USING VYGOTSKY'S THEORY ON THE ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTION OF A SCHOOL FILM CLUB - AN ACTION RESEARCH[i]

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Abstract:

Lev Vygotsky's theory states that individuals' development is a result of socializing. Individuals are influenced by other individuals in the social environment. In this way, individuals' internal cognitive functions are formed. At the same time, they create a social status and gradually build their personal appreciation for the world and the social reality around them. In this learning process, the active participation of a student himself/herself is necessary, while teachers' role is also important. Teachers contribute to knowledge's acquisition of knowledge by students. They encourage their students, while knowing the students' needs and abilities, and using the declining support method within a group of peers. In this study, action research was used as a form of self-reflective inquiry, known for its distinguished and liberating character. Teachers who participated studied and tried to understand their social or educational practices, to improve them. On the other hand, the critical friend and teachers' facilitator contributed to this process of intertwining research with action and theory with practice. This study used action research and Vygotsky's theory on the organization and function of a school film club. Using active learning strategies, elementary school students of the 5th & 6th grades, discussed, shared emotions and creatively wrote. They developed their social, cultural and linguistic abilities. Also, relationships within the school community were developed.

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[i] This study was produced from the implementation of a project in the school classroom from the second and third author, while the first author acted as a critical friend and the fourth author as a teacher-facilitator.

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1. Introduction

Vygotsky's theory became internationally known during '70s. Since then, it has been translated in many languages and has influenced mainly the field of education (Blake & Pope, 2008). A basic notion in Vygotsky's theory is the Zone of Proximal Development (Z.P.D.) that describes the distance between a student's experience and his/her potential of development. This notion gives an answer to parents' questions concerning the potential of each student as well as the factors influencing someone's unique learning course. Students are actively engaged to a dynamic interdependent process of creation, discovery of meanings and knowledge acquisition. Social factors play an important role to an individual's cognitive development, since they allow to a student to freely "move" among different stimuli that he/she perceives and to create new connections among them. Within this framework, Vygotsky interprets learning as a promising, but constantly changing process that refers to all the things that students can accomplish with or without help (Eggen & Kauchak, 2013). In reality, knowledge acquisition is a process of cognitive change and transformation of an individual. During this process, the environment, the social interaction, the meaning of communication and the language play an important role to the discovery of meanings by the individual (Mahn & John-Steiner, 2012).

Vygotsky underlines the social nature of learning, which is not a mere implementation of mental actions, but a construction of meanings. Internalization process is not understood as inculcation, but as a familiarization with some meanings. In later stages, a student reshapes these meanings with his/her active participation. A student's knowledge, thoughts, attitudes and values emerge by the interaction with his/her classmates. Therefore, it is an active internalization process and not a passive acceptance. When a students' team interacts and cooperates, learning is organized, and this results in students' development. Cognitive development is the result of a dialectical process, where a student learns by sharing experiences of problems and solutions to someone else (siblings, friends, parents, and teachers) (Gindis, 1999). This active participation of a student creates a dialectical relation among the world, the environment and the mind (Liu & Matthews, 2005). When processing and assigning meaning through the social interaction and the use of tools and means of communication, an individual can liberate him/herself by the limitations of his/her environment and at the same time, he/she can have a saying for his/her future (Moran & John-Steiner, 2003). Children experience and deal with an internal fight concerning their interests and what society considers acceptable for them to be keen on. Taking into consideration that the environment directly influences children's development, it can be deduced that the prevalent social ideas can determine whether children's transition to adulthood would be smooth or not (Dennington, n.d.)

Vygotsky's theory states that our actions are determined by the socialization process we took part in. Our internal language and imagination are connected to the development of superior mental functions. In order for someone to internalize something, he/she first has to envision it as real and then to mentally depict it. Then, he/she is able to implement it him/herself. It appears that someone's internal language and imagination exhibit a dynamic relation concerning the development of superior mental functions and especially internalization, when actual demonstration is combined with personal explanation. According to Vygotsky, action, practice and repetition lead to the learning and internalization of a new knowledge (Smagorinsky, 2007).

