



## Intercultural Education through the Educational Software “The Whole World, One World”

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### ABSTRACT

The diversions in the school population on issues of language, literature and nationality have been a reality for a country, during the last few decades. The presence of “outsiders”, referring with the term to different aspects of heterogeneity, is no longer an exception but a common characteristic of the Greek society, which tends to become a rule. Under these new circumstances, the school is asked to undertake an open plan of action, with regards to the social changes, to introduce innovative methods that will contribute to a peaceful education by resolving conflicts. The educational software “The whole world, one world”, constitutes a multimedia realization of a particular educational proposal, which aims to abate xenophobic tendencies and to form beliefs and behaviours receptive to diversities.

**Key words:** New Technologies, hyper-media, multimedia, implementation, intercultural education, diversity, intercultural ability, racism, human rights.

### INTRODUCTION

“You see he said, they are ‘the other’ and they can’t be without you, and you can’t be without them. You see, he said, they are ‘the others’ and you need to face them.”

*Odysseas Elitis*

The need for the implementation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in Education derives from “the message of our times”. In a world of perpetual changes, direct information disperse and globalisation of financial relationships, political practices, communication and cultures, the school is called to adjust and correspond to the new conditions.

The new terms of the “changing world” have brought on the doorstep of the Greek educational system 57.000 foreign and repatriated students and along with them the need to search for new methods in order for the school to adjust to the needs of the new multicultural status and proper tools for the gradual integration<sup>2</sup> of the “outsider” students and at the same time the educational training of the students of the dominant group on how to respect and co-exist with diversity.

The new multimedia technology<sup>3</sup> provides the opportunity to develop the students’ social and multicultural<sup>4</sup> ability, more the effectively than by using traditional educational means (Palaiologou & Evaggelou, 2009; Vrasidas et al., 2009). It gives direct access to real-life communication and equal opportunities to groups of students, in a disadvantageous position because of geographical, social and cultural circumstances.

The New Technologies allow more decentralized, local communications and they lead to the establishment of “communities” beyond the national borders. They increase opportunities for active participation and they provide new forms of cultural expression (Buckingham, 2004). Moreover, they facilitate intercommunication, they make learning more relevant to learners’ experiences, they develop a sense of responsibility, they foster a non-linear group-work learning, they help to decrease the need for a meta-lingua and they change the teacher’s role (Makrakis 2000).

It is important to realize that the content of the analytic based on New Technologies curriculum does not function without social, cultural and ideological foundations. The school passes on a set of values, ideas and models that replicate the current social ideology (Fragoudaki 1985)<sup>5</sup>. To fully understand the relationship education-society-technology, we use the two following terms: “education for social stabilization” and “education for social change”. The first is connected to concepts like adjustment and



objectification, whereas the second with concepts such as, strengthening, liberation, realization and emancipation. Whether school reality clings towards the one direction or the other, is dependant of the teacher's intermediate role, whose intervention is more direct and important. The teacher is an active participant in the process of learning communication, an intermediate of the official culture and a negotiator of ideas (Raptis&Rapti 2000: 101).

New Technologies have the potential to become a dynamic tool in the hands of a teacher<sup>6</sup>, since through educational methods appropriate for heterogeneous classes and oriented towards diversity and through special approaches a teacher can lead the children of today to take their place as active citizens in the complicated, commercially driven, global societies emerging nowadays.

## INTER CULTURAL EDUCATION (I.E.)

### 1. Interculturalism in Education

The concept of Interculturalism<sup>7</sup>, arises from the thought of to endow ourselves with the knowledge of other cultures, through our contact with them and our ability to develop our personalities via this encounter. From that point of view, Interculturalism is related to meta-modernism, since it appears as a negotiating tool among the different political identities which are all legalized and encouraged by the relationship between the values that construct them.

A different approach of Interculturalism does not divide, but unites, it does not seek to identify and emphasize diversity, but to override it and create societies free of obsessions over national identities and racial stereotypes (Nikolaou 2005), where different people will be able to live together despite their different culture.

According to Holfsted (2001) culture can be defined as a collective programming of the spirit that distinguishes the members of one social group from another". Interculturalism means to accept and respect the diverse. Believing in Interculturalism is believing in learning to enrich our mind and personality by encountering other cultures (UNITED for the Intercultural action) in societies with values, social consistency, equality and above all fair opportunities.

