

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

The Role of Academia in Promoting Child Rights

6 & 7
JUNE

Conference & Cultural Center
of the University of Patras



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UNIVERSITY OF
PATRAS
ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟ ΠΑΤΡΩΝ

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The Role of Academia in Promoting Child Rights

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1. INTRODUCTION & CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

1.1 *Background*

Since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1989 child rights have emerged as a fundamental social norm fostering an increasing activity on education and awareness raising on child rights. The aim of this trend is to cultivate a global cultural universalism on child rights intended to enhance their protection across societies. This approach is explicitly articulated in Art. 42 of the CRC whereby “states should make the principles and provisions of the Convention widely known” obliging CRC State Parties to undertake all necessary measures to this end. Consequently, the discussion on effective societal strategies for building awareness about child rights and the CRC has been ongoing in scientific, political, and educational discourse.

Universities, as well-established institutions in modern societies, fulfill critical social functions that extend beyond knowledge transmission. Among these roles, higher education supports social development by fostering values, principles, and norms that uphold democracy, human rights, and active citizenship. Given that universities are key agents in the socialization of individuals, shaping their perceptions, the contribution of academia can have a multiplier effect on the social value and impact of child rights. Thus, universities are ideally positioned to promote the child rights agenda throughout society by engaging in multilevel activities —such as education, training, research, and knowledge generation— that significantly contribute to embedding a culture of child rights in society.

Considering academia’s influential role in advancing child rights, it is evident that there is substantial potential to further explore this relationship. Many human and child rights studies programs have been developed globally over the past 20 years. However the systematic integration of child rights into university teaching and practice of all academic disciplines — such as social sciences, education, business and management, applied sciences, and health sciences— can be further reinforced. A structured reflection and dialogue about the role of academia in promoting child rights could serve as a powerful platform for enhancing social awareness on child rights. This holistic approach not only enriches academic discourse but also prepares students to become informed and compassionate leaders who champion child rights in their respective fields.

1.2 Overview and context of the conference

University of Patras established in partnership with UNICEF Greece Country Office the first Child Rights Centre in Greece in October 2023. The Child Rights Centres initiative builds upon the powerful role of Academia to promote and mainstream child rights in society through establishing knowledge hubs within universities that serve this purpose. In the context of this initiative, an international conference on the Role of “Academia in Promoting Child Rights” is co-organized by UNICEF Greece Country Office and University of Patras on June 6th and 7th 2025.

The conference aims to facilitate the exchange of international and national experiences and best practices on how academia can effectively promote and protect child rights, with a focus on diverse international perspectives. It will bring together members of the academic community, representatives from UNICEF and other United Nations agencies, child rights experts, practitioners, policymakers, officials from central and local government, various Civil Society Organizations, as well as children and young people themselves. This broad spectrum of stakeholder participation reflects the belief that every sector of society plays a vital role in upholding and fostering a culture of respect for child rights, which, over time, can drive shifts in social norms to the benefit of children

Considering that since the adoption of the CRC child rights have emerged as an autonomous interdisciplinary scientific field, the conference is adopting this strategy to promote a comprehensive, integrated, and complementary approach to advancing child rights. For this reason, submissions relevant to the conference topic from various disciplines are encouraged such as law, sociology, philosophy, pedagogy, childhood studies, psychology, social work, political science, humanities, anthropology, health sciences, economics, demography, and information science. In addition, thematic areas of focus relevant to child rights are highly welcome such as environment and climate change, child rights and business, child rights in the digital space, gender, disability, disaster, conflict, and displacement.

1.3 *Key objectives and themes of conference*

They include:

- Highlight the pivotal role of Academia in promoting child rights and how to place them into the academic agenda at international and national levels
- Networking on academic experience in the field of child rights and sharing the model of “Child Rights Centres” implemented in Greece;
- Demonstrate the benefits of strengthening the role of Academia in promoting child rights for implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- Exchange of international good practices and experience in the areas of:
 - a. engagement and partnerships at local and international level for the promotion of child rights;
 - b. evidence generation with a focus on concrete examples of evidence-based policy making for children;
 - c. integrating child rights in the university curricula;
 - d. engagement of academia with the private sector and business for the promotion and protection of child rights.

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2. Conference Abstracts

1. Investigating the Presence of Children's Rights in the Curricula of Greek University Education Departments

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Although the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was signed more than 30 years ago, research shows that there remains a significant gap in awareness – not only among the general public but also among individuals who can be considered stakeholders, such as teachers. Based on research suggesting that university education plays a crucial role in promoting children's rights, we examined the curricula of 19 university education departments in Greece to assess the presence of children's rights-related content. More specifically, we calculated the frequency of references to children's rights within course titles, course content, or other parts of the curriculum for the academic year 2024-2025. General references to human rights were not included in our analysis. Our findings reveal that a considerable number of departments (9 out of 19) do not include any reference to children's rights in their curricula. The highest number of references in a single curriculum was seven (references in five courses titles and/or content and two references in other parts of the curriculum), while several departments mentioned children's rights in the content of only one course. It is important to acknowledge the limitations of our methodology. For example, the absence of references in children's rights in course titles or descriptions does not necessarily imply a lack of relevant content, just as its presence does not guarantee its emphasis during instruction. These findings are discussed in light of the relevant literature, with implications for curriculum development and the promotion of children's rights education.

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Short CVs

- Georgios Ampatzidis is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Early Childhood Education of the University of Thessaly. His scientific work concerns a series of articles in peer-reviewed Greek and international journals, articles in peer-reviewed Greek and international conference proceedings and chapters in peer-reviewed Greek and international books.
- Kostas Magos is a Professor at the Department of Early Childhood Education of the University of Thessaly. His scientific interests focus on the theory and practice of intercultural education and children's rights.

2. The Experience of the Psychological and Counselling Centre in University of Patras: When the Child Speaks through the Adult

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The beginning of academic studies coincides with a specific period in the life of the individual spanning from the late adolescence to the early adult age. It is this specific point in which the young adult is being called to confront new circumstances and conditions of incorporation in a different environment such as the one of the academic life (Jeammets, 2002). In this context, the element of infant which resides in the psychic life of the individual, re-surfaces in a latent form, in the present of the subject. It is in the afterwordness (Freud, 1897) of some aspects of the infant and adolescence period of life where resuscitates personal and family experiences of the students. At the Centre of Psychological and Counselling Support in the University of Patras, the students can address their personal experience. These are being formed mentally in the space where each student tries to give a specific meaning to his/her everyday life. Since 2019 that the Centre provides psychological and counselling sessions to the students there is a variety of demands related to conflicts in the childhood or the adolescence period which continue to create obstacles in the level of functionality of the individual. Given some statistical data of this service, it is observed that an important part of the students, report symptoms of anxiety and depression, and problems with their interpersonal relations. In this direction, this presentation aims to present the aspects of the young adults, underlining their experiences and the strategies concerning the children's rights in a symbolical meaning.

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Short CVs

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- Nikolia TSOKANA is social worker MSc. at the Centre of Psychological and Counselling Support of University of Patras.
- Eleni ALBANI is Vice-Rector for Student and Cultural Affairs and Associate Professor of Nursing of University of Patras.

3. Children Rights Through Teacher Training: The Teach.In.G. Program and the CRC of NCUA

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The Teach.in.G. program has been implemented since 2021 by the Faculty of Philology (School of Philosophy) and the Department of Early Childhood Education (School of Education) of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, with the financial support of UNICEF, as part of the Teach4Integration program. This announcement will present the structure of the program, the profile of the participants, and the findings of the internal evaluation process. Teach.in.G. emphasizes inclusive and differentiated pedagogy as well as a theoretical and experiential approach to children's rights. It is an attempt to create communities of practice and learning within a framework of synchronous and asynchronous distance learning. Participants include teachers of various specialties in formal and non-formal education, educational staff and refugee education coordinators from all over Greece, mainly from areas where students from vulnerable social groups study. Throughout the program, a specific evaluation process was followed using structured online questionnaires after the completion of each training module and after the end of the entire training cycle. This announcement explores the parameters that shaped the training experience of the participants and the impact that specific methodological choices had on this experience. At the same time, it examines the impact of the program on the attitudes and perceptions of trainees on integration of children from vulnerable social groups as well as on issues of inclusive practices.

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Short CVs

- Alexandra Androusou is Professor of Teaching Methodology and Development of Educational Material in National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and director of the Laboratory of Intercultural Education and Pedagogical Intervention. She has a strong interest in minorities and education, teacher training, and the production of electronic and analogue educational materials. She was a member of the scientific committee of MUSEDUC (1997-2019) while also acting as a consultant of the Greek National Committee for the integration of refugee students in education.

- Maria Iakovou is Professor of Applied Linguistics at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. She specializes in teaching Greek as a second/foreign language, with research focusing on migrants, refugees, and heritage speakers. She has led major projects and published extensively on language education, curriculum design, and teacher development.
- Elina Tsiroga is a PhD Candidate in National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. She studied Business Administration and also holds a BA in Education, an MBA and a MA in Special Education. She has long experience in project management and data analysis and she is the project manager of various NKUA projects. She has teaching experience in upper secondary schools and in teacher's training programs.

4. National Action to Combat Childhood Obesity: Linking University with Schools and the Community

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The protection of children's right to health needs to be one of the priorities of the state, while cooperation between the academic community, schools and the wider society is a necessary condition for positive results. The National Action against Childhood Obesity, implemented by the Ministry of Health with the support of UNICEF, provides the necessary framework for the promotion of prevention for children's health and in particular for the fight against childhood obesity, a disease which is highly prevalent in the case of Greece. The Department of Nutrition and Dietetics of the University of Thessaly, in collaboration with the Center for the Rights of the Child of the same University, proceeded to implement innovative training activities for school counselors, teachers and parents/guardians with the aim of adopting scientifically documented practices in everyday school and family life that ensure children's right to health. The central core of the training and other actions are the educational toolkits of the "Food for Action" program. Through experiential, collaborative and interactive activities, the above educational material raises awareness among students, teachers and parents/guardians on key dimensions of childhood obesity prevention, such as consumption of water and healthy breakfast/snacks, increase of physical activity and interruption/decrease of sedentary time. At the same time, the above educational material suggests guidelines for the organization of actions such as 'Health Festivals' and others where community participation is promoted in collaboration with members of the academic community. The implementation of the program so far has shown that cooperation between the University, school bodies and the community can be a decisive factor in protecting the right to health of children and especially in the issue of combating childhood obesity.

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Short CVs

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- Giorgos Simopoulos is Education Officer in UNICEF Greece Country Office, supporting programme development for quality inclusive education. His areas of specialization encompass Intercultural - Inclusive Education, Plurilingualism and Second Language Teaching, and Educators' Professional Development

5. Adding a Communication Dimension to the Academic Approach

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As communication adviser I will focus on the best way to use the academic environment (beyond curriculum development) to strategically promote child rights.

I will call to think out of the box and provide key partners with the right communication tools (data and fact sheets) to develop policies and curricula integrating child rights across disciplines and lead to impact change.

As UNICEF-Greece is a pioneer in creating awareness around child rights in Greece, including the creative training to journalists, and the establishment of Child rights partnerships with various universities, it is important to build on this success and expand it to other countries.

Other grassroot activities can be planned within the academic environment, across disciplines, and students can be encouraged to use their creativity to promote child rights; it will be useful to allow them to brainstorm their own ideas and use key documents as reference for prioritizing their community approach.

Academia can identify the disciplines which can creatively promote child rights, but as a former journalist I look at sustainable awareness with journalism students who will carry the torch of child rights in the future.

There is also a wealth of fresh minds among creative students in marcom, and I can see lovely capstone projects around child rights (and UNICEF can create a competition around it).

Mapping the current landscape of child rights (and abuses) is essential when putting awareness programs. The localized approach is crucial in respecting local cultures and context, but I will emphasize the universality of child rights, and the importance of preserving the rights of the weakest and the most vulnerable, such as the children of legal and illegal migrants.

In a nutshell, I will call for adding a communication component to academia (including internal communication efforts to explain their role in supporting Child rights).

Short CV

– A communication adviser, combining 4 decades of strategic communication in 13 countries, he contributed to stop using juvenile camel jockeys in UAE with UNICEF; eradicating worst forms of child labor in Lebanon with ILO; reducing irregular migration from Iraq to Europe with IOM; promoting municipal elections in Libya with UNDP; introducing the rights of students with diabetes in Qatar with Qatar Foundation; promoting food waste reduction with FAO.

6. Strengthening Child Rights through Academic Partnerships: the Experience of UNICEF Cameroon in Establishing Child Rights Centers and Mainstreaming Child Rights Education

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UNICEF Cameroon is pioneering a transformative initiative in West and Central Africa to institutionalize child rights through the establishment of Child Rights Centres (CRCs) in partnership with public universities, academic institutions, and specialized schools. These centres function as interdisciplinary hubs for research, education, and advocacy, designed to integrate child rights across academic disciplines, policymaking processes, and local governance systems. Inspired by models piloted in Georgia and then in Greece, the CRC initiative has been contextually adapted to Cameroon's national realities and is now shaping a uniquely African approach to child rights education and policy engagement.

Importantly, Cameroon is building on Africa's deep-rooted human rights philosophy, often overlooked in global discourse. Long before Western frameworks emerged, African civilizations articulated principles of dignity, justice, and solidarity. The Charter of Manden, proclaimed in 1236 in the Mali Empire, is one of the earliest codified human rights declarations, affirming the sanctity of life, protection from slavery, and respect for human dignity. Cameroon's CRC model reclaims this historical legacy to anchor child rights within African value systems.

The initiative is formalized through Memoranda of Understanding with eleven universities and specialized schools, guided by a co-creation methodology and a structured institutional roadmap. Each CRC supports interdisciplinary teaching, student-led research, and localized policy dialogue aligned with national development goals. Beyond higher education, UNICEF also partners with the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education to integrate child rights into school curricula, through teacher training and civic engagement and out-of-school children.

As Cameroon expands its CRC network across all ten administrative regions, it is also laying the groundwork for regional collaboration and cross-country learning, making it a frontrunner in shaping how child rights can be embedded in university curricula, local governance, and national education systems throughout West and Central Africa. This initiative reflects a strategic ambition: to transform Cameroon's academic and policy infrastructure into a regional hub for child rights innovation, grounded in both historical authenticity and future-oriented development.

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- Fatimata Balandi Kirakoya is the Chief of Social and Behavior Change Programme at UNICEF Cameroon. With over 25 years of experience in public policy, community engagement, and rights-based programming in 8 countries, she leads national initiatives to promote child rights, including the development of university-based Child Rights Centres and child-centered curricula across education levels.
- Nadine Perrault is UNICEF Representative in Cameroon. She is a lawyer by formation. With over 25 years of significant experience, she has held several positions at UNICEF, including at the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean in Panama. Before that, she worked at UNICEF headquarters in New York, where she was working on Child Rights issues. Ms Perrault was also a UNICEF Representative in El Salvador and Guinea-Bissau before her appointment to Cameroon.
- Casimira Bengé is the Chief of Child Protection at UNICEF Cameroon. With a background in law, she is a seasoned expert in child protection with over 35 years of experience in child rights, including 32 years at UNICEF, working across development and humanitarian crisis contexts. Her expertise in child protection covers armed conflicts, post-conflict recovery, forced displacement, and natural and climate-related disasters, spanning low- and middle-income countries in West, Central, Eastern, and Southern Africa, as well as Latin America.
- Albert Legrand Fosso is a multidisciplinary scientist with a PhD in medical anthropology. Currently serving as a Social and Behavior Change (SBC) Officer at UNICEF Cameroon, he leads evidence generation and child rights promotion. His expertise spans anthropology, agriculture, and development, blending research with impactful programs. Passionate about global equity, Fosso integrates academic rigor and fieldwork to drive sustainable change.

7. Child Rights, Mental Health, and Digital Interventions: The Role of Higher Education in Research and Implementation

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The rising incidence of mental health challenges among children and adolescents has made the need for innovative, accessible, and rights-based interventions more urgent than ever. Digital mental health solutions – including apps, online counseling platforms, and AI-powered tools – offer promising opportunities to scale support. However, a critical gap persists between academic research, policymaking, and the practical implementation of these tools in ways that are ethical, effective, and child-centered.

Higher education institutions have a crucial, multi-dimensional role in closing this gap. Universities can drive interdisciplinary research that ensures digital mental health innovations are grounded in robust evidence, uphold child rights, and address ethical concerns such as privacy, consent, and accessibility. A data-driven approach is essential – not only for evaluating the effectiveness and safety of digital interventions but also for informing continuous adaptation and policy development. Universities are uniquely positioned to collect, analyze, and translate real-world data into actionable insights, ensuring that digital solutions meet the evolving needs of children and adolescents.