Vygotsky supports that knowledge is socially defined, so he underlines the importance of teamwork. A basic axis of his theory is the belief that each student contributes to the team with his/her personal characteristics. Thus, a learning environment where ideas are exchanged is positively influenced by these dynamic and interacting relations fostered by teamwork (Liu & Matthews, 2005).

The team members create a chain of active and exploratory influence. Each person offers and receives stimuli (Anagnostopoulou, 2001). The "other" constitutes an extension of the environment and this is the implementation of the Zone of Proximal Development, as Vygotsky defines it. Each student is developed and forms his/her personality based on the others' influences. As a team member, he/she acquires social skills and attitudes, gets accustomed to contemporary social problems, exchanges ideas and experiences, freely expresses his/her ideas. Thus, an individual develops his/her autonomy, his/her creativity and successful codes of communication, so he/she reaches his/her psychosocial and personal development (Leichsenring, 2013). Based on the modern multicultural theories, education in teams can be effective for all the students regardless of their cultural or linguistic differences. In this way, students develop not only their cognitive skills but far more than these (Mahn & John-Steiner, 2012· Moran & John-Steiner, 2003).

Education should follow society's needs, as those are formed by the big and fast changes dictated by politics, economy and technology. School plays an important role so as children to develop imagination and creativity, foster mental endurance and understand the interdependence among feelings, personal experience and consciousness (Moran & John-Steiner, 2003). When functioning and co-existing with peers of the same age, school students sustain and not "erase" their childhood (Postman, 1997).

For Vygotsky, a student except from his/her peers should have alongside someone who can offer to him/her the ability to develop towards various directions. Hence, teacher's role as an adult close to student is very significant in Vygotsky's theory. The teacher should guide a student to his/her full development and formation of his/her personality (Lake, 2012). The teacher should forge an environment of interaction and dialogue, where the student is the center. Within this environment, the teacher should enforce his/her students' voice and their personal interpretation of things. The teacher should offer an individualized help and support to his/her students and explain how knowledge is constructed (Liu & Matthews, 2005). Then, the teacher gradually reduces

the given help to his/her students and asks from them to take on more responsibilities; for example, he/she asks from the students to teach and explain to sub-groups something they know well themselves. Thus, there is a continuous cycle of teaching and learning. It should be noted that it is difficult and demanding for a teacher to abandon his/her "authority" and give away his/her rights and freedoms to his/her students. At the same time, a teacher should have confidence in his/her students' skills and abilities as long as in their collaboration (Hertz-Lazarowitz, 1992).

Finally, Vygotsky recognizes culture's contribution to an individual's mental development, as it is explained in the following points: (a) a child acquires a civilization's main agents and their mentality through culture (b) culture provides a child with the mental processes needed and with the means to generate such processes. So, culture gives to a child the "*tools of intellectual adaptation*" (Vygotsky, 1997). The culture is a decisive factor to personal development. Therefore, a child's learning development is influenced by its culture to a great extent (Pishghadam & Ghardiri, 2011). The personal development is related and affected by the history, the culture and the mind's ability to generalize whatever the mind comprehends. Vygotsky believes that a person's ability know is related to the situations he/she recognizes him/herself into (Cobb, 1996, as referred in Liu & Matthews, 2005, p. 392). Society and its products refer to a wider notion of whatever is related to culture. This notion of "culture" refers to whatever is a product of social life as well as of human action. So, human and society are two notions interrelated (Mahn & John-Steiner, 2012). Culture offers to students their metacognitive skills. It gives them the opportunity to understand the way they think, their mentality. A team's power and dynamics constitute an extension of the cultural framework and an expression of the established social culture. Thus, each student shapes a new temperament, a product of integrating all given information from the socio-cultural framework of reference.

2. Arts within School Curriculum

Arts constitute specific categories of thinking and function as means for understanding each framework (culture). The students who exercise Arts develop their self-control, their coordination, their movement precision and their attention to details. They are also supported to their interpersonal and intercultural understanding (Michailidou & Petra, 2016).