Some scientists (Essinger, Graf) have underlined that I.E. is the right answer given by the educational science for a multi-national and multi-cultural society. While for others (Bozzi-Escot, Escobar, Wolck, Bratt-Paulston) I.E. is considered a strategy for the normal function of life in a multi-cultural reality.

I.E. is perceived as an open action plan, connected to social changes. Therefore, it introduces innovative processes based on student-centered teaching, it gives emphasis on real life experiences, autonomy, spontaneity and individuality. It embeds educational values that control means and processes, addressing to all members of a social group<sup>8</sup>, where inevitably there are diversions in mentality, ideals and lifestyle.

As any other characterization attributed to education the term "Intercultural" carries an ideological "burden" interpreted into values, targets and certain practices. The following four basic principles of I.E.<sup>9</sup> make both an educational and a moral stand:

1. Respect for any human being, a foreigner, a woman or a child. The rights that one applies for oneself should apply for everyone.
2. Individuality should be a message against stereotyped relationships and prejudice. Individuality is a combination of different elements one of which is cultural identity.
3. Changing perspectives, in other words, trying to adapt the perspective that someone else has of the world is interesting to some people. That encourages flexibility, an element important for the co-existence of people in all aspects of socializing.
4. Collaboration and conflict resolution are considered to be a vital contribution to "education for peace" cause. The most important part of this collaboration is the ability to resolve personal and cultural disagreements and conflicts.

Consequently, the I.E. cannot be perceived neither as development of the integration method, nor as a method for the establishment of cultural boundaries and the preservation of diversions, in the sense of a ghetto categorization of the members of a cultural society.



## 2. From the integration to the identification of social diversions

The term Intercultural Education first appeared in Greece in the 1970's to give a solution to the social problem of providing education for the children of the immigrants and the repatriated populations. The Greek educational policy followed the same traditional model followed by all countries accepting immigrants, in other words they attempted to assimilate the "outsiders" through an integration process in which, of pivotal importance was the official national language (Androusou, 2000). To elaborate, in the educational process the differentiation of the educational ability of the foreign students is considered to be a liability, compared to that of the dominant group. This is a practice, according to which there is no space left for the cultural identity of the "different" students to be preserved and cultivated as a value but on the contrary, it leads to its gradual withering and to the integration of the culturally different groups to the existing system. In that way, those students are deprived of education opportunities, since they are taken away of their right to use the linguistic and cultural features they possess (Damanakis, 2005). The degrading of their identity, displayed in the teacher-student interactions, convinces some students to believe that an effort to learn is futile. The students in an attempt to preserve their identity mentally withdraw from school life (Cummins, 2000).

The high rates of school failure that characterizes the schooling of the "different" students, has led to the total swing of that process, by replacing the liability approach with a concept that identifies the right to be different and gives apposite meaning to cultural variation. The target now is to integrate the different students by maintaining their cultural diversities. The educational practices adopting this approach emphasize on the harmonic co-existence of different groups and deem the recognition and acceptance of students with different culture, this should be encouraged by school (Papachristos, 2007). At the same time, the proponents of the above support the belief that having knowledge of other cultures prevents stereotypes and puts a limit to prejudice and distinction on the expense of minorities (Androusou&Askouni, 2001).

## 3. The recipients of Intercultural Education

Finding the answer to the question "What does 'other' cultures mean?" seems to be quite a challenge. When culture is defined as a way of living formed under specific historical, social, financial and political conditions (Banks, 1991) it is enough for someone to see strange outfits, taste different flavors and listen to traditional musics in order to meet a new culture.

A lot of educational programmes that focus on "distant" cultures not just in space but also, in time, reinforce unwittingly a stereotype image of what is different and an "exotic" dimension of the "other" (Donald & Rattansi, 1992) a fact which indirectly strengthens the ranking between what is "ours" and what is "different". The fact that no culture is developed in isolation (Braudel, 2001) is being ignored. Therefore, a certain way of thinking is formed, where human groups are homogeneous in their core and differ when it comes to culture, religion, language and tradition. In other words, different dimensions of the human identity are overly stressed, putting people under important categories like sex and social class.

Each person belongs to more than one groups and in terms of socialization a person holds "multiple identities", which means that one's distinct cultural identity is nothing more than differentiations on a national, religious and linguistic level (Gotovos, 2002).