By leveraging their academic expertise, data capacities, and social responsibility mandates, universities can bridge the worlds of research, policy, and practice – ensuring that digital mental health interventions truly advance the rights and well-being of children and adolescents.

The evaluation focuses on assessing the "How Wonderful You Are Here" platform, launched in 2023 to provide mental health and psychosocial support to adolescents, especially those with limited access to traditional services. It highlights the platform's achievements in engagement and international recognition, while emphasizing the role of gratitude in combating loneliness among youth. Survey findings reveal that although the platform addresses relevant mental health issues like anxiety, personal growth, and loneliness, its visibility remains low, and users suggest improvements in content format, tone, visuals, and language. The evaluation recommends targeted marketing, influencer collaborations, enhanced user experience features, and diversified content strategies to boost engagement, emotional safety, and accessibility, ultimately strengthening the platform's impact on adolescent mental health.

The evaluation of the "How Wonderful You Are Here" platform demonstrates both its successes and areas for improvement in providing mental health support to adolescents, particularly through its focus on combating loneliness and promoting gratitude. Despite achieving significant reach and engagement, the platform faces challenges in increasing visibility and improving user experience. The recommendations from the evaluation emphasize refining content formats, visual appeal, and language accessibility, while also expanding targeted marketing and collaborations to enhance engagement.

This presentation will showcase successful models of university engagement, highlight the role of data-driven strategies, outline key challenges and opportunities, and propose a roadmap for how higher education can lead systemic change in the mental health and digital innovation landscape for young people, incorporating lessons learned from the platform's evaluation to drive future initiatives.

Short CVs

– Ivan Brezina, PhD – Ivan joined UNICEF with the actual refugee response in December 2022. Previously he has worked in the field of democratization in Latin America, Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa with the European Commission. During the past decade, Ivan has also been coordinating international observers on human rights observation and monitoring missions with European External Action Service and OSCE/ODIHR, in conflict and post-conflict countries. During his doc and post-doc, Ivan's interest in cognitive and cross-cultural psychology gave way to publications focusing on information processing, implicit beliefs, relations between values and behaviors, among other topics. In his free time Ivan is a dedicated climber and skier. Currently he serves as Emergency Coordinator in UNICEF RRO Slovakia.

- Zuzana Neupauer, PhD - Zuzana is the Chief of Child Protection at the UNICEF Emergency Response in Slovakia. Previously she served as a Child Protection Specialist – Mental Health and Psychosocial support Regional Advisor in UNICEF ECARO. She has worked in the field of clinical psychology and psychotherapy prior to joining UNICEF. Previously she has also worked for the Crisis intervention team which provides support to victims of incidents and their relatives at a peritraumatic time. Her doctoral thesis was focused on adults' docility from the perspective of cognitive neurosciences. Zuzana also previously worked in the field of human rights focusing on the phenomena of Hate Crime, Hate Violence and Right-wing extremism in society.

8. Empowering School Communities to Combat Violence and Bullying

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This presentation outlines the outcomes of three training workshops that are part of a pilot program aimed at the prevention and management of school violence and bullying, the promotion of positive behavior in schools, and the enhancement of the sense of belonging.

The prevention and management of school violence require the active involvement of the entire school community—teachers, students, and parents—as well as the adoption of a shared educational framework grounded in cooperation, acceptance, and respect for children's rights (Chatzichristou, 2023).

Empirical studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of anti-bullying intervention programs in Greek secondary schools, particularly those focusing on empowering students to develop coping strategies (Roussi et al., 2018). Specifically, results showed a reduction in bullying incidents and an increase in the sense of safety within schools (Roussi et al., 2018).

This pilot program was developed through a tripartite collaboration between the UNICEF office in Greece, the Regional Directorate of Education of Central Macedonia, and the Child Rights Centers of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and the International Hellenic University. The training activities were implemented with the participation of teachers from primary (75%) and secondary (25%) education in the Thessaloniki area. They were based on a blended training model that combined (in person and online) theoretical reflection with experiential approaches.

These training workshops were rooted in pedagogical principles that focus on creating a positive school climate, strengthening teachers' professional identity, and cultivating supportive relationships within the school community—while also enhancing the sense of belonging and networking among participants. Before, during, and after each training session, questionnaires were distributed and group-based tools for reflection, evaluation, and collaborative redesign were used. Data analysis revealed a highly positive response and strong engagement from participants, all of whom stated that the training sessions served as a source of inspiration, empowerment, and commitment to continue the initiatives—while also fostering networking and the creation of a community of practice.

There was an emphasis on the need for systematic implementation of these actions in daily school practice so that they permeate the culture of each school unit and extend to the broader educational community, including the involvement of students' families. Analysis of the open-ended responses revealed four key areas of support for teachers in implementing such initiatives in their schools:

- a.The availability of appropriate educational material, co-designed according to the needs and specific characteristics of each school ,and closely linked to the experiential aspect of training;
- b.The empowerment of schools as communities of learning, collaboration, and critical reflection;
- c.The formal allocation of time for the implementation of such programs;
- d.The institutional dissemination of best practices.

This mapping aligns with both international and national literature that documents the effectiveness of interventions focused on developing students' personal and social skills (Olweus et al., 2019), as well as on the psychological resilience and professional empowerment of teachers (Daniilidou & Platsidou, 2023).

Addressing school violence and bullying cannot be limited to fragmented actions or disciplinary measures; it requires integration into a holistic educational policy (Council of Europe, 2018), grounded in evidence-based data, a clear values framework, and the active participation of all stakeholders.

Through ongoing interaction, the need emerged for sustained support of teachers' roles by strengthening institutional provisions and material/technical infrastructure, along with regular supervision and systematic professional development. This constructive interaction raised critical reflections around learning goals related to psychosocial education, empowerment, life skills development, mental resilience, school readiness, and autonomous learning capacity. These goals are fundamental in supporting inclusion (Imoto et al., 2024).

The existence of stable frameworks and rules that are co-created and consider children's voices, as well as the development of communities of practice, are crucial for the sustainability of such interventions (Gaffney et al., 2019; Wenger, 1998), including this pilot program.

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Short CVs

- Giota Gatsi teaches at the Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Programme in Education (SNEG) of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH) and in Secondary Education in the region of Pella. Her PhD and main research interests focus on multilingualism, inclusive education, and the psychosocial empowerment of children and adolescents. She has collaborated with the Institute of Educational Policy (IEP), the Ministry of Education (MoE), international organizations, NGOs, and universities in Greece and abroad. She develops educational materials and training programs and is actively involved in writing and in the education of teachers and young people with diverse linguistic and cultural repertoires.
- Korina Chatzinikolaou is an Associate Professor of Developmental Psychopathology and Communication Disorders in the Department of Early Childhood Education at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH). Her professional and research interests focus on issues of child protection and the safeguarding of children's rights, as well as the prevention and combatting of human trafficking and the protection of victims. She collaborates with governmental agencies, the European Union, international organizations, and both international and Greek NGOs on topics related to her field of expertise.
- Lito Eleni Michalopoulou is an Assistant Professor of School Psychology in the Department of Psychology at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH). She holds a Bachelor's degree in Psychology from the same department. She completed her graduate and doctoral studies in School Psychology at The Pennsylvania State University (USA). Her research interests and clinical work focus on the provision of psychological services to vulnerable and minority student populations, as well as to their families.

- Giorgos Simopoulos is Education Officer in UNICEF Greece Country Office, supporting programme development for quality inclusive education. His areas of specialization encompass Intercultural - Inclusive Education, Plurilingualism and Second Language Teaching, and Educators' Professional Development

9. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework on the Role of University Education in Child Rights Education & Promotion

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This paper depicts a comprehensive theoretical and conceptual framework that enables higher education as a strategic platform for the protection of child rights. Grounded in a multidisciplinary approach, the framework draws on imperative theories including the Human Rights-Based Approach, Critical Pedagogy, Constructivist Learning Theory, and the Social Ecological Model to examine the transformative potential of higher education in promoting children's rights. It explores how universities and educational institutes, through their core functions such as education, research, and community engagement can contribute significantly to the realization and dissemination of child rights as enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and related international organizations.

The framework is organized into three core pillars:

1. Curriculum and Pedagogical approaches: This advocates for the assimilation of child rights principles across disciplines through participatory, rights-based, and inclusive teaching methods.
2. Research and Knowledge Creation: This highlights the university's role in generating evidence, shaping discourse, and informing policy while ensuring ethical engagement with children.
3. Community Engagement and Policy Influence: This focuses on institutional partnerships, advocacy, and public awareness to bridge academic work with real-world impact. By engaging students, faculty, and communities, academic institutions can foster a generation of professionals equipped with the knowledge, values, and skills essential to promote and protect child rights across sectors.
4. The paper contributes to the currently available literature on human rights education by offering a strategic model for embedding child rights within education systems. It also provides actionable insights for curriculum developers, academicians, and policy-makers seeking to institutionalize child rights education in higher learning environments. Ultimately, the study apparently depicts that academia has both the responsibility and the capacity to serve as a catalyst for advancing children's rights, social justice, and inclusive development for every child.

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Short CV

- Lipi Chhaya is a seasoned academician and researcher with 17 years of experience in education, electronics, and smart grid technology. She integrates interdisciplinary knowledge into teaching and research. Her work emphasizes digital learning, and academic quality enhancement, reflecting a deep commitment to educational innovation and student success. She has published extensively in reputed journals. She has also led various administrative and community outreach initiatives. Her work reflects a commitment to innovation, sustainability, and ethical education.

10. The Role of the Child Rights Center and the Importance of Interdisciplinary Approaches in Legal Education on the Example of Teaching Child Rights and Restorative Justice

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One of the main objectives of legal education is to form essential competencies in students, develop appropriate skills, and prepare them for contemporary challenges. One of the most effective means of achieving this goal is integrated learning. Through integrated lectures, students are given the opportunity to gain deep and diverse knowledge by utilizing information from various fields and by rethinking phenomena in an entirely new way. Establishing interconnections between disciplines enables the synthesis of knowledge, helps students develop the ability to transfer knowledge from one field to another, and fosters a comprehensive understanding of complex legal issues. Interdisciplinary learning supports the development of analytical thinking and generalization skills, which, in turn, helps future lawyers grasp the essence of the law.

In 2023, the Child Rights Center was established at the School of Law of Caucasus University. The center, through its team of researchers, carries out educational and research activities. Its mission is to promote the creation and dissemination of knowledge about child rights in schools and higher education institutions. To achieve this goal, one of the center's primary objectives is to introduce interdisciplinary approaches into the field of legal education.

Offering child rights and restorative justice as independent, interdisciplinary study modules at the undergraduate and graduate levels of legal education is one of the best ways for students to acquire theoretical, practical, and empirical knowledge in the field of child rights. Within these subjects, by studying various branches of law and adjacent disciplines, students will be able to form a unified, comprehensive, and broad understanding of the child as an independent actor in legal relationships, society, and the child's place in the world.

Our presentation will address the trends that have emerged and explain why strengthening interdisciplinary education in the field of child rights within university programs is crucial.

Short CV

– Levan Darbaidze, judge with 11 years of experience, affiliated professor of the Law School of the Caucasus University, doctor of law. Since 2001, he worked in various public institutions, including as a prosecutor. Since 2014 he has been a judge in the Criminal Law Board of the Gori District Court. Since 2016, he has been a specialized juvenile judge. In addition, since 2006, he has been teaching at various universities.

11. Innovative Experiential Learning Approaches for Teaching Child Rights in Governance Studies

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One of the main objectives of legal education is to form essential competencies in students, develop Integrating child rights education into academic curricula requires dynamic, experiential learning approaches that move beyond traditional lecture-based methods. This abstract proposes innovative pedagogical strategies designed to immerse students in real-world child rights issues, fostering critical thinking, ethical leadership, and practical policy skills.

Experiential learning can take various forms, including immersive policy simulations, where students engage in role-playing exercises that mimic negotiations on child rights at international forums. These activities develop analytical and advocacy skills while deepening students' understanding of the complexities of governance in child protection. Case-based learning allows students to examine real-world child rights challenges through interactive discussions, encouraging them to explore legal frameworks, social policies, and institutional responses.

Collaboration with child rights organizations is another essential component, offering students hands-on engagement through internships, field research, and project-based learning. Partnerships with NGOs and government agencies provide firsthand exposure to child advocacy work, enabling students to apply theoretical knowledge in tangible contexts.

Additionally, the use of digital storytelling and media projects encourages creative learning, where students produce short films, podcasts, or reports analyzing child rights issues. These mediums enhance engagement, communication skills, and public awareness efforts. Community-based participatory research further empowers students to work directly with affected children and families, ensuring that academic inquiry is grounded in lived experiences.

By embedding these experiential methods in governance studies, universities can equip students with the skills necessary to shape policies that prioritize children's well-being. This discussion contributes to the broader conference dialogue on academia's role in child rights education, demonstrating how innovative teaching methods can build future leaders committed to equity and justice for children worldwide.

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Short CV

- Dr. Aïda Darouichi. PhD in Management with extensive academic experience across Swiss institutions including UNIGE, UNINE, IIG, and UNID. She lectures in strategy, governance, and international development, and currently contributes to UNICEF Geneva on ESG and child rights monitoring. Her interdisciplinary work bridges education, data science, and policy, with a focus on stakeholder engagement, inclusive governance, and rights-based approaches to learning, development, and organizational transformation.

12. A Whole School Approach to Fostering a Rights-Based Culture and Preventing Childhood Obesity

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This presentation focuses on the implementation of a holistic, rights-based intervention in schools, grounded in the Whole School Approach model and inspired by the toolkits of the "Food for Action" program (Ministry of Health & UNICEF, 2025). The aim is to promote a school culture that respects and upholds children's rights, while also addressing the pressing issue of childhood obesity (WHO, 2016).

The presentation showcases the application of this model in two school settings: the 21st Kindergarten of Athens and the 3rd Primary School of Zografou. The intervention extends beyond the traditional curriculum to include the school's physical and social environment, as well as its collaboration with the local community and health promotion services (World Health Organization, 1997; SHE Network, n.d.). Key components of the model include comprehensive school policies, participatory practices that empower children (Lundy, 2007), and activities that encourage healthy lifestyles within a framework of children's rights (Covell & Howe, 2008; UNICEF, 2009; UNICEF UK, 2015).

The presentation highlights the positive outcomes of these integrated actions, both in terms of enhancing awareness and advocacy for children's rights and supporting behavior change related to health and nutrition. Attention is also given to the challenges of ensuring sustained commitment from all stakeholders and the long-term viability of the approach within the school context. The session concludes with practical recommendations for upscaling the whole school approach across more educational settings, advocating for the right of every child to health, well-being, and a high quality of life, both locally and nationally

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Short CVs

- Maria Dimopoulou is a teacher and works as Environmental Education Officer at the Primary Education A' Athens. She is also founder of the Network Schools4climate.
- Georgia Gyftoula is an English teacher and principal of 3rd Primary School of Zografou. She works towards a sustainable school profile and encourages participation in national and global networks and projects supporting a whole-school approach.
- Niki Kokkinopliti, Kindergarten Teacher at the 21st Kindergarten of Athens. He is a member of the network Schools4climat.

13. Empowering Prevention: The Role of Universities in Addressing Juvenile Delinquency Among Unaccompanied Minors Through a Child Rights Framework

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Unaccompanied minors (UAMs), youth who navigate life without parental or legal guardianship, face significant adversity, often resulting in heightened vulnerability to juvenile delinquency. These behaviors are frequently symptomatic of deeper structural neglect, trauma, and marginalization. This paper argues that universities, as vital institutions of social development and value formation, are uniquely positioned to intervene by promoting a child rights-based approach to prevention. In line with their broader societal mandate, universities can play a transformative role in reshaping how unaccompanied minors are perceived and supported.

This study explores the root causes of delinquent behavior in unaccompanied minors and critiques current institutional responses, which too often prioritize punitive over preventive measures. Additionally, it is aiming towards understanding the challenges UAMs face and how this assessment seeks to address the gaps in care and prevention mechanisms. We propose a multidisciplinary intervention model rooted in the principles of child rights, social justice, and democratic participation. Our model calls for universities to act as key drivers of change by engaging in integrated activities, education, training, research, and community partnership, that embed a culture of child protection and advocacy within and beyond the academic setting.