Picasso used to say that "*Art washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life*"; something that all students need. Arts are related to the imagination and the emotion. Imagination becomes a reality within a piece of art, where this piece offers a window to the world and is not a depiction of the reality. Art gives to a person the opportunity to create and feel. However, there is an internal process in each person, before expressing himself/herself through Art. The piece of art itself expresses social messages and comprises important stimuli concerning the expression and manifestation of whatever someone feels (Azeri & Sayali, 2012). Vygotsky considers the imagination as a cultural function in order someone to prevail on his/her behavior (Dennington, n.d.)

"*Artwork is thus a concept, but one which corresponds to signification and determination of the emotional world*" (Vygotsky 1971, as referred in Azeri & Sayali, 2012, p. 439). It is a vehicle to the creation and construction of the world of human emotions. It is this world that led students to paths of creativity, imagination, creation and life (Azeri & Sayali, 2012). Through art, a person understands himself/herself, comprehends life in a more critical manner, acquires a liberating sensitivity and releases him/herself from social fixations (Grosdos, 2020). Vygotsky also underlines the Art's significance, since he thinks that "*Art is the social technique of emotion, a tool of society which brings the most intimate and personal aspects of our being into the circle of social life*" (Vygotsky 1971, as referred in Azeri & Sayali, 2012, p. 440).

Arts do not demand the teaching formalism that is usually followed by other school subjects. This subject allows students to make mistakes, since there is no "right answer". It gives students with different cognitive backgrounds and skills the opportunity to actively participate, to express their feelings, their skills and aptitudes, to learn in their own personal way. Participating in Arts' school subject is successful, when a student is unique and not homogenous; the surprise is not only allowed but also sought, since it is a motivation and opportunity for learning (Eisner & Powell, 2002). As an educational tool, Arts' subject is used so as pedagogical aims and cognitive skills to be achieved, because their implementation influences and molds children's character Students use and create artwork based on spontaneous expressions of their feelings, through sounds, colors and images (Michailidou & Petra, 2016).

According to the Greek School Curriculum (Cross-Thematic Curriculum Framework (CTCF)) for elementary schools, as it is described in the general goals and the objectives for each school subject, the main goal is the students' complete development (CTCF, 2003). The newly introduced school subject of "skills' workshops" can be used to connect school knowledge to students' experiences. In this way, students would develop empathy and experience the freedom of speech and emotions and a sense of security within a team.

In elementary school, Arts' subject is taught in an empirical and experiential way. This way of teaching is based on connecting school subjects in a cross-curricular manner and on conforming to students' evolution with regard to their natural and mental abilities. As a result, students are gradually able to make good use of external stimuli, when they reach 5th and 6th grades in elementary school. As group members, the students can take advantage of the stimuli perceived by the external to school environment. They can use those stimuli in their oral speech, in their personal expression and motion within school classroom and their group of students (CTCF, 2003).

Students come often in contact to audiovisual stimuli and are influenced by those. So, these stimuli should be subject to certain criteria, since they form students' audiovisual education. More specifically, it is important the stimuli presented to children to include optimistic symbolisms, healthy role models of life and behavior. These stimuli should also promote students' contact to cultural elements and bring them in touch with the "mean" (the film, the creator, the material). These stimuli should also enhance

communication within a group of students/a team so as a team dialogue and each student's internal dialogue to be developed. By making students to approach and meet with products of the audiovisual arts (i.e comics, photographs, movies, television and radio shows, advertisements, newspapers, magazines, etc.), students acquire both cinematic skills and life skills. As a result of students' contact to audiovisual arts, they are capable of producing their own pieces of art (Grosdos, 2010, p. 64-65). Grosdos claims that "*initiation to cinema world through games is neither a luxury nor a pleasurable hobby. It is a stimulus and an incentive. It is a refuge, an act and an idea! The "mysterious pleasure by watching a movie" marks a relation of debatable instability between the prevailing one and the prevailed one*" (Grosdos, 2010, p. 64-65).

When mentioning children's theater, Vygotsky wonders whether it is a "*theater for children or theater by children*". He underlines that teachers should add "*the salt of laughter and tear, the salt of theater*" in students' everyday experience. Only in this way, the students would be able to "*wear*" both "*masks*" of drama, the cheerful one of laughter and the sad one of tear (Marques, 2018, pp. 7, 11).

