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The Principles of Social Pedagogy in Contemporary Curriculum Design: The Case of Greece

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Abstract: The reform of school curricula in Greece highlights the importance of Social Pedagogy in linking education with holistic development and democratic participation. This study aims to investigate how the new curricula for primary and lower secondary education reflect the socio-pedagogical principles. A qualitative content analysis of the expected learning outcomes of all the subjects was conducted using official curriculum documents, such as Geography, Visual Arts, Drama Education, Religious Education, History, Social and Political Education, Mathematics, Environmental Studies, Music, Modern / Ancient Greek Language and Literature, ICT, Natural Sciences, Physical Education, Physics, Chemistry Biology, Geology. Findings show that the curricula prioritise empathy, collaboration, creativity, critical thinking and respect for diversity, which are core principles of Social Work. Social and emotional learning, interdisciplinary problem solving and digital literacy are systematically promoted. Subjects such as Visual Arts, Physical Education, Modern Greek Language, Computer Science and Home Economics demonstrate

the most comprehensive alignment with socio-pedagogical values. At the same time, initiative and research skills remain underrepresented. The fragmented structure of curricula limits holistic integration. Our study provides policymakers, educators, and social workers with practical insights, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of curricula in social pedagogy, and supporting the design of inclusive and democratic educational practices based on the applied science of Social Work. This study advances curriculum development theory by linking practical classroom needs with adaptive, learner-centred design principles.

Keywords: curriculum design, social pedagogy, contemporary education, Educational reform, Greek education, social-emotional learning.

Introduction

Social pedagogy is an educational philosophy and practice grounded in holistic development, social justice, and humanistic values (Hämäläinen, 2015; Bird & Eichsteller, 2011). Its role in shaping curriculum design has gained increasing attention in recent years, especially in educational settings that view learning not just as academic achievement, but also as a means of personal growth and societal change. (Stobbs et al. 2023)

This approach reflects a timeless effort to reform educational systems in which Social pedagogy plays a vital role in rethinking how schools operate. In the postmodern view of education, the classroom becomes a space for discovery. Students and teachers explore their needs and strengths through interaction, turning these insights into personal and collective goals (Koutselini, 2013), which has inspired the writing of this study. We begin with the premise that the curriculum is not only a syllabus but also a cultural and political tool (Apple, 2004) and that Social pedagogy plays a key role in the structure and design of curricula (Buchkremer, 1995), ensuring that education aligns with the needs of individuals and society.

Research Problem

In the current Greek educational landscape, it is essential to examine the issue at hand, given the ongoing reform of national curricula. The newly introduced curricula lay the groundwork for a high-quality education system that actively engages all students without discrimination in the realisation of an effective, innovative, creative, and sustainable school environment. These reforms aim to cultivate a modern school that is open to society, responsive to evolving cultural and scientific contexts, and committed to bridging theory with practice through methodical and impactful pedagogical approaches.

A key societal benefit of this transformation lies in the development of a learning model grounded in the principles of Social Pedagogy. Such a model is essential for fostering core values among students, preparing them to become responsible and empathetic citizens. Furthermore, this study contributes to the academic field by offering a flexible and contextually relevant framework for curriculum design, emphasising continuous feedback and adaptability. Despite its significance, this topic remains underexplored in international literature, mainly because the new curricula are still in the early stages of implementation. Nonetheless, a critical discourse has begun within Greece, supported by emerging scholarly contributions, particularly in the domain of early childhood education (e.g., Penteri, 2022).

This research seeks to uncover new insights into the evolving educational paradigm by analysing the foundational principles of the 2021–2023 curriculum reforms. These reforms aim to create inclusive and innovative learning environments that cater to the diverse needs of all students. The curricula are designed

to promote openness to societal change, cultural diversity, and scientific advancement, while encouraging the integration of theoretical knowledge with practical application¹.

Given the transitional phase of curriculum implementation and the concurrent development of school textbooks, this study investigates the Expected Learning Outcomes (ELOs) across compulsory education subjects. It assumes that these outcomes reflect the social dimension of education and align with the principles of Social Pedagogy.