The children of immigrants and minorities inside the school community are not only the carriers of a different culture but at the same time they are boys and girls stamped with the characteristics of the social class they belong to. In this way the social minorities of the national group is blurred by the ideal of the homogeneity projected. This is a powerful ranking, attributing higher value to those elements that they seem to be more familiar with and identifies them with what it is supposed to be regular. According to this approach of culture evaluation, superior cultures are not influenced but they influence others. In this way, a fallacious ranking is formed at the peak of which the ancient Greek and/or Western European civilization (Fragoudaki&Dragona, 1997), which enforces racism and legalizes illegal behavior on the expense of other groups.

From that point of view, Intercultural Education's main components are not just the concepts of difference and diversion but also, those of social disparity and hierarchy. An educational practice



competent to correspond to the multiple heterogeneity of school classes cannot be an educational practice for minorities. On the contrary, it should correspond, in the same way, to the members of the social group. Only if one manages to single out the heterogeneity and multiplicity of “his/her own group”, the tensions and conflicts that come along with it and the forms of power that comprise it, will he/she be able to see clearly what the relationship of his/her group is to the “other” (Askouni, 2001). This is a process enriched with meanings and ways of thinking that enable individuals to self-define and formulate their identities beyond the limitations set by regional, national, cultural differences by developing an intercultural ability.

## **THE EDUCATIONAL SOFTWARE “THE WHOLE WORLD, ONE WORLD”**

### **1. Theoretical frames**

The theoretical frames are prerequisite for the construction of the educational software, since it will comprise the foundation for its strategic planning. The educational software “The whole world, one world” was based on the cognitive theories<sup>10</sup> of social constructivism<sup>11</sup>. It is a critical theory oriented towards the understanding of the role of technology in Education and the change of structures, attitudes, values and practices both in the educational process and the broader socio-cultural reality. We are talking, hence, for a dialectic, communicative, actional education based on life experiences (Raptis&Rapti, 2002)

Social constructivism is based on the construction of knowledge by the students in a framework of limited support where knowledge is not merely provided by the teacher.

The construction of knowledge utilizes the authentic, personal experience of every individual and is based on his/her special cultural values, attributes and beliefs.

As it is mentioned in the UNESCO report (1999), education is not only about bringing people together and have them accept the common values that have been formed in the past, but to allow at the same time everyone to actively participate in the society, to forge his critical ability which leads to free thinking and autonomy. The aim of intercultural education is to provide an opportunity for students and citizens to make choices for themselves, to learn and to develop conversation (Papachristos&Pantazopoulou 2005, 340-341).

Constructing knowledge does not necessarily mean the production of new knowledge but the establishment of new concept forms and the perception of the meaning of the world around us (Makrakis,2000). Educational technology seems to harmonize with the need for enforcing a social-constructivistic theory in the learning process. The theories of social constructivism supported by New Technologies allow students to create actively, using a variety of means to achieve their goals.

### **2. Design and Development**

The hypermedia-multimedia application “All the world, one world” was developed with Multimedia Builder (MMB), a package of a construction software able to construct multimedia educational material (Mantzaridouet al., 2009) in which Macromedia Flash MX files-scenes were embedded. Flash MX provided the capacity to create animation.

The application allows the user to connect directly his activities with the target situation set, combining the use of different elements(text, image, animation, sound) and a user friendly environment able to provide constructive learning.

It is a multimedia knowledge representation applicationof research nature, with a fully-scripted orientation, where students are given to complete assignments based on chosen educational targets (project-based).

It ensures collaboration in a functional level and data exchange with other applications of general purpose which are going to be used by the students, like word processors and image tools. It embodies, where possible, net use for the exploitation of internet resources.

The software is being developed in three stages/units, based on the abilities and knowledge of the age group they address to. For each stage/unit a script is developed to directly engage the student.

The first stage/unit is comprised of two integral components. The first one includes almost all the information about the unit it refers to. It includes texts, maps, photographs, mobile pictures, narration





and it allows student interaction through a multi-level navigation system where the student has access to the information of the application from different views. The child gets a full visual view of the cognitive object through a cultural, special and artistic perspective. The second component consists of group and interactive activities, multiple choice, matching or completing tasks. Those tasks activate all levels of intelligence (according to Gardener) and in this way communication and learning are facilitated, especially in the case of limited language acquisition.

The teacher can use the material to process with the students in a full and combining way different parts of the curriculum. This is, in fact, what we call project method, which involves approaching the cognitive material through real life experiences.

