

# Dealing with the complexity of racism: Teachers' Perspectives in Primary Education multicultural settings in Thessaloniki/Greece

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## Abstract

Teachers have a crucial role in dealing with the complexity of racism by acting as role models and employing various teaching practices that promote human rights, respect, equality, and intercultural understanding among all students. The aim of the present qualitative research, which was conducted using semi-structured interviews with 20 participants, was to explore primary teachers' perspectives on racism in school settings and their responses on counteraction. Data were analysed by thematic analysis. Findings highlighted that racism manifests in various forms, driven by stereotypical and discriminatory perceptions toward various forms of difference. Racial manifestations are visible in various school settings and have negative effects, primarily microaggressions, discrimination, and exclusion. Teachers employ various teaching practices to foster democratic values, equality, intercultural understanding and social inclusion. Teachers' training in multicultural education and collaboration with parents can also address racism more effectively. A holistic school policy was identified as a solution for creating safe and inclusive learning environments.

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## Keywords:

racism; school violence; social justice; Primary Education

## Lidar com a complexidade do racismo: perspectivas dos professores em contextos multiculturais de ensino primário em Tessalónica/Grécia

**Resumo:** Os professores têm um papel crucial no enfrentamento da complexidade do racismo, atuando como modelos e empregando diversas práticas de ensino que aumentarão o respeito pelos direitos humanos, a igualdade e a compreensão intercultural entre todos os alunos. O objetivo da presente investigação qualitativa, conduzida através de entrevistas semiestruturadas a 20 participantes, foi explorar as perspectivas dos professores do ensino básico sobre o racismo em ambientes escolares e as suas respostas/combates. Os dados foram analisados por análise temática. Os resultados realçaram que o racismo opera com diversas manifestações e formas, impulsionado por percepções estereotipadas e discriminatórias em relação a diversas formas de diferença. As manifestações raciais são visíveis em diversos ambientes escolares e têm efeitos negativos, principalmente as micro-agressões, a discriminação e a exclusão. Os professores empregam diversas práticas de ensino para promover os valores democráticos, a igualdade, a compreensão intercultural e a inclusão social. A formação de professores em educação multicultural e a colaboração com os pais também podem combater o racismo de forma mais eficaz. Uma política escolar holística foi relatada como uma solução para criar ambientes de aprendizagem seguros e inclusivos.

**Palavras-chave:** racismo; violência escolar; justiça social; Educação Primária

## Faire face à la complexité du racisme : les perspectives des enseignants dans l'enseignement primaire dans des contextes multiculturels à Thessalonique, en Grèce

**Résumé:** Les enseignants jouent un rôle crucial dans la gestion de la complexité du racisme en agissant comme modèles et en adoptant diverses pratiques pédagogiques qui renforcent le respect des droits humains, l'égalité et la compréhension interculturelle parmi tous les élèves. L'objectif de cette recherche qualitative, menée par le biais d'entretiens semi-directifs auprès de 20 participants, était d'explorer le point de vue des enseignants du primaire sur le racisme en milieu scolaire et leurs réponses/contre-actions. Les données ont été analysées par analyse thématique. Les résultats ont mis en évidence que le racisme se manifeste sous diverses formes et manifestations, alimenté par des perceptions stéréotypées et discriminatoires envers diverses formes de différence. Les manifestations raciales sont visibles dans divers contextes scolaires et ont des effets négatifs, principalement des micro agressions, des discriminations et de l'exclusion. Les enseignants utilisent diverses pratiques pédagogiques pour promouvoir les valeurs démocratiques, l'égalité, la compréhension interculturelle et l'inclusion sociale. La formation des enseignants à l'éducation multiculturelle et la collaboration avec les parents peuvent également lutter plus efficacement contre le racisme. Une politique scolaire holistique a été présentée comme une solution pour créer des environnements d'apprentissage sûrs et inclusifs.

**Mots-clés:** racisme; violence scolaire; justice sociale; éducation primaire

## Abordar la complejidad del racismo: Perspectivas del profesorado en entornos multiculturales de educación primaria en Tesalónica/Grecia

**Resumen:** El profesorado desempeña un papel crucial a la hora de abordar la complejidad del racismo, actuando como modelos a seguir y empleando diversas prácticas docentes que aumenten el respeto por los derechos humanos, la igualdad y la comprensión intercultural entre todo el alumnado. El objetivo de la presente investigación cualitativa, realizada mediante entrevistas semiestructuradas con 20 participantes, fue explorar las perspectivas del profesorado de primaria sobre el racismo en el entorno escolar y sus respuestas/contramedidas. Los datos se analizaron mediante análisis temático. Los hallazgos destacaron que el racismo opera con diversas manifestaciones y formas, impulsado por percepciones estereotipadas y discriminatorias hacia diversas formas de diferencia. Las manifestaciones raciales son visibles en diversos entornos escolares y tienen efectos negativos, principalmente microagresiones, discriminación y exclusión. El profesorado emplea diversas prácticas docentes para fomentar los valores democráticos, la igualdad, la comprensión intercultural y la inclusión social. La formación del profesorado en educación multicultural y la colaboración con los padres también pueden abordar el racismo de forma más eficaz. Se informó de una política escolar holística como solución para crear entornos de aprendizaje seguros e inclusivos.

**Palabras clave:** racismo; violencia escolar; justicia social; Educación Primaria

## Introduction

Racism is a historically persisting and pervasive problem as it transcends geographical, social, and cultural boundaries globally. According to traditional perceptions and theories 'racism' is defined as a set of ideologies/beliefs, and attitudes or behaviours determined either by racial or ethnic difference. Racism is currently escalating as migration flows become more intense due to humanitarian, economic, and environmental crises, as well as armed conflicts that usually disproportionately affect vulnerable groups. According to the annual report of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI, 2024) intolerance, hate speech, resentment, anti-Muslim rhetoric, antisemitism, terrorist attacks, and religious extremism are the consequences of xenophobic populism, the prolonged economic crisis and ineffective social integration of migrant fluxes. However, in the same report, the ECRI also refers to intolerance, and discrimination against LGBTQ+ individuals, Roma and Travelers, and People of African descent, while highlighting that antisemitism is on the rise due to the current conflict in the Middle East. Accordingly, the 2025 report poses to the forefront four major priorities: combating racial profiling by law enforcement officials, addressing the school segregation of Roma children, counteraction against transphobia and ensuring equal rights and dignity for intersex and transgender persons, and strengthening national equality bodies across Europe (ECRI, 2025). A positive dimension of this anti-racist approach is that it is based in a broader analytical framework of racism and counteraction, which reflects current social and political demands articulated at local, national, and international levels. This framework acknowledges the complexity and multidimensional nature of racism, as well as the need for more inclusive and flexible forms of counteraction.