Based on this saying, the school film club was organized. The aim was the students to approach different movies, to trigger their senses and expression of feelings, to enhance inquiry-based learning and symbolic thinking within an ambiance of images and sounds. Different stimuli were used in order to put emphasis on each student's personality and skills. In this way, all students would be able to acquire knowledge and skills, to develop an active life attitude towards whatever happens and finally to form their social behavior. Teachers/Researchers designed the cinematic activities based on criteria such as the communicative nature, the resourcefulness, the functionality and the adaptability of an activity. In this context, the function of the school film club attempted a gradual transition from the student-spectator to the student-critic and then, to the student-creator/filmmaker.

Taking into consideration Vygotsky's theory with regard to the importance of the peers' group, the environment and the adults' role (parents and teachers), this study's purpose was to explore how Arts, and especially cinema, contributes to students' social, cultural and linguistic development. The participants of the study were students of the 5th and 6th grade of elementary school. This study also wanted to feature how educational research and school everyday practice can be connected.

3. Material and Methods

The methodological framework for this research is that of "action research". This methodology offers to the researchers (two teachers, a teacher-facilitator and a critical friend) the opportunity to document how theoretical tools, notions and perceptions of Vygotsky's theory can be implemented. This implementation constructed a pedagogical relation within the school community and the students in order them to develop themselves socially, culturally and linguistically. In this study, the creation of a school

film club within a school unit resulted in an interaction and mutual communication process, an active participation by students, teachers and parents.

The methodology of action research allows the adjustment to the specific needs and conditions of each research. It entails the active participation by all the involved parties (teachers, students, parents and colleagues). This is a pre-designed and prepared teaching action, an open, social, participatory, critical and liberating process. It can be characterized as such, because the researchers/teachers can actively participate in the action by implementing themselves the changes dictated. They can also experiment with practices related to various theories, when at the same time judging and ameliorating these practices and thus, improving the theory itself (Grundy & Kemmis, 1988· Henry & Kemmis, 1993· Katsarou, 2010· Kemmis & Wilkinson, 1998· Kemmis, 1999). It is important for the teachers as researchers to reflect on this process; otherwise, they just replicate practices. Thus, it would be no change in teachers' mentality and the school unit's culture as a whole (Katsarou & Tsafos, 2018).

Researchers/Teachers' knowledge is constructed on the needs of everyday teaching practice and is connected to educational research and theory. When they understand the theory, they put meaning on it, observe and judge their practices; they acquire new knowledge and skills. In other words, they are professionally developed (Katsarou & Tsafos, 2003· Katsarou & Tsafos, 2018).

In this study, the four stages model of Kemmis (1980) was adopted. It was unfolded in the following phases: *design, action, observation-reflection, redesign* (Katsarou & Tsafos, 2018).

The following research questions were addressed in the present study: [iii]

- Does the creation of a school film club contribute to students' social, cultural and linguistic development?
- Does the creation of a school film club contribute to the relationships' development within the school community?
- Does the creation of a school film club contribute to teachers' professional development?

4. Results

In the first part of this section, there is presented the activities' calendar of the school film club for the school year 2019-2020. In the second part, an indicative activity of the school film club is presented.

[iii] In action-research, the research questions were not raised to "prove" something, but as a guideline for the research.

4.1 The activities' calendar

In **September**, an experiential training seminar took place concerning cinema literacy[iv] and teachers' awareness. There was also a first meeting with the Chania Cinema Festival.

In **October,** a school film club was created. Parents and teachers' association was informed about the club. Two different groups of students were formed, a target group and a group of predators who were students taking the role of the researchers inside the documentary shot. Also, the whole process was formally legalized by the Prefecture of Education. In parallel, the layout of activities was formed, and the first important decisions were taken concerning the theme of the film, how it would be display to students and the shooting's form and duration.