The research specifically aims to explore the opportunities presented by various subjects in the new curricula of Primary and Lower Secondary Education (Gymnasium) to apply Social Pedagogical principles, including:

- Strengthening and developing students' emotional and social skills (e.g. creating internal motivation and goal setting, developing personal responsibility, strengthening positive characteristics)
- Critical reflection on discrimination, racism and sexism, social exclusion and social vulnerability, gender and otherness
- Planning socio-cultural animation actions for students in compulsory education.
- The resolution of fundamental socio-pedagogical problems within the school environment (Petrie et al., 2006)

The relevance of this research spans across the fields of Social Pedagogy and Comparative Education. Social Pedagogy contributes to the psychosocial development of children within inclusive and democratic school settings, while Comparative Education offers insights into improving educational practices both locally and internationally. This study is driven by the need to construct a contemporary and comprehensive understanding of Social Pedagogy in relation to curriculum development across European contexts, in alignment with the European Union's educational priorities.

Literature Review

Social pedagogy originated in 19th-century Europe, particularly in Germany and Scandinavia, where education was perceived not just as academic instruction, but also as a means of fostering democratic citizenship, social inclusion, and personal development (Petrie et al., 2006). Its foundations, however, can be traced back to the ancient Greek philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, who emphasised the role of education in shaping both the individual & society (Hämäläinen, 2015). Today, Social Pedagogy has evolved into an international educational and social movement, gaining increasing recognition and dissemination across numerous countries worldwide (Cameron et al., 2023).

As a science, social pedagogy is a relational practice, considering the educator a reflective practitioner, and the learner a whole person, encompassing emotional, cognitive, and social dimensions (Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011). This holistic approach is grounded in key principles that include holistic education, democratic relationships, experiential learning, social justice, and inclusion.

In relation to the school educational process, Social Pedagogy is related to the concept of education (Bildung). It is argued that the relationship between social pedagogy and education depends on the definition of education (Moss & Petrie, 2019). Rather than focusing solely on academic achievement, social pedagogy offers a framework for creating learning experiences that contribute to the overall well-being and social development of students. The curriculum is not confined only to formal schooling but extends to

¹ <https://www.iep.edu.gr/provoli-neon-programmaton-spoudon/>

informal educational settings, such as youth work, residential care, and community initiatives (Cameron & Moss, 2011).

The principles of Social Pedagogy have consistently influenced the shaping of curricula in ways defined by the socio-cultural norms and expectations of each country and historical period. Social pedagogic approaches to curriculum focus on empowerment rather than transmission of knowledge, learner participation in shaping educational goals, contextual learning rooted in real-life experiences, and integration of care and education. This contrasts with traditional, standardised curricula, which often prioritise assessment and outcomes over process and relational development.

Germany and Scandinavia offer foundational examples of how Social Pedagogy has been institutionalised as a part of both education and social care. The curriculum in these models emphasises citizenship, well-being, and participatory democracy (Lorenz, 2008).

The United Kingdom has also played a pivotal role in integrating the principles of Social Pedagogy into the curriculum design. L. Stenhouse defended the 'process' model through the Humanities Curriculum Project, advocating for a curriculum that supports personal and social development rather than delivering rigid content. This resulted in the creation of Comprehensive Programs aimed at nurturing students' social and emotional growth (Aubrey & Riley). Despite social pedagogy's influence on child welfare and youth services, its integration in schools is limited due to the dominance of outcomes-based models. Nonetheless, programs like Forest Schools and Restorative Practices integrate social pedagogic values (Cameron & Moss, 2011). The current educational system in England has been critically characterised as technocratic, exclusionary and insufficient in preparing children to navigate the complexities of contemporary society. In response to these limitations, Social Pedagogy is increasingly viewed as a necessary framework for fostering a more holistic, human-centred approach to education (Stobbs et al., 2023).

Social pedagogy had a profound impact in Latin America, where pedagogues have developed a critical pedagogy that aligns with social pedagogic principles. This approach emphasised liberation, consciousness raising and the politicisation of the curriculum, aiming to empower learners (Torres, 2020).

In the context of the former Soviet Union, the need to reform polytechnic education led to significant changes in curriculum and school practices. Today, the Russian Federation has shifted its educational goals toward socialisation, the development of a value system, and the holistic growth of individuals through collaborative learning. Social Pedagogy is increasingly recognised as a key element in the modernisation of Russian education, supporting efforts to create more inclusive and socially responsive learning environments (Egorychev & Kretinin, 2017).