Four main dimensions around racism are highly challenging and raise tensions, and therefore are important to critically problematize from the beginning of the present research. The first point is that, regardless of the typology, forms, or levels of racism and irrespective of intentions (Babacan et al., 2020), all manifestations have similar effects, as they are connected to unequal power relations, hierarchies, and the sustenance of privilege. Although 'race' as an analytical category might have been (superficially) dismissed, racism, either as an ideology or as actions and inactions, continues to exist and devaluates, oppresses, exploits, excludes and marginalizes individuals or groups (UNESCO, 2024; Arneback & Jämte, 2021; Babacan et al., 2020; Forrest et al., 2015). The dimension, is related to its unconscious or unintentional nature. As racism is unconsciously embedded in individuals through processes of socialization (family, schools, the media, and daily interactions), it is perpetuated in a subtle and even unintentional way, and this is exactly one reason that it is so difficult to eradicate. Cole (2017) suggests that when somebody expresses something that

reflects racism, it does not necessarily imply that the person is a racist (as somebody who adopts far-right ideologies), or intends to generate harmful racist effects. The third is that racism is not a unified, static or fixed phenomenon. Cole (2017) suggests using the term ‘racisms’ instead of ‘racism’ to provide a more thorough conceptual framework. Its various forms and meanings occur within different contexts – geographical, historical, political, and social that evolve over time (UNESCO, 2024). As racism is a socially constructed concept, therefore it is important to examine, situate and interpret it –along with racialization (Priest et al., 2016)– within its current context and shifting agendas (political, social, economic, cultural, national, linguistic) (Solomos, 2022; Arneback, 2022). The fourth feature within the discourse of racism is intersectionality, which is inherent in Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Abel et al., 2024; Akkari & Radhouane, 2022; Center for Intersectional Justice, 2019; Gilborn, 2015). ‘Intersectionality’, originally introduced as a term by Crenshaw (1989), has gained increased academic and policy attention and has served as a powerful analytical concept also in the field of racism (Akkari & Radhouane, 2022; Sleeter, 2016), helping to interpret and raise awareness of intersecting inequalities and discriminations (Plummer et al., 2024). Intersectionality examines how various analytical tools/forms of identity, such as race, ethnicity, religion, gender, ability/disability, and sexual orientation intertwine simultaneously and in manifold ways. The product of this interrelated and overlapping intersectionality of identities/difference, which is subjective as it is shaped by different contextual and individual factors (Bonilla-Silva, 2021), results in three major systems of subordination spread globally – capitalism, racism and patriarchy– and functions as a source of discrimination that, in turn, leads to social inequality and injustice (Center for Intersectional Justice, 2019).

Racism within the educational context, in its various forms, generates an equally important multiplicity of violence, and functions as an impediment against the physical, psychological, and relational wellbeing of students, hindering their positive educational outcomes and social inclusion. Its detrimental effects extend to the entire school community, spanning from the individual to all involved stakeholders and from an early age to adulthood. Racism, discrimination, prejudice, and hatred limit both educational access and opportunities, while threatening inclusion, social cohesion/wellbeing, democracy, sustainable development, and constituting a violation of human rights (UNESCO, 2024; UNESCO & Right to Education Initiative, 2019).

Xenophobia, intolerance and racism (both interpersonal and structural) pose significant challenges for citizenship education, as they undermine core democratic values –equality, inclusion and human rights– that the European Union seeks to promote as the foundation of inclusive European identities. Citizenship education, although applied differently among European educational systems (European Commission, 2018), should not only transmit normative knowledge of civic institutions but also

cultivate more profound democratic competencies that underpin the European project, such as active citizenship, inclusivity, intercultural communication and understanding, empathy, tolerance, and solidarity across diverse communities (Osler, 2020). The Council of Europe (2024) and the European Parliament (2022) have proposed the revision of curricula and teaching materials within citizenship education to more explicitly reflect ethnic/racial diversity and embed anti-racist perspectives to dismantle discriminatory stereotypes. Furthermore, both institutions have suggested that teachers training should equip educators with critical and reflective pedagogies enabling them to provide inclusive educational content, interrogate entrenched forms of racism and effectively cultivate democratic values. Finally, the demand for more inclusive and anti-racist content with a global perspective in citizenship education is becoming more evident, as uncertainty, rapid demographic changes, and persisting socioeconomic problems create space for populist and authoritarian rhetoric across and beyond European settings (Osler & Starkey, 2018).

The present paper is structured in the following sections: 1. Introduction. 2. Literature review, which provides an overview of definitions and conceptual frameworks of racism and empirical evidence about racism within educational settings. 3. The methodology section presents in detail the research aim and the research questions, the context of the present research, participants, the data collection process, the research tool, and data analysis. 4. The findings of the thematic analysis are presented in themes along with excerpts from the semi-structured interviews. 5. In Discussion, findings are interpreted, connected to the research questions, theory, and prior empirical evidence. Finally, the section closes with recommendations for effectively addressing racism within educational settings.

## **Literature review**

### **Definitions and conceptual frameworks**

Crozier (2023) defines 'racism' as a manifestation of individual prejudice and personal negative attitudes that lead to various forms of discrimination, while later the author states that racism is "systemic and deeply embedded throughout the structures and organisations of society" (p. 30). Racism is a highly contested term and a complex and multidimensional phenomenon in many ways, as reflected in the broad spectrum of its various definitions, conceptual frameworks and approaches outlined in the field. Racism today is a complex interplay of biological and cultural dimensions, reflected in both ideological discourses, processes, and material practices (Cole, 2017). Racism also has historical biological and cultural underpinnings. It has a wide typology of categories as well: it can be symbolic, structural, institutional, societal, dominative, aversive, overt/explicit and covert/subtle (Alansari et al., 2020;

Cole, 2017), intended or unintended (Arneback & Jämte, 2021), and an ‘unconscious bias’ (Tate & Page, 2018). Shiao and Woody (2021) discern four major conceptualizations, dimensions and meanings within the discourse of racism: the psychological, the cultural, the ideological and the structural – a typology that points to different ramifications and forms of racism. Finally, UNESCO (2024) within the educational context draws attention to the mechanisms of racialization, as an escalating process that involves classification, homogenization, naturalization/culturalization, essentialization, polarization, and hierarchization (p. 13).