This is achieved through the different process levels of each unit: engage, search, observe, record and analyse research data.

The educational approach is based on the need for students to:

- Form their identity through knowledge and self-awareness.
- To develop ease, insight and fair behavior to what is different.
- To be able to describe their own culture, recognizing the influences that have affected on their way of thinking and behaving.
- To discuss immigration history.
- To identify problems and needs common to people of different cultures (e.g. love, family, health) and to compare interesting culture diversions.
- To express their views –for different people, which will be specific and free of stereotypes and prejudice.
- To estimate the importance of the value of respect, acceptance, social responsibility in themselves and towards others.
- To sensitize on global issues, such as peace and human rights.

### 3. Description and intercultural characteristics

The educational software “The whole world, one world”, consists of three theme units, designed to correspond to the analytic curriculum and to cover different levels of student ability. It enables the teacher to adjust it to the needs and abilities of the class, by organizing the lesson the way that he considers best.

*Theme unit 1: “Being able to co-exist with what is different is the greater challenge”.*

It addresses to the 1st and 2nd grade of primary school and provides students with the opportunity to get in touch with diverse, to accept it and not to isolate or just tolerate it. This is done through three different perspectives:

- “What makes me different”. The children learn about human characteristics, they become aware of differences and similarities among people and they learn how to respect people’s differences.
- “What I feel”. Children learn to accept their feelings and to evaluate them under different circumstances.
- “At home and in the street”. Different types of houses from different places are presented in order for children to understand that people built their homes to cover certain needs, depending on the conditions that they face where they live. In the second part they familiarize themselves with the different means of transport around the world, observing similarities and differences.

After each unit is presented the children are asked to consider what they have seen and to use them in order to solve a sequence of problems. It is done using free expression activities, creative writing, painting and games.

In the “Wheel of emotions”, for example, there is a circle of faces, each one reflecting a particular emotion. The children are asked to turn the wheel and then stop it at random. Afterwards, they describe the face they have randomly chosen, the feelings reflected and when was the last time they felt the same way. They express their thoughts and ideas and therefore, creativity is activated through narrative speech.



In other words, if the emotion of sadness is chosen, the students are asked to complete the expressions: "When I'm sad I feel like...", "A lot of things make me sad, like...". They find ways to feel better, "To forget my sadness...". But "Sometimes I make things too that make other people sad.....". They talk, they write about the things that make people sad. They discuss ways about changing their behavior. We ask them to express their thoughts when they hear the phrases: "I'm in a bad mood today" and "I've been hurt by your words". They listen to different sounds (bells, drums, rainsticks, maracas etc.) and they choose the one they think best describes sadness. Finally, they draw the emotion using a weather phenomenon as a symbol.

In the activity "We look different. Are we different?" the children initially view pictures of different birds. We ask them to observe the color of the feathers, their beak etc., the observation is facilitated by the capacity to maximize the part of the picture they choose. They finally realize that, for example, the eagle is different from the owl, the pelican, the swan, when it comes to exterior characteristics and habits and ways of living. They come to conclude, though, that it is a bird like all the others (with a beak, wings to fly, two legs).

In the next scene they observe different games, with one thing in common: They are all games. The same applies for us..... Activities follow to identify differences and similarities among people, with regards to their characteristics and needs. Finally, they make their own personal identity in a mirror, on which the following phrase is inscribed: "There are many and different people in the world like many and different are the fish in the water and the colors in the sky. But EVERY PERSON HAS HIS OWN VALUE AND HE IS UNIQUE...LIKE ME".

*Theme unit 2: "In a world where borders stop to exist and civilizations embrace".*

It addresses to the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade of the primary school. The script requires that the children are divided into groups of travelers, searching and collecting knowledge about geography, culture, language, dressing customs, food, everyday objects that various national, racial and cultural groups use. In this way, the children of the dominant culture are given the chance to understand "the others" and at the same time the children coming from different environments share the opportunity to verify their own identity.

An attempt has been made, for the concept of culture to be defined in its full sense. In other words, to be understood as an entity consisted of different lifestyles, values, symbolisms; all those elements that are after all used by man as reference points in real life relationships, to perceive the world around him, to identify and conceive his personal value inside it.

