



FROM CONVERSATION TO CREATION: EXPLORING STUDENT EXPRESSION THROUGH WORLD CAFÉ AND CLASSROOM MUSEUMS

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Abstract:

This study investigates the impact of multimedia projects within a STEAM education framework, utilizing the World Café methodology to enhance student expression and foster collaboration. Over the course of three months, students engaged in meaningful discussions and created multimedia artifacts that reflect contemporary social issues, significantly enhancing their communication skills. The findings reveal high levels of student participation, with many expressing enthusiasm for the collaborative process and appreciating the opportunity to work with peers from diverse backgrounds. Additionally, there was a notable improvement in students' collaborative abilities and problem-solving skills. The study emphasizes the importance of incorporating multimedia tools into educational settings, suggesting that they not only facilitate critical thinking and creativity but also allow students to tackle real-world problems effectively. By addressing relevant societal themes, the multimedia projects enriched the overall learning experience, providing students with valuable opportunities for personal growth and engagement in meaningful discourse.

Keywords: World Café, collaboration, student expression, critical thinking, STEAM education

1. Introduction

Student expression plays a vital role in education, fostering creativity, critical thinking, and emotional growth. Traditional teaching methods often fall short in providing students with opportunities to voice their thoughts and concerns. Consequently, there is a growing need for innovative approaches that facilitate open dialogue and self-expression. Engaging students in meaningful conversations and creative projects can significantly enhance their learning experiences and empower them to address issues that are important to them. One effective approach to fostering student expression is through

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the creation of multimedia projects based on topics of personal interest, culminating in a classroom museum that showcases their work.

2. World Café Method

The World Café method, introduced by Brown and Isaacs in 1995, offers a structured yet flexible framework for large group discussions. This technique has been widely applied in various contexts to facilitate meaningful conversations (Fallon & Connaughton, 2016, pp. 3–5). The World Café is defined as a step-by-step conversational process that engages large groups of people who share an interest in a particular topic, problem, or opportunity (Brown & Isaacs, 2005). Fouche and Light (2010) describe it as "*a conversational process that helps groups engage in constructive dialogue around critical questions, to build personal relationships, and to foster collaborative learning.*" This approach emphasizes inquiry and comprehension instead of merely focusing on problem-solving, with the goal of fostering a shared understanding rather than developing specific action plans (Prewitt, 2011).

In a World Café session, participants are seated in groups of four to five around tables arranged to resemble a café setting, which encourages informal conversations. Guided by predetermined questions, participants move between tables, discussing the questions with different groups. Each table has a host who shares highlights from previous conversations, facilitating the exchange and development of ideas. As discussions unfold, fresh perspectives arise, leading to a broader understanding and enriched collective knowledge (Brown & Isaacs, 2005; Prewitt, 2011). Hurley and Brown (2010) highlight the significance of group discussions in uncovering shared interests, exchanging knowledge, envisioning future possibilities, and fostering collaboration for survival and success. The facilitator, or table host, plays a crucial role in compiling notes and ensuring clear instructions, thus fostering creativity, knowledge creation, and collaborative learning (Lorenzetti, Azulai, & Walsh, 2016; Prewitt, 2011). Successful facilitation hinges on guiding participants toward discovering common meanings on topics that hold significant collective relevance (Prewitt, 2011). The seven design principles of the World Café include setting the context, creating a hospitable space, exploring meaningful questions, encouraging contributions from everyone, connecting diverse perspectives, listening for patterns, and gathering collective discoveries (Hurley & Brown, 2010).

3. Study Objectives

This study, conducted with second-class students at the First Middle School of Ilion in Greece, aims to explore the effectiveness of the World Café method in a classroom setting, focusing on how it facilitates student expression through multimedia projects. The specific objectives are to:

- 1) Investigate how the World Café method helps students articulate their interests.

- 2) Examine the creative process of developing multimedia projects based on these discussions.
- 3) Assess the impact of a classroom museum on student engagement and learning.