Vast prior literature on the topic has attributed racism to an ideological process that builds upon race/racial ideologies – known as ‘racialization’. White supremacy and the U.S. slavery system, under a Marxist perspective, are inextricably linked to labour power and to the systematic exploitation of Black people (Miles, 1987). However, during the present and the previous century, globalization and rapid demographic and societal changes due to immigration, have shifted academic, research and political discourses towards ‘ethnicity’, as a powerful analytical tool to interpret various forms of cultural difference (nationality, religion, language) that define the boundaries of ethnic racism, inclusion, exclusion, hierarchization and discrimination towards immigrants and ethnic groups/minorities (Verhaeghe et al., 2024). The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE, 2015) and Squire et al. (2024) refer to ‘neo-racism’ as racism, intolerance and xenophobia which are apparent in the European context and globally. The main characteristic of neo-racism is that it is considered as ‘race-less racism’ and affects a broad spectrum of people – Muslims, Roma, Jews, asylum seekers, immigrants- on the basis of perceived cultural, religious, and national incompatibility. PACE (2015) and ECRI (2025; 2024), as mentioned earlier, stress that intolerance, hate speech and discrimination can emanate from ethnicity, race, migrant status, language, religion, ability/disability, gender identity and sexual orientation. Therefore, as racism has multiple forms, it consequently requires multiple forms of counteraction.

## **Racism and Education**

In the educational context, a growing body of evidence focuses on racist/ethnic bullying as a form of school violence. Raines (2017), while exploring the connection between cultural diversity and bullying, defines bullying –physical, verbal and exclusion– as a form of violence recurrently perpetuated among students of all ages, including elementary students, driven by a power imbalance. The author refers to gender, sexual orientation and ethnic/racial diversity as strong factors that cause bullying, while he suggests that females, LGBTQ+ and immigrants face a higher risk of facing peer victimization than other peers. Arens & Visser (2024) employ the term

'ethnic peer victimization' and report that ethnicity (culture, language, religion) is a negative risk factor. However, the researchers stress that much prior evidence on the topic provides controversial and/or ambiguous results and therefore it should be cautiously interpreted, as all forms of peer victimization are not linked to ethnic prejudice and bias, but to individual and other contextual factors, such as peer-relations. In line with this, Menesini & Salmivalli (2017), while referring to ethnic bullying, add the dimension of prejudice-related bullying and outline a series of individual and classroom factors (demographics, classroom hierarchy, teachers' attitudes) that create and sustain bullying within school settings. The researchers stress that bullying threatens the psychological, physical and societal/relational wellbeing of children, while reporting various detrimental effects on victims, such as low self-esteem, peer-rejection, low friendship quality, anxiety, depression and low academic outcomes.

Castillo et al. (2025) in their systematic review draw the attention to racial microaggressions (RMAs). The researchers define the term as a subtle form, often slight and unconscious verbal statements (derogatory comments, insults, i.e.) or behaviours that transfer hostility and racial attitudes and stress that an attempt to measure this form of individual-level racism can be problematic because of their ambiguous and subtle nature. Sue et al. (2007) discerned a typology of RMAs: microinsults, micro-assaults and microinvalidations. Brown & Miller (2018) support that RMAs can -through the intersectionality of identities- be directed against race, class, gender, sexual orientation, immigration status, language (or even accent), religion and other individual dispositions. Mabrouk et al. (2024) indicate that micro-assaults are an overt/explicit form of hostility that occurs less frequently. Fu et al. (2022) suggest that RMAs can start even from an early age and, if not addressed properly, can have even more detrimental effects to victims during adolescence. The researchers also stress the research gap on RMAs manifested during early adolescents (that is included in the level of Primary Education -6 to 12 years in Greece). More importantly, Fu et al. support that RMAs can be better addressed when considering the contribution of family, peers and teachers and that teachers have a crucial role in providing an equitable and inclusive learning environment.

Teachers along with the school leadership have a determinant role in counteraction against racism either through their beliefs, attitudes, actions -as they function as role models- or through their teaching strategies. Arneback & Jämte (2021) delineated a teachers' racist counteraction typology that is broadly divided into two main categories: the first category involves teaching strategies and actions that aim to interrogate structural racism -the emancipatory, intercultural and the norm-critical perspectives, where teachers act as political agents and critical pedagogues whose goal is to empower students; the second category involves approaches that focus on individualized racial forms: the relational (that emphasizes on solid positive

relations that bring respect, care and solidarity); the democratic that employs democratic dialogue and promotes democratic values and culture, and, finally, the knowledge-focused perspectives, which focus on transmitting knowledge and skills that can enable students to critically challenge racism within the broader social context. Arneback (2022) stresses the role of teachers' own perceptions and prior experiences with racism and the need for critical self-reflection as a crucial compound of their professional development. Forrest et al. (2016) report two types of teachers' responses in the Australian context: 1. teachers who act as agents of change and strongly support the aims of multicultural education, challenge discrimination and racism, promote intercultural understanding, equality and social justice; 2. Teachers with a more overt anti-racist interventions and attitudes, who employ culturally diverse learning and curriculum interventions and aim to foster cultural inclusiveness and intercultural relations, while embracing increased parental involvement. Sieben-Aduful et al. (2025) qualitative research in the Netherlands aimed to explore teachers' perceptions and actions against ethnic/racial bullying in primary schools. According to their findings, teachers reported the importance of a safe classroom climate and that they could not discern racist from interpersonal bullying. Addressing such incidents was reported as challenging and although teachers avoided discussing racism as a social phenomenon, they focused on discussing cultural diversity. The researchers stress the importance of several factors that shape how teachers cope with racism and racist bullying, such as beliefs and attitudes, knowledge and skills, competences –skills and tools and non-passive attitudes– the classroom climate, the school climate –including the role and responses of the school leadership who has to provide support to teachers and be aligned with anti-racist beliefs, and parental responses– and the school curriculum. Finally, Kheirkhah & Aronson's (2025) findings report the importance of teachers' competence in implementing multicultural and anti-racist education. Participants stressed the importance of creating safe and inclusive classrooms for their students, their determined commitment and the increased demand for training in multicultural education. Insufficient administrative support and training along with the broader political backlash in the USA context were reported as the main barriers against effective responses.