That means that the references to specific cultures and cultural diversions were not made out of obsession for the distinction of national, linguistic and religious differences. The "other" culture is not presented statically, as a "fossil culture" (Bullivant, 1997), but as a dynamic, evolving process subjected to changes.

Though stories of children coming from different parts of the earth, the students learn about new places, they imagine stories, by watching pictures of objects that they are given. They can use "Thesaurus" and find more clues and details about the objects, their symbolic meaning for the culture they belong to but for their use as well, and their variations in different cultures.

Those clues are extremely important in the educational process, since they provide all the cognitive foundation free from all the heavy encyclopedic presentation, there are activities for the children to learn how to search for knowledge, combining information and not memorizing it. In that way, they learn how to work in a manner similar to that of researching.

*Unit 3: "The vision of a peaceful world.... A school without borders in a society securing human rights and descent life conditions".*

It addresses to the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade of primary school. All the children of the earth should understand the meaning of the word right. To know what their rights are. To sympathize with those whose rights are being violated and take action not only for their rights, but for the rights of others as well. The aim is that human rights are engraved to the mind of children to guide them.

Clicking on various cards, pictures and representations students learn about their rights and the places in the world that those are being violated. They discover that the Declarations for the human rights and



rights of the child express an ideal and not a reality. The rule set to be globally enforced is on the contrary, constantly broken, as human rights are infringed on a daily basis. For further information, they can activate links, leading to the U.N. organisation, International Amnesty, Doctors without Borders, Unicef and Red Cross websites.

The anti-racism index book provides definitions of the underlined words inside the texts, e.g. negro, genocide, man-slavery.

A time line presents the most important dates and incidents related to racism and human rights. The activities allow students to practise on the basic principles of the rights, like experiencing a real-life situation. The important thing is for them to contemplate and feel on situations where the rights in life, justice, freedom and equality are being violated (United Nations 2004).

For example, in the activity "Children of an inferior God" the students identify the link between the different rights and the way that those affect the children's lives. They consider the results of the violation of those rights and they realize that this might occur in any part of the world. Through that process the children learn that the issues of rights violation do not effect only people in distant places but exist and concern their societies too.

They are given eight closed cards. Behind each card there is a story of a child, who has one of his rights violated. Each group reads a story and it matches it to the article or articles from the Convention on the rights of the child they believe that it refers to. Their choice is justified verbally. They create their own cards with examples of right violation and they discuss on ways to defend them. They are encouraged to express the ways in which those rights were defended or violated in their personal life.

Finally, a comic satirizes prejudice and stereotypes<sup>12</sup>. Carrying out, in an amusing way, the message that prejudice becomes a social problem when those being prejudiced have the power to act in that way on people. Hence, prejudice becomes racism.

This unit is an attempt to awaken children's consciousness to visualize a better world.

#### **4. Research**

##### *Research hypothesis*

The aim of the research was to study the extent to which, an educational designed for pedagogical purposes software could be utilized as a supportive cognitive tool able to formulate attitudes and values towards different, fostering the social awareness and knowledge that will render students able to confront social and moral problems that they often encounter in the process of their lives.

##### *Methodology*

This is a low scale intervention, through New Technologies, on the function of the real world and a close examination of the effects of that intervention. Furthermore, it is an issue that concerns school life and has as a target to enforce the transformation trend which requires that the researcher himself participates. Therefore, the research-action method was chosen (Car & Kemmis, 1986), which involves step by step research, reinforcement, flexibility, adjustability and a variety of mechanisms.

In February, 2009 the educational/ intercultural software "All the world one world" was implemented and evaluated in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade of the 46<sup>th</sup> Primary School in Piraeus (in Greece) (that particular school is considered in terms ability and social frames a good model of an urban primary school unit)<sup>13</sup>. The profile of the students that participated in the research was the following: 22 girls (17 had Greek nationality, 4 Albanian and 1 Ukrainian), 19 boys (14 had Greek nationality and 5 Albanian). The techniques used for the production of the research material were: (1) participating observation, meaning organized planning, in terms of time in which the researcher-observer can participate in the activities that he attempts to observe (Cohen & Manion, 2000), (2) focused interview ( since the conversations taking place in such interviews provide a wide variety of answers and the interactions that are developed affect the activities and the reasons why the team was formed ( Lewis, 1992) and (3) the questionnaire (scale of social distance Bogardus<sup>14</sup>).