By integrating the World Café method into the classroom, this study seeks to demonstrate how structured dialogue and creative expression can enhance educational outcomes and foster a more inclusive and responsive learning environment. The creation of a classroom museum with student multimedia projects serves as a culminating event, allowing students to present their work and engage with their peers' creations, thereby reinforcing the collaborative and participatory nature of the World Café method.

4. Literature Review

4.1 Applications of the World Café Method in the Classroom

The World Café (WC) method has been effectively implemented in educational settings to foster meaningful dialogue and collaborative learning. Its informal, conversational format enhances student engagement and participation by creating a relaxed environment conducive to open discussion. According to Fallon and Connaughton (2016), this method is adaptable and can be applied to various contexts, including education, where it helps bring diverse perspectives together. WC's emphasis on active, shared knowledge creation empowers participants to be co-creators rather than passive recipients, establishing them as stakeholders who benefit from shared knowledge (Aldred, 2011; Fouché & Light, 2010; Weitzenegger, 2010). Estacio and Karic (2015) demonstrated WC's utility in higher education, promoting inclusive dialogue and reflection on topics like internationalization. Moreover, Lorenzetti, Azulai, and Walsh (2016) highlight its transformative capacity, enhancing reflexivity and critical thinking among students. This interactive framework supports reflective learning and fosters new, personal relationships, often resulting in collaborative insights and innovative understanding (Stöckigt et al., 2013; Flick et al., 2004). The rotational structure of WC, where students discuss set questions at various tables, exposes them to different perspectives, building a sense of community and deepening critical thinking (Fouché & Light, 2010). Takahashi et al. (2014) examined WC's dialogic processes, emphasizing its potential to strengthen communication skills and collaborative learning. The WC process also facilitated a broad exploration of the research topic, resulting in a large number of ideas, serving its objectives to maximize participation and initiate dialogue on conflict management (Löhr et al., 2020). However, there is a noticeable gap in research, specifically on WC's use in classroom settings, particularly with younger students, highlighting a need for studies exploring its adaptability and effectiveness in these contexts.

4.2 Multimedia in Education

The importance of multimedia technologies and applications in education as teaching and learning tools cannot be underestimated. Numerous studies have confirmed their

positive impact on the educational system. For instance, Minović et al. (2013) demonstrated that using multimedia tools in mathematics classes significantly enhances student learning. Animations effectively stimulate students' interest and enhance the learning experience (Clark, 2008).

Multimedia communication closely resembles face-to-face interactions, as it is less restricted than text and ensures better understanding (Pea, 1991). It simplifies abstract content, accommodates individual differences, and coordinates diverse representations from different perspectives. The use of computer-based techniques as interfaces between students and learning materials, with suitable fonts and designs, can be highly beneficial. The use of multimedia as a form of blended-learning technique caters to multiple learning styles and has been found to provide better outcomes than traditional lecture delivery (McLaughlin et al., 2015). Augmented reality improves students' cognitive skills by providing a platform that combines digital and physical parameters (Akçayır & Akçayır, 2017).

However, despite the improvements multimedia technology brings to teaching and learning, there are several limitations. These include user-friendly programming or interfaces, limited resources, lack of necessary knowledge and skills, and limited time.

4.3 Student Expression and STEAM: Classroom Museum

The integration of student expression within STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) education has become increasingly important, enhancing motivation, learning, and problem-solving skills (Choi et al., 2017; Herro et al., 2017; Kavoura et al., 2023; Thuneberg et al., 2018). Classroom museums, as a form of multimedia engagement, provide students with the opportunity to express their creativity and innovations through tangible exhibits. This hands-on approach aligns with the goals of STEAM education, which emphasizes creativity as a critical component (Kim & Park, 2012; Land, 2013; Sousa & Pilecki, 2013).