Antiracist education – and specifically antiracist pedagogy – is another effective approach not only in classroom settings but also in teachers' initial preparation. King & Chandler (2016) suggest that an approach of non-racism –understood as the passive rejection of overtly racist behaviours, language, or ideologies– does little to disrupt or transform collective understandings of race. Instead, such passivity sustains existing racial hierarchies by remaining silent about racial knowledge and structural inequalities. Chandler (2015) introduces the concept of racial pedagogical content knowledge (RPCK) in social studies teacher education as a means of moving beyond



non-racism toward explicitly anti-racist pedagogical approaches. In this context, contemporary expressions of non-racism are examined in contrast with anti-racist practices, leading to practical recommendations for advancing anti-racist education in the field. Non-racist curriculum and pedagogy, often framed within a racially liberal perspective, tend to favour passive responses that reject only the most extreme expressions of racism, while leaving deeper structures intact. This perspective reduces racism to a matter of individual prejudice or immoral behaviour, neglecting its systemic and institutional dimensions.

In contrast, an anti-racist orientation requires an active rejection of institutional and structural racism, making visible the ways in which race is socially constructed and embedded across different contexts. Grounded in CRT, anti-racist pedagogy highlights how racism is normalized within institutions and systems. CRT underscores the importance of intersectionality, the lived experiences of people of colour, and the idea of “interest convergence” – that racism endures because it benefits certain dominant groups (Kishimoto, 2018). Within this framework, anti-racist pedagogy intentionally uses race and racism as analytical entry points for understanding broader systems of oppression, especially in relevance to the wider political and social forces (Kishimoto, 2022). This approach not only challenges students to critically reflect on their own social positions within a racialized society but also requires educators to examine their roles and responsibilities in sustaining or resisting racial inequality.

Like other critical pedagogies, anti-racist pedagogy develops students’ analytical capacities to recognize and contest racism. Similar to feminist pedagogy, it extends beyond awareness to activism, emphasizing both classroom practices and organizing efforts that take place within and beyond educational spaces (Kishimoto, 2022). Kishimoto outlines that antiracist pedagogy as an organizing project both within and beyond the classroom is a life-long process. It involves the faculty’s critical-self reflection on their own positionality and the alignment of content, pedagogy and organizing aspects. Introducing racial content accompanied by specific activities in a variety of disciplines (maths, biology, computer science, engineering) can help students become aware of racism as a socially constructed concept, develop critical analytical skills, decentre authority, take responsibility for their own learning, become empowered and foster a sense of shared community. In line with this, Rabiger (2025) in a study conducted across 25 schools in England demonstrated that the murder of George Floyd served as a catalyst for engagement in the Anti-Racist School Award programme. However, the author supports that despite this, discussions about race in schools are often suppressed, while the English education system continues to uphold narratives of race-neutrality and meritocracy. Widespread ignorance and discomfort in addressing racism contribute to schools’ inconsistent responses. The findings indicate that many leaders involved in the programme conceptualise racism as

an external problem, overlooking its embeddedness within institutional structures, policies, and deficit-based perceptions of racially minoritised students, staff, and families. Few schools engage with a holistic concept of permanent racism, which recognises both the role of educational institutions in sustaining inequality and the need for continuous processes of unlearning. The author concludes that a genuine anti-racist practice demands that leaders acknowledge the permanence of racism and approach it without sentimentality and that schools can begin to confront systemic racism, challenge structural white supremacy and foster a sustained culture of anti-racist vigilance.

In the Greek context, Zachos (2019) in his qualitative research with 28 primary education teachers explored racial stereotypes, prejudices and the role of teachers in combating racism in school settings. Findings revealed that teachers believe that the root causes are low educational level, low self-perception, the social structures, the Media, the Internet and family. Participants also reported that they find it difficult to identify racist incidents in their schools and when they occur, they are related with racial difference, i.e. with Roma children and other forms of diversity, such as language. Also, participants supported that teachers as professionals may have racial stereotypes and that in some cases, they are not aware of them or cannot identify them and critically self-reflect, something that poses a significant barrier when dealing with racism in school settings. Group discussions, collaborative teaching strategies, arts, dramatization and collaboration with families were reported as the main strategies to promote intercultural understanding, tolerance and empathy. Most participants referred to the increased demand for teachers' training in intercultural/multicultural education.

Nikolaou & Samsari (2016), in quantitative research with 839 schoolchildren (primary and secondary ethnically diverse schools), reported that a substantial percentage of students have witnessed incidents of ethnic bullying, – though not all within the school setting – and that positive inter-ethnic relationships can impact low frequency of bullying. Finally, one important finding was that ethnic bullying was perpetrated by non-native students against their ethnic peers, as their motive was to gain acceptance by native students. In a 2015 online survey by the Children's Ombudsman, 66% of students reported that racism exists and is a noticeable phenomenon in schools. The largest percentage of racist attacks (57%) concerns students with special features in appearance; 37% concerns students from a different race/ethnicity or religion; 18% concerns students with a disability. In a 2015 online survey by the Children's Ombudsman, 29% of students also reported discrimination against good or bad students (positive and negative discrimination) while 12% pointed out that discrimination against students from families with low socioeconomic status. Finally, in terms of legislation, the Law 4415/2016 Regulations for Greek-language education, intercultural

education and other provisions states that “structures relations between different cultural groups in order to eliminate inequalities and social exclusion, through the democratic operation of the school, the respect of children’s rights and the training of teachers in intercultural education” (A.20 – A.21).

## **Methodology**

### **The present research**

The aim of the present research was to explore teachers’ perspectives about racism in school settings and their responses to the phenomenon. Semi-structured interviews were selected to explore the following research questions (RQs): 1. What are the manifestations of racism? 2. Which practices do teachers employ to tackle racism? 3. Which solutions do teachers consider most effective?

#### *The context*

Primary education was selected according to prior literature, as the topic remains less explored at this educational level and mostly explored at high-school settings (lower/upper) as it has more alarming, overt and violent manifestations (Bourou et al., 2024; Raines, 2017). Primary Education, which is compulsory in Greece, serves students aged from 6 to 12 years old and is structured in six grades. The compulsory school schedule begins at 08:15 and ends at 13.15 with a supplementary extension until 17.30 for working parents/families. Three schools were selected in Thessaloniki, the second-largest city in Greece, which presents an urban context with increased diversity reflected in its school settings as well. The main criterion for selection was the ethnic/racial diversity of schools.