Concept maps were also studied (Novak, 1991;Jonassen, 2000)<sup>15</sup> created by the students before and after the intervention on the topic focusing on the foreign and different.



The quantity and quality analysis on the data was carried out with the statistics tool Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS).

### *Initial research*

The interconnection of the student with the terms local and universal, theory and action can change his attitude towards the world and to create citizens with “global consciousness and responsibility” (Makrakis, 2000). Alternative analytic curricula and cognitive tools are needed to arouse human sensitivity, solidarity, cooperation, the right to be different and finally the diversion from conflicts and tensions that lead to the rejection of everything new and they fight back progress. Those curricula should consider the students’ way of thinking, the ideas already existent inside them and they should also allow them to delve into their mistaken beliefs.

An educational intervention to fight off racism, presupposes understanding the following phenomena:

- How come some people consider others as different and further on as member of a different group?
- How do some people form an opinion about the members of a different group?
- What are the factors and how are different attitudes formed against a group, which is considered different?
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The answers to the above queries are necessary in order for the educational process to guide the student to a complete perception of the social world and the social problems on a regional and global level and to understand their relationships and interconnections.

On that basis, software was designed and developed on specific conclusions reached with an initial research connected to the experiences and beliefs of students on racism and xenophobia.

The initial research involved 9-12 year old children filling in questionnaires (Bogardus social distance scale) and personal interviews taken from 6-8 year old children. Personal interviews were conducted with older children participating in the research in order to specify any unclear answers they might have given when completing the questionnaire.

Studying the answers (quality study for the interviews) we were lead to some conclusions about the students beliefs about racism and xenophobia, classified in the following categories:

1<sup>st</sup> category: The children of the dominant group often consider the “different” children inferior and/or dangerous.

2<sup>nd</sup> category: In the question “ Who would you rather have as a friend...” 72% would prefer an English friend, 40% a black, 28% a Turkish and only a 21% an Albanian.

3<sup>rd</sup> category: Make students think that school does not help them form the right idea about other cultures. This lack of knowledge generates a fear for everything “different”.

4<sup>th</sup> category: For some students the media communicate negative messages for foreign people.

5<sup>th</sup> category: Prefabricated ideas that they have are passed on mainly from the family environment.

6<sup>th</sup> category: Minority children present more self-esteem and self-respect than those of the dominant group.

7<sup>th</sup> category: Most of the minority children keep themselves closer to their families and friends of the same nationality while students of the dominant group turn to the respective group of reference in a larger degree.

8<sup>th</sup> group: Children of the majority group are more school oriented than their “other” fellow-students.

There have been differentiations in terms of children’s sex (girls consider “foreigners” dangerous, while the boys inferiors, the girls have expressed a greater wish to learn about other cultures than the boys), age (younger children are more identified with their family and neighbourhood, while the older children with their hometown, country and school). Minority children comprise a strong, dynamic cultural identity group necessary for the resistance against racism.

At the personal interview we observed that the children tried to cover up their beliefs about their differences with foreigners, which implies that they accept social prejudice but at the same time they realise that “it is not nice “to express openly such emotions.

The challenge that comes along with Interculturalism has lead to a number of detailed researches with racism and ethno-centricity as their theme; their results have helped to develop an image of the Greek





reality. The research data dictate us to adopt a new approach of the Greek education connected to the social changes and able to promote peaceful ideals and introduce innovative processes.

#### *Target and process evaluation*

One month after the education software “All the world one world” was implemented the students were given to complete an anonymous questionnaire. At the same time, three ten-member and one eleven-member focus groups were consisted and with them we had three meetings and conducted some semi-constructed interviews. The members of the focus group were observed by the researchers. Moreover, during that month, between the software implementation and the research a theatrical play “Giuri’s dreams” by A. Karakitsios was staged by the students and painting contest with a similar theme was held.

#### *Outcomes*

Their impression of the “others” was measured with pictures, included in the questionnaire, where the faces have distinctive characteristics presenting difference. The answers were rated according to the Likert scale. The impression given before the educational intervention by the pictures was positive to completely positive by 52% and after the implementation by 74%. Those with a negative to completely negative impression covered a 43% which was reduced to a 27% after the implementation.