By fostering trauma-informed pedagogies, facilitating youth participation, and influencing public policy through evidence-based research, higher education institutions can generate lasting social value. Moreover, by socializing future professionals across disciplines with a rights-based lens, universities contribute to systemic shifts that safeguard unaccompanied minors from criminalization and promote their full integration into society. Ultimately, while highlighting the unique challenges unaccompanied minors face in Greece, such as language barriers, social isolation, and vulnerability to exploitation, this paper also emphasizes the multiplier effect of academic engagement in child rights, asserting that meaningful change begins with the commitment of universities to lead with compassion, equity, and responsibility

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Short CV

- Dimitris Georgiadis (PhD | Post-Doc) Has earned BAs in Pedagogy, & Psychology from University Aldo Moro (Bari, Italy), PhD from University of Ioannina (Greece), Post-doc in Migrants' Integration from University of Thessaly (Volos, Greece). Scientific collaborator at Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences (Athens, Greece). Research interests: Psychodynamic Counseling, Migration and Social Education

- Maria Papathanasiou (PhD) Has earned BAs in Pedagogy, & Psychology (Univ. of Athens, Greece & SJSU, USA), MAs in Comparative Education & Human Rights (Univ. of Athens & IoE, London, UK), PhD (Federico II, Napoli, Italy & TC, Columbia Univ., USA) Current position: Advisor at the Ministry of Migration & Asylum, & adjunct professor at University of Thessaly. Previously: a family counselor, adult educator in schools for parents, independent researcher in Federico II Naples University, and a Visiting Research Scholar at Montclair State University, NJ. Research topics: School –Family Relationships, Human Rights, Special Education, Gifted Education, Foster Parents and Adoption.
- Chrysovalantis Papathanasiou (PhD | Post-Doc) He holds a PhD in Social Psychology from Aix-Marseille University and an MSc in Sociology from the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), Paris, supported by a French Government scholarship. He completed postdoctoral research in Social Psychiatry and Community Psychology at Panteion University, funded by the Hellenic State Scholarship Foundation. He has served as Deputy Manager at the University Hospital of Patras and as President of the National Center for Social Solidarity. He coordinated the UNHCR-funded program Community-Based Interventions for Mental Health Care of Refugees in Greece. He currently teaches in higher education and directs the MSc in Human Rights and Migration Studies, delivered by Aegean College in partnership with the University of Essex.

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

a.GRIVA Eleni, b.KIPOUROPOULOU Evmorfia, c.TZIFOPOULOS Menelaos

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.

Short CVs

- Griva Eleni: Vice rector for International Affairs, Lifelong Learning and Student Affairs Professor of Applied Linguistics Department of Primary Education, University of Western Macedonia, Greece
- Evmorfia Kipouropoulou: Assistant Professor of Intercultural Pedagogy and Teachers Education Department of Primary Education, University of Western Macedonia, Greece
- Menelaos Tzifopoulos: Assistant Professor of Pedagogy and Applications in Primary Education Director of the Centre of Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning (C.CE.LL./KEDIVIM) Department of Primary Education, University of Western Macedonia, Greece

15. Participatory Research and Children's Rights Approach in the Academic Sphere: A Polish Perspective

a.JAROSZ Ewa, b.MARKOWSKA-MANISTA Urszula

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This presentation undertakes a critical examination of the intersection of participatory research and children's rights approach within the context of university-based research. Through a combination of desk research and our longitudinal experience in childhood studies, we aim to introduce the notion of rights-based research as a paradigmatic shift in academic discourse. We will explore the methodological and ethical complexities and opportunities arising from the implementation of participatory research in contemporary childhood studies, with a specific focus on the Polish academic context. By employing a narrative approach, we will foreground the experiences, challenges, and needs of Polish scholars engaged in this type of research, with particular attention to the scientific value and practice-oriented implications of prioritizing children's rights to participate in research that directly affects them.

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Short CVs

- Ewa Jarosz - Ewa Jarosz, Professor at the University of Silesia (Institute of Pedagogy, Faculty of Social Sciences), researches children's rights and childhood studies, focusing on participation and violence against children. She holds various leadership roles, including Committee of Pedagogical Sciences member, president of the Section on Social Pedagogy, and Chairperson of the Ombudsman for Children's Rights Team for Developing Children's Participation. Additionally, she serves as Secretary General of the International Janusz Korczak Association (IKA), advancing children's rights and education.
- Urszula Markowska-Manista - Urszula Markowska-Manista, PhD habil., researches childhood and education in diverse environments, employing inclusive and participatory approaches. She has held various leadership roles, including director of the MACR program (2016-2021) and head of the UNESCO J.Korczak Chair (2017-2018). Currently, she is a PhD professor at the University of Warsaw, leading the Interdisciplinary Research Center for Intercultural Education and Communication, and a member of the Ombudsman for Children's Rights Team for Developing Children's Participation.

16. Children Municipal Councils: The Case of a French Municipality

a.KARACHONTZITI Eleni

In recent years, there has been a growing trend at the European level to promote children's participation and to highlight their voices in the public sphere. More specifically, since 2003, a series of Recommendations from the Council of Europe have called on member states to promote activities within the framework of both formal and non-formal education. In Greece, for example, youth municipal councils were established in 2006, aiming to involve young people in public affairs and to facilitate their networking at both local and European levels.

This presentation focuses on the French case and specifically on Children's Municipal Councils, an institution that was established in 1979 and now includes more than one thousand Children's and Youth Municipal Councils.

The research we will present centers on a region in Normandy and studies the Children's Municipal Councils in two municipalities with different political orientations. The aim is to highlight the practices used to encourage children's participation in the public sphere, as well as to examine to what extent the profiles of the involved adult actors influence these practices by either facilitating or hindering the smooth functioning of the institution.

The methodology is based on 200 hours of observation and nine semi-structured interviews with institutional (elected officials, educational policy managers) and local actors (coordinators).

The findings reveal a lack of educational continuity and vision regarding the active participation of children in the public sphere.

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Short CV

- Eleni Karachontziti is Assistant Professor on Education Sciences at the University of Rouen Normandie. Her works focus on several aspects of citizenship in formal and nonformal education as well as on comparative education.

17. Academia's Role in Safeguarding Roma Children's Rights

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The rights of Roma people are subject of an increased attention from international organizations and national authorities, as Roma are among the most marginalized and vulnerable social groups in Europe and other parts of the world. Even though their rights are largely safeguarded through international and national legislation, many Roma communities continue to face significant challenges such as poverty, discrimination, social exclusion, and limited access to basic services. Roma children often encounter barriers to accessing quality education, including discrimination, segregated classes, and inadequate learning resources. The new EU Strategic Framework for Roma Equality, Inclusion and Participation 2020–2030 renews and strengthens the EU's commitment to Roma equality, inclusion, and participation. Regarding educational issues, the framework sets the following objectives: a) reducing the gap in participation in early childhood education, b) reducing the percentage of Roma children attending segregated primary schools, and c) reducing the employment gap and the gender employment gap.

Within this context, our presentation will discuss the role of universities in this field. More specifically we will refer to a study and research project conducted by the Laboratory for the Study of Gender, Inequalities, and Discrimination of the Department of Social and Educational Policy, in connection with the teaching of the course Policy for Childhood Protection within the same department. The research focuses on monitoring the problems and difficulties faced by this specific group in the educational process and on exploring proposals and solutions. Specifically, the study is based on the documentation and analysis of the views of 10 educators from the areas of Examilia and Zevgolatio, using the tool of semi-structured interviews.

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Short CVs

- Despina Karakatsani is a Professor of Pedagogy at the Department of Social and Educational Policy at the University of the Peloponnese. She is President of the Gender, Inequalities, and Discrimination Study Laboratory at the Department of Social and Educational Policy since 2024. Her research interests include the history of pedagogical theories and institutions, Freinet pedagogy, education for citizenship, democratic and intercultural education. She is a member of the Board of the DARE Network (Democracy and Human Rights Education in Europe).
- Dora Katsamori holds a BA in Political Science and Public Administration from the University of Athens, where she was specialized in the field of International and European Studies, a master's degree in social Discrimination, Migration and Citizenship and a PhD in the field of citizenship and adult education from the University of the Peloponnese. She is currently working as post-doctoral researcher within the Software and Knowledge Engineering Laboratory (SKEL) of the Institute of Informatics and Telecommunications (IIT) at the National Center for Scientific Research "Demokritos" and as Academic Fellow at the University of Patras.

18. Children's Rights: Shaping Future Teachers. A Research on ECEC Students' Views

a.KARAMANE Eufimia, b.PAPADOPOULOS Issak

a.Special Teaching Staff, Department of Early Childhood Care & Education

b.Assistant Professor, Department of Early Childhood Care & Education

This study investigated the awareness and perspectives of students in the Department of Early Childhood Care and Education at the International Hellenic University regarding children's rights, with a focus on their understanding, education, and implementation.

The research was based on the use of a multidimensional questionnaire, which was distributed to 80 undergraduate students before and after the completion of the compulsory undergraduate course "Children's Rights." The students' education included thematic units related to the theoretical and practical approach to children's rights, aiming to deepen their understanding of fundamental principles, the legislative framework, and contemporary challenges concerning the protection and promotion of these rights. Particular emphasis was placed on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the importance of education in the advocacy of children's rights, and the students' perceptions regarding the implementation of these rights within Greek society.

At the same time, the study explored students' attitudes toward the economic dimension of rights and the protection of children from violence and exploitation. Additionally, participants were invited to express their views through open-ended questions, examining their personal definition of children's rights, the prioritization of fundamental rights, and the role of education in their dissemination. They also evaluated the impact that engaging with this specific subject area had on enhancing their understanding of children's rights.

This study contributed to mapping the level of awareness and attitudes of future early childhood education professionals, highlighting the need to integrate children's rights into the educational framework. Furthermore, it presented proposals to strengthen relevant education in order to ensure the development of pedagogical practices that promote knowledge, awareness, and the implementation of these rights.

Short CVs

- Eufimia Karamané is a member of the Laboratory Teaching Staff in the Department of Early Childhood Care and Education at the International Hellenic University. She holds a degree in Philology from the School of Philosophy at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (A.U.Th.) and a postgraduate specialization diploma in Pedagogy. Her doctoral dissertation was conducted in the Department of Philosophy and Pedagogy at A.U.Th. and focused on teachers' interpersonal behavior in the classroom. As part of her postdoctoral research (Department of Philosophy and Pedagogy, A.U.Th.), she studied emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and job satisfaction among preschool educators. She has taught undergraduate courses at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and the International Hellenic University. She has conducted training seminars for kindergarten teachers and has participated in research projects. She has authored a monograph, published articles in international scientific journals, and presented at national and international conferences. She is also a peer reviewer for two academic journals.
- Isaak M. Papadopoulos is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Early Childhood Education and Care at the International Hellenic University. He has taught at various universities both nationally (Hellenic Open University) and internationally (European University Cyprus), while he has served as the Head of the Department of Education and Associate Dean for the School of Doctoral Studies at UNICAF University in Cyprus. His research and teaching interests focus on language teaching for children, bilingualism/multilingualism, and the teaching of reading/writing skills in kindergarten and primary school. He has presented his research at international and national conferences. He has published four scientific books, edited eight academic volumes, and written chapters in books/collective volumes, as well as articles in international journals and conference proceedings.

19. Exploring Intercultural Sensitivity and Teacher Effectiveness in Multicultural

a.KARANIKOLA Zoe, b.GRIGORAKI Athanasia, c.PANAGIOTOPOULOS Giorgos

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The increasing cultural diversity in Greek schools highlights the importance of teachers' intercultural sensitivity as a critical factor in promoting an educational environment that fosters and promotes the rights of all children. The primary aim of this research is to explore teachers' views on intercultural sensitivity and to examine how it affects their effectiveness within a multicultural classroom. In addition, it seeks to identify the challenges teachers face in multicultural educational settings and their readiness to address the needs of diverse student populations. Utilizing quantitative methodology, a questionnaire with Likert scale questions was distributed to 98 teachers working in intercultural schools. The findings reveal important aspects of teachers' attitudes, practices and challenges related to intercultural education. In addition, the analysis examines potential differences in Intercultural Sensitivity based on demographic factors such as teaching experience, gender, and age. This research contributes to a broader understanding of the role of Intercultural Sensitivity in the educational process, offering practical ideas and suggestions for improving multicultural education in Greece. By examining the perspectives and experiences of teachers, the study provides valuable data for policy makers, education professionals and researchers aiming to enhance the effectiveness of teaching in culturally diverse classrooms.

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Short CVs

- Dr Karanikola holds a PHD in Educational Sciences with a focus on educational policies and intercultural views. Her scientific interests relate to the field of training, education and human resource development, respective national and international policies, intercultural and global competences. Her scientific work includes participation in research projects, international publications and announcements in international conferences. Today, she is working at the Department of History-Archaeology of the University of Patras as a Special Education Staff Member.
- Mrs Grigoraki Athanasia is a Special Education Teacher, with a master in Educational Management (Department of Management Science and Technology, School of Economic Sciences and Business Administration, University of Patras).
- Dr Panagiotopoulos is Professor at the Department of History-Archaeology of the University of Patras, and Vice-Rector for Planning, Digital Modernization and Infrastructure. His PhD focuses on the field of human resources education and development, whereas his scientific interests are in the field of lifelong learning and designing and evaluating training programs. His scientific work includes participation in research projects, international publications and announcements in international conferences.

20. Impact Assessment of a Teachers' Professional Development Programme on Inclusive Education

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TEACH4Integration is a flagship initiative of the UNICEF Greece Country Office, aiming to train trainers and educators working with refugee and migrant background populations. The programme has been implemented from 2018 to the present. It is a collaboration between the UNICEF Greece Country Office and the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, and the University of Thessaly, with the support of the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports, under the supervision of the Institute of Educational Policy. Teach for Integration comprises 400 training hours, spread over a period of nine months, which are accredited according to current legislation. The programme is implemented through live meetings / workshops, online meetings, and asynchronous digital learning methods. A total of 5,335 educators and 661 school counselors participated in the program during the last 4 years, approximately 7,000 education staff in total from the beginning of the project. Throughout the four implementation cycles from 2021 onward, Teach for Integration has been implemented as part of the All Children in Education programme, a UNICEF led initiative, with the cooperation of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum and with co-funding from the European Union.

To assess the impact and long-term sustainability of the program's results, an impact assessment was conducted using a targeted questionnaire distributed to participants from all phases of the program up to that point. From the current academic year onward, an additional, fully asynchronous version of the program, titled TEACH4Inclusion, has been developed in the form of a MOOC and was piloted accordingly. The evaluation of all program phases from 2021 to the present was conducted by a research team of the Laboratory of Pedagogical Research and Lifelong Education of the Department of Educational Science and Early Childhood Education at the University of Patras, in close collaboration with the UNICEF Greece Country Office. This presentation will showcase selected data from all phases of the TEACH4Integration program—primarily from the impact assessment, as well as the pilot implementation of the TEACH4Inclusion programme.

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Short CVs

- Sofia Kasola holds a PhD in Educational Sciences focusing on Adults' Education and Recognition of Prior Learning, a master's degree in Adult Education and a second master's degree in management and administration of educational Organizations. Her research interests include evaluation, quality assurance, micro credentials, methodology on Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning, Management of Education Organization and Education Policy. She has more than 20 years' experience in Education consultation, mostly in European projects, holding the role of the evaluator.
- Anthi Adamopoulou is a member of Laboratory Teaching Staff of the Division of Social and Educational Theory and Analysis at the Department of Educational Sciences and Social Work Sciences of the University of Patras, since 1994. She holds BA in Mathematics and MA in Educational Sciences with specialization in Educational Policy, Planning and Administration. She has participated in research projects in the areas of pedagogy and educational policy for more than twenty-five years.

- Natassa Raikou is Assistant Professor of Pedagogy at the University of Thessaly and Adjunct Professor of Adult Education at the Hellenic Open University. She has many years of teaching experience in higher education, as well as a significant number of scientific publications. She is a member of various international and Greek scientific networks, reviewer in three journals and Review Editor in the journal 'Adult Education Critical Issues'.
- Thanassis Karalis is a Professor of Lifelong Learning and Adult Education at the Department of Educational Sciences and Early Childhood Education, former Director of the Laboratory of Pedagogical Research and Lifelong Education and scientific coordinator for the assessment of the TEACH4Integration and TEACH4Inclusion programmes. He is the Director of the Child Rights Center (in cooperation with UNICEF Greece Country Office) and coordinator of the Center for Teaching and Learning – University of Patras.
- Giorgos Simopoulos is an Education Officer on UNICEF Greece Country Office, supporting programme development for quality inclusive education, and a tutor on Hellenic Open University. Giorgos holds a PhD on Intercultural Education and Teaching Greek as a Second Language. His areas of specialization encompass Intercultural - Inclusive Education, Second Language Teaching, Educators' Professional Development, Lifelong Learning, as well as Educational Material Design and Development.

21. Perspectives on the Relationship Between Business and Educational Institutions

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c. Lela Tavdgiridze, Candidate of pedagogical sciences, Professor, Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University, Georgia, Lela.tavdgiridze@bsu.edu.ge.

