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in cooperation with the University of Cyprus



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***THALIA***

***Drama in Intercultural Education***

***Thalia is a 3 year project engaging partners from different European countries.***

***Duration three years.***

***To imagine a language means to imagine a form of life,***

**Ludwig Wittgenstein.**

***Language is embedded in the significant behavior (including non-linguistic behavior)  
of human beings.***

**The notion of a *form of life* has cultural connotations.**

An important element of contemporary cultural policy is the real and active participation of young people including immigrants in different forms of cultural expression. The aim of regulating cultural education is to provide support to educative cultural projects, which explore the talents of pupils from different cultural backgrounds. The goal would be the genuine intercultural exchanges and the discovery of a certain social diversity otherwise unattainable. Tolerance is primarily defined as a function of knowledge.

Intercultural education is an education for all children and not only for those of ethnic minorities. This implies mutual learning and joint growth and a process of acquiring, not only a set of basic facts and concepts about 'the other', but particular skills and competences which will enable one to interact functionally with anyone different from oneself regardless of their origins.

Our experience with drama in primary schools has proved that the children become flexible, confident after the conclusion of a set of drama sessions, realizing their competences and those of others. They bond with their drama team and they share emotions and thoughts more easily with each other. Drama is a most powerful tool for social change and political intervention in the history of mankind and as Edward Bond has said: ***“In the end I believe that drama has only one subject: justice”***.

### **Intercultural Arts' Education**

*I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal...[]*

*Their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom. We cannot walk alone.*

Martin Luther King, *I have a dream*

To build a concept covering the various aspects of educating through art, for the promotion of Intercultural Dialogue the foundation is simple and loud and clear. All men are created equal. Different education and language skills present problems which can be solved through the universal language of art which indeed has so many different forms of expression and shapes and meanings, but when we follow the thread in the labyrinths of the human soul they all end up in the archetypal myths of the soul and human existence. The goal has to be the transformation of European society beyond multiculturalism, a place where cultures met and created an amazing new space together.

It is essential that we recognize arts education's capacity in contributing to lifelong learning and to European Union's goal for Flexicurity and job growth. To reach a state of flexibility in the labour markets and systems the individuals must be able to be flexible in their way of political and social thinking, in order to be flexible in a continually changing environment. Arts' education enables one to critically view things from a distance and to creatively solve problems and adjust easily to new situations. The security of lifelong learning combined to the Universities' being open to non-typical learners, who had their ability for change strengthened by an art education system will result in a successful transition between jobs.

In 1959 in England the Crowther Report declared:

***The Arts are not the flowers, but the roots of education.***

Cited in Dance Education and Training in Britain,

Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1980, p.3

Susan Crowe – Lifelong Learning and the Arts

In the *Thalia* project six European countries will engage four directors each, to work in four different primary local schools especially in areas and townships where many families with migration background are living. The directors will choose an integrated cast with children of different cultural background, social status and equal number of girls and boys. They will be dramatizing myths from each country of each child. The children will follow the mythic path, reaching their common origin, in a creative, pleasant environment, gaining knowledge and confidence. Each dramatization will end up in a performance. The performances will be multilingual accompanied with mime. All the performances will participate in a joint Festival, the *Thalia Festival of Intercultural Mythopoiea*.

The mythic imagination represents facts of the mind. Myths, according to Freud are of the psychological order of dream. Myths are public dreams; dreams are private myths. They are telling us, according to Carl Jung in picture language of powers of the psyche to be recognized and integrated in our lives, powers that have been common to the human spirit forever. Analogously, the society that cherishes and keeps its myths alive will be nourished from the soundest, richest strata of the human spirit. In contemporary life, what is required states Jung, is a dialogue, not a fixture to either pole; a dialogue by way of symbolic forms put forth from the unconscious mind and recognized by the conscious in continuous interaction. The most evident distinguishing sign in the psychological character of our species is man's organization of his life according to mythic laws. Not only does man face death but he confronts

the necessity to adapt himself to whatever order of life may happen to be that of the community into which he was born, a superorganism into which he must allow himself to be absorbed. Therefore there is not only a factor representative of the unity of our species, but also one of differentiation.

In the light of the findings of archaeology there was a general movement of peoples, with the various populations becoming increasingly separated, each developing its own applications and associated interpretations of the shared universal motifs. In today's world of transport and communication, those differences are fading and is becoming important that we should learn to see through all the differences to the common themes that have been there all the while, that came into being with the first emergence of ancestral man from the animal levels of existence and are with us still. <sup>1</sup>

Quoting Studs Terkel:

*“Einstein once observed that Westerners have a feeling the individual loses his freedom if he joins, say, a union or any group. Precisely the opposite’s the case. The individual discovers his strength as an individual because he has, along the way, discovered others share his feelings — he is not alone, and thus a community is formed. You might call it the prescient community or the prophetic community. It’s always been there”.*

The systematic monitoring and reporting of the collected qualitative data will be the responsibility of trained social workers able to follow the ethics with respect for the

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Cambell, Myths to live by, Arkana 1993

children, beneficence, justice and respect for the community with the informed consent of the parents and children. The result will be an anthology of human stories which will shed light on and deepen our understanding of the connections between the concepts, opinions and formal and informal relationships between the children.