In **November**, the two groups of students were met and introduced to each other with breaking the ice activities so as to creatively co-exist. Taking into account the team's dynamics, a suggestion for a film shooting was presented to the students and they endorsed it. Then, the students discussed about the roles and the responsibilities they would undertake. Also, it was discussed how a short film shooting would take place with the help of a film crew. However, the theme of the film was not yet revealed, because researchers/teachers considered it more creative if students would learn about it through personal testimonials. Afterwards, students would decide themselves to be the researchers for whatever they have listened to. The main aim of the previous activities was the students to know each other, to collaborate, to suggest ideas, to participate and to take initiatives. In order to raise students' awareness and to psychologically prepare them for the first shooting, four experiential meetings were organized. On purpose, some of students' questions were left unanswered. Students were introduced to some cinema skills such as the speculation, the multi-sensory connotations, the acquaintance with the theme through shots and scenes. When viewing the films, the students practiced in identifying themselves with characters (heroes) and situations. They combined what they watched with what they felt along with their personal experiences.

Finally, the "team contract" was agreed. It included rules suggested by all team members, teachers and students. Rules referred to issues such as: what is an acceptable or unacceptable behavior, how the students would commit to a task as part of the whole activity, how students and teachers would show solidarity and give help to each other when needed.

Researchers/Teachers shared their experiences with the Teachers' association and the teacher facilitator, and they discussed about extending this program. Their colleagues showed trust, acceptance and interest in this endeavor. However, they had doubts on how the teaching material based on the school curriculum would be completed on time. In a school event for students' parents, a visual material by students' creations was

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[iv] A 20hour seminar was held under the auspices of Chania Film Festival. The seminar combined theory and practice for the participants. Participants were expected to construct educational activities based on a movie's content, but also to be able to decode film's indicators (color, sound, scenes, silences, plot twists, dialogue, chronological sequence).

collected and presented. The material was spontaneously created by the students without any explanations, dictation or critique by the teachers.

In **December**, an activity was designed for the Children's Library of Chania Municipality. Researchers/Teachers wanted to approach Christmas' Celebration in a different way. For this purpose, they used two short films ("The box" and «The visitors») that puzzled and deeply moved the students. Teachers' aim was to look into students' feelings and experiences. So, there would be a construction of knowledge and feelings for each student, separately and within the group. By experientially processing the films, each student attempted to discover his/her own path of learning and knowledge construction, emotions exploring and experiences acquiring. The students collaborated, wrote dialogues among the play's characters and original texts and they made drawings. Lastly, they gave an answer to significant issues concerning the human nature and existence. Students' answers were documented and "hidden" in a box. The box was taken back to the school and it served as food for thought for the other teachers. As a result, they asked to modify this activity and implement it inside their classrooms. In this way, the "Christmas' box" was enriched by the ideas of all the school students, became a symbol and a common point of reference. It represented each student's ability to participate in the activity and to express him/herself, being anonymous at the same time.

There was a discussion with the critical friend and the teacher facilitator on the program's course, its initial goals and objectives. Issues such as the collaboration and the feelings developed during the whole program were also talked about. This discussion brought to light the need to modify the program's initial design and to create a short film. The film included students' photos when participating in the activity, their drawings and their answers. It was showed to a parents' event, resulting in their active involvement in the whole program.

In **January,** the team watched a "tough" documentary (Kayayo - the pack animals), discussing inequalities. Students had to face the truth of children of their age, living somewhere far, having a much different life than theirs. Students had to tackle issues such as the family, the society's expectations and demands, and the goods, values and rights we take for granted. By corresponding to the girl leading character with empathy, the students opened a discussion with themselves. In parallel, documentary's shooting started regarding the explosion of the ship "Panormitis" in October 1979 in Souda's port. The reason for the documentary was a pantomime, where students tried to enact some words related to the documentary's topic (ship, fire, explosion). It is a topic based on Chania's local history that all students knew from their parents. Students understood history's influence on our lives and how people's actions affect others' lives. The documentary's production was supported by Chania Film Festival that undertook to do the shooting and the montage. After contacting the critical friend, it was agreed that a similar event for students' parents should be organized. Parents were considered as they were film club members and they participated in a shot film screening. After the film's screening, they also took part in some relevant activities and a conversation. Thus, after understanding the importance of the whole process taking place in a film club, students'

parents as a group played an important role, since they promoted children's participation.