#### *Participants and data collection process*

The participants were 20 teachers who had worked in multicultural educational settings in Primary Education. Participants had teaching experience with diverse student populations from various countries and ethnicities, including Roma students, Albania, Romania, Serbia, Poland, the Czech Republic, England, Germany, Syria, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Turkey, Egypt, Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, Somalia, and Australia. The 20 participating teachers worked in different schools. All participants were of Greek nationality and reported no ethnic background. 17 participants were female and 3 were male. The female overrepresentation in Primary Education is consistent with data provided by the World Bank (2023). Participants’ age varied from 38 to 52 years, and their teaching experience ranged from 10 to 27 years. 10 had participated in training seminars in multicultural education. 16 were teachers of Primary Education, meaning that they had Tertiary degrees specialized in Primary

Education. Three were foreign language teachers – two English and one French – and one was a Fine Arts teacher. Participants were recruited through snowball sampling, a convenient method that provides the opportunity for participants to introduce other participants to the researchers according to their professional acquaintances. Data collection lasted seven months during 2024. The semi-structured interviews lasted 40-60 minutes and were conducted outside school-grounds. The location was selected upon the preference of participants and with respect to their personal schedule. Although all participants chose to participate willingly, they were informed about the aims of the present research, about their right to withdraw at any time, and the privacy and confidentiality of data. Three interviews were pilot.

### ***Research tool***

The interview guide was structured by the researchers according to the literature and was divided into four main sections – perceptions; manifestations, causes and effects of racism; practices/responses; barriers and solutions – with 19 open-ended questions that provided participants with the opportunity to elaborate thoroughly on their thoughts.

Considering the number of participants, although suitable for qualitative research, findings should not be generalized to the entire Primary Education sector in Greece.

### ***Data analysis***

Data were submitted to reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) (Braun & Clarke, 2022). According to Braun and Clarke, RTA is a flexible method for identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns of meaning –themes– within qualitative data. In their most updated framework (2022), the authors emphasize researcher's subjectivity, reflexivity and the opportunity for creativity. Their approach is not codebook-driven, and themes are developed through deep engagement and interpretation, which means they are not merely discovered and are not neutral. The iterative process included six stages. Initially all data were transcribed. 1. In the first stage, there was familiarization with the data. Transcripts were read three times and initial notes highlighted significant content. The researchers' objective at this stage was to immerse deeply in the data. 2. At the second stage, initial codes were generated from the excerpts. Coding was interpretative and active, capturing interesting and meaningful features from the data according to prior literature and the RQs. Concerning reflexivity at this stage, the researchers considered how their subjectivity might influence what they noticed and how they coded it, since their research interests align with intercultural education, feminist pedagogy and democratic schooling. 3. In step three, initial themes were generated. The researchers organized codes into themes that reflect broader patterns of shared meaning. The relationships between codes were examined and

followingly they were clustered into potential themes that could function as interpretative and meaningful stories about the data always in relation to the RQs. 4. In step four, the researchers reviewed the candidate themes in relation to the coded data extracts. Each theme was checked for distinctiveness, lack of overlap with other themes and for coherence. At this stage the researchers decided to rearrange codes “forms” and “manifestations” and merge them with “definitions” into Theme 1, as forms and manifestations are interrelated and may shape the way participants define and perceive racism. This also helped to reveal how multidimensional the phenomenon of racism is. For the other five remaining themes, there was consensus among the researchers. 5. In step five, defining and naming themes, the researchers decided on the focus and scope of each theme and on clear and meaningful names that could capture the essence of each theme and its relevance to the RQs. Consensus on the themes was reached through recurring meetings between the researchers. Finally, in step 6, the report was written. As a final self-reflection comment, it is significant to mention that the analysis followed the recursive approach of the previous steps and the writing evolved accordingly.

### *Findings*

In the following section, we outline major themes along with indicative excerpts. TA revealed the following six (6) themes:

Theme 1: Definitions, forms and manifestations of racism

Theme 2: The root causes of racism

Theme 3: Detrimental effects of racism

Theme 4: Teachers’ role and coping strategies

Theme 5: Barriers against effective responses

### *Theme 6: Possible solutions*

#### *Theme 1: Definitions, forms and manifestations of racism*

Theme 1 prompted from the 1st RQ, which aimed to explore how teachers perceive racism through its manifestations. All participants explained how they perceive racism and their experiences concerning forms and manifestations within school settings. All teachers reported that they perceive racism a serious problem that can take many forms related to intolerance against various forms of diversity – ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, language, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, physical appearance (body size), dressing, low educational outcomes (lower grades), and low performance in sports – and a sense of superiority. However, many teachers highlighted that stereotypes, discriminatory practices, exclusion and even racist microaggressions are interrelated phenomena and are the result of overlapping and

intersecting forms of difference, such as ethnicity/race, gender, religion, language and socio-economic status. Participants stressed that their main concern was school violence in all its manifestations and in all contexts/place of occurrence. Half of the participants reported racist incidents targeting against students with an immigrant/refugee background:

“Incidents happen against students with immigrant or refugee background, because they look different in physical appearance, or in terms of language and have a visibly lower socio-economic status than the majority”. (T15)

Most teachers reported both overt and covert forms of racist incidents, which have more subtle manifestations, which makes it more difficult for them to identify the phenomenon. Manifestations of racism were related either with acts of violence or with stereotyping. According to teachers, violence took the form of microaggressions, name-calling, mocking, laughing against others and exclusion. Most teachers reported that verbal violence was the most common case, while physical violence, such as fights and attacks were not common:

“During this age physical fights aren’t a common thing; primary school is a more secure space, children feel more protected, and we have strict rules. These incidents are more visible to teachers”. (T18)

Another teacher reported that:

“Verbal violence ... usually degrading talking and comments, especially against specific groups, Albanians for example. But this can happen even from children with Albanian origins. There was a boy for instance of half Albanian descend that repeatedly made nasty comments, mocked his Albanian peers ... even made them cry. His behaviour was bad, but this was just one case”. (T6)

Additionally, most teachers stressed that such incidents usually take place in more informal settings, where rules are less strict and students feel freer and looser, such as school corridors and the courtyard, where students during free play might sometimes go unnoticed and/or unattended. Also, four teachers reported other spaces, which are indirectly related to school, such as digital spaces –online games, social media platforms or chat applications– where racist verbal microaggressions and exclusion can occur as well. Teachers’ covert stereotypical perceptions about students with immigrant/refugee background that results in classroom discrimination was also identified as a manifestation or racial prejudice:

“Teachers as well bear some kind of racist bias, not overtly but it surely affects their teaching and the classroom. It’s because of the students’ language diversity.

They believe that it's a barrier for the entire classroom and in some cases, they undermine those students who become even less involved or even invisible". (T12)

In line with this, T18 mentioned that:

"Teachers might be professionals, but they're also common people who live and construct their beliefs and attitudes within the same social context as everyone else. Racism can affect everyone!".