The classical understanding of employment has changed significantly in the modern world, due to the uninterrupted development and diversity of employment spheres. Furthermore, the age and working conditions of employees have changed significantly, with the age limit for employees being reduced and the work environment shifted from offices to remote work. All of the above has significantly contributed to the growth in youth employment, which, along with the positive results, is associated with significant challenges, such as provision of thorough and quality education. This has increasingly increased the business sector's responsibility to ensure the full realization of the right to education.

The aim of this paper is to analyze the cooperation and those institutional mechanisms between the education and business sectors, assess their effectiveness, and study the factors that influence academic performance at school and university levels, education quality, and the realization of children's rights.

The main research questions are:

- In what ways does business help education?
- What procedures do businesses employ to protect children's rights?
- What is the role of business in supporting education? (involvement in the creation of educational programs, social responsibility campaigns, etc.)

The study is based on scientific concepts as well as key business-related approaches, such as corporate social responsibility (CSR) and public-private partnerships (PPP). The combination of these two forms a basis for a multi-component analysis of the link between business and the educational system.

The paper presents conclusions and recommendations that will help to shape policy and stimulate debate on the role and value of business in the educational system.

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Short CVs

- Dr. Giorgi Katamadze, Doctor of Business Administration, is an Assistant Professor at Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University. His research focuses on business administration, crisis management, economic awareness, microeconomics, and child rights. He has presented at numerous international conferences and published widely in scholarly journals. Dr. Katamadze is currently leading two scientific research grant projects, and is the author of two monographs. He has served as both editor and technical editor for several academic publication in the field.

- Dr. Maia Bolkvadze, Doctor of Philology, is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Pedagogy at Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University. Her scholarly work focuses on pedagogy, early childhood education, child rights, contemporary learning processes and instructional methods. She has authored numerous course syllabi and a monograph, and has served as editor and reviewer for several academic publications. Dr. Bolkvadze has published extensively in both Georgian and English in high-ranking, peer-reviewed journals, contributing significantly to the field of educational sciences.
- Dr. Lela Tavdgiridze, Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences, is a professor at Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University and the coordinator of the Child Rights Knowledge Center. Her research interests include pedagogy, didactics, child rights and innovative approaches to teaching and learning. She has authored and edited multiple monographs and textbooks, developed a wide range of course syllabi, and actively contributes as a scholar. Dr. Tavdgiridze has published extensively in Georgian and English internationally recognized, peer-reviewed academic journals.

22. Preparing Active Citizens in the AI Era

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According to the Council of Europe (2019), digital citizenship is the ability to participate actively, systematically and responsibly in online and physical communities, using digital technologies. In the modern era, where the daily use of technology has increased rapidly and AI is part of it, we have to talk about a digital world, where citizens and especially children have to find their place in it. The preparation of young people for their safe entry into the digital world through the internet should be the main objective of education, focusing on the cultivation and development of the appropriate values, attitudes, skills and knowledge necessary for their safe existence, protecting their rights and information as well as the rights and information of all those who coexist with them. The need for digital literacy is therefore emerging, including competences variously referred to as computer literacy, ICT literacy, information literacy, AI literacy and media literacy (UNESCO, 2018). This presentation aims to highlight the important role of the academic and research community in preparing both teachers/educators and parents and children themselves to meet the challenges of the new digital era by approaching their access to it in a critical way, so that they are able to defend their democratic rights and promote the values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law in cyberspace. At the same time, the use of AI technologies in educational contexts is something that will emerge due to its direct link to digital citizenship education, according to the Council of Europe (Committee of Ministers, 2019).

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Short CV

- Dora Katsamori is an Associate Researcher in the field of citizenship education and inclusion. Lately, her field of research concerns media Literacy, AI & Education as well as explainable AI systems as a member of European working groups. She has a long experience as project coordinator and researcher in European funded research projects and as civic educator. She is also an Academic Fellow in the field of Social Pedagogy.

23. *Integrating Child Rights into Pre-service Teacher Education*

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Promoting child rights through university academic programmes is both important and entirely feasible. Child rights can be integrated into almost every discipline in various formats, whether it is a cross-curricular theme, a specific course, a scientific research activity, or a university-organized public event (Council of Europe, OSCE/ODIHR, UNESCO, & OHCHR, 2009).

The below abstract represents a Child Rights incorporation example into the curriculum of Caucasus Education School at Caucasus University, Tbilisi, Georgia. Within the Fall semester of the 2024-2025 academic year, in collaboration with the Black Sea-Baltic Alliance - Georgia, the university added a new, one-semester elective course "Social-Emotional Learning" to the BA-level pre-service teacher preparation programme.

In order for children to protect the rights of their own and of others', it is important that they have developed social-emotional skills (UNICEF, 2019; the Advocates for Human Rights, 2013) and have access to a socio-emotionally enabling and empowering environment (Affolter, 2005). Teachers play a significant role in creating such an environment in schools (Lundy & Brown, 2020).

Lecturers' reflection on the above-mentioned course and students' Focus Group Discussion (FGD) results demonstrate raised mental health literacy, improved social-emotional skills, in-depth understanding of and readiness to advocate for human/child rights among students.

Building on this experience, we are now expanding the course into a two-semester compulsory course starting from 2025-2026 academic year. The first semester will again target the development of the same competences in students as in the pilot course, while the second semester will prepare them to apply these competencies in their practice, equipping them with tools and strategies to support children's social-emotional development in accordance with rights-based approach to education.

Key components of the revised course, assessment approaches and students' FGD results will be highlighted at the conference, emphasizing how to promote a rights-based approach to education among future teachers.

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Short CV

- Mariana Khundzakishvili is a psychologist, lecturer, and consultant in the fields of psychology and education. Committed to supporting the socio-emotional development, psychological well-being, and educational outcomes of the most vulnerable children, she has contributed to reforms aimed at advancing psychosocial support systems in educational settings. She is dedicated to promoting inclusive education, child rights, and teacher professional development through her work with international organizations, universities, and educational institutions in Georgia.

24. Migrant Children's Right to Culturally Responsive Teaching

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The last consecutive years much research has been conducted internationally in tertiary education with emphasis on the Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) (Liu et al., 2025) due to the intense waves of migrant crisis all over the world. However, there are a few recent studies that focus on teachers' viewpoints in primary education concerning this pedagogy. CRT focuses on cultivating cultural competence incorporating cultural traits of migrant students aiming at a respectful and supportive school environment (Gay, 2000). CRT is considered by many scholars as a prerequisite for teachers teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students (Szlachta & Champion, 2019) since it functions as a bridge between school and home (Aronson & Laughter, 2018). This study examines, through 9 interviews, how Greek teachers that work in Greek intercultural schools, DYEP and ZEP classes, in primary education in Greece define CRT and explores its impact on students' academic performance and social inclusion. Research findings indicate that CRT is highly associated with students' inclusion and academic performance helping them adapt to the new school environment more easily and creating opportunities to be active participants in the learning process. All participants agree on the increased engagement levels, higher motivation and stronger feeling of belonging thanks to CRT's contribution. This research also reveals the challenges teachers face while using CRT in favor of migrant children, mentioning lack of training, language barriers and limited resources as the most common ones. Suggestions are made for its successful implementation in the Greek school contexts. Finally, proposals are made for its successful implementation in the Greek school context with updated curricula and teacher training. Hellenic Open University supports and advances these practices via research like this and their dissemination.

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Short CV

- Konstantina Kydrou holds a BA in English Language and Literature from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece. She also holds a Master's degree in Language Education for Refugees and Migrants, during which she completed her teaching practicum in a Reception Facility for Refugee Education (DYEP) at a public primary school, teaching English to refugee children. She has been working as an English language teacher. Additionally, she has completed specialized training in Special Education.
- Dr Thomais Rousoulioti brings a strong foundation of academic expertise and hands-on experience to the field of multilingual education. She works at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece, specializing in the instruction of multilingual learners, particularly in the context of Greek as a second language. She is an active member of the SIG for Inclusive Assessment in Education (AEA Europe) and affiliated with EALTA, ALTE, and the OsloMet EnA research team.

- Nektaria Palaiologou is Professor at the School of Humanities at Hellenic Open University (HOU), former Assoc. Professor at the University of Western Macedonia. She is also serving as Editor in Chief at the Intercultural Education Journal, Taylor and Francis, Routledge as well as Editorial Board member on frequent basis at seven international journals. She is the co-author of three books in Greek. She also edited three books in English language. She has also published extensively in international journals.

25. Attitudes of Preschool Education Students towards Children's Rights and their Training Needs

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The importance of educating young children about children's rights has been consistently highlighted by researchers with the role of educators recognized as a crucial determinant (e.g. Clair et al., 2012; Hareket & Gülhan, 2017). International literature has emphasized the need for further research on children's rights (e.g. Correia et al., 2019), particularly among students (Karaman-Kepeneci, 2006). However, in Greece, the attitudes of students in Pedagogical Departments towards children's rights have not been sufficiently explored to scientifically and educationally inform and sensitize them, thereby equipping them to promote and defend children's rights. The aim of this study was to identify the attitudes of students in the Department of Preschool Education regarding children's rights and to examine factors that may influence these attitudes. Furthermore, the study explored students' intention to inform others and raise awareness about the protection of children's rights, as well as the perceived necessity for training seminars and educational programs. The research sample consisted of 154 students, and data collection was carried out through a questionnaire comprising three sections: the first section gathered demographic and research-related information; the second incorporated the Scale for Measuring Students' Attitudes towards Children's Rights (Karaman-Kepeneci, 2006); and the third included the Scale for Recording Training Needs for Children's Rights (Kypriotaki, 2025). The results indicated that students generally held positive attitudes towards children's rights. Nevertheless, the findings underscored the need to support and empower students on issues related to child rights advocacy, as well as the necessity for practices that promote children's rights both within the academic community and later in the classroom.

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Short CV

- Dr. Maria Kypriotaki is an Associate Professor at the Department of Preschool Education, University of Crete. Her teaching experience from 2002 until today, her research interests and publications in Journals and chapters in books confirm her interest and knowledge in Special Education and themes regarding inclusion, family of children with disabilities and dimensions such as school climate, self-efficacy, wellbeing and training needs of special education teachers, competencies and interests of children in childcare, child rights etc. She has also participated in 24 research projects and got research grants

26. Kindergarten Teachers' Beliefs on Child Rights: The Need for Educational Programmes

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The concept of “children’s rights” is multifaceted, much like human rights in general, as it evolves and varies across time and space depending on the historical context of different societies (Balias, 2004; Karaman-Kepeneci, 2006). The recognition of children’s rights within a child-centered framework—where each child learns about their rights and respects the rights of others—presupposes that educators are also aware of and able to respond to children’s needs, aiming for the well-being and development of each child individually (Banko-Bal & Guler-Yildiz, 2021). International literature has highlighted the need for more research on children’s rights and their implementation in educational practice (e.g., Correia et al., 2019). However, within the Greek context, educators’ beliefs about children’s rights, as well as their training needs in this area, have not been adequately explored, making it difficult to design and implement relevant educational programs that genuinely support the protection of children's rights.

The aim of the present qualitative study was to investigate kindergarten teachers' knowledge and beliefs regarding children's rights and to identify their training needs. The research sample consisted of 10 educators working in public and private kindergartens. The data collection method used was semi-structured interviews.

The findings of the study revealed a lack of sufficient knowledge among kindergarten teachers regarding children’s rights, the presence of stereotypical views, and the absence of inclusive practices in kindergarten classrooms. With the results of this study, we aim to gain a more comprehensive understanding of educators’ training needs and to be able to design and implement appropriate programs and interventions.

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Short CVs

- Dr. Maria Kypriotaki is an Associate Professor at the Department of Preschool Education, University of Crete. Her teaching experience from 2002 until today, her research interests and publications in Journals and chapters in books confirm her interest and knowledge in Special Education and themes regarding inclusion, family of children with disabilities and dimensions such as school climate, self-efficacy, wellbeing and training needs of special education teachers, competencies and interests of children in childcare, child rights etc. She has also participated in 24 research projects and got research grants.
- Dr. Dionysia Kontogianni is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Preschool Education, University of Crete. She graduated from the Department of Primary Education of the University of Ioannina and in 2002 she obtained a PhD in Education from the University of Crete. From 2004 to 2008 she worked as a Primary Education teacher. Her research interests focus on Intercultural Education, Migration, Bilingual Education and Greek-language Education in Diaspora.

27. Bioeconomy through Outdoor Education in Kindergarten: A Rights-Based Academic Pathway for Sustainable Futures

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This presentation explores how the integration of bioeconomy principles into Outdoor Education at the kindergarten level can serve as a dynamic academic and pedagogical framework for promoting the rights of the child. Framed within Article 29 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which emphasizes education for the development of the child's personality, talents, and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential, our work proposes a vision where environmental literacy, sustainability, and children's participation intersect meaningfully in early childhood education.

Drawing from interdisciplinary academic collaborations and field-based educational practices in Greece, we present a model piloted within university-affiliated training programs that positions Outdoor Education as a vehicle for introducing concepts of the bio-economy, sustainability, and environmental responsibility to young children. Central to this model is the recognition of the child as an active agent of change, a rights-holder capable of contributing to the dialogue around local and global ecological challenges.

Our research combines qualitative field observations, educator reflections, and child-led project outcomes to analyze how Academia can train future educators not only to deliver content, but to cultivate a pedagogy of rights, participation, and sustainability from the earliest years. The presentation further explores how such approaches expand academia's role in mainstreaming child rights across curricula, fostering intergenerational responsibility, and aligning with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), and SDG 13 (Climate Action).

By situating child rights within the practical application of bioeconomy concepts through Outdoor Education, we argue for a reimagined academic agenda, one that prepares educators to uphold and advocate for children's rights while contributing to a sustainable, inclusive future.

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Short CVs

- Dr Aristeia Kyriakou is a Postdoctoral Researcher at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and Education Consultant with UNICEF. She holds a PhD in Outdoor Education from the University of Aberdeen (as an Onassis Foundation scholar). She is the co-founder of the European Outdoor Education Hub, a non profit established to make outdoor education accessible to every school in Europe. Her work focuses on outdoor learning, sustainability, and curriculum design, leading international projects that promote innovation and climate resilience in education through participatory, nature-based methods.

- Professor Anastasia Dimitriou is a faculty member at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, specializing in Sciences and Environmental Education at the School of Early Childhood Education. Her research interests include environmental education, science teaching and learning in early childhood and primary education, and environmental justice. She has coordinated national teacher training programs and contributed to numerous academic initiatives advancing participatory and transformative education practices in early learning environments.

28. National Action to Combat Childhood Obesity – The University of Patras contribution

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The National Action Against Childhood Obesity is an initiative of the Hellenic Ministry of Health in collaboration with UNICEF, aimed at preventing and addressing childhood obesity in Greece as a critical issue of public health and social equity. This program frames obesity not solely as a medical or dietary concern, but as a multidimensional social inequality that compromises children's rights to health, information, equal opportunities, and well-being. It adopts a holistic, child-centered approach, encompassing health education in schools, training for parents and educators, community-based interventions, and the development of supportive environments that promote healthy choices.

The action is grounded in cross-sectoral collaboration between health, education, and social policy domains, engaging local stakeholders to enhance the sustainability of its interventions. Methodologically, the program utilizes tools for mapping local needs, collecting data, and assessing impact, thereby supporting evidence-based policy formulation. Research data highlight significant social inequalities in both dietary habits and physical activity opportunities for children. Furthermore, the school is identified as a key point of intervention, emphasizing the need for training professionals—teachers, health, and social workers—on children's rights to healthy eating and physical activity.

The Action serves as an example of a collaborative approach between the state, international organizations, and the scientific community, strengthening the link between policy and research. Early implementation outcomes underscore the importance of institutionalizing public health policies that address the root causes of childhood obesity while empowering children as rightsholders and active citizens.

Short CVs

- Michalis Leotsinidis is Professor Emeritus at the University of Patras and former Director of the Laboratory of Public Health, Medical Department. He holds a B.Sc. in Chemistry and a Ph.D. in Hygiene from the same department. His expertise is in Hygiene and Environmental Hygiene, with over 100 publications and 3,800 citations. He is a member of the EU's SANTE Committee and has coordinated over 40 research projects in related fields.
- Nefeli-Olga Schoina is a Ph.D. Candidate at the Medical School of the University of Patras. She holds a B.Sc. in Food Science and Nutrition and an M.Sc. in Public Health. She works on the National Action Against Childhood Obesity in Western Greece and has research experience at the Laboratory of Public Health, focusing on chemical and microbiological analyses and public health policy in the fields of environmental and food safety.