In the United States, the application of Social Pedagogy extends into dimensions that require adaptation to the country's unique socio-cultural context. Nonetheless, the field demonstrates significant potential for creative development and for contributing to the promotion of democracy, equity, and social cohesion (Shure, 2024).

The approaches discussed above are rooted in curriculum theories that have evolved in parallel with the development of Social Pedagogy. Several educational theorists closely align with social pedagogy in their views on curriculum, including John Dewey, who advocated for experiential learning and democracy in education, and Paulo Freire, who introduced the concept of dialogical education, viewing the curriculum as a process of liberation (Lorenz, 2008). Similarly, Jerome Bruner emphasised that the curriculum is a process of constructing knowledge, not transmitting facts (Rannikmäe et al. 2020). These perspectives support a transformative vision of curriculum that aligns with social pedagogical values, providing sources of inspiration for modern scholars.

Current debates and emerging challenges

In today's world, shaped by postmodern thinking and global educational goals, Social Pedagogy has taken a new direction. Its theoretical foundations and scientific objectives have been redefined to support the vision of an inclusive, democratic school environment. This shift has prompted educational policymakers, especially in Western countries, to realise the importance of adapting modern curricula to the realities of multicultural societies. The goal is to prepare students not only for academic success but also for active, responsible participation in civic life.

For this reason, there's a growing emphasis on cultivating learning and collaborative skills as well as critical thinking alongside cognitive goals. These efforts align with the broader educational agenda of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals established by the United Nations and endorsed by the EU.

Social sustainability in education plays a crucial role in advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. By nurturing inclusive communities, promoting social equity and diversity, and encouraging active participation, it empowers learners to grow into responsible citizens. The approach, often referred to as Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and Education for the Sustainable Development Goals (ESDGs), aims to address pressing challenges such as inequality and fragmentation (Nilsson Dahlström, 2025). At the same time, it fosters the values and behaviours that enable individuals to contribute positively to society. This vision resonates strongly with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4.7, which highlights the importance of inclusive, equitable, and high-quality education within the framework of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and Education for the Sustainable Development Goals (ESDG)²

Today, there's a growing need to focus on the cultivation of social-emotional learning and character education. Schools around the world, including those in Greece, are adopting a holistic approach to education, enabling students to develop essential skills such as self-awareness, empathy, self-regulation, and problem-solving (Kress & Elias, 2019).

One of the positive aspects of today's post-modern internationalised education is the growing emphasis on Social Pedagogy. Educational bodies are increasingly focusing on approaches that connect students with the world, utilising modern digital forms of communication and collaboration. A key characteristic of 21st-century education, strongly supported by EU guidelines and other bodies, is the development of digital skills for all students. Such skills include the ability to interact through technology, use digital tools creatively and collaborate effectively, which are directly linked to the values of Social Pedagogy.

For instance, UNICEF's Reimagine Education initiative calls on partners to collaborate in a global movement that will advocate the above values. One of its documents suggests that the goal of modern education is to go beyond basic skills, such as reading, writing, and mathematics, and focus on problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity, and digital literacy, so that students can contribute to their communities³. Today, the scope of Social Pedagogy is expanding to include AI literacy, particularly within the framework of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP). Recent research into teacher-AI collaboration highlights the potential of Large Language Models (LLMs) to support educators in integrating CRP principles into their instructional practices, particularly in addressing global educational priorities, such as preparing students for an AI-informed future (Wang et al., 2025).

Learning within collaborative communities, as well as reflecting on thoughts and actions within a social, cultural, and institutional context, is well promoted in the European Union. Policies increasingly

² <https://www.unesco.org/sdg4education2030/en/about-us#sustainable-development-goal-4-sdg-4>