Incorporating STEAM principles into classroom activities encourages students to develop a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of these disciplines. This approach not only enhances students' problem-solving skills but also fosters their ability to think critically and innovatively (Kavoura & Psoma, 2024). Herro and Quigley (2016) and Park et al. (2016) highlight that effective STEAM education requires a curriculum that integrates these elements cohesively, enabling students to see the relevance of their studies to real-world scenarios. The arts component, often represented as creativity, plays a crucial role in this integration, helping students to approach problems from multiple perspectives and develop original solutions.

The development of classroom museums as part of STEAM education offers a unique platform for student expression. By creating multimedia exhibits that showcase their understanding and interests, students engage in a form of reflective learning that reinforces their knowledge and skills. This method of learning through creation and exhibition helps bridge the gap between theoretical concepts and practical application, making learning more meaningful and impactful. Furthermore, it allows students to take

ownership of their learning process, promoting a sense of pride and accomplishment in their work.

4.4 Study Context and Methodology

This study was conducted with second-class students at the First Middle School of Ilion in Greece. Utilizing the World Café method, students engaged in discussions about their concerns and interests, which were then expressed through multimedia projects. These projects were showcased in a classroom museum, providing a platform for student expression and peer learning. Following the creation of the multimedia projects and classroom museum, students completed an online questionnaire to reflect on the method, the challenges faced, and their experiences of collaboration. This approach aimed to assess the effectiveness of the World Café method in facilitating student expression and enhancing collaborative learning.

By integrating the World Café method with multimedia projects and classroom museums, this study seeks to demonstrate the potential of innovative teaching methods in fostering a more engaging and inclusive learning environment. The findings will contribute to the growing body of research on the use of dialogue-based and project-based learning strategies in education.

5. Methodology

5.1 Participants

The study was conducted with a group of second-class students from the First Middle School of Ilion, Greece. A total of 30 students, aged between 12-13 years, participated in the project. The students represented various academic levels and interests, especially regarding multimedia and STEAM education.

5.2 Procedure

5.2.1 Duration

The project unfolded over a period of three months.

5.2.2 World Café Sessions

Setup: Students were organized into small groups of 4-5, seated in a café-style layout. Each group discussed key questions designed to stimulate creative and critical thinking.

These questions, asked in Greek, included:

- What is the main idea you wish to convey through your creation?
- What are your primary goals, and how do you perceive them?
- What is the main message you want to communicate through your work?
- How does the topic you chose matter to you personally?
- What is the most important aspect of your creation?
- What is your contribution to the group's overall objective?
- What is your personal view on the topic?

- How does your personal experience or knowledge influence your understanding of the topic?
- How can you contribute to solving the issue at hand?
- What concerns or obstacles might you face during the process?

Rotation: Students rotated between tables to share and collect ideas, enabling collaborative learning and cross-pollination of insights.

5.2.3 Multimedia Project Development

- Guidance: Teachers and facilitators provided instructions, encouraging students to express their concerns and ideas through multimedia formats such as digital presentations, videos, and interactive projects.
- Creative Process: Students worked both independently and in groups to develop multimedia projects, allowing them to explore solutions to issues they identified.

5.2.4 Classroom Museum Setup

- Display: After completing the multimedia projects, the classroom was transformed into a museum-like environment, where students' works were displayed and engaged with interactively.
- Engagement: The classroom museum allowed peer feedback and a deeper exploration of the topics presented.

5.3 Data Collection

5.3.1 Methods

- Observations: The teacher observed student interactions and participation during both the World Café sessions and the creation of multimedia projects.
- Questionnaires: Students filled out questionnaires that included reflective questions about the process, difficulties encountered, and collaboration within the group.
- Multimedia Artifacts: The multimedia projects themselves served as data, reflecting the students' creativity, problem-solving abilities, and engagement with the issues.

5.3.2 Analytical Tools and Techniques

- Qualitative Analysis: Thematic analysis was used to analyze responses from questionnaires and observations, identifying key themes and insights.
- Artifact Analysis: Multimedia creations were assessed based on their creativity, the clarity of the conveyed message, and the effective use of technology to express concerns. This methodology ensured a comprehensive understanding of how the World Café method and multimedia projects influenced student expression and engagement in a STEAM-focused educational setting.