29. Multilingual Education: The Role of Academia in Promoting Its Implementation

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The linguistic landscape has changed in recent years because of constant migration, technological developments, and recognition of multilingualism's cognitive, social, and economic benefits. Many children worldwide speak a home language that differs from the official language used in the school and societal context. Children's right to education has been safeguarded long ago (<https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>). In fact, access to quality and inclusive education by respecting students' funds of knowledge is highly recommend, especially in the early years, because it belongs to basic human rights, constitutes the foundation for sustainable development, and promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all (European Commission, 2021; UNICEF, 2019; UNESCO, 2025). Additionally, multilingual competence development belongs to one of the eight key competences recommended by the European Union for lifelong learning (European Commission, 2021). However, monolingualism in the official languages is still the norm worldwide (UNESCO, 2025). In Greece, particularly, research indicated that students' multilingualism was not actually promoted in classrooms, as teachers felt rather unprepared (Michala et al., 2024), though new curricula that valued student linguistic and cultural diversity have been recently launched. Universities given that they are key agents not only in knowledge transmission but also in individuals' training, development, and socialization by instilling values, can play a critical role in promoting multilingual education starting from the early years considering the contribution of this period to students' overall development. Countries through the help and multiplier effect of academia on promoting child's rights need to provide more support to pre-service and in-service teachers and trainers to put multilingual education into practice, as multilingual education is not just about language; it is about creating inclusive, equitable learning settings where linguistic and other forms of diversity are valued cultivating, thus, inclusive societies where every individual can thrive in a multilingual world.

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Short CVs

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- Nektarios Stellakis is an Associate Professor at the Department of Educational Sciences and Early Childhood Education, University of Patras, Greece. His research focuses on early literacy development, family literacy and literacy practices in early childhood education. From 2005 to 2009, he was President of Greek National Committee and Regional Vice - President for Europe (2013- 2018) of World Organization for Early Childhood Education (OMEP). Since 2015, he has been involved in various activities aiming to early childhood education to refugee or asylum-seeking children living in Reception and Identification Centers in Greece.

30. We All Have a Voice... But Do We Really Hear All Voices Around Us?

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The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) Article 12(1) stipulates that "States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, with due weight accorded to the child's age and maturity." This provision enshrines the child's right to participate in decision-making processes and have their opinions heard and valued (General Comment No. 12, 2009). However, despite its significance, Article 12 appears to be often overlooked in contemporary societies across Europe and beyond. This raises critical questions regarding the extent to which children's voices are genuinely heard and integrated into decision-making processes that affect their lives. How can we foster meaningful child participation in educational settings and across various sectors of society? Janusz Korczak's pioneering work has had a profound impact on the development of children's rights globally (Markowska-Manista, 2020). His philosophical approach and contributions significantly influenced the codification of children's rights within a humanistic paradigm (Valeeva & Demakova, 2015), as enshrined in the UNCRC. Although Korczak did not participate directly in the UN sessions (he was murdered at Treblinka during World War II), his ideas fundamentally shaped the Convention's underlying assumptions. Informed by Korczak's paradigm (Maier-Höfer, MarkowskaManista & Stellakis, 2023), this study aims to investigate the practical implementation of Art. 12 in various contexts, including homes, schools, universities, and society at large. Specifically, we will examine whether this right is exercised universally, with a particular focus on children in vulnerable situations, such as those in care, with migrant or refugee backgrounds, or experiencing poverty and social exclusion. Additionally, we intend to explore the significance of integrating the CRC, including Article 12, into the studies of future teachers, highlighting the importance of embedding children's rights into educational and university curricula.

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Short CVs

- Claudia Maier-Höfer, Dr.phil., is a Professor for Childhood Studies at Evangelische Hochschule Darmstadt, Germany. Her research focus is ethics and agency of children in the fields of education, inclusion and sustainability. She is working with concepts of psychoanalysis of Lacan and Mannoni and the poststructuralist approaches of Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari. She is member of the Scientific Council of the journal 'Jewish Studies. Almanac' published by the Zamość Academy and member of political advisory board of federal organization for studies in social pedagogy of Protestant Church in Germany.
- Urszula Markowska-Manista - PhD habil., researches childhood and education in diverse environments, employing inclusive and participatory approaches. She has held various leadership roles, including director of the MACR program (2016-2021) and head of the UNESCO J. Korczak Chair (2017-2018). Currently, she is a PhD professor at the University of Warsaw, leading the Interdisciplinary Research Center for Intercultural Education and Communication, and a member of the Ombudsman for Children's Rights Team for Developing Children's Participation in Poland.

- Nektarios Stellakis is Associate Professor at the Department of Educational Sciences and Early Childhood Education, University of Patras, Greece. His research focuses on early literacy development, family literacy and literacy practices in early childhood education. From 2005-2009 was President of Greek National Committee and Regional Vice - President for Europe (2013- 2018) of World Organization for Early Childhood Education (OMEP). After 2015 he has been involved in various activities aiming to early childhood education to refugee or asylum-seeking children living in Reception and Identification Centers in Greece.

31. Revising Child Rights Frameworks in Education: Shifting Focus from Catalogues to Values

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This paper examines the critical role of academia in promoting and teaching child rights, emphasizing the need to shift the focus from catalogues to values. Drawing on my experience with the Bulgarian University education on human rights in general, I will address two significant challenges in the academic discourse surrounding child rights: the tendency to present these rights as static catalogues and the lack of interdisciplinary engagement. I argue that child rights are often framed in a formalistic manner, which can lead to a distorted understanding among future legal professionals. This approach risks portraying rights as mere obligations for parents and educators rather than as essential values that affirm dignity and respect for children. By shifting the focus from a catalogue approach to a values-based understanding, we can better equip students to recognize the dynamic nature of children's rights within various contexts. I will highlight the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration in research and teaching about child rights. Engaging with fields such as sociology, psychology, and education can enrich our understanding and foster innovative approaches to advocacy and policy-making. By examining various academic initiatives, the paper illustrates how institutions can effectively engage with communities to promote child rights through research and practice. Ultimately, this study aims to inspire a transformation in academic settings, advocating for a holistic and values-driven approach to child rights that empowers students and contributes to a more just and equitable society for all children.

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Short CV

- Deyana Marcheva is an Associate Professor of Constitutional Law and Human Rights at New Bulgarian University. She has published extensively in the fields of constitutional law and human rights law. Her research and academic interests primarily focus on the human rights of vulnerable groups, such as children, refugees, and the LGBTI community. Additionally, Deyana Marcheva is a practicing lawyer and a member of the Sofia Bar Association.

32. The Friuli Venezia Giulia Child Protection's Mou

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UNICEF ECARO has formalized a strategic Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region (Italy) with the University of Trieste, the University of Udine, the Superintendence of Archaeology, Fine Arts and Landscape (under the Ministry of Culture), the Regional Ombudsperson, the Trieste Juvenile Court, the FVG Guardians Association and the UNICEF National Committee.

This MoU establishes a dynamic and self-sustaining framework for the promotion and protection of children's and adolescents' rights. Through an integrative, multidisciplinary, and intersectoral approach, this initiative capitalizes on the expertise of Academia and key institutional stakeholders to develop holistic strategies that foster child welfare and development.

Central to this collaboration is Academia's pivotal role in advancing child rights through its Third Mission activities—university-driven endeavors that transcend traditional teaching and research to generate tangible societal impact. This initiative underscores the transformative power of knowledge as an instrument for cultural and social advancement, fostering a society grounded in social justice, equality, and universal human rights.

Given the inherently interdisciplinary nature of child rights, Academic institutions will curate a cross-sectoral capacity-building program spanning anthropology, pedagogy, sociology, political science, languages and communication science. This initiative aims to empower students, professionals, and caregivers with the expertise required to champion child rights within their respective fields.

A distinctive element of this MoU is its partnership with the Superintendence of Archaeology, Fine Arts and Landscape, reinforcing a commitment to public engagement in line with the Third Mission and the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Through participatory initiatives, the MoU cultivates an inclusive and evolving societal identity that embraces diversity while nurturing a global cultural universalism of child rights. Projects will focus on citizenship education and cultural heritage as intergenerational connectors, fostering inclusive spaces for self-expression, cultural integration, and civic consciousness within a shared heritage community.

By leveraging interdisciplinary expertise and institutional cooperation, this alliance aspires to establish a sustainable and impactful model for safeguarding and promoting children's rights, reinforcing their role in shaping a more just and equitable society.

33. Legal and Non-legal Instruments to Tackle Child Labour in Malawi: An Integrated Perspective Approach

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Child labour continues to be a global problem affecting children and families across the globe. It is work performed by a child that is likely to interfere with their education or harm their health, physical, mental, moral, or social development. To address the problem, the international community agreed to adopt different legal frameworks on child labour. Malawi has ratified these international human rights instruments and has even enacted domestic legislation to overcome the problem. Furthermore, initiatives that include the legal ban on child labour, access to education initiatives, poverty alleviation programmes, and direct interventions by governments and the International Labour Organization (ILO) on incentive-based schemes have been taken to combat the problem. Despite these efforts, child labour is increasing, especially in the agricultural sector.

In this study, I contend that there is a gap between the promise the legal framework gives children in addressing child labour and the reality of the problem. Thus, the existing legal framework on child labour fails to operate to cure child labour, mainly as a result of contextual barriers outside and within the law. At its core, the thesis argues that children in Malawi experience their childhood in a context where they are expected to work for the households' survival strategies and as expected by the community. The thesis has demonstrated that if the gap between the legal frameworks on child labour and the reality of child labour on the ground is to be addressed, there is a need to reimagine and restate the notion of childhood from the lens of integrated childhood. This new perspective of integrated childhood acknowledges the reality that children's roles are incorporated into household survival strategies and community expectations, which is sometimes a diversion from the legally framed notion of childhood and child labour captured in the international and Malawi's legal frameworks.

The study explores its research questions by employing socio-legal research methods that first involve desk research and followed by empirical field research that infuses Theatre for Development (TfD) as a research approach. Through a performative analysis in the TfD process, the child labour legal framework is examined alongside the communities' lived realities to explore both analytical and practical solutions to the problem of child labour in Malawi.

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Short CV

- Gift Gawanani Mauluka is a PhD candidate at the University of Bayreuth. His research interests are children's rights, gender equality and climate change. He is currently working on a research project interrogating the disparity between the comprehensive legal frameworks on child labour and the increased cases of child labour in Malawi. His work employs social legal research methods and unorthodox approaches to understanding human rights problems.

34. An Overview of Child Rights Curricula & Instruction in Albania since the 1990s

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Since the early 1990s, Albania has undergone a breakthrough transformation in its educational and institutional approach to children's rights, following the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992. This paper examines the evolution of child rights education in Albania, mapping developments across both pre-university and higher education settings. The post-communist period ushered in the depoliticisation of curricula, the elimination of ideological content, and the introduction of human rights education with increasing alignment to international standards. While primary and secondary education integrated children's rights more rapidly – supported by international donors and national reform bodies – higher education institutions adopted these changes more gradually due to structural inertia and the persistence of ideologically shaped academic cultures. Since the early 2000s, universities such as the University of Tirana, Shkodra, Elbasan, and Vlora progressively embedded children's rights within study programmes in Social Work, Law, Education, and Psychology, often through modules rather than standalone courses. Despite notable progress, challenges persist, including limited access to contemporary Albanian-language resources, lack of pedagogical training among staff, and a gap between theory and practical application. This survey paper shall conclude by highlighting both the strengths and shortcomings of current curricula, and propose strategic recommendations at academic, institutional, and policy levels to strengthen child rights education, also by leveraging the potential of digital tools in the promotion of child rights as a civic and professional imperative in Albania's ongoing democratic development, as has been experienced in the context of the ERASMUS+ CBHE Homo Digitalis project No. 101129182 by the use of such tools in humanities and educational media. In this context, the paper also presents the first formative efforts to establish a Child Rights Centre at LOGOS University College, the first of its kind in Albania.

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- Saimira Gjapi completed her higher education at the University of Tirana, Faculty of Foreign Languages, in the Department of Slavic-Balkan Languages, specializing in the Greek language. She pursued postgraduate studies in Comparative Literature at the Faculty of Philosophy of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, in the Department of Philology, and also completed a postgraduate course in International Relations and Diplomacy at the Albanian Diplomatic Academy. She is currently a Ph.D. candidate in Comparative Literature in the Department of Italian Language and Philology at the Faculty of Philosophy, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

- Erleta Mato is professor of Sciences of Education at LOGOS University College, where she also serves as Chair of the Department of Pedagogy and Psychology in Faculty of Human Sciences and Language Communication. She is the first Chair of a Child Rights Centre operating in a HEI in Albania, fruit of an agreement with UNICEF, Albania.
- Konstantinos Giakoumis is professor of History, Visual Arts and their Didactics at the Department of Pedagogy and Psychology, LOGOS University College, Tirana, Albania, where he also serves as Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Linguistic Communication. He is a founding member of LOGOS' Child Rights Centre. Beyond his research agenda, he is active in EU developmental actions having been coordinated in three ERASMUS+ CBHE projects.

35. "The Treehouse with the Little Animals of Rights": Child Rights for Preschool and Early School-Age Children

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The presentation discusses the experiential approach to the concept of children's rights and the promotion of their right to be heard and to participate in dialogue and collective decision-making processes for their community, through the educational material for preschool and early school aged children "The Tree House with the Little Animals of Rights," created by the Initiative for Article 12 (PROTA.12). We will present the material, along with the theoretical and methodological approach on which it is based and examples of its use to date in dozens of kindergartens and primary school classrooms throughout the country. Emphasis will be placed on the presentations made by PROTA. 12, with the support of theater educators who are members of the group, to approximately 1,000 children, as well as the trainings that took place in person and by distance in the form of experiential workshops for 700 teachers and students, in collaboration with the Department of Early Childhood Education of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and with the support of UNICEF and the Center for Children's Rights of NKUA.

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Short CVs

- George Moschos studied law in Athens and criminology (M. Phil) in London. Throughout his career, he has worked to empower and support children and adolescents at risk of social exclusion, advocate for youth rights and train professionals, students, parents and volunteers. In 2003 he was appointed as the first Children's Ombudsman in Greece and served in this position until 2018. He is a founding member of the Initiative for Article 12. Since June 2022 he has been collaborating with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Initiative, as director of the Youth Engagement Scheme YES.

- Matoula Papadimitriou studied communication and mass media and holds a M.A. on education and human rights. As a senior investigator at the Greek Children's Ombudsman, she promoted children's participation, managed campaigns and created materials on children's rights. From 2020 to 2025 she worked at the Audiovisual Education Department of EKOME, creating and implementing media and film literacy projects for children. She is a teachers' trainer on human rights education with children and on multimodal educational material. She is a founding member of the Initiative for Article 12.
- Elina Tsiroga is a PhD Candidate in National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. She studied Business Administration and also holds a BA in Education, an MBA and a MA in Special Education. She has long experience in project management and data analysis and she is the project manager of various NKUA projects. She has teaching experience in upper secondary schools and in teacher's training programs.

36. Engaging for and Engaging with Children on Human Rights: Perspectives from Seven Regional Post-Graduate Programmes

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In 2019, seven regional human rights post-graduate programmes across the world agreed to develop a thematic focus on child rights within their curriculum and to engage on the topic through various activities. Their goal was to advance child rights by building capacity, mainstreaming them within their curriculum and by implementing projects that engage on child rights. These regional programmes have since undertaken numerous child rights activities across Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas that offer a unique opportunity for a comparative study.

While most of these academic programmes focus on teaching and research, they have also been directly involving children through a great variety of projects such as child mootings, child teams and child research; some based on the principle of child participation, while others falling under human rights education for children. Additionally, they have promoted and advanced child rights through projects that raise awareness, strategic litigation and clinical work (human rights clinics). This diverse range of activities provides a unique comparative perspective on how academic institutions, operating in very different contexts (Lebanon, South Africa, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Thailand, Armenia, Argentina, Italy and Kyrgyzstan), address child rights education and the principle of child participation. This engagement extends beyond curriculum integration, mainstreaming and research.

This comparative analysis examines the different activities that the regional programmes implement, through interviews with child rights focal points and the examination of the different activities they engaged in. It explores the meaning of academic involvement with children, the opportunities it offers but also some of its shortcomings and associated risks. It questions the role of universities when it comes to child rights promotion and the implications of the activities with which it engages on its larger function, position and role on the national and international level. Specifically, the paper addresses how the principle of child participation translates within academia, and how universities engage with child rights advocacy, while keeping with their commitment to evidence-based approaches, critical analysis and value neutrality.