³ <https://www.unicef.org/media/87296/file/%20Reimagine%20Education%20Summary%20Case%20for%20Investment-2020.pdf>

recognise that students bring with them unique personal life stories, not just knowledge and skills. As a result, there's growing support for offering diverse learning opportunities and for implementing socio-pedagogical programs that address the whole person (Koutselini, 2013). According to the Council of Europe's Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education, students are allowed to develop their full potential within a framework of educational equality, equal rights, and justice. Furthermore, the Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (EDC/HRE) program is part of the Council of Europe's Education Department, under the Directorate of Democracy. It plays a key role in supporting educators and policymakers by offering practical resources and guidance. These programs focus on helping students develop critical thinking skills and encourage them to participate actively in democratic life⁴. Social Pedagogy has the potential to significantly contribute to citizenship education through practical teaching approaches (Puni & Febrer, 2023). Empowering young people through socio-pedagogical methods is particularly vital for cultivating democratic values and fostering peaceful communities even within contexts marked by violence and authoritarianism (Kishani, 2024). Empirical findings suggest that the systematic implementation of Social Pedagogy can substantially enhance students' tolerance, collaboration, and positive social interactions. However, several challenges hinder its practical application, including limited instructional time, insufficient resources, and inadequate teacher training (Sutarti et al., 2024).

The growing challenges of migration in today's world have also influenced educational policies across many countries. The adaptation of curricula was considered necessary as classrooms became increasingly diverse. Within this context, education systems face the challenge of helping students develop an intercultural identity and ensuring the smooth inclusion of students with a migrant background. Achieving this means incorporating intercultural perspectives into teaching practices and prioritising inclusive approaches that value and respect diversity, which are rooted in the principles of Social Pedagogy.

Early childhood education holds significant potential for instilling respect and tolerance for diversity from the earliest years of a child's life (Acker & Nyland, 2025). In this context, particular emphasis is placed on Australia's national early childhood curriculum, which demonstrates a strengthened commitment to Aboriginal Australians and actively promotes equity and social justice in a country still grappling with the legacies of colonialism and settler perspectives. In the same context, a study conducted in a primary school in Central Greece among Roma and non-Roma students investigated the extent to which socio-pedagogical strategies aimed at inclusion were employed. These included fostering a favourable school climate, adopting a holistic approach to learning, and encouraging collaborative practices.

In the context of cooperation and acceptance of diversity, a study was conducted on the curricula of the so-called "national" subjects in post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina, following a relevant assignment by UNESCO to a team from the Comparative Education Department of Heidelberg University (Stabback, 2004).

Research programs on topics relevant to Social pedagogy span all levels of education. Starting with early childhood education, we refer to the Curriculum Quality Analysis and Impact Review of European ECEC (CARE), which explores curricula and quality indicators in early childhood education, aiming to support the development of education policies that foster the holistic development of the child and uphold their right to high-quality education (Melhuish et al., 2015). The potential of Social Pedagogy in early childhood education and educational planning is increasingly emphasised, highlighting its dynamic role in shaping inclusive and developmentally responsive learning environments (Gallagher & Stobbs, 2023).

⁴ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/edc>

Comparing curricula through the lens of Social pedagogy has become increasingly important, especially in countries that have developed such themes in secondary education for many years, as seen in a study of three curricula in the Netherlands, Norway, and Ireland (Pelle Hallstedt & Mats Högström, 2005).

Finally, an International Comparison in Social Pedagogy Training across universities in different countries analyses the content of Social Pedagogy study programs based on their key dimensions, highlighting the need for clearer knowledge transmission and contributing to the integration of the theoretical, educational, and professional domains of the discipline (Janer & Ucar, 2020).

Despite intense efforts to highlight the above issues, one of the main challenges is striking a balance between national curriculum standards and the flexibility required for social pedagogy. Standardised testing and rigid benchmarks often undermine relational and holistic approaches central to the field of Social pedagogy (Biesta, 2010).

In an attempt to align with the developments above, the Institute of Educational Policy of Greece attempted to develop a comprehensive proposal through the design of a package of programs based on the new curricula, in synergy with other initiatives such as the implementation of Skills Labs in compulsory education, continuous teacher training, digital readiness initiatives in schools, and the implementation of the curriculum “Active Citizen Actions”⁵.

The research that follows aims to assess the impact of these efforts by examining the Expected Learning Outcomes of the new curricula across all subjects in Greece’s compulsory education system, as part of the latest educational reform.

Materials and Methods

This study employed a qualitative research strategy of content analysis, a method considered one of the most common approaches for examining public documents. Specifically, it focused on analysing the Expected Learning Outcomes (ELOs) of all subjects in the national curricula. These outcomes were reviewed using the official Government Gazette publications of the Compulsory Education Curricula, following their revision in 2023.