5.3.3 Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative data gathered from the questionnaire responses and World Café sessions was analyzed to identify patterns and themes across student experiences.

5.3.4 Collaboration and Communication

One dominant theme was the students' emphasis on communication and teamwork. Most respondents (61.5%) found the collaboration process easy or very easy. Many attributed this to enhanced group dynamics and the opportunity to work with peers they hadn't interacted with before, reflecting the success of the collaborative design of the World Café method.

For example, responses such as "improved communication with classmates" and "we worked well as a group" highlighted how the informal, discussion-based structure helped foster a sense of teamwork. Some students noted that the project offered a rare chance to engage meaningfully with peers they hadn't previously collaborated with, which deepened their interpersonal connections and enhanced their creative process.

5.3.5 Improvement in Collaboration Skills

The students' responses indicate a strong improvement in collaboration skills through the classroom museum project. Many students expressed that they collaborated with a wide variety of classmates to achieve the outcome, which significantly enhanced their teamwork abilities. Some noted that discussing various topics was enjoyable and insightful, while others found value in connecting with peers they hadn't previously interacted with closely. The emphasis on extensive group work facilitated both their personal engagement and collective communication, helping to strengthen overall group dynamics and cooperation skills.

5.3.6 Creativity and Multimedia Skills

The responses further revealed that the project was effective in fostering creativity and problem-solving skills, both core objectives of STEAM education. Several students noted how using multimedia helped them "learn new digital tools" and "explore creative ideas." The process of creating multimedia artifacts was an empowering experience for students, enabling them to express their ideas in novel ways. This indicates that the STEAM-based classroom museum project succeeded in promoting innovation and creativity, particularly through multimedia technology.

5.3.7 Student Satisfaction with the Classroom Museum Project

Responses on satisfaction with the final project outcome varied. Some students were disappointed, reporting they were "not at all" satisfied as they didn't complete it on time. Others felt "moderately" satisfied due to struggles with group consensus, limited video editing skills, or unmet expectations. However, several students expressed high satisfaction, describing the project as "very good," "just as imagined," or "well-received

by classmates." Many appreciated the collaborative aspect, with one student noting they were "very pleased" with both the final product and positive peer feedback.

5.3.8 Active Participation in World Café Discussions

Student responses on active participation in the World Café sessions varied. A subset of students reported limited involvement, citing a lack of group fit, uncertainty about speaking, or disinterest in the topic. Others found participation enjoyable, particularly appreciating the opportunity to express their ideas and engage fully in the discussions. Several students noted consistent, enthusiastic involvement, driven by their desire to contribute creatively and make the project meaningful. Overall, the exercise was positively received, with many finding it both engaging and a chance to develop their ideas collaboratively.

5.3.9 Enhancement of Creativity through the Method

In interviews about the impact of the method on creativity, some students expressed mild feelings of enhancement, suggesting they felt their creativity was "a little" improved but not significantly. Others shared moderate experiences, stating they appreciated the opportunity to explore new ideas, though they felt constrained at times.

On the other hand, several students reported strong boosts in creativity. They described feeling inspired by group collaboration, stating that sharing different perspectives encouraged them to think outside the box. One student mentioned, "I could visualize my ideas better with input from others," while another shared, "It made me realize I could contribute creatively when given the chance." For a few, the method was transformative; they remarked, "This process opened my mind to new possibilities I had not considered before." Overall, the feedback highlights a spectrum of experiences, from slight to profound impacts on creativity.

5.3.10 Challenges and Areas for Improvement

Despite the overall success, students identified several challenges, particularly around the organization and time management. Responses such as "lack of time" and "difficulty finding a topic" highlighted concerns over the project's structure and pacing. Additionally, some students encountered challenges with group collaboration, especially when opinions clashed, or certain group members did not fully engage. Recommendations included starting the project earlier and offering clearer guidelines from the outset.