In **February**, the documentary's shooting continued as well as the meetings of cinema training seminar for both parents and students. However, the lockdown because of the pandemic meant a cease to all the activities. This was the reason for the cancellation of the screening the film "Sing" in Souda's Open Protection Centre for the Elderly (KAPI). This screening wanted to open the school film club to local society and to experientially involve the elderly in the club's activities. However, more teachers in the school showed interest in helping with the documentary's shooting inside and outside the school.

For the next three months (**March, April** and **May**), the school film club functioned in an electronic platform. It was configured to be attractive to students and to attract their interest. It included many creative games and activities. The feature and shot films on the platform were creations of the Chania Film Festival, so there were no copyright issues. The movies were suggested to be watched alone or with all the family. The activities asked from students to prepare their place before film screening in a way to have the "cinema convention". Activities after the film's screening suggested creating playdough sculptures, creative writing, creating a "thoughts' museum" in a padlet, participating in an electronic viewers' book. The students took shots of their creations and they shared them with their peers in the school film club. During the lockdown, a students' writing contest was announced. The topic was "HOPE". Students acted on their own and they freely created their writings, out of any conventions, based on their feelings.

In **June**, when students and teachers returned back to classrooms and face-to-face lessons, the documentary's shooting was completed and the montage, i.e., the scenes' editing, started.

4.2 An indicative activity of the film club

This case study features all the activities taking place before, during and after short movies' viewing by students in the Children's Library of Chania Municipality in December 2019. The activities took place in the context of the school film club, as a different approach to the Christmas Celebration. The short movies selected to be shown to students were «The Box» and «The visitors». In the movie *«The box»*, war's absurdity and violence disrupt the normal, quiet life of a child that has to be displaced by his homeland. In a route that this child loses everything, the only point of reference is a box, where he used to put his toys. In the movie *«The visitors»*, two seniors try to speak to their children through Skype, shortly before Christmas dinner. The table is set, the food menu is rich, but who is going to sit in this table?

4.2.1 Before the movie's screening

Before the students watched the film, a small box was presented to them. This box would "protect" children's thoughts, as they would be unraveled and recorded. More precisely, the question «What is Christmas for you?» was addressed to the students. Then, the students wrote their answers by impulse and these thoughts were collected and hold by.

For example, some students answered that Christmas is «*Joy, happiness, giving gifts*», «*When the snow and the gifts come*», «*Love, because each person gives love in his/her own way* », «*Wishes*».

4.2.2 During the movie's screening

The students watched the film «The Box» by Merve Cirisoglu Cotur, till the end. They were completely silent, and the ambiance was emotionally overwhelmed. Some students almost cried. They had to answer to the question «*What do you think it happened next?*». Some answers were: «He reached to an island/deserted place», «*He tried to survive*», «*He may have survived or died*», «*He found his parents*», «*He found another family (because his parents had died)*», «*He found his relatives*». *Then, the students watched another short movie called* «The visitors» by Thodoris Papadoulakis. During the screening, students didn't move nor speak nor whisper to each other. During the film's screening, the researchers/teachers paused at the scene, where a pickup car shows up and the driver uncovers the back of the truck that is covered with nylon. So, the children were asked to answer the question «What do you think there is under nylon?». Some of the answers were: «*Kids*», «*A child from the Box!*», «*A stolen child (trafficking)*». Then, the film's screening continued, but many students were emotionally overwhelmed.

4.2.3 After the movie's screening

After the viewing, the students were silent for a while and then, they listened to the song "Wa habibi" (Oh, mama!), a song played in the movie. However, now the students listened to it without any image displayed.[v] A brainstorming activity followed, where students were asked to write any ideas, words or phrases came to mind, when listening to the song (Brainstorming, I.E.P., 2014, p. 111). They stuck their answers on a paper sheet on the wall. For example, they said «Water, Love, Care», «*Poor family, children*», «*Love gives strength, food, a home*», «*God give me strength, happiness to grandparents*», «*Some people have no roof/home, no food, while others complain, even though they have everything they need*», «*Grandmother, Grandson, happiness*», «*Mother, child, cry*», «*food, war*», «*truck, sorrow*», «*beggar, cross, poverty*», «*Family, borders, mountains*», «*love, cross, sky of mine*», «*water, flower, mama*», «*poverty*», «*It was a very touching ending*», «*Christmas is love. This shows from inside you, not from the outside*», «*Loneliness, sorrow, fear, cold, abandonment*», «*The child found a family and his grandfather came and offered hospitality to them*», «*a house, borders, a roof for everybody*», «*people, love, hug, happiness, family*», «*sky, spring, light*», «*clouds, poverty, bed*», «*love, happiness, hospitality*», «*Christmas, joy*» «*To be hospitable, hugs*».