### *Theme 2: The root causes of racism*

Theme 2 was prompted from the 1st RQ. Participants' discourse revealed that 'racism' was defined through its root causes. Their responses reflect a broad spectrum of causal factors. All participants identified bias, prejudice, and stereotypes as the main reason behind all forms and manifestations of racist beliefs and attitudes. "Stereotypes are deeply rooted beliefs ... you just can't unroot them through schooling or by some limited interventions. It needs more collective and serious efforts" (T20). Similarly, T5 supported that: "many people have a fear or reluctance about cultural differences".

Participants discerned three main interrelated spheres that produce, reproduce and sustain racism. Most teachers identified family as the sphere with the most influential role:

"Parental beliefs and everyday attitudes are responsible for creating all kinds of racism. Children don't have an opinion of their own about diversity at this age. They replicate what they hear". (T7)

and T11 "Parental political opinions, who identify with far-right parties for example transmit nationalistic values to children that cause discriminatory attitudes". A few teachers referred to cases where there was conflict with parents: "One of my students refused to sit next to a refugee student from Syria. The next day the father fiercely demanded from me to change this arrangement" (T16).

The second sphere identified was society, including various dimensions and factors within it. Four teachers reported that structural inequality is a main reason behind hierarchical divisions and inequality among groups of people. Societies which are deeply divided among socioeconomic status and power relations use stereotypes to perpetuate inequality based upon supremacy of in-group members: "According to such beliefs, people with a different nationality such as immigrants are lower and even a threat. Systemic structures and organizations perpetuate those beliefs" (T9).

Poverty and economic inequalities on a global scale, social exclusion along with the human rights' violations were also reported as social conditions that favour racism and racist attitudes and threaten social justice.

The Mass Media were also reported as a means for creating and sustaining racism. T4's response is revealing:

"The Media depict on a daily basis immigrants arriving in our country, hate crimes or crimes committed by dangerous or con-conforming immigrants or religious fanatics ... people are used to the idea that these people are dramatically different and that 'others' are a serious threat to our society. These scenes are normalized in our minds".

Finally, the Internet was reported by a few teachers as a means for spreading fake news or formulating people's perceptions and especially adolescents' and children's:

"Children who access the web can't have a critical literacy of what they're reading or watching. Those things function as negative role models and children are deeply affected". (T18)

Education and specifically schooling was the third factor mentioned. T1 reported:

"Schools and teachers have a crucial role through their attitudes. Racist or discriminatory attitudes depend on whether the school has strict rules and is tolerant or intolerant against such cases".

And T8 referred to teachers' responses:

"When you don't know how to respond or act effectively, then you become a bad role model. Children have the impression that racism in any form is a normal attitude and that we -teachers tolerate it or even accept it".

### ***Theme 3: Detrimental effects of racism***

The 3rd theme was prompted from the 1st RQ. Along with root causes, an emphasis was given to the various effects and negative impacts of racism. All participants reported negative effects both for perpetrators and victims. T17 reported:

"Kids who defy strict rules against intolerance and violence or bullying have the impression that they can do whatever they want because of their superiority



and then as they grow older this type of behaviour becomes normalized, and it's spread outside schools and in adult life. The bully then becomes the real threat".

And T3 suggested that: "School is the place where stereotypes are generated and perpetuated".

Most participants, however, reported disproportionately detrimental effects on victims. T7 mentioned in detail:

"Children with immigrant backgrounds have lower grades and performance than their native peers mainly because they are less involved ... they don't participate in classroom processes due to low self-esteem, reluctance, fear or because they're somehow excluded. For example, they don't participate actively during free play in the courtyard or from school excursions. It's a kind of marginalization. They're closed to themselves or socialize only with their ethnic peers".

#### ***Theme 4: Teachers' role and coping strategies***

Theme 4 was prompted from the 2nd RQ which aimed to explore teachers' practices against racism. All teachers reported various strategies for addressing racism and discriminatory attitudes. Starting from within the school, T13 mentioned that "School, after the family, is the primary children's space of socialization. School has the responsibility to shape students' personality, their social skills and create responsible citizens who'll respect human rights". Most participants highlighted the crucial pedagogical role of teachers, for example T15 noted that:

"It largely depends on the individual ... you have to act like a pedagogue, transmit values and ideals and not just cling to teaching the curriculum, but this depends on personal willingness".

Similarly, T11 reported:

"We must act as role models. Students imitate and replicate our attitudes and behaviours and not only the negative ones but mostly the positive. If you behave with tolerance, acceptance and respect towards diversity, then our students will do the same".

In line with the above, T19 mentioned:

"We've got to inspire children and not disappoint them. They got high expectations and in some cases we're their main influence ... many kids try to find a strong attachment inside the school".

*Finally, T9 revealed another dimension:*

"First, we must examine our personal stance ... where do we stand? I mean self-reflection and critical thinking is important as a tool against racism and various discriminations and a tool to become a better person and then a better professional. We must constantly improve ourselves".

School policies were also mentioned as a crucial determinant for addressing microaggressions, racist attitudes, intolerance and incidents of violence in general. T13's discourse revealed:

"Strict rules and zero tolerance policies are the best way to respond. There's got to be consensus and an immediate and uniform response. All cases aren't the same. It's a complex issue but differentiated reactions either by teachers or by the leadership create a gap .... this is misinterpreted as weakness or as tolerance".

Also, in relevance to the school, almost all participants highlighted the importance of a positive school climate and the need to create safe and inclusive learning spaces for all, regardless of difference.

"A school that wants to build tolerance, equality, and peaceful relations must invest in safety and inclusion for all ... regardless of religion, nationality or socio-economic status" (T20).

All participants emphasized establishing an effective and positive classroom climate, enhancing acceptance, tolerance, empathy, cooperation, intercultural understanding, and peace. T18 referred to awareness as a decisive preventive strategy:

"Keeping our students informed and increasing awareness. Children must be informed and gain a better understanding about diversity ... all forms of diversity aren't the same but gradually we've got to enhance their knowledge".