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Short CV

- Jihad Nammour is the Academic Coordinator of the Global Campus Arab World, a regional postgraduate programme in Democracy and Human Rights coordinated by Saint Joseph University of Beirut in partnership with Birzeit University, Carthage University, the International University of Rabat, the University of Jordan and the University of Southern Denmark. He is a lecturer at the Institute of Political Sciences with a background in Legal theory and Political sociology

37. Parental Agency and Children's Rights at the European Court of Human Rights. A Case-Based Inquiry into Legal Culture and Access to Justice

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The act of seeking judicial remedies in matters concerning education and the right to education depends on a range of factors, including cultural values, legal systems, structural conditions, and the development of parental agency. This paper explores how and why parents turn to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in response to violations of their children's rights, with the broader aim of promoting democratic awareness and civic engagement around children's rights in Europe. The paper employs a qualitative analysis of ECtHR judgments, legal frameworks, and secondary literature to examine how cultural norms, legal barriers, and structural inequalities shape parental access to supranational justice. Where relevant, media coverage and public discourse are also considered as influencing factors. Focusing on the Albanian context, the case of *X and Others v. Albania* (2022), concerning the educational segregation of Roma and Egyptian children, is used as a central example. The analysis reveals that while parental engagement with the ECtHR is often hindered by limited structural conditions, legal literacy and insufficient access to legal aid, it can also serve as a catalyst for legal and policy reform or as a means to challenge existing laws. The paper concludes with recommendations for improving access to justice for marginalized families, including the expansion of legal support services, targeted public awareness campaigns, and inclusive educational policy reforms.

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Short CV

- Dr. Valbona Nathanaili is a scholar in the field of education, lecturer at University College "LOGOS" and is actively involved in several international education and research projects. Her academic focus includes education policy, pedagogical theory and reform. Dr. Nathanaili has led national initiatives such as the STEM campaign and recognition of the right of professionals from diverse fields to enter the teaching profession upon completing training in pedagogy & psychology. She has also directed university publishing houses.

38. From Pledges to Practice: Academia's Role in Advancing Child Protection via Sri Lanka's the International Conference on Child Protection 2025

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This presentation will detail experiences and strategies in promoting child rights and generating related knowledge in Sri Lanka, centered around the International Conference on Child Protection (ICCP'25): "Broadening Perspectives" (July 2025). This pivotal event, hosted by the University of Kelaniya's Centre for Gender Studies, in partnership with UNICEF Sri Lanka and the National Child Protection Authority (NCPA), is crucial for advancing child protection. It strategically aligns with Sri Lanka's renewed high-level commitments made in 2024 at the Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence against Children held in Bogotá. ICCP'25 is particularly vital for translating these pledges, specifically those strengthening the child protection workforce and building child-sensitive services for survivors, into actionable, sustainable strategies through evidence-based policymaking and multisectoral collaboration.

The promotion of child rights leverages key partnerships between academia, government (NCPA), and international organizations (UNICEF). Extensive awareness-raising activities, including national media campaigns and targeted pre-conference workshops for diverse stakeholders, ensure a localized and impactful approach.

Regarding knowledge generation, ICCP'25 serves as a critical nexus for national and international experts to share research and evidence-based solutions. The conference will actively foster multidisciplinary dialogue across law, health, education, and social work to address complex child protection challenges. A key objective is facilitating the use of research outputs to inform policy development and advocacy, directly supporting the operationalization of national commitments. High-level engagement, including from the Prime Minister's office and the SRSG on Violence Against Children, underscores the conference's significant role in mobilizing academic and policy actors to protect child rights in Sri Lanka.

Short CV

- Dedicated child protection professional currently with UNICEF Sri Lanka, enhancing the professionalization of social service workforce and leading child protection research. With a background spanning UNRWA, UNHCR, IFRC, and the European Commission, I've driven impactful initiatives in mental health, juvenile justice, and violence prevention for vulnerable communities. My dual LSE/Sciences Po Paris Master's degrees fuel my commitment to strengthening systems for lasting child protection outcomes.

39. The Teaching of Juvenile Law in Greek Law Schools: Historical Development and Future Directions

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Juvenile Law has been recognized as a distinct legal discipline. In the narrow sense of the term, this discipline focuses on the criminal treatment of juvenile offenders, grounded on criminological theory; in a broader perspective it includes the analysis of additional legal provisions concerning children that are part of different legal disciplines, such as civil and labor law (Spinellis 1992, Courakis 2012).

In the 1990s, Professor K.D. Spinellis noted that Juvenile Law was then a 'discipline under development', as a 'sufficiently autonomous or independent doctrine from other disciplines' had not been finalized. The International Convention on the Rights of the Child introduced modern concepts of childhood in legal thinking. For instance, the Convention established the right of minors to participate in legal proceedings (the right to be heard). Both the Convention and other Guidelines of international and European organizations (such as the Guidelines on child-friendly justice, Committee of Ministers, Council of Europe) have contributed to the development of the 'Child Law', which is based on a multidisciplinary theoretical analysis of childhood (Artinopoulou 2010).

The presentation will examine the factors that contributed to the emergence of Juvenile Law as a distinct subject within legal education in Greece. It will also highlight the specific training needs of lawyers and judges involved in cases concerning children. In this context, examples of effective educational practices implemented thus far in Greek legal academia will be presented. Finally, the importance of strengthening the position of Child Law within legal studies will be emphasized.

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Short CV

- K. Panagos studied Law at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. He pursued postgraduate studies at the LSE (Criminal Justice Policy) and at the Faculty of Law, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (Sociology of Law), where he also completed his doctoral thesis with a specialization in Criminology and Penology. He is currently a member of the teaching staff at the Faculty of Law, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens.

40. Mobile Unit for the Diagnosis and Support of Learning Difficulties of the Hellenic Mediterranean University: A University–Local Government Partnership for the Protection of Child Rights

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Children with learning difficulties who do not receive timely intervention are at increased risk for anxiety, low self-esteem, school refusal, emotional difficulties, and various behavioral problems. Delays in identification and insufficient family support are also associated with significant psychological burden for parents and crises in family relationships. Lack of information, fear of stigma, and, in some cases, financial hardship often prevent families from seeking timely assessment and support services. Recognizing the gap in prevention and mental health promotion services for children and adolescents, and the serious social implications, the Hellenic Mediterranean University established in 2020-with funding from the Region of Crete (MIS 5162111)- the first nationwide Mobile Unit for Learning Difficulties and ADHD. The unit aims for comprehensive assessment of learning, social, emotional, and behavioral difficulties in primary school children and provides short-term individualized counseling support to their families. Staffed by specialized professionals (special education teachers, child psychologists, child psychiatrists, social workers, speech therapists), the mobile unit visits remote areas of Crete by appointment, identifies the nature, depth, and extent of problems using validated psychometric tools, and develops personalized support plans, offering free sessions for children and parents to address learning difficulties at home. To date, over 400 families have participated, with approximately 70% from remote areas of Crete. The unit has reached individuals with low literacy, poor financial status, and those in geographically isolated areas who could not otherwise access support. It has also reduced waiting times for children, relieved families, and lessened the burden on educators. A significant benefit is the early detection of psychopathological symptoms. This initiative provides important evidence for the effectiveness of university–local government partnerships in promoting and protecting child rights.

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Short CVs

- Dr. Maria Papadakaki is an Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Social Work at the Hellenic Mediterranean University. She also serves as Director of the Laboratory of Health and Road Safety (LaHeRS). Internationally, she holds key leadership roles, including Chair of the Injury Prevention Section of the European Public Health Association (EUPHA), Chair of the European Association for Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion (EuroSafe), and Advisory Board Member of the European Forum for Primary Care.
- Mrs. Stavroula Lioliou, a PhD candidate at the Hellenic Mediterranean University, holds a Psychology degree from Aristotle University and a Master's in Child and Adolescent Psychology from Leiden University. She specialized in disability education and trained in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. Since 2014, she has collaborated with LaHeRS Lab on EU projects and education, while also working in special education, focusing on assessing children with special educational needs since 2015.
- Ms Kyriaki Vagionaki earned her Bachelor's degree in Social Work from the Hellenic Mediterranean University in 2020 and a Master's in Public Health from the University of Crete in 2022. Since 2020, she has been a member of the LaHeRS Lab team. Her work focuses on child and youth safety, counseling juvenile offenders, and designing community interventions addressing issues like child abuse, youth aggression, and infodemic management among vulnerable populations.
- Dr. Nikolaos Bitsakos is a Postdoctoral Researcher at the University of Crete and his research relates to issues of sociology in education. He holds a Master's degree in Political Analysis and Public and European Policies from the Faculty of Political Sciences of the University of Crete.
- Mrs. Sofia Pitsikaki is a social worker with an MSc and extensive experience in special education. She has worked for several years supporting children with special educational needs and their families, contributing to inclusive educational practices.
- Ms. Vasiliki Kounali is a PhD candidate at the Hellenic Mediterranean University's Department of Social Work and a registered psychologist and psychotherapist for all ages. She earned her Psychology degree from the University of Crete (2017) and a Master's in School/Educational Psychology from Neapolis University Paphos (2020). She is specialized in Systemic-Family Therapy and Play Therapy and continues her training in these therapeutic approaches.
- Dr. Nektaria Pedioti is a postdoctoral researcher and teaching staff member at the Department of Social Work, Hellenic Mediterranean University. She holds postgraduate degrees in Adult Education and Special Education. Since 2019, she has been an active member of the LaHeRS research team. With over 20 years of experience, she has worked as a social worker with diverse population groups and in various educational and community-based settings.

41. The Contribution of the Child Rights Center to the Program "Food for Action": The Case of AUTH

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The main objective of the Child Rights Centre (CRC) at Greek higher education institutions, which operate in collaboration with UNICEF, is to promote children's rights (United Nations General Assembly, 1989) both within the teaching and research activities of universities and in civil society. Within this framework, representatives of the CRC at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH) are part of the academic team—comprised of members from the School of Medicine and the Department of Physical Education and Sport Science—responsible for promoting the National Action against Childhood Obesity (<https://paxisarkiakaipaidi.gov.gr/>) in areas of Central and Western Macedonia.

This presentation aims to (a) outline the ways in which the CRC-AUTH contributes to the successful implementation of the above program, and (b) highlight the value of the CRC-AUTH's participation in these actions, through the experiences and views of the AUTH team members.

Specifically, members of the scientific team at AUTH emphasized the necessity of collaborating with the CRC and the contribution of its representatives in effectively engaging educators and children/adolescents as well as in integrating best practices for implementing the program within the school environment. They also stressed the importance of future partnerships between the academic community and CRCs in carrying out actions on related issues.

Overall, it appears that: (a) CRCs can be meaningfully involved in academic programs aimed at ensuring a better quality of life for children, contributing to the creation of bridges between the academic community and stakeholders directly involved in advocating for children's rights (Hanson, 2024), and (b) it is important for CRCs to consist of professionals from various scientific disciplines (Moody & Darbellay, 2019), in order to be able to respond to potentially diverse teaching, research, and social needs.

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- Despina Papadopoulou is a Professor of Linguistics in the School of Philology at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH) and the Coordinator of the Child Rights Centre (KeDiPai) at AUTH. Her research interests include psycholinguistics, neurolinguistics, bilingualism, and the acquisition and teaching of a language as a first and as a second/foreign. She is currently coordinating the European Program ACTIN (<https://www.actintegration.eu/>) and the training program "Teach4Integration" at AUTH (<https://www.teach4integration.gr/>). She also participates in the National Action against Childhood Obesity as a representative of the Child Rights Center of AUTH.

- Nina Douka holds a PhD in Applied Linguistics from Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Her research primarily focuses on sentence processing in first and second language. In addition to her academic work, Nina has considerable experience teaching Greek as a second/foreign language. She currently works in the European Program ACTIN (<https://www.actintegration.eu/>) and the training program "Teach4Integration" at AUTH (<https://www.teach4integration.gr/>). She also participates in the National Action against Childhood Obesity as a representative of the Child Rights Center of AUTH.
- Kostas Alexandris (PhD, MA, MEd) is a Professor in Sport and Leisure Management and Dean of the School of PE and Sport Science at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece, and a Visiting Professor at Sheffield Hallam Business School, UK. He is also member of the Adjunct Teaching Staff at the Hellenic Open University and Director of the "Sport, Tourism and Recreation Management" Laboratory at the School of Physical Education and Sport Science of AUTH. He is a Board Member at the European Association of Sport Management (EASM), and Scientific coordinator of the Association's annual conferences. He is among the 2% of researchers globally, based on the Stanford list of most recognized researchers internationally.
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- Xenophon Theodoridis is a dietitian-nutritionist and PhD candidate at the school of Medicine at AUTH, specializing in clinical nutrition and research methodology in health sciences. He has research and teaching experience in undergraduate and postgraduate programs. He has published 54 scientific articles and serves as a reviewer for prestigious journals. His research focuses on clinical nutrition, epidemiology, and public health.

42. Promoting Child Rights Through Philosophical Dialogue: Academia's Role in Cultivating a Community of Inquiry via a Picture-Based Game

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An initiative has been developed by a researcher from the University of Thessaly's Child Rights Center, that explores how Academia can actively promote children's rights through Philosophy for Children (P4C). By merging philosophical dialogue with playful, visual learning, the project empowers children to engage in ethical reflection and dialogue about their rights, in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Central to this initiative is a picture-based game designed to stimulate a Community of Inquiry (CoI). The game features images portraying everyday scenarios related to core child rights— education, participation, protection, identity—and prompts children to ask questions, reflect, and discuss. This method encourages critical, creative, collaborative, and caring thinking, offering children a voice in exploring concepts of justice, fairness, and responsibility.

The researcher will present the theoretical foundation of the approach, drawing from P4C and rights-based education, and share insights from its application in educational settings. The aim is to show how children, through image-triggered dialogue, can deepen their understanding of rights and develop democratic dialogue skills in an inclusive, inquiry-driven environment.

The project highlights the potential of academic institutions to act as catalysts for social change, using innovative pedagogical tools that bridge theory and practice. It argues that universities have a vital role not only in researching and teaching about rights but also in modeling participatory, childcentered education that brings rights to life.

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Short CV

- Dr. Maria Papathanasiou holds a degree in Education and Psychology, a Master's degree in Human Rights and School Psychology, and a PhD in Adult Education and Leadership. She has studied at Teachers College – Columbia University, Federico II, EKPA, LMU, IoE and SJSU, and is fluent in English, Italian and German. She has worked in Primary, Special and Post-secondary Education in five different countries. She teaches Philosophy with Children at the University of Thessaly and Human Rights at Aegean College. At the General Secretariat for Vulnerable Persons and Institutional Protection she is in charge of case management for vulnerable social groups and coordinator of the Victims of Trafficking Protection Unit. In 2024 she organized the 1st Training Conference on Child Protection and Vulnerability of Refugees and Migrants. Her research interests include Adult Education, School-Family Relations, Philosophy with Children and Adults, Human Rights and Child Protection.

43. The Role of Academia in Forging Child-Rights Based Legislation

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The role of academia in law-making is rarely acknowledged. With respect to children's rights in particular, the implications of academia through their Child Rights Centers in shaping child rights-based legislation is crucial. Let's take parent-children's relationships as an example to illustrate this argument.

The Convention on the Rights of Children (the Convention) reflects a new vision of children, which requires States Parties to bring their legislation, policy and practice into accordance with its standards and principles. With respect to the family, by reaffirming that children are neither the property of their parents nor helpless objects of charity, the Convention has a substantial impact on the relationship between children and adults as well as between children and the State. As "the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child", parents are thus called upon to ensure their home is a safe, happy and healthy place for children. Unfortunately, parents' responsibilities are often misunderstood. In trying to regulate family life and parents' duties towards their children, the legislators often create conditions and situations which may lead to violations of child's rights within the family and beyond.

As the prime duty bearers in guaranteeing human rights realization and addressing violations wherever they occur, the State has a duty – through its legal framework - to ensure the family environment is conducive to the realization of children's rights. This is not a task that can be left solely to legislators as one cannot expect legislators to have knowledge – even broad – on children's rights.

Academia's role is to engage in research on norms and behaviors that shape family life, provide advice to legislators on human rights principles and standards applicable to each situation and give precise recommendations on the content of national legislation. It is only by involving them in the law-making process that the State has the guarantee that its legal framework complies with the Convention and that the rights vested upon children are effectively realizable in everyday life.

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- Nadine Perrault is UNICEF Representative in Cameroon. She is a lawyer by formation. With over 25 years of significant experience, she has held several positions at UNICEF, including at the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean in Panama. Before that, she worked at UNICEF headquarters in New York, where she was working on Child Rights issues. Ms Perrault was also a UNICEF Representative in El Salvador and Guinea-Bissau before her appointment to Cameroon.