Content analysis is a method used to examine documents and texts (in print, online, written, or oral form) by identifying underlying thematic patterns within the material. It differs from Semiotics (the study/science of signs) and from Ethnographic analysis, which constitute alternative approaches to the content analysis of communication (Bryman, 2016).

In this study, we chose to focus on the Expected Learning Outcomes because the designers of the new curricula emphasised that learning “shifts from the subject matter, the teachers, and the teaching process toward the students and the Expected Learning Outcomes. Essentially, a reverse design process is pursued, where the design basis lies in the learning outcomes, and all other parameters depend on their definition. Preschool Education was excluded from this research as the topic has been thoroughly examined in a recent study (Penteri, 2022)

The sample selection was based on international practices in curriculum development. The ELOs define specific objectives at the thematic unit level, emphasising the three key dimensions of learning (knowledge, skills, competences).

⁵ <https://act.digitalschool.gov.gr/draseis-enischysis-energou-politeiotitas/>

Content Analysis Study of the New (Revised) Curricula 2023

Table 1

Sample: From the Government Gazette Issue (FEK)⁶

Primary (Elementary School) Codes, Subjects & Years	Secondary (Lower Secondary School) Codes, Subjects & Years
• (Code 1) Geography-5,6 (FEK 2259/τ. B'/6-4-2023) • (Code 2) Visual Arts 1.2.3.4.5.6. (FEK 3024/τ. B'/8-5-2023) • (Code 3) Drama Education 1,2,3,4 (FEK 614/τ. B'/9-2-2023) • (Code 4) Religious Education 3,4,5,6 (FEK 615/τ. B'/9-2-2023) • (Code 5) History 3,4,5,6 (FEK507/τ. B'/2-2-2023) • (Code 6) Social and Political Education 5,6 (FEK506/τ. B'/2-2-2023) • (Code 7) Mathematics 1,2,3,4,5,6 (FEK508/τ. B'/2-2-2023) • (Code 8) Environmental Studies 1,2,3,4 (FEK3023/τ. B'/9-5-2023) • (Code 9) Music 1,2,3,4,5,6 (FEK 3040/τ. B'/8-5-2023) • (Code 10) Modern Greek Language 1,2,3,4,5,6 (FEK 684/τ. B'/9-2-2023) • (Code 11) ICT 1,2,3,4,5,6 (FEK 3022/τ. B'/8-5-2023) • (Code 12) Natural Sciences 5,6 (FEK 3056/τ. B'/9-5-2023) • (Code 13) Physical Education 1,2,3,4,5,6 (FEK 2155/τ. B'/3-4-2023)	• (Code 14) Ancient Greek Language and Literature 7, 8, 9 (FEK2052/τ. B'/31-3-2023) • (Code 15) Biology 7,8,9(FEK443/τ. B'/31-1-2023.) • (Code 16) Geology – Geography 7,8 (FEK1859/τ. B'/24-3-2023) • (Code 17) Religious Education 7,8,9 (FEK416/τ. B'/30-1-2023) • (Code 18) History 7,8,9 (FEK217/τ. B'/19-1-2023) • (Code 19) Arts 7,8,9 (FEK2911/τ. B'/3-5-2023) • (Code 20) Social and Political Education 9(FEK202/τ. B'/19-1-2023) • (Code 21) Literature 7,8,9 (FEK694/τ. B'/10-2-2023) • (Code 22) Mathematics 7,8,9(FEK235/τ. B'/20-1-2023) • (Code 23) Music 7,8,9 (FEK1998/τ. B'/27-3-2023) • (Code 24) Modern Greek Language 7,8,9 (FEK 685-τ. B'-9-2-2023) • (Code 25) Home Economics 7 (FEK2930/τ. B'/3-5-2023) • (Code 26) Informatics 7,8,9 (FEK2932/τ. B'/3-5-2023) • (Code 27) Technology 7,8,9(FEK417/τ. B'/30-1-2023.) • (Code 28) Physical Education (FEK203/τ. B'/19-1 2023) • (Code 29) Physics 7,9 (FEK421/τ. B'/30-1-2023) • (Code 30) Chemistry 8,9 (FEK2910/τ. B'/3-5-2023)

Data Processing and Evaluation Method

The data analysis adhered to the principles of Content Analysis, involving the creation of a coding framework. Thirty (30) codes were created, equal to the number of compulsory education subjects taught, organised by grade level (Table 1). Each code was categorised according to the grouped results criteria of the Transdisciplinary Socio-Pedagogical Model (Pohl, 2011; Mylonakou-Keke, 2021). This model was selected due to its alignment with the core principles of Social Pedagogy and has been widely used to address antisocial behaviours in educational settings. It is divided into six main categories (Table 2).