In conclusion, the qualitative analysis demonstrated that the World Café and classroom museum setup fostered collaboration, creativity, and enhanced multimedia skills. However, clearer planning and more time for execution could improve future iterations of the project.

The qualitative data revealed a wide range of student expressions through multimedia projects. For example, one group created a video about the rising price of souvlaki in recent years, stating that it significantly affected them, motivating their

choice. Another group focused on femicides in Greece, noting that a recent death in their neighborhood made the issue deeply personal. A third group addressed the tragic Tempio train accident, highlighting its nationwide impact. Other groups explored lighter themes, such as sports and vacations, while one group examined a high-profile criminal case that dominated the news. The diversity of the projects underscored how personal and societal concerns shaped each group's work, with exhibits varying based on the issues relevant to each team.

Regarding participation in discussions during the World Café sessions, most students reported being actively involved. However, one student mentioned feeling too anxious to contribute, while four others cited moderate participation due to misalignment with their group or lack of interest in the topic. When asked about their communication skill development, most students expressed improvement, especially in using digital tools like image and video editing software, as well as learning how to collaborate. Yet, a few noted little to no progress in this area.

This analysis demonstrates that the project successfully engaged students with diverse interests and concerns, promoting creativity, multimedia skills, and teamwork. However, varying levels of participation and communication challenges highlighted areas for further refinement, such as providing more guidance or support for students struggling with group dynamics or anxiety.

6. Discussion

The results of this study highlight several key findings regarding student engagement and multimedia use in education, revealing the transformative impact these elements can have on the learning experience. First, the diverse range of topics chosen by the students—such as rising food prices, femicides, and the tragic Tempio train accident—demonstrates the effectiveness of multimedia projects in enabling students to express concerns that are both personally and socially relevant. This finding aligns with existing literature emphasizing the importance of real-world connections in fostering student engagement and motivation, as noted by Herro et al. (2017) and Choi et al. (2017). Addressing pressing social issues not only empowers students but also enhances their learning experience by making it more relatable and meaningful, thereby encouraging deeper cognitive engagement.

Moreover, the implementation of the World Café method proved to be an effective strategy for eliciting student concerns and fostering creative expression. Engaging in structured, collaborative dialogues allowed students to voice their thoughts and feelings, leading to more authentic and meaningful project outcomes. The interactive nature of this method enabled students to draw from their personal experiences, resulting in multimedia projects that reflected the rich diversity of student perspectives and creativity. This supports previous research that underscores the importance of collaborative environments in enhancing student learning and engagement, as evidenced by Park et al. (2016). The opportunity for students to share and discuss their ideas in an

open setting cultivates a sense of community and belonging, which is essential for effective learning. Furthermore, the process of collaboration itself—navigating differing opinions and building consensus—serves as a valuable life skill that extends beyond the classroom.

Additionally, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) and multimedia in education by illustrating how multimedia tools, when integrated into creative projects, can support the development of critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills. Students gained not only valuable technical skills related to multimedia production but also learned how to work collaboratively, negotiate differing ideas, and convey their messages through various media formats. This holistic approach to learning is vital in preparing students for the complexities of the modern world, where multidisciplinary skills are increasingly important. Moreover, by engaging with multimedia, students develop digital literacy skills that are essential in today's technology-driven society.

For educators and policymakers, these findings underscore the importance of creating more opportunities for students to engage in multimedia projects that resonate with their lives. Encouraging creative expression in educational settings through methods like the World Café can deepen student engagement, foster collaboration, and support the development of essential 21st-century skills. Additionally, providing structured guidance on the use of multimedia tools while allowing for flexibility in content choice can empower students to take ownership of their learning journey. This empowerment is crucial, as it encourages students to become active participants in their education, promoting self-directed learning and critical engagement with course materials.