44. Training Educators in Experiential Activities on School Bullying within the Framework of Children's Rights: A Pilot Implementation with Local Focus and Prospects for Expansion

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The protection and promotion of children's rights constitute a fundamental principle for establishing a safe, inclusive, and democratic school environment. In this context, a pilot program of experiential activities was designed and implemented, focusing on the prevention of school bullying and the reinforcement of children's rights. The program is grounded in the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and is aligned with Greek Law 5029/2023 ("Living in Harmony – Breaking the Silence"), which introduces institutional measures for the prevention and response to school-based violence. This initiative was implemented by UNICEF, with scientific and pedagogical guidance provided by the Child Rights Centers of the University of Patras and the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, in collaboration with the Regional Directorates of Education of Western Greece and Central Macedonia. The contribution of the academic teams was pivotal both in the reflective development of the educational material and in the training of teachers and evaluation of the intervention. The program was applied to students in the fifth grade of primary school and the second grade of lower secondary school, aiming to foster participation, empathy, communication, and emotional regulation within the school setting with an emphasis on the active participation of students through experiential activities. Prior to and throughout the pilot phase, close collaboration was established among all stakeholders, particularly with the classroom teachers who implemented the program. This paper presents the structure, methodology, and key tools of the program, highlighting its potential for expansion and integration into official education policy in Greece.

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- Nikoletta Theodorou, PhD is an educator and psychotherapist working at the Education Department of UNICEF Greece. Her work focuses on the design and implementation of programmes that support child well-being in the early years, as well as school-based initiatives that promote well-being throughout childhood. She is currently supporting the implementation of Greece's National Strategy against Childhood Obesity.

45. Do We Feel Ready to Teach Children's Rights? Exploring the Readiness and Proposals of Future Educators in Higher Education

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The promotion and protection of children's rights is a fundamental responsibility of education systems worldwide. Teachers play a crucial role in shaping students' understanding of their rights and responsibilities, fostering a culture of respect, equality, and active citizenship from an early age. Therefore, it is essential that future educators are adequately trained to integrate children's rights into their teaching practice. Providing future teachers with knowledge, tools, and confidence to address them is not only a matter of readiness and competence, but also of social justice and democratic engagement. Having into account the above this qualitative study examines the readiness of fourthyear Greek university students -future primary teachers- to teach children's rights. Findings reveal that the majority of participants do not feel adequately prepared to teach children's rights. They cite a lack of training and insufficient focus on the subject within their university curriculum as key barriers. Despite this, university students suggested thoughtful and pedagogically sound teaching techniques and methods for integrating children's rights into classroom practice. The results highlight a significant gap in teacher university curriculum, while also underlining the potential of studentteachers to engage creatively with rights-based education when given the appropriate tools and support. All in all, the study put emphasis on the importance of embedding Children's Rights Education within initial teacher education and advocates for its inclusion as a mandatory subject in university teacher curriculum.

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- Maria Iatrou, Med, holds a degree in Primary Education from the University of Patras and a master's degree in educational sciences, with a specialization in social inequality and the teaching of Greek as a second or foreign language. Her academic interests focus on children's rights, diversity, the promotion of equity and social inclusion, as well as the implementation of inclusive policies within the educational contexts.

46. The Relevance of Research on Child Rights Jurisprudence

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Special protection measures are widely regarded as a response to the issue of justice in the context of the Rights of the Child. These protection measures are rooted in the immaturity, weakness and inexperience of the child. However, the content and scope of such measures are determined by a thorough analysis of the various types of problems for their application in each specific situation or context, thereby ensuring their effective implementation to protect children's rights. A comprehensive research analysis of the jurisprudence of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR), with a particular focus on its decisions concerning children's rights, has provided a better understanding of the content of these special protection measures. Thus, a broad spectrum of protection measures can be distinguished, as these are analysed and applied in relation to the problem raised in each specific case. It is possible to distinguish between protection measures aimed at guaranteeing the right to live in dignity and protection measures aimed at ensuring the judicial protection of minors. The impact of the decisions issued by the IACHR has made it possible, to a certain extent, to evaluate the protection mechanisms put in place by States. This activity may include a review of existing national legislation, the application of human rights standards at the national level, and the monitoring of compliance with judgments. In this sense, the role of academia in promoting child rights is to build bridges between courts and society through research on children's rights jurisprudence. This will contribute to the strengthening of national and international human rights systems by providing a set of updated inputs for the design of public policies and the development of legal protection instruments by States.

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Short CV

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47. Integrating Child Rights Education in Curricula of Law Universities: Experience and Strategy of Using Clinical Legal Education for Advancing Access to Justice for Children in Conflict with Law

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The Centre for Child and the Law (CCL), located within the National Law School of India University (NLSIU), utilizes the Clinical Legal Education (CLE) space, to integrate child rights practice insights into the curricula of the law University, and facilitates the process of making CLE useful in enabling access to justice for children in conflict with law.

Juvenile Justice, despite being one of the core areas of child rights law research, education and practice, remains one of the most under-resourced sectors from the point of view of budgetary allocation, provision of human resources, training and even evolution of standard practices. (Bajpai, A. 2019). Not only is there a dearth of committed, motivated and competent free legal aid lawyers, the provisions that provide a legal right to free legal aid, are also marred with several challenges, consequently resulting in denial of the right to free legal aid for children. Child Rights Clinics that are part of the legal education framework provide opportunity to orient and sensitize young minds on various issues concerning child rights while training them on advocating for enabling justice to children.

The clinic facilitated by CCL NLSIU adopts multidisciplinary and system strengthening approach, draws from collaboration with state and civil society, and provide students opportunity to observe the challenges in the system. Hands on experiences during the clinical courses result in mutual learning for the students and the functionaries in the system along with leading to qualitative improvements in the lives of children. CLE, in addition to helping law students understand the processes involved in operationalization of law, provides opportunities for making steady contributions towards reforming the systems. Positioned in between pro bono lawyering and extending legal service, the clinics of law universities have a lot to offer and CCL NLSIU offers a replicable model for the same.

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48. Child Rights MA Program as a Reference Point for Launching Interaction Among Disciplines

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To ensure the fulfillment of the obligations of the UN CRC, it is crucial to bridge the gap between the real and the ideal world. This effort must go beyond legislative frameworks to avoid the “technicalization” and “decontextualization” of children’s rights (Reynaert et al., 2009). Promoting children’s rights at all levels of practice requires more than a basic understanding of the rights themselves—it demands a comprehensive grasp of social structures, power dynamics, and identity formation, informed by the theory of intersectionality. Additionally, it requires knowledge of family, education, health, and justice systems grounded in systems theory. An understanding of how social norms evolve, based on the theory of change, as well as specialized expertise in leading change processes, is also critical. This endeavor necessitates interdisciplinary knowledge and action.

This paper outlines the rationale for establishing a new MA program in Children’s Rights at TSU and envisions a collaborative relationship with the newly established Center for Children’s Rights. It will present the curriculum for the new program, developed in response to a labor market study that, among other findings, highlighted the need for effective interdisciplinary collaboration and expanded knowledge on the ethics of working with children. Furthermore, the paper will explore the importance of socio-culturally sensitive research in the field of children’s rights. Such an approach enhances the identification of local strengths and gaps, which, in turn, informs the development of locally grounded evidence. Keeping educators and policymakers informed about both international and local evidence has the potential to drive meaningful change in practice for the benefit of children. Timely mitigation of flawed practices, attitudes, and approaches—as well as the promotion of effective ones—can significantly accelerate the realization of a child rights-based society.

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49. The Role of Schools and Universities in Reducing the Conflict Gap in Children's Rights Online

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Following the global risks of climate change, children are among the most vulnerable groups affected. Based on the principle that every child has the right to a healthy life, child activism has emerged worldwide, both online and on the ground. This activism aims to seek solutions to the dangers posed by climate change. However, it requires access to information, which raises questions about potential conflicts with children's rights. This exploratory study uses content analysis to examine the gap between children's rights to protection and participation in the context of access to information and how academic institutions can help reduce the lack of harmonization between these rights. Using a child rights approach and social conflict theory, the study analyzes and discusses current policies and regulations regarding children's online access to information and their impact on the balance between protection and participation rights. It also explores the potential role of schools and universities in promoting children's rights.

The findings show that there is a conflict between protection and participation. This contradiction arises from adults prioritizing the protection of children online and viewing them as incapable. The study suggests that early education is crucial to improving children's participation and awareness of their rights and enhancing their involvement in research and decision-making processes. The research recommends developing a media literacy curriculum focusing on children's rights in schools and universities. In addition, increasing the focus on rights-based approaches in university curricula will raise awareness among a new generation of decision-makers and lead to changes in legislation and regulations based on a child rights approach. This approach will contribute to more practical cooperation between academic institutions and local and international organizations. These findings highlight the importance of further research on children's rights to access information online and participate in decision-making

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Short CV

- Phantina Sholi: Independent researcher and child rights activist. She holds a master's in Childhood Studies and Children's Rights from the University of Applied Sciences in Potsdam, Germany. She has experience in media work and social research focusing on children's and women's rights.

50. Child Rights and the Importance of Child Rights Knowledge Center in the University Space

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The topic of defending children's rights in Georgia gained its importance in 1994, when our country became the part to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, committing to protect and promote children's rights and freedoms. Children need to understand their rights and how to value and exercise them. To attain this goal, the school must provide an environment rich with opportunities to learn children's rights. Children learn and value their rights when they exercise such rights both at and outside the school. To inspire students in their daily lives, teachers must create an environment founded on democratic and human rights principles.

In this regard, the Child Rights Knowledge Center, created in 2021 at Batumi State University with UNICEF's initiative and support is carrying out various innovative activities. The center's purpose is to develop, implement and institutionalize a long-term system for capacity development of academic staff, teachers, school administration, parents and stakeholders in the field of inclusive education and children's rights. A number of significant projects have been implemented recently such as: "Establishment of the Child Rights Center of Knowledge Hub for building Inclusive and Child Rights oriented knowledge, attitudes and practices", "Research on Youth Access to Quality Mental Health Services", "Strengthening University Capacity to Support Inclusive Preschool and General Education". Several articles on children's rights and books on early childhood education were translated, a number of trainings for primary, and secondary school teachers were conducted, and conferences organized. Hundreds of teachers, pupils and students attended the trainings, webinars and information sessions.

This report gives the details of the experience of the BSU Child Rights Knowledge Center in advocating for children's rights in the region, researching challenges related to children's rights, and spreading knowledge.

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Short CVs

- Dr. Lela Tavdgiridze, Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences, is a professor at Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University and the coordinator of the Child Rights Knowledge Center. Her research interests include pedagogy, didactics, child rights and innovative approaches to teaching and learning. She has authored and edited multiple monographs and textbooks, developed a wide range of course syllabi, and actively contributes as a scholar. Dr. Tavdgiridze has published extensively in Georgian and English internationally recognized, peer-reviewed academic journals.

- Dr. Lela Turmanidze, Doctor of Mathematics, is a professor and Dean of the Faculty of Exact Sciences and Education at Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University. With over two decades of academic and administrative experience, she has held roles such as Director of the University Library and Head of Quality Assurance. An active researcher and project coordinator, she has contributed extensively to international conferences, scientific publications, and EU-funded projects in education reform, mathematics, and quality assurance.
- Dr. Maia Bolkvadze, Doctor of Philology, is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Pedagogy at Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University. Her scholarly work focuses on pedagogy, early childhood education, child rights, contemporary learning processes and instructional methods. She has authored numerous course syllabi and a monograph, and has served as editor and reviewer for several academic publications. Dr. Bolkvadze has published extensively in both Georgian and English in high-ranking, peer-reviewed journals, contributing significantly to the field of educational sciences.

51. Applying the ABCD Paradigm to Integrate Children's Rights into University Curricula for Preparing Doctoral Students to Lead Systemic Improvements and Workforce Development for Child Protection

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This presentation focuses on the integration of child rights into university curricula by using real world cases and applying the ABCD Child Safety Paradigm with masters and doctoral level students. By building on critical thinking skills, the ABCD Paradigm guides a way of thinking about assessment in the areas of Adult Parental Protective Capacity (A), Parental Behaviors that May Cause Harm such as substance use, untreated mental health, domestic violence (B), Child Vulnerabilities due to tender age and special needs (C), and Dangerous Conditions in the environment (D). It provides a structured, deliberate approach to assessing child safety while embedding core principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children (UNCRC).

By utilizing real-world case studies, this approach bridges theoretical understanding with practical application, fostering critical thinking skills, and promoting ethical decision-making among graduate – level social work students and child welfare professionals. The model brings to life the ways that skillful safety assessments protect children's rights to be raised by caregivers who can ensure their safety and well-being; to be free from abuse, neglect, and exploitation; to grow up in safe and secure environments, particularly when children are more vulnerable due to age and special needs; and when unsafe settings put them at greater risk. Dr. Joyce Taylor has taught at 3 Schools of Social Work in the United States, and has been collaborating with HMU faculty and PhD students to bring the ABCD Paradigm to Greece with cultural adaptation and special plans to engage community leaders in Athens and Crete.

Short CV

– Dr. Joyce Taylor is the Deputy Commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF). She is credited with creating and implementing the ABCD Paradigm. Beyond DCF, Dr. Taylor has led large nonprofit agencies, and was retained on consulting contracts. Her academic career includes faculty positions at Springfield College, Yale University, and Southern Connecticut State University. She is named as a child welfare expert on the Fulbright Specialist Roster.

52. Main Aspects of Participatory Democracy in School

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The paper provides a study of the aspects to be considered for determining the role of democratic school culture in the academic progress and personal development of pupils. Research on democratic school culture is based on the basic principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and sustainable development.

In the course of teaching and learning process, teachers observe how the work on certain subjects contributes to the holistic development of students, how to implement a student-oriented approach of teaching and learning, what effect the learning environment has on the student's personal growth, how the "hidden curriculum" of the school is formed, and what the democratic management style should be at school. In order to properly plan the school curriculum, it is important to find out the factors affecting the student's academic progress and personal development, which ensure the development of democratic competences and increase of motivation to study in adolescents. In order to determine the criteria of modern school democracy, we studied the following: parameters of students' involvement and their qualitative indicators, the degree of application of the principles of democratic education by teachers and ways of perfecting democratic ideas and practices by them. In order to establish a place of democratic citizenship at schools, it is necessary to master such citizenship skills as communication, cooperation, effective participation in social, economic and political life, etc. Accomplishing the mentioned tasks, developing a theoretical framework and implementing it in practice is a comprehensive and lengthy process of introducing education for democratic citizenship.

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Short CVs

- Neli Tchampuridze: 2006-present - Position of Full Professor through a competition for the Educational department in Gori State University 2011- present - From present to the Head of the Department of Pedagogy and Methodology. Trainer-consultant. 15.11.2001. Diploma of a Candidate of Sciences № 002814, On the ground of this decision the diploma has been issued by the Board of Academic Experts of Georgia.
- Marika Sherazadishvili: 2007-present - Full Professor of the faculty of social sciences, business and law at Gori State University 2016- 2025 - Dean of the faculty of social sciences, business and law at Gori State University. 10.02.2004. Candidate of Philology, Arnold Chikobava Institute of Linguistics of the Georgian Academy of Sciences

53. Issues of Ensuring Inclusiveness and Equality in Teacher Training Educational Programs

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With the support of the United Nations Children's Fund and sharing the experience of Estonian experts, the issues of children's rights were integrated into the university educational programs. As a result of the revision of educational programs, the integrated bachelor-master program of primary education was strengthened in the direction of child rights protection; the issues of the second chance education program were included in the curriculum (literacy of the second chance education program, differentiated teaching, opportunities to develop an individual curriculum, and adaptation of the national curriculum). Within the framework of the project, training, method seminars, and international conferences in the direction of children's rights in the children's rights center, which is established in the state universities. The University Center for Child Rights was established as a kind of hub for spreading the knowledge, training, and implementation of activities related to children's rights.

University education programs with issues of inclusion and equality provided an opportunity for students of the integrated bachelor's and master's program in elementary education to research school practice in the direction of children's rights programming. As a result of the research it was revealed the increase in the number of children at risk of losing learning motivation and the number of children lagging behind in general education after the pandemic. In order to reflect on the practice, the students promoted an internal university project aimed at helping children with learning disabilities in literacy, as well as holding debates and discussions in the direction of protecting children's rights. The project helped to shape students into leaders and increase their entry into the profession.

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Short CV

- Neli Tchampuridze: Full Professor, Department of Education, Gori University (2006–present), Head, Department of Pedagogy and Methodology, Gori University (2011–present), Trainer-Consultant. Candidate of Sciences Diploma №002814, awarded by the Board of Academic Experts of Georgia on November 15, 2001
- Tamila Kekoshvili: Invited Academic Doctor of Biology, Gori University (2000–present). Lecturer, Professional Center, Gori University (2021–present). Candidate of Sciences Diploma №N005361, awarded by the Board of Academic Experts of Georgia. Author of 22 scientific works in the field of biology, contributing to various academic journals and conferences.