Some of the pedagogical strategies employed by teachers are: “Discussions, group discussions about diversity, human rights, and bringing racist attitudes of any form to the forefront” (T10). Other pedagogic strategies reported were: “Group projects and collaborative learning in mixed teams are effective. They promote co-operation, a sense of solidarity, understanding, help-sharing, mutual respect, and empathy” (T5). Gamification, music and Fine Arts were also employed to foster intercultural understanding and strengthen interpersonal relations. Moreover, T9 suggested that “I stress the common grounds that children share rather than their differences. Difference is accepted and works as space for negotiation”. T2 referred to another pedagogical practice:

“Experiential learning. Not just working abstract values ... they're important but students can't embed human rights just by a limited discussion confined to some texts. This is superficial; children must experience those values in their everyday lives ... that human rights and human dignity are respected uniformly”.

Socioemotional learning interventions were also reported to increase democratic values, empathy and respect. Finally, various formal educational programmes about ethnic diversity have proven to be effective and well-accepted as they offer the opportunity to students to get acquainted with customs, folk stories, language, music and food from other nations. Three teachers reported that media literacy in the digital realm can have positive outcomes, with the precondition that enhances critical thinking skills to students.

Finally, six teachers reported that they consider parental involvement and the wider community as decisive, for example:

“We can't be alone in this. Parents can help us and in turn we can help them too. Keeping parents informed. We must communicate with them regularly and engage them in our interventions when working with diversity issues”. (T8)

And similarly:

“Parents and the wider community. Why not engage them more actively? Our classroom's activities about children's rights were communicated through posters to local shops. All the children took part, and they enjoyed it very much. The school must come out of its walls”. (T15)

### ***Theme 5: Barriers against effective responses***

The 5th theme was prompted from the 2nd RQ, as participants suggested that barriers and various challenges can hinder their efforts and various strategies employed. Most teachers reported that their work overload due to the formal curriculum hinders employing effective strategies. T2 mentioned:

“There's not enough time to work in the classroom as I'd ideally like to have worked with complex topics, such as human rights or children's rights or peace. Students get to know a glimpse of all these topics and it's not only superficial but boring as well”.

While T20 suggested that: “We need more guidance from the Ministry and more flexibility. The curriculum needs to be cut down to size”.

All participants reported limited resources, specifically insufficient training in multicultural education or dated skills from their preservice stage or that:

“We need more practical suggestions and to increase our skills. How to implement something that'll be exciting, playful and have an impact when we're talking about diversity?”. (T8)

The absence of holistic approaches that involve the engagement of all stakeholders was reported by more than half of the participants: “The school leadership has to show a stronger will and pursue state support through specific initiatives” (T5). T15 referred to parental involvement:

“Parents in some cases are a strong barrier. While they have high expectations, when we're trying to raise awareness about diversity and not just ethnic diversity, they don't agree, because the school shouldn't intervene into traditional family values. There's a conflict here that we can't deal with”. (T15)

Finally, the Media and the wider societal crisis were also reported as barriers, something that was depicted previously in Theme 2, highlighting that root causes function as challenges as well.

### ***Theme 6: Possible solutions***

Theme 6 was prompted from the 3rd RQ that aimed to explore possible solutions. Almost all the participants stressed the growing demand for training as part of their professional development. T19 reported: “The preservice stage wasn't adequate. Training in multicultural education will increase our multicultural effectiveness and our

skills and boost our confidence". Another dimension was mentioned by T15: "Training has to be regular and catch up with current demands, let's say for example school violence, bullying, inclusive education, gender equality ... it should cover more forms of diversity". More specifically, T12 referred to the importance of "training through experiential learning, we need more practical suggestions and workshops and work our self-reflection even in groups!". Finally, T9 proposed another strategy: "training in conflict resolution. I think it'd helped a lot to know specific tools to handle conflict and promote peace and understanding in my classroom".

Collaboration, reflection and support among teachers as professionals was also mentioned by fewer teachers while support and guidance by the school leadership was mentioned by three participants.

Another group of participants focused on the curriculum. For example, T5 suggested:

"The curriculum must focus more on and expand on topics of intercultural understanding, equality and peace and non-violence and I'm not referring just to knowledge transmission but to something deeper. Working with socioemotional learning tools and empowering students would make a visible difference".

And some teachers reported that flexibility and more autonomy in pedagogical strategies is crucial:

"We definitely need more time to be more flexible and invest in role playing and dramatization and arts and crafts. Dialogue also about hot topics that are relevant to children's lives ... listen to what they have to say -what's really bothering them" (T12).

All participants stressed the increased demand for holistic approaches. T2 suggested that: "All initiatives and efforts to promote respect, peace and equality should involve all and by all, I mean parents, the school leadership and the entire community". And T1 emphasized "Parents ... we could have done much better if they collaborated more. We need a common ground for mutual understanding". Also, pessimism and reluctance were expressed, as schools alone cannot cope with their increased social role. Indicatively, T1 supported that:

"We can't hide ... racism and violence aren't only a school problem. It's a matter of political will and educational policies ... and what happens if policies are contradictory or social responses are working against us? This demands strong coordination and wider social acceptance. Sometimes we feel like we're cancelled, but you can't give up!".

## Discussion and recommendations

The aim of the present qualitative research was to explore teachers' perspectives and responses towards racism as a phenomenon occurring within primary educational settings. Findings highlight the complexity of the topic and the crucial role of schools.

Concerning the first RQ, findings demonstrated various perceptions and conceptual frameworks. All participants expressed that they perceive racism as a serious social problem that exists within educational settings as well. This finding is important, as it reveals that teachers acknowledge and identify racist incidents and racism as not an overlooked problem, easily masked or disregarded through subjective interpretations that consider students as innocent (Sieben-Aduful, 2025). However, participants' responses revealed two distinct conceptual frameworks about racism. On the one hand, participants defined and perceived racism in a broader sense, as a phenomenon not strictly related to racial difference, but as a set of beliefs, attitudes and actions that are generated by any form of diversity, such as gender, ethnicity/race, language, religion, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation physical appearance – students' outfits and obesity for example were reported –, bad performance in active sports, and low grades (Raines (2017). This finding aligns with more current approaches that have broadened the spectrum of diversity – and consequently vulnerability – recognized in modern societies. Such approaches problematize racism as intolerance, stereotyping – rejecting – notions that produce a wide range of hostility, violence, hate speech, xenophobia, discrimination, exclusion, marginalization, and social injustice against 'otherness' (ECRI, 2025; 2024)– while highlighting that racism is not a static or uniform phenomenon. On the contrary, they suggest that racism is a socially constructed concept, the result of overlapping identity intersections (Center for Intersectional Justice, 2019) and subjected to shifting political, economic, cultural, and social agendas (Solomos, 2022). On the other hand, half participants, although very scarce, identified cases of racism – mostly in the form of microaggressions (Castillo et al., 2025; Mabrouk et al., 2024) – specifically against immigrant students. Overall, these two patterns reveal the subjective way participants perceive what 'racism' is and their different level of awareness and competence to truly discern racist peer victimization from other cases of microaggressions driven by other individual or contextual factors, which emphasizes how challenging and ambiguous these cases are (Castillo et al., 2025; Arens & Visser, 2024). Finally, participants stressed in several cases that they are more concerned with the root causes and the detrimental effects of racism, and specifically with the most overt and urging issue of school-violence (also referred as 'school-related gender-based violence' according to most recent approaches (Pliogou et al., 2025). Participants' discourse revealed that strategies to tackle school violence should consider race/ethnicity and focus on

the positive school climate, teachers' roles and training, rules and discipline to promote safety as an overarching term for all students (Mayer et al., 2021).