⁶ <https://www.iep.edu.gr/provoli-neon-programmaton-spoudon/>

Next, we looked for recurring patterns across subjects and assigned relevant excerpts to thematic categories. Using thematic analysis, the Expected Learning Outcomes were examined to identify “thematic cores.” In total, 26 distinct Thematic Units were developed, each designed to support interdisciplinary and experiential learning aligned with the broader goals of the curriculum. This allowed us to break down data into segments, each labelled and mapped to one of the six categories of the Transdisciplinary Socio-Pedagogical Model, as shown in Table 2.

The analysis then sought points of connection between excerpts to interpret the resulting data and link them to the research questions that guided the study, as well as to the relevant literature. For clarity, the examined excerpts were recorded starting with primary school subjects, followed by secondary school subjects. The thirty (30) codes, corresponding to the compulsory education subjects by grade and their abbreviations, are presented. The set of ELOs analysed in the study is included in the

Results

The findings are organised in order from primary to secondary education, allowing the mapping of Expected Learning Outcomes (ELOs) to key socio-pedagogical priorities. This process revealed meaningful connections between curriculum design and broader educational goals, offering insights into how principles of social pedagogy are integrated within compulsory education.

Table 2

Mapping Expected Learning Outcomes to Socio-Pedagogical Priorities Across Primary and Secondary Education

Category	Thematic Labels	Illustrative ELOs
1. Response to Objectives – Usefulness – Value Framework	New meaning-making, problem-solving, decision-making, communication, integrity, socio-pedagogical ethos, family support	Students propose solutions to social issues, justify decisions ethically, and collaborate respectfully on school projects.
2. Creativity – Innovation	Creative and innovative thinking	Students generate original ideas for environmental projects using interdisciplinary approaches.
3. Reciprocity – Cooperation – Multiple Dialectical Synergies	Holistic systemic approach, holistic student development	Students combine knowledge from science, history, and technology to address real-world problems.
4. Harmony of Differences	Teamwork, respect for diversity and uniqueness	Students work in mixed-ability teams to create cultural exhibitions that value diverse backgrounds.
5. Multiple and Enriched Skills and Relationships	Organizational thinking, adaptability, empathy, social justice, responsibility, empowerment, emotional and digital skills	Students demonstrate empathy in group discussions, adapt to new tools, and use digital platforms to promote community initiatives.
6. Integration and Transformation of Processes and Knowledge / Dissemination and Sustainability	Critical reflection, metacognition	Students evaluate their learning strategies, reflect on project outcomes, and suggest improvements for future activities.

Despite the criticism that the new curricula received for reflecting a technocratic and behaviourist orientation (Grollios, 2022a), our analysis through a socio-pedagogical lens indicates several significant trends:

- Across all subjects in compulsory education, there is a strong emphasis on developing areas that foster organisational thinking, empathy and solidarity, social awareness, personal empowerment, and the creation of positive experiences. Students are also encouraged to develop emotional skills, as well as their familiarity with research processes and digital literacy.
- The development of value-based frameworks and systems, the promotion of socio-pedagogical ethos, and the connection of each subject with students' everyday lives are evident in almost all learning areas.
- Critical thinking and reflective practice are pursued in every subject area from the earliest years of primary school. This is accompanied by significant advances in promoting creativity, collaboration, and respect for diversity.
- The curriculum places considerable emphasis on relationship-building, using learning to address socio-pedagogical challenges within the school environment, and guiding students toward practical, intervention-oriented initiatives.
- A further notable feature is the effort across all subjects to transform students' attitudes and beliefs by the end of the course, as a result of their metacognitive development.
- In particular, the curricula for Visual Arts, Social and Political Education, Physical Education, and Modern Greek Language in primary school, as well as those for Informatics Social and Political Education and Home Economics in secondary school, display a comprehensive engagement with almost all components of the Transdisciplinary Socio-Pedagogical Model, which we have applied in this study to identify the principles of Social Pedagogy.