Then, the students presented «frozen images» (Institute of Educational Policy – I.E.P., 2014, p. 155). They split up in teams on their own, discussed and answered to the question «What kind of stories has the bench of the movie heard?» *or* «*what would the bench say, if it could speak?*». They had to answer to the questions by using only their bodies. All children's teams reenacted people hugging each other, being hunched and

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[v] It is a traditional song-hymn that is sung in Libanon in Holy Friday. Adaptation to Greek by Christodoulos Chalaris, lyrics by Nikos Gatsos, Adaptation-Interpretation: Eleni & Suzanna Vougioukli.

sad. The students interpreted the images seen as «*Homeless people feeling cold*», «*A family that loves each other*», «*People thinking how they can survive*», «*Siblings left all alone*». According to the students, if the bench spoke, it would say «*I wish I had more to give to them*».

The discussion was about loneliness. A question was «How would this night have turned into for the two seniors, if the videocall had worked out? » All students responded that the situation would be worse, because «They would have been left alone», «*The grandfather would have not been out and would not have met the family*».

At the end, the initial question was raised again «What is Christmas for you? » The students wrote «*Not be left alone*», «*To love, to be happy and to give*», «*Jesus Christ' birth, days of love and warmth*», «*Some good days for us, but difficult ones for others*», «*Love, to be happy with what we got and to not ask for more*», «*family moment, love, joy, together, game, sadness for other people*», «*Feelings*», «*To respect each other*», «*Joy, to help the homeless, friendship and family*», «*Jesus Christ' birth*», «*A warm hug*», «*Hospitality*», «*A roof for everybody*». *All the answers were collected and put back in the box, where the initial answers were placed, before this activity took place.*

This educational visit to Children's Library of Chania Municipality ended here. The box was brought back to school as a souvenir.

5. Discussion

This study aimed to show how a School film club functioned with regard to the following three axes: the students' social, cultural and linguistic development, the development of relationships within the school community and lastly, the teachers' professional development, since in this study, they serve both as teachers and researchers.

First and foremost, the students learned to participate in a team, to listen and to answer, to raise questions, to give interpretations, to make argumentations, to describe their thoughts and their impressions. They also nurtured their feelings and were encouraged to express them. They came in contact with their inner self and with their classmate peers. They understood that they can have different opinions and still discuss them with respect. They also realized that there are different "truths" and that each person has its own perspective. With all their senses, they felt and comprehended the environment that surrounds them. They understood how they are related to the history and the memories of their neighborhood and the city they live in. They appreciated cinema art, while they developed communicative and exploratory skills, undertook initiatives, got inspired and creative. The school film club contributed to the students' social, cultural and linguistic development. This is because students' active participation, teachers' experiential approach, teamwork and interaction were the basic elements of the learning process implemented. The students gradually undertook a more active and creative role in the learning process, while the teachers had the role of facilitator and counselor, as Vygotsky's theory suggests (Hertz-Lazarowitz, 1992· Liu & Matthews, 2005· Mahn & John-Steiner, 2012· Moran & John-Steiner, 2003· Vygotsky, 2000).