54. Exploring Collaborative Research with Academics and Young People

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Collaborating with young people as researchers allows academics to explore child rights issues alongside those affected. This approach allows young people to access their right to be heard and listened to under Article 12 of the UNCRC, whilst also supporting their education, development, and socialization. Furthermore, bringing together the insights from both young people and academics can lead to creative thinking grounded in both lived experience and evidence.

These ideas were highlighted by both young people and academics throughout the operations of a youth-led research project that ran between August 2022 and 2024. The aim of the group was to champion creative youth voice methodology and facilitate young people's participation in decision-making spaces, using research as a mechanism for advocacy. This project became a case study showing the strengths and limitations of youth-led participation and the role of academia in supporting youth-led research. The members of the group contributed to reports, presented at conferences, and created resources for academics. Following these opportunities, those involved were asked to reflect on the experience focusing on additional support they would have liked to receive as well as highlighting how academics could become champions of youth-led research.

The data collected through the evaluation inspired a number of resources, methodologies, and training sessions created by young people. They aim to raise awareness of the power of youth-led research whilst acknowledging risk, and provide realistic steps allowing academics to apply children's rights to their contexts. An interactive resource for young people was also published which provides the background information they need to decide if academic research is right for them and are guided through the process using right-based language. Resources and training sessions highlight the power imbalance, supporting researchers to understand this dynamic and work collaboratively with young people and partners so all strengthened are valued.

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Short CV

- Arthur Templeman-Lilley is a children's rights advocate and independent youth participation consultant. He advises academics on collaborative, rights-based research methods and develops resources to help young people feel confident engaging in research. Arthur authored *Pause, Play, Fast-Forward*, an illustrated history of children's rights in Wales, and works with organizations including UNICEF and the Diana Award to embed youth voice in research, policy, and practice.

55. Dynamic Interpretation of Children's Rights by the Committee on the Rights of the Child and its Integration in Academic Education

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My paper aims to contribute to the Conference's goal of exchanging international good practices and experience in the areas of evidence generation with a focus on concrete examples of evidence-based policy making for children. I will focus on some recent recommendations and general comments of the Committee on the Rights of the Child that illustrate how this treaty body appreciates the dynamic nature of children's rights and the need to reflect it in the children's rights education and training. The dynamic nature of children's rights is an issue for all professionals concerned with children's rights, and particularly for those in state institutions responsible for their implementation. Therefore, the shift from a catalogue to a value-based approach is an imperative for the modern higher education. This would enhance the role of universities as ideally positioned to promote the child rights agenda throughout society by engaging in multilevel activities –such as education, training, research, and knowledge generation– that significantly contribute to embedding a culture of child rights in society. I will engage with some thematic areas such as climate change, digital environment, war conflicts, etc. but will address also some current challenges created by the push backs to children's rights.

Another focus of my presentation is to discuss the main results of the Round Table "Modern Trends in Teaching of Children's Rights in Higher Education - challenges, and proposals", organized by UNICEF Bulgaria on 25 November 2024 at the New Bulgarian University. It illustrates the efforts of the national academia to overcome the fragmented nature of child rights education and the major needs to increase its effectiveness in the complex political and cultural context of Bulgaria.

Short CV

– Velina Todorova is a lawyer, graduated at Sofia University 'KI. Ohridski' and a doctor on Sociology of Law. She is currently an associate professor of Family Law at the Plovdiv University (Bulgaria). Her research interests focus on the family law, child law and human rights. She is a member to the Commission on the European Family Law (CEFL) and the European Family Law Academic Network (FLEUR). Member of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2017-2025).

56. Digital Citizenship and Children's Rights in an AI Era

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Despite being frequently referred to as digital “natives”, children remain excluded from the rights and recognition of full digital citizenship. Commonly regarded as incomplete human subjects, they are routinely left out of critical philosophical and political conversations about subjectivity, identity, and the redefinition of what it means to be human in the digital age. This paper argues for the importance of acknowledging children not only as passive users of digital technology but as active digital citizens, whose voices and imaginaries are vital to shaping the evolving sociotechnical terrain and including their perspectives in discussions about subjectivity.

Drawing on the educational program “Familiarization with Artificial Intelligence”, designed by ahedd DIH of the National Center for Scientific Research Demokritos and implemented as an interactive workshop for 5th-grade students at the Ralleios Experimental Schools of Athens University (Greece, February-March 2025), this study explores how children engage with AI as both a technological artifact and a social phenomenon. The program aimed to cultivate critical thinking around key issues of digitality by highlighting AI's ethical, environmental, and cultural dimensions, culminating in a series of science fiction essays, through which the students expressed their visions of the future.

Through their narratives, the children construct speculative story-worlds that reflect not only their grasp of technological concepts but also their deep, often philosophical inquiries into agency, ethics, and relationality. These stories can be framed as a manifestation of children's experiences and interpretations of the present by unraveling the values, morals, and emotions that shape their understanding of subjectivity in an increasingly digitized world. But most importantly, they hide a transformative quality: the creation and mobilization of alternative imaginaries as possibilities for the future.

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Short CVs

- Eleni Tsatsaroni is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Sociology at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and a Researcher at the Institute of Informatics and Telecommunications, NCSR Demokritos. Drawing on affect theory, she investigates human-non-human relationality and the emerging forms of subjectivity shaped by these affective interactions. Her research and practice are driven by a commitment to rethinking subjectivity more inclusively.
- Amalia Giannoutsou is a researcher, educator, and pedagogical assessor specializing in differentiated learning strategies at the Ralleios Experimental Schools of Athens University. Her work explores the intersections of education and artistic expression, particularly the role of memory and imagination in children's identity construction and agency. She is interested in how children's engagement with storytelling encourages critical reflections on social transformation by producing alternative visions of identity, community, and the future.

57. Using AI in an Experiential Workshop on Bullying in Schools

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Bullying remains a critical violation of children's rights, undermining their dignity, safety and development under Articles 19 and 29 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). The academic community plays a key role in promoting and disseminating these rights in society by establishing special centers that act as knowledge hubs within universities. However, the establishment of Child Rights Centers by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Greece started in 2023 (UNICEF and the University of Patras Establish the 1st Child Rights Centre in Greece, 2023), and further exploration is needed on how to cooperate with an equally important stakeholder in promoting a culture of mutual respect, the school (Burridge & Chodkiewicz, 2017). This proposal presents an innovative intervention that integrates Artificial Intelligence (AI) within an interactive session on bullying at school, aiming to enhance emotional literacy while developing key 21st-century soft and hard skills, including those related to AI Literacy - AI Ethics. The 45- minute-long intervention was implemented in a mixed-age classroom of 12 students in the 5th grade and 2 students in the 1st grade at a school in the regional unit of Aetolia and Acarnania. Through hands-on activities involving a web-based tool (Teachable Machine, n.d.) to train a machine learning model to understand children's emotions through their facial expressions and reflective discussions, students demonstrated greater empathy and improved ability to articulate feelings and ethical concerns related to new technologies. Pre- and post-intervention observations and student feedback suggest a positive shift in emotional vocabulary, peer interaction quality, and the responsible use of AI-powered tools. This research contributes to the broader discussion on the interaction between humans and AI and its safe and ethical use, especially when children are exposed to AI in and outside of the school context (La Fors, 2020).

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Short CVs

- Konstantinos Tsioukas is a PhD Candidate at the Dept. of Primary Education, University of the Aegean, Greece. His research is on Artificial Intelligence in Education and Teacher Professional Development. He is a Primary School Teacher, Language Teacher, and the Co-Founder and President of a non-profit company that strives to improve educational processes using new technologies and supports teachers in primary education.
- Apostolos is Assistant Professor at the Department of Primary Education, University of the Aegean, Greece. His research interests include e-learning, AI in Education, Distance Education, Communities of Practice and Social Networks in Education, Initial Teacher Education and Teacher Professional Development. He has participated in numerous European and national funded research projects. Currently, he serves as Director of the Lifelong Learning Center, University of the Aegean.

58. From School Classroom to the Academic Community and Backwards: STEAM Education as a Pathway for the Promotion of Child Rights in Early Childhood

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The Department of Early Childhood Education at the University of Thessaly, among other outreach activities that it plans and implements, focuses on academic and social initiatives that promote children's rights. In this context, it also supports the completion of relevant doctoral dissertations. One of these dissertations highlighted the theoretical model of 'Global Intercultural Inclusive Interdisciplinary STEAM Education,' which combines an intercultural perspective with an interdisciplinary approach.

The theoretical framework of this model is supported on the one hand by interdisciplinary STEM Education [Integrated STE(A)M Education], and on the other hand by intercultural, inclusive, and global education, as well as their common 'ground' through the lens of multiliteracies, education for social justice, and children's rights. The model is inspired by the vision of creating an educational system that promotes acceptance for all in a pluralistic society and engages students in a journey toward social transformation through research and learning. It envisions curricula that encourage all students to construct meaning, develop scientific and social skills, claim their rights, engage in social action and active citizenship, so they can address global issues. The research plan of the aforementioned dissertation focused on conducting intercultural action-research with the participation of children at a typical kindergarten class in three successive research cycles, within the framework of an annual educational program. Through this type of research, educators can support educational processes that promote equal opportunities and rights for all students. A central teaching choice of the educational program was the design of learning environments that combined the interdisciplinary STEAM approach with intercultural inclusive education.

The theoretical model proposed by the doctoral dissertation could be integrated into the curricula and practical training of Pedagogical Departments so that future teachers, when they take up work in school classrooms, can approach children's rights from various scientific fields, including STEAM education.

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Short CVs

- Cecilia Tsoukala is an Early Childhood Education teacher with Master and Doctoral studies at the University of Thessaly. Her academic interests focus on inclusive STEAM Education in early childhood, practices and projects that promote children's rights.
- Kostas Magos is Professor at the Department of Early Childhood Education in the University of Thessaly in Volos/Greece. His scientific interests focus on the theory and practice of intercultural education and children's rights.

59. A Decolonial Approach to the Promotion of Children's Rights in Teaching

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This abstract highlights the MPhil in Childhood Studies' (NTNU) efforts to diminish Eurocentric echo chambers, decolonize children's rights, and foster an inclusive, global academic environment. Our MA program, rooted in interdisciplinary Childhood Studies, integrates children's rights through dedicated courses on rights-based methods and global perspectives. Established in 2007, the program has evolved based on our 2022 evaluation. We have implemented changes to decolonize teaching by incorporating global viewpoints, evident in courses like BARN3300 Children, Youth and Development, examining the effects of politics on youth in the Global South, and BARN3102 Children's Rights, exploring varied sociocultural understandings of rights.

The program traditionally attracts many students from outside Europe, preparing graduates for work in international contexts and diverse societies. A 2022 evaluation highlighted the need for more inclusion of literature and lecturers from the Global South. In response, NTNU has incorporated more non-Western literature and knowledge, enriching the curriculum. For example, human rights are explored through Ubuntu, a pan-African philosophy emphasizing interdependence over individualism.

NTNU has launched a four-year project with digital lectures in partnership with master's programs in South Africa and Brazil. It welcomes students from Uganda, Ethiopia, South Africa, and Brazil. To challenge Eurocentric views and decolonize children's rights, NTNU provides scholarships for studies and fieldwork in South Africa or Brazil, offering students unique opportunities to learn about diverse cultures and perspectives.

In addition, we have strategic partnerships with key actors in the practice field in Norway, Brazil and South Africa to bridge the gap between academia and policymaking. These partnerships enhance localized, cross-cultural and child-focused collaborative knowledge production that strengthens developments in the translation and implementation of children's rights. The partnership will contribute to identifying research gaps, facilitate MA students' access to fieldwork and internships, increase knowledge on children's (potential lack of) rights through MA projects and cross-institutional collaboration, and improve policy uptake of research results.

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Short CV

- Ursin is a Professor of Childhood Studies and teaches children's rights from the BA to PhD level. She has conducted a longitudinal study on the streets in Brazil, following a group of boys on the verge of adulthood. In recent years, Ursin has explored children's rights in the social welfare system, young people's political rights, and Sami children's rights to climate justice in Norway.

60. Advancing Child Rights through Higher Education: A Rights-Based Institutional Model

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The role of academia in advancing child rights is pivotal in shaping responsive, rights-based professionals and informed citizens. This paper explores effective strategies for integrating child rights into higher education curricula, drawing on the experience of Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, which has pioneered specialized education and institutional mechanisms in child protection. Through the establishment of a dedicated Center for Child Protection, the university has fostered cross-sectoral collaborations with local, state, and central government departments, anchoring academic work in real-world impact.

The paper presents a dual model of integration: a modular approach through specialized courses on child rights and child protection, and a cross-cutting approach that embeds child rights principles across disciplines such as law, social work, public health, project management and education. Case studies from Amrita's curriculum design, student engagement, and field-based projects will illustrate how academic institutions can play a transformative role in mainstreaming child rights discourse.

Further, the paper highlights the significance of faculty capacity building through professional development programs and partnerships with child protection stakeholders. These efforts have created a robust ecosystem where research, teaching, and community engagement converge to uphold the rights of children.

This case study contributes to the growing discourse on the institutionalization of child rights education in academia and provides actionable insights for universities seeking to integrate a rights-based approach in their curricula. It advocates for academia not only as a site of knowledge production but also as an active participant in the protection and promotion of child rights.

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- Gayatri Menon – Ms. Gayatri Menon is a development professional with 10 years of experience in child protection, gender, and community development. She has worked on issues such as child labor, child marriage, child beggary, and child sexual abuse with reputed NGOs and government agencies. Her field experience includes handling cases of violence against women and children. She has also led evaluation studies on Dalit rights, elderly care, education, and child rights. She is currently pursuing her PhD on child marriage.

61. The Role of Academia in Advancing Child Rights in Conflict Settings: A Study of Sexual Abuse and Rights Violations among Internally Displaced Children in Cameroon's Centre, Littoral and West Regions of Cameroon

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Cameroon faces multiple, overlapping humanitarian crises: the Boko Haram insurgency and Nigerian refugee influx in the Far North since 2014; the arrival of Central African refugees in the East and Adamawa regions since 2012; and the socio-political conflict in the North-West and South-West regions since 2017. These crises have caused mass internal displacement, forcing thousands of children into precarious living and educational conditions, particularly in host regions like the Centre, Littoral, and West. This study examines how teacher training affects educators' capacity to adopt and integrate Child Rights education to mitigate the vulnerability of internally displaced children (IDCs) to sexual abuse and other rights violations within school settings. Using a mixed-methods approach, data were gathered from 350 internally displaced pupils, 40 teachers, 10 school administrators, and 15 child protection actors through structured surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions. Findings reveal a sharp increase in sexual exploitation, harassment, and psychological trauma among IDCs, largely due to overcrowded schools, absence of trained personnel, and weak protective frameworks. The study emphasizes academia's pivotal role not only in generating evidence but also in promoting systemic change. Higher education institutions can lead in mainstreaming child rights education within teacher training and faculty programs, building capacity for child-sensitive research, and influencing policy through advocacy and strategic partnerships. It calls on national and international academic institutions to prioritize child rights, especially in conflict-affected settings by embedding them in research, curriculum reforms, and intersectoral collaboration. This aligns with SDG 16.2 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, reinforcing academia's responsibility to protect displaced children and champion systemic transformation.

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Short CV

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62. Children's Rights and Criminal Justice: The Child-friendly Justice Model – Application, Teaching and Policies

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Child-Friendly Justice, both as a conceptual framework and as a modus operandi, reflects the paradigm shift introduced by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in the specific area of justice for children. It redefines the approach to children through a rights-based lens. The paradigm of children's rights, particularly in relation to criminal justice, is progressively evolving, generating knowledge, methodology, and standardized responses to various challenges.

Scholars, researchers, and professionals involved in this field—across scientific research, theoretical analysis, legislation, and the implementation of laws and policies—participate in forming a shared understanding. Within this context, a purposeful system is organized to address, both theoretically and practically, the complexity of delivering justice from the perspective of children's rights.

This presentation outlines:

- the model of child-friendly justice as a coherent structure connecting the fundamental principles, rules, and key components of specialized justice for children, grounded in their rights (rights-based approach);
- original research findings on the child-friendliness of the juvenile justice system in Greece;
- a unique university-level teaching model on the subject, offered in the form of a seminar by the presenter within the undergraduate curriculum of the Department of Sociology at Panteion University, titled "Child-Friendly Justice", with an emphasis on interdisciplinary and experiential learning;
- the application of the child rights approach in the drafting of the National Strategy on Violence and Juvenile Delinquency.

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Short CV

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