The qualitative research will be reinforced by a collection and editing of primary data by trained researchers. While our statistical figures will tell us that there has been change, the qualitative data will tell us why there has been change and will capture change in the bud and in the process of its implementation.

Again quoting Studs Terkel:

*“This is a memory book rather than one of hard fact and precise statistic”*

Thalia is about change. In order to create and sustain change in a project we need duration and preservation of memory. For this reason the directors will keep a diary, where they will narrate their experiences with the children each day. The diary could be written in a simple way in order to be read from children also. At the end of each year a book containing all diaries with pictures of working days and Festival will be published.

Thalia is ambitious. The project will give the best results if implemented for 3 years, sufficient time to show best practice results. The project has a backbone aim as well: when Thalia succeeds we look forward to put pressure on the Member State’s governments to implement the project on a permanent basis, thus reinforcing art education and drama in particular. As stated at the Report produced by the working

group of EU Member States Experts (Open Method of Coordination) dated October 2012, “Cultural Education should be regarded as one of the core activities of the cultural field. Cultural Education has a lot to do with sustainability. Arts and Cultural Education should be part of the curricula of all school types”.

### *The discovery of meaning*

The director will select the intercultural group of children. In the first sessions he/she will engage them in theatre warm up games and improvisations for trust and ensemble building and emotional availability. Each player will have the opportunity to bring his or her own personal background, prior knowledge and experiences to the activity and will be able to communicate it creatively. Knowledge is not enough. Imagination evolves knowledge; it is the core of innovation, invention, problem solving, self – expression and sharing. The children’s emotional involvement will deepen their understanding.

### *Inside the picture, outside the frame*

When the director will feel that a strong, supportive group dynamic has been built, he/she will proceed to the next phase. The children will be asked to communicate a myth of their country using a combination of communication tools. Mime, drawing, dancing, singing, speaking, and any other form of expression will be used to build up the myth. After a lot of sessions all the children will be able to recognise the myths of the other children. Then the director will ask the children to choose one myth of another child and communicate it to the group. This will be done until all children will be able to communicate all myths. The next phase will be the construction of a synthetic myth created by the combination of parts from all the myths. The children

will choose the parts they like best from the myths of the other children. The final stage will be the dramatization of the new myth. The children will also actively participate in all the preparations of the myth's staging. (Costumes, settings, lighting etc). The fact that the parents will help in the realization of the performances, while helping with the preparations and attending the performances will be an extra benefit since they will interact with each other as well. The choice of directors should also be intercultural.

### ***Existence is a party***

At the end of each year all the performances of all the countries will participate at the ***Thalia Festival of Intercultural Mythopoiea.***

### ***I wanted to write a happy song***

The directors will keep a diary of every session. The diary will be written in simple, funny language. At the end of each year a book with all diaries of each country will be published with pictures from the sessions and the Festival. At the end of the three years a publication will be prepared containing the conclusions and essays of the directors, the organizers and the creator of *Thalia*.

### ***Some thoughts***

The economical developments reflect the deep confusion and collapse of values and practices that the media and the politicians have named "crisis". Being Greek I cannot resist the temptation to use the word with respect to its meaning: Krino = I evaluate, I express my opinion, I criticize, I judge, I play an active role.



In this context as I was preparing this proposal that has to do with social change, the course of culture in EU decision making level was vivid in my mind. The Lisbon Strategy, how it was evident that it failed by 2007, the 0.02% of the budget then that was given to Culture, the Agenda for Culture by the European Commission that tried to make up for the 0.02 and then the 2020 EU Strategy that has not the word Culture written in it even once. Then I thought of the new methods that the European Commission has implemented and the efforts for finding ways of dealing with all these contradictory facts. Then I thought this: A project today, at this specific moment, that has to do with change must be able to make a statement. *Thalia* proposes the creation of more bridges between institutions and methodologies.