The school film club promoted the relationships' development among all the people involved in the school unit (teachers, students, parents, critical friend, teacher facilitator). Parents and teachers' association was constantly informed about the activities planned, the movies selected, the active techniques used in the club. This program was creatively enhanced by the teachers' teams created so as to exchange ideas and collaborate. Teachers' involvement in the program was a conscious decision as well as the dissemination of the club's material, the students' creations based on a time schedule. This material functioned for teachers either as the reason to move to the next film's screening or as an invitation to participate in an activities' presentation by the film club members. The school film club served as an opportunity for interaction, exchanging of ideas and taking the initiatives. Unfortunately, the pandemic did not allow the school film club to come out to society. However, the film "SING!" was the center of an untypical in-school training seminar for a teachers' group. During this seminar and along with the teachers participating, some activities were designed in order to be implemented in the future. On the other hand, parents were enthusiastic for their children's participation in the school film club, they were helpful in any possible way and excited for every new activity of the program. Parents took part in the activities planned along with their children. These collaborations contributed to the school's opening to the local community, while a culture of collaboration was created within the school unit (Schein, 2010). Moreover, parents' involvement contributed to the creation of bonds of mutual trust, a necessary condition for a community-school interaction resulting in the development and practice of students' skills (Moran & John-Steiner, 2003).

Lastly, in this study, the schoolteachers of the 5th and 6th grades implemented the school film club program, being also the researchers of the study. They adopted the four stages model of Kemmis (1980). Thus, they learnt to design, act, observe, listen carefully and redesign the activities after taking into consideration the critical friend's and the teacher's facilitator views and suggestions. Without feeling the fear of failure or the program's incompletion, they listened to the opinions expressed by the students, the parents and teachers' association and the parents themselves. Each activity was followed by a reflection on it and the design of the activities for the following month. Therefore, teachers were professionally developed, since they connected theory and practice, they understood their practices and they improved them by understanding the changes made (Vozaitis & Ifanti, 2013· Henry & Kemmis, 1993· Katsarou, 2010· Katsarou & Tsafos, 2018). All the process was based on the collaboration, the communication and the views' exchange with the critical friend and the teacher facilitator; this resulted in teachers' reflecting on their practices and in the whole program's successful route and completion. Thus, a combination of theory and practice, research and action were succeeded based on a dynamic and continuously developing design. The critical friend and the teacher facilitator were helpers to the researchers/teachers' attempt to critically judge themselves and their expectations, their choices, their demands by adopting a new culture of research. The reflection offers a way of giving meaning and understanding the

uncertainty of teachers' professional environment, while it was a source of power, ability and ethics for a profession that aims to balance between "*order and chaos*" (Ghaye, 2000).

6. Recommendations

Future research could focus on the evaluation of the effects of other forms of Arts, i.e., Painting, Theatre Literature and Music on students' social, cultural and linguistic development, the development of relationships within the school community and the teachers' professional development. In addition, a quantitative approach could be used to measure and assess the relation and/or effect of the Arts on these four different axes. Furthermore, an experimental study could be designed, and a control and an intervention group of students could be involved. Finally, other age groups of students may participate in similar studies and a comparison between different age groups could be made.

7. Conclusion

Based on Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, a school film club that consisted of students of 5th & 6th grades was formed. In addition, the effects of this on students' social, cultural and linguistic development, the development of relationships within the school community and the teachers' professional development were assessed.

The significance of others is eminent in Vygotsky's theory, and this mainly determined the work of the film club. Through this project, students had the opportunity to be actively engaged in the creation and development of the club, they worked in teams and they interacted with their peers for the implementation of several activities. Teachers were also involved, guiding students through the whole process. Nevertheless, they gradually reduced the assistance that they were giving to students so that the latter could take responsibility and a more active role in their own learning. Expressing their inner thoughts and emotions, actively participating in discussions, raising questions, giving answers, and interpreting different situations, students developed their social, cultural, and linguistic skills.

In addition, relationships within the school community were cultivated. Students' parents, Teacher's Association and local community got to know the film club and were constantly informed about its activities, while they also supported its development.

Finally, teachers were developed professionally as, going through a process of reflection, and taking into consideration critical friend's and teacher's facilitator thoughts and recommendations, they designed, acted, observed, and redesigned the activities that they along with their students would be involved in.

This study serves as an example of how Vygotsky's theory can be implemented in class and how school community can be developed in multiple ways, also illustrating the importance of the support of all the teachers in a school and of students' parents. Future

research could further validate its findings and investigate new means to achieve this development.

8. Limitations

The research was time bound and limited in space, as it focused on the organizational and function of a film club in one school. Nevertheless, the findings highlight the use of Lev Vygotsky's theory in the classroom, as well as action research.

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