In reference to attitudes towards “the others” comparing data we observe that there has been a swift towards more positive attitudes in all four groups. The data arose from a relevant question, included in the questionnaire, which combined proposals for the collection of opinions and attitudes with answers, ranked in a scale and the social distance Bogardus scale. With the implementation of the educational software, the students’ attitudes were not, on a large degree, tolerant towards anything foreign and different. 49% of the students were zero to non-tolerant. Very tolerant were 25% of those asked. After the intervention the percentage of the very tolerant rose to 58%. It is important to pinpoint that the decrease of the extremely non-tolerant resulted in a swift towards more positive attitudes, of the extremely non-tolerant to non-tolerant and mostly of the non-tolerant to the almost tolerant and tolerant.

Except the numbers and percentages that prove the degree in which the students have changed towards heterogeneity, there are other findings in favour of that: The creation of concept maps by the students before and after the intervention, confirmed the intervention’s successful social target on heterogeneity at large and in specific the cultural heterogeneity that was researched by the focus groups proved that beliefs are adopted flippantly and therefore during the intervention process were reconsidered. Children, in their majority, can detect a problem (racism, stereotypes, prejudice, peaceful co-existence of the minority and the majority etc.) and search for solutions.

94% of the students could describe with precision the targets of the intervention, which was not straightly revealed to them. They refer to words such as, understanding, willingness, sensitization, love, right, condescension, equality.

The texts that were produced during the activities of the software show some degree of insight and acceptance. It seems that the children were affectively involved in a processes where they put themselves in “the others” position and they compared their lives.

Moreover, the majority of the students, found the experience exciting, since they were distracted from the school routine. This was ascertained with the interviews taken by the focus group. All the students were in position to describe in detail the content and the activities they were involved in during the implementation of the educational software and to express their opinion. They referred with enthusiasm to the software, stating how faster, better and more pleasant, learning was. When asked if they would rather have the same content presented through real-life activities the majority answered that if they could choose, they would have all their lessons done using a computer.

## **CONCLUSION**

The educational software “All the world one world” attempts different ways of educational intervention for the introduction of intercultural orientation of the school curriculum of the primary school. The main objective is to change student attitudes, inside and outside school, towards “the diverse” and the teachers’ familiarization with the management of cultural differences inside school.



The ultimate goal is to constructively engage students in matters that reveal the influence and dependence between cultures that foster the legalisation of different inside the school community and that align with broader global/ universal frames, like peace, human rights, racial distinction, with the help of the New Technologies.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The educational / intercultural software “The whole world one world” was designed and developed by Archontia Mantzaridou under the scientific supervision of Prof. Aristotelis Raptis and the pedagogic guidance of the associate assistant Prof. Athanasia Rapti, for the post-graduate department “ICT in Education” of the University of Athens for the academic year 2006-2007.

The educational software “The whole world one world” was approved by the Ministry of Education and Cultural of Cyprus for Primary Education and with the opportunity of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008 seminars were organized for primary school teachers (December 2008) on how to use the educational software “The whole world, one world”. The teachers that attended the seminars were engaged in the responsibility to present the software to their colleagues at school. The software has been sent to primary schools in Cyprus to be installed to the computers for free use.

<sup>2</sup> The term “entaksi” (ένταξη) (used in the original Greek text) corresponds to the internationally used term “integration” in connection to the terms “embodiment”, “co-education”, “co-existence” to describe the common life and education of children and adolescents with different culture (Prenzel, 1995, p. 65). The term Intercultural Education first appeared in Greece in the 1970’ s to give a solution to the social problem of providing education for the children of the immigrants and the repatriated populations. The Greek educational policy followed the same traditional model followed by all countries accepting immigrants, in other words they attempted to assimilate the “outsiders” through an integration process in which, of pivotal importance was the official national language.

<sup>3</sup> The term “multimedia” refers to the computer ability to manage text and various ways of user interaction, like image, graphics, sound movement assimilation, video etc. in order to obtain, manage and process all kinds of information that can be saved in digital form ( Jonassen, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> The term “multicultural” is not used to describe a “cumulative union” of cultures, which presupposes their clear distinction. Most importantly the term refers to the interdependence and dynamic relations of cultures (Hoyles, 1981, p. 169).

<sup>5</sup> A teacher or a student does not deal with ICT like they were tabula rasa, but they are filtered through already set ideas and practices connected directly to their cultural, social, educational and idealistic environment (Street, 1995). For instance, it is argued that literacy practices applied on the internet are not global but culturally defined (Hawisher & Selfe, 2000). That means that the way that computers and the internet are being used in language teaching is primarily connected to pedagogic ideas and practices of the teachers and less to the technological equipment or the intentions of the state.