In relation to the second RQ, findings reveal that teachers employ various teaching practices, such as dialogic pedagogy, collaborative learning, project-based learning, experiential learning, playful learning, arts, and drama as powerful tools that can promote collaboration, cooperation, intercultural communication and understanding, empathy, tolerance, group solidarity, and inclusion, which align with prior literature (Conti, 2025; Zachos, 2019). Such practices –participatory, adaptive and responsive– embedded within the paradigm of intercultural education, seek to foster inclusion and resilience, to empower learners to critically question hierarchies within the digital realm and enhance students' agency and sense of belonging (Ruhela, 2023). Also, they have a transformative character, while building cooperative bridges with parents (Conti, 2025). Furthermore, they promote democratic values and human rights respect, something reported by participants. Socioemotional learning (SEL) was also reported within findings. According to prior evidence, SEL's core elements –self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision making, empathy and communication skills, and teaching/learning practices– are strongly interrelated with intercultural competencies (Nielsen et al., 2019) and can positively strengthen relationships and classroom climate.

Finally, in relation to the third RQ, suggested solutions have a reciprocal relation with barriers reported. Findings highlight teachers' self-reflection in identifying their own gaps and challenges while positively questioning their effectiveness, which supports professional development. Participants' responses mostly focused on the increased demand for specialized training through experiential learning in multicultural education (Kheirkhah & Aronson's, 2025) and in other areas, such as gender equality and school violence (Pliogou et al., 2025). Findings also stressed the importance of the school leadership (Sieben-Aduful et al., 2025) and the crucial role of parental involvement (Pliogou & Tromara, 2024) in enhancing positive outcomes in anti-racist action and intercultural understanding, while promoting a positive and safe school climate.

Findings reveal the complexity of racism in school settings and the crucial role of teachers who have to take a proactive and transformative role amidst multiple intersecting crises confronted within the social, political, economic and environmental spheres, all of which have a strong impact upon the educational context as well. These crises are foremost threats against democracy, democratic values, peace and human rights. Tackling school violence and manifold racism and promoting at the same time social inclusion and social justice are a challenging endeavour that transcends the educational field and demands strong political will and social change. Antiracist education goes beyond intercultural learning and multiculturalism by directly confronting

prejudice, racism and systemic discrimination (Gillborn, 2015; 2006). Its goals involve identifying and challenging racist ideologies, practices and structures; developing critical consciousness and empowering students to resist injustice; creating safe, inclusive learning environments for all students regardless of difference; and promoting equity in access, outcomes, and participation across diverse groups. This approach requires both permanent curricular reform and pedagogical transformation (Rabiger, 2025; Kishimoto, 2022) (i.e., dialogic teaching, critical pedagogy, whole-school inclusion policies). We, therefore, suggest that adopting the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC) (Council of Europe, 2018a) in teaching/learning practices can have positive, visible and long-term outcomes. The core concepts of the Framework are democracy, the rule of law and human rights and its aim is to go beyond knowledge transmission about democratic values by making them both a teaching/learning tool (through) and a goal (for). The Framework's aim is to provide a concrete and holistic approach on teaching/learning about democratic values, democratic culture, democratic citizenship and intercultural dialogue, by helping students to build the necessary set of competencies – values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding – indispensable for participative, active, responsible citizenship in increasing multicultural and rapidly changing societies. The Framework, structured in three volumes, outlines the model, provides clear descriptors of competences that can help educators design, implement and assess interventions that can cultivate a democratic mindset and human rights respect. Additionally, the third volume offers a wide range of pedagogical strategies –process oriented: cooperative learning, project-based learning, service learning, modelling democratic attitudes and content oriented: team teaching, integrated curricular approaches, using the existing curriculum, the hidden curriculum– (Council of Europe, 2018b) that have positive outcomes. The third volume also outlines how the Framework can counter radicalization while addressing the detrimental effects of racism, exclusion, and marginalization of vulnerable students.

Another crucial point is the whole-school approach – (the demand for holistic approaches)– , which can increase the impact of the Framework– and any other concrete intervention– and counter violence and discrimination in schools. The whole-school approach takes into account all involved stakeholders (teachers, students, the school leadership, parents and the community), teaching/learning methodologies and pedagogy and the classroom climate, the school governance (leadership, governance, decision making, policies and rules, student participation) and cooperation with the wider community (parents, other schools, and community institutions). At its the whole-school approach interrelated and overlapping spheres that affect individuals, teaching, and learning. They altogether



In conclusion, a holistic approach that aligns RFCDC with antiracist education can have significant implications for school practice. The prerequisites involve: 1. Curriculum reform (including diverse perspectives, histories, literatures, and teaching about racism, democratic values and human rights). 2. Effective pedagogical strategies, such as participatory and dialogical methods that encourage critical engagement and empathy. 3. Student empowerment that could be promoted by supporting student-led initiatives against racism and enabling students' participation in decision-making processes within and outside the school. 4. Whole-school policies that focus on anti-discrimination policies, have effective reporting mechanisms for racist incidents and promote inclusive school climates. 5. Teacher education –as a life-long process– which should invest during the preservice stage in teachers' preparation in antiracist practices, intercultural competences, and critical pedagogy aligned with the RFCDC descriptors and expand to professional development on those topics. Finally, active participation and continuous commitment are crucial role in this transformative collective endeavour. Democratic schooling constitutes an anti-racist practice insofar as it challenges exclusionary structures and unequal power relations, ensures equal participation, recognizes diverse cultural identities and fosters social justice. Ultimately, the struggle against racism in education requires continuous critical reflection and collective action that confront entrenched hierarchies and create genuinely inclusive spaces for all learners. Countering racism is not merely an educational imperative but a social one, paving the way for more democratic, equitable, and just societies.

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