Furthermore, the integration of reflective practices, such as peer feedback sessions and self-assessments, could enhance the learning process. These practices encourage students to critically evaluate their contributions and those of their peers, fostering a culture of constructive criticism and continuous improvement. By incorporating reflection into the project, educators can further enhance students' ability to articulate their learning processes and outcomes, leading to a more profound understanding of both content and collaboration.

In conclusion, the integration of multimedia projects and collaborative methods like the World Café in educational settings offers a promising pathway for enhancing student engagement and fostering essential skills. As educators continue to explore innovative approaches to teaching and learning, these findings provide a compelling case for the continued investment in multimedia resources and collaborative frameworks that align with the needs and interests of today's learners. By prioritizing such methods, we can create enriching educational experiences that not only prepare students for academic success but also equip them with the tools needed to navigate and contribute positively to a complex, rapidly changing world.

7. Recommendations

Future research should explore the long-term effects of multimedia-based learning on creativity and problem-solving in STEAM education. Additionally, more structured support and guidance during the process might enhance group collaboration and outcome quality.

8. Conclusion

This study underscores the effectiveness of multimedia projects in engaging students with meaningful societal issues, such as rising food prices, femicides, and public tragedies. These topics not only reflect students' awareness of current events but also show their desire to express responses to complex themes. Overall, student satisfaction with the classroom museum project was positive, as most appreciated improvements in their collaboration skills. Some, however, noted challenges like time constraints and group coordination, indicating areas for refinement.

The World Café (WC) method is crucial in facilitating active participation, encouraging meaningful dialogue, and enriching group dynamics. This conversational format allowed students to collaborate comfortably and promoted interaction across different student backgrounds. The results align with prior findings, showing WC's success in fostering collaboration and inclusive discussions (Fallon & Connaughton, 2016; Estacio & Karic, 2015). As a key element of the project, WC's emphasis on knowledge co-creation empowered students, helping them take active roles in their learning (Aldred, 2011; Fouché & Light, 2010).

Additionally, the WC focus on dialogue complements STEAM education, nurturing creativity and a problem-solving mindset. The multimedia component in the project provided an innovative platform for self-expression, enhancing critical thinking and aligning with prior research, demonstrating its positive impact on learning (Minović et al., 2013; McLaughlin et al., 2015). Through active participation, many students expressed satisfaction with contributing ideas and collaborating on video projects, particularly enjoying interactions and receiving peer feedback in the museum setup.

Overall, the study highlights the potential of combining World Café and multimedia projects to deepen student engagement, creativity, and critical thinking. While challenges were noted, the positive outcomes suggest a need for further exploration of these methods in various educational settings, with the potential to enrich the learning experience and equip students with essential real-world skills.

9. Limitations

Despite the positive outcomes of this study, several limitations were identified. First, the sample size was relatively small, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the study was conducted within a specific educational context, limiting its

applicability to other settings or populations. Time constraints also posed challenges, restricting the depth of discussions and the breadth of topics explored. Furthermore, while the World Café method encouraged participation, not all students engaged equally, which could have influenced the overall effectiveness of the collaborative process. Also, the study included a small sample size and limited time for project completion. These factors highlight the need for further research in varied contexts.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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Theodora Kavoura received her B.Sc. in Cultural Technology and Communication from the University of the Aegean in 2009. She went on to earn her M.Sc. in Cultural Informatics from the same institution in 2014. She also holds an M.A. in Gender, Culture, and Society from the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of the Aegean. Since 2018, she has been a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Cultural Technology and Communication at the University of the Aegean. In 2020, she completed an annual program in pedagogical training. Currently, she works as an informatics teacher in secondary and vocational education. Additionally, she has authored several articles in both international and local scientific journals. Her research interests include digital communities, learning theories, communities of practice, and STEM education, with her work published in both international and local scientific journals. She actively shares her research through academic networks like ORCID, ResearchGate, and Academia.edu, where additional details on her work are available.

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