Thalia Project is not only a project which has regional, national and European levels of implementation. It is a combination of a personal belief nurtured in a personal and a working environment and new knowledge gained since 2008 when the Cyprus Centre of the International Theatre Institute began its participation in the Structured Dialogue between the European Commission and the Civil Society. The Cyprus I.T.I. became a member of Culture Action Europe and the Platform for Intercultural Europe. The new knowledge was consistent and in harmony with the nature of the rooted belief and was easily embodied in it. The belief that drama could and should help students – as early as primary school age – develop their personalities and strengthen their talents and competences, and the natural human feeling that all men are created equal and any educational system must primarily reflect this fundamental truth, were combined.

The Thalia Project is the bridge linking the idea of an artist working in the context of the participatory democracy created by the European Commission and the Open Method of Coordination Working Groups' recommendations on developing synergies with education, especially arts education as described in the final report. Thalia reflects 12 from the 16<sup>th</sup> recommendations. Some of them were reflected at the beginning of this journey, some of them were strengthened by the new knowledge.

**From the European Agenda for Culture, Open Method of Coordination**

*Working Group on developing synergies with education, especially arts education*

**Final Report**

**Editors: Jean-Marc LAURET, François MARIE**

***“Recommendation 1: Promote Transdisciplinarity***

- The children with the help of a theatre director will use techniques reflecting different subjects of the school curriculum in order to communicate their myth. Painting, singing, geography, language any subject could help a student “narrate” his/hers and other’s myths.

***“Recommendation 2: Promote and reinforce heritage education, with an underlying philosophy based on a wide approach to heritage education.***

- *Thalia* will promote and reinforce the heritage of each child, since the child will actively and deeply experience the meaning of his country’s myth, while on the same time he/she will be attracted to the new myth. By the end of the year the children will be communicating their synthetic myth and will be able to recognize and comprehend that heritage is diverse while it is possible to find common ground in it.

***“Recommendation 6: Highlight, promote and evaluate the creative talent and skills acquired by children and teenagers (to the Member States).”***

- The dramatization of the myths will highlight, promote and evaluate the creative talent and skills of the children. Drama is the most creative and synthetic art, combining acting, singing, the stage and costume’s designing, music, language, history, science and any subject imaginable.

***“Recommendation 7: Engage all education partners and cultural activities around the previously stated goals (transversal recommendation).***

***The role of cultural institutions ("partnerships")***

- *Thalia* combines the education and culture worlds. Real artists, theatre directors, will work in the education system for the promotion of the previously stated goals. Cultural organizations will work with schools and Ministries of Education and Culture.

***“Recommendation 8: embed cooperation between schools and cultural organizations in a long-term policy strategy and structure in which both sides participate actively and which is monitored and periodically evaluated. By doing so, cooperation will become more sustainable and not remain purely project-based.***

- The theatre directors will keep the diaries which will be published, while social workers will monitor and evaluate the creative interplay of the children. *Thalia* will give an example of cooperation between a cultural organization, artists and schools.

***“Recommendation 9: Support the further exchange of information and knowledge between Member states on the cooperation between educational and cultural sectors by facilitating EU-networks and the realization of an UE-wide glossary and portal on cultural education.”***

- The partners of *Thalia* will exchange information, qualitative and quantitative data and experiences while working within the sphere of educational and cultural sectors on national and European level.

***“Recommendation 10: Promote cooperation between partnerships of schools and cultural organisations from different countries throughout the EU (to the EU).”***

- All schools of all the partners will participate at the *Thalia Festival of Intercultural Mythopoeia* and at the Festival’s preparations in close and continuous cooperation.

***“Recommendation 11: Invest on partnerships for quality by creating mediation teams and ensuring their skills (to the MS and the EU).***

- The project in order to be successful will need precise identification of partners' motivations and goals, the sharing of the responsibility, the investing in the continuity, the finding of creative ways of improving the partnerships at every level.

***“Recommendation 12: Give sufficient support to the initial training of teachers, artists and other culture professionals and their continuing professional development.***

- Professional artists will cooperate with the teachers of the chosen classrooms. The Ministries of Culture and Education with shared or separated competences will cooperate since information will be needed from both and reports and evaluation data will be given to both. Also some partners will be Ministries.

***“13: Raise the status, financing and visibility of arts education and its beneficial effects on young people and citizens in our society at large. Evaluation***

- The evaluation of the project will give credibility to the results which we have no doubt that they are going to be spectacular. At the end of the three years we will publish, aside the three collections of diaries, a book which will cover the concept, the monitoring and the evaluation of Thalia.

***“Recommendation 14 : Include evaluation programmes in national policies (to the Member States)”***

- The project *Thalia* has the goal of persuading the Member States to implement drama in primary education for intercultural integration and to evaluate with social workers and statistical experts the results each year.

***“Recommendation 15: contribute to supporting teacher and cultural professional training in evaluation approaches and offer them tools for carrying out these evaluations.”***

- Thalia project will set an example for the training of social workers to evaluate these programmes.

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