<sup>6</sup> According to Reusser (1994) the design of computer-based teaching and learning environments should be considered a genuine didactic task. Their planning needs to be based on researches relevant to the learning process in general but the understanding and the learning procedures of specific cognitive subjects as well, in a pedagogic model that will embody the way that computers and the specific software is used in teaching, in researches relevant to the technological environments like those of working strategies and interaction of students with the respective educational software.

<sup>7</sup> In the present article we will use the term interculturalism and not multiculturalism. It is a fact that the concepts of “multiculturalism” and “Interculturalism” have not yet been fully distinguished in meaning. In some cases they appear identical and in others they differentiate. A number of researchers though, distinguish the two terms, underlining that they should not be used as identical or synonymous, in order not to be semantically confused or disoriented. Hohmann (1983, p. 4-8), refers with the term “multicultural” to the social condition that arises from immigration, in which the processes in force are effected by the existence of minority groups, culturally different from the dominant population. Respectively, the term “Interculturalism” is associated to the development of pedagogic, cultural and social programmes aiming to resolve the issues caused by immigration, that is intercultural education. In other words, the term “multiculturalism” expresses the existing conditions in the contemporary



societies, “that which is”, while the term “Interculturalism” expresses “that which should be”. Interculturalism presupposes multiculturalism, but does not necessarily stems directly from it. According to Essinger (1984, p.4) in a multinational and multicultural society the only pedagogic solution is intercultural education.

<sup>8</sup> On the matter of social issues not being treated as individual situations for they effect the whole social body, it is interesting to look upon, Albee’s view. “The defining of problems as individual is oversimplified and irrational when thousands of people face to a large extent the same problems” (Albee,1990 in Fox &Prilleltensky, 2003, p. 45).

<sup>9</sup> The principles presented are adapted from:

(a) Sheila Aikman (1999). “Interculturality and Intercultural Education: A Challenge for Democracy”. *International Review of Education* 43 (5-6), 463-79.

(b) Liddicoat, A.J., Papademetre, L., Scarino, A., Kohler, M. (2003).*Report on Intercultural Language Learning*. Prepared by the Research Centre for Languages and Cultures Education at the University of South Australia and the School of Languages and Linguistics at Griffith University. Canberra: DEST.

<sup>10</sup> Cognitive psychologists contribute in the sciences, with their research reports they discuss the cognitive function of the subject, in a state of learning, as well as the factors and approaches that facilitate the learning process (Vorniadou, 1994).

Their research contributes in various fields:

- Procedures for human-engine communication( ways of presenting information and communication methods)
- Student model strategies ( resolving problems, reasoning, model acquisition models)
- Study of the effect of mental representation methods (special, oral kinesthetic) in reference to resolving problems strategies and knowledge acquisition strategies.
- Defining of factors to facilitate learning, such as promotion of semantic change, development of meta-cognitive awareness, cognitive flexibility or even organization of activities and cognitive functions involved, in the frames of proximal development zone.

<sup>11</sup> The social or critical-dialectic constructivism has its semantic grounds in what we call socio-cultural perspective (Vygotsky, 2000).This approach of social psychology, especially in regards to thinking and learning, “ communicates” with the social or critical-dialectic constructivism and the cultural-historical activity theory (Engeström, 1987). What these approaches have in common is the need to turn towards activities taking place in real conditions (Nardi, 1996) and to include somehow in all cases, those frames in the study of human activity.

<sup>12</sup> According to the Anti-BiasCurriculum (Derman-Sparks&theABC Task Force, 1989), the act of becoming aware of stereotypes and prejudice is the most important precondition to have students creatively confront distinctions. Becoming aware of the stereotypes does not imply a deficiency in our knowledge of the “others”, but it is a sensitize and critical confrontation of the fact that children become message recipients about the link between specific characteristics, such as skin colour, national origin, sex etc. with social power, social privileges or social disregard. These are processes characteristic of the “dominant culture”.

<sup>13</sup> In the same school the initial research was conducted in February 2007 to make records of the children’s opinions on racism and xenophobia.

<sup>14</sup> The Bogardus social distance scale (1928) constitutes the first large scare research on “racial distances” in America “the concepts of values and culture are rather vague, complex, difficult to access and inappropriate for empirical research”. Emphasis is not given in the