Fields with High and Low Content Density

High-Density Areas: These include themes such as holistic and systemic thinking, metacognition, teamwork, respect for diversity, personal empowerment, and self-confidence. These areas are frequently referenced and requested in ELOs.

Low-Density Areas: Themes like taking initiative, familiarity with socio-pedagogical research methods, digital literacy, conceptual reinterpretation, and integrity are less emphasised, with limited references in ELOs.

Discussion

The analysis of the findings reveals a deliberate effort by curriculum designers in Greece to embed principles of Social Pedagogy within contemporary frameworks. This approach aligned with international academic discourse and the evolving demands of the 21st century. Current curricular models across educational systems increasingly aspire not only to foster academic success but also to equip students for meaningful participation in future societies (Scheie et al., 2025).

It is noteworthy that all subject areas, irrespective of their immediate association with socio-pedagogical themes, hold the potential to contribute to this transformative agenda. For instance, the integration of ecological literacy into English Language Teaching (ELT) exemplifies an innovative intersection of language education and sustainability goals, as seen in recent initiatives in Switzerland (Kazazoglu, 2025) and India (Verma et al., 2025). Similarly, Physical Education (PE) has been positioned as a setting for cultivating moral and social development, particularly through the pedagogical enactment of *fair play* (Jadwiszczak et al., 2025). Social Science education also plays a vital role in fostering cooperation,

conflict resolution, and peaceful coexistence, even at the primary school level (Kuter & Sanal-Erginel, 2025). The teaching of history can play a significant role in addressing cultural differences in the Balkan region (Kesidou, 2002; Stabback, 2004). Furthermore, as previously discussed, Large Language Models (LLMs) can assist teachers in adapting digital literacy curricula to the cultural contexts of their students, particularly in U.S. schools, when integrated through various educational tools. This integration supports more inclusive and responsive approaches to AI education (Wang et al., 2025).

Within the Greek educational context, however, a structural weakness remains despite explicit references to socio-pedagogical principles. Curricula at the compulsory education level remain largely fragmented, with individual subjects operating independently. This tendency reflects the long-standing tradition of the Greek system that favours discrete disciplinary instruction at the expense of integrative perspectives. Such an orientation hinders the adoption of a genuinely holistic approach to knowledge. Yet, the Expected Learning Outcomes clearly advocate for systemic and holistic pedagogical practices, highlighting a significant inconsistency between intended goals and prevailing practices.

To address the limitations above, we propose leveraging the Expected Learning Outcomes (ELOs) of curriculum subjects with shared or complementary content to design interdisciplinary, experiential activities within the Skills Labs framework. These activities can be strategically aligned with different Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), activating a diverse set of learning objectives. As an illustrative example, we refer to the ELOs from subjects such as Geography, Visual Arts, Religious Education, Environmental Studies, and Natural Sciences in Primary Education, which can be integrated into a project focused on climate change (Table 3).

Table 3

Expected Learning Outcomes. Students are capable of

Geography (Grade 6) • <i>Adopt a positive attitude toward the preservation of the natural environment and biodiversity.</i> • <i>Define the greenhouse effect.</i> • <i>Recognize the influence of the natural environment on human life.</i> • <i>Associate the impact of natural processes and human activities with the global climate crisis.</i> • <i>Understanding that meeting present needs should not compromise the ability of future generations to meet theirs.</i> Visual Arts (Grades 1–2) • <i>Identify safe, non-toxic materials that do not harm the environment.</i> • <i>Distinguish between recyclable and non-recyclable art materials.</i> • <i>Create artworks using recyclable materials.</i> • <i>Produce art inspired by themes of biodiversity.</i> Visual Arts (Grades 3–4) • <i>Observe, compare, and propose solutions to issues related to urban and natural environments.</i> • <i>Develop environmental awareness through engagement with artworks.</i> • <i>Cultivate critical thinking and reflection on recycling, pollution, and overconsumption through artistic creation.</i> • <i>Build problem-solving skills for environmental challenges.</i> • <i>Foster a sense of responsibility toward the environment.</i> Visual Arts (Grades 5–6) • <i>Strengthen ecological sensitivity through exposure to visual and applied arts (e.g., posters, visual texts) related to sustainability.</i> • <i>Present and critique artworks addressing recycling, pollution, and overconsumption, encouraging critical engagement with these issues.</i>

Religious Education (Grades 4–5)

- *Recognize the protective role and responsibility of humans toward the natural environment.*
- *Identify examples of ecological awareness and environmental action by the Church.*
- *Connect biblical narratives (e.g., Genesis 2:19–20) with human responsibility for creation.*
- *Engage with topics related to environmental protection and sustainability.*

Environmental Studies (Grades 1–4)

- *Identify local environmental problems caused by human interventions.*
- *Detect natural changes in their local area over time.*
- *Analyze human-made structures and argue for their positive and negative impacts.*
- *Investigate human activities with both positive and negative effects on the planet.*
- *Conduct group research on environmental issues (e.g., air pollution, ocean contamination, climate change) and present findings.*
- *Identify causes of endangered species and biodiversity loss.*

Natural Sciences (Grade 5)

- *Recognize the importance of energy conservation.*
- *Design activities and propose methods for saving energy in their school.*
- *Adopt attitudes of informed and active citizenship in addressing environmental issues.*
- *Take initiative in solving problems in their broader environment.*
- *Describe major effects of climate change on the planet and humanity.*
- *Suggest ways to mitigate climate change.*

Similarly, students may engage in interdisciplinary projects on topics such as school bullying or cultural heritage, among others. In the context of Lower Secondary Education (Gymnasium), however, implementing such initiatives presents a particular challenge, as it necessitates the active collaboration of teachers from different subject areas. Encouraging and facilitating this cross-disciplinary cooperation is essential for the success of such pedagogical approaches.

Conclusions

The present study highlights the pivotal role of Social Pedagogy in the design and implementation of contemporary curricula. Its principles provide a conceptual framework capable of shaping both teaching methodologies and the organisational structure of the learning environment. They support the integration of collaborative practices, promote critical reflection, and foster the development of a sense of responsibility not only for students' personal growth but also for the enhancement of their broader environment. Moreover, they support the cultivation of interpersonal relationships founded on mutual respect and understanding. In comparison with international standards and practices, the Greek context demonstrates significant progress, while simultaneously indicating considerable scope for further improvement.

Addressing the existing tensions within the implementation of curricula requires school communities to adopt a more holistic approach toward the educational frameworks. This shift is increasingly feasible due to the integration of curricula with initiatives such as Skills Laboratories, as well as their alignment with the "Active Citizen Actions" program and dedicated School Days that focus on socio-pedagogical themes⁷.

When effectively implemented, these initiatives can establish a coherent and unified framework for socio-pedagogical learning and collaboration.

⁷ <https://act.digitalschool.gov.gr/draseis-enischysis-energou-politeiotitas/>

Within this framework, educators are encouraged to adopt interdisciplinary and collaborative pedagogies, an approach consistently supported in the international educational literature (Scheie et al., 2025). In this undertaking, teachers may further benefit from the support of school-based Social Workers and Psychologists, particularly in the design and facilitation of experiential learning activities. This collaborative orientation offers the potential to overcome the persistent absence of cross-subject initiatives.

Nonetheless, the new curricula have not escaped criticism. Concerns have been raised regarding the adequacy of student assessment practices within the context of differentiated instruction (Grollios, 2022b). To ensure the success of these reforms, timely improvements are needed. These include the development of supplementary teaching materials, the provision of appropriate infrastructure, and addressing the practical challenge of managing classrooms with 25 students. Social pedagogy is the necessary basis for teacher training. In Greece (Pantazis & Styła, 2020).

The contribution of this study lies in emphasising the value of leveraging emerging opportunities to advance an education that prioritises the development of critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and adaptive capabilities in an ever-changing environment, while placing less emphasis on accountability and cost efficiency.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future research could focus on the empirical evaluation of specific socio-pedagogical strategies as they are implemented within the new curricula across diverse school settings, particularly once these reforms are more broadly adopted nationwide. Such research questions could also be extended to studies conducted in Upper Secondary Education (Lyceum) or Higher Education, offering valuable insights that could inform the development of more effective and socially responsive educational policies. Additionally, comparative studies with other European countries could further enrich the field by examining how the principles of Social Pedagogy are interpreted and applied across different educational systems and cultural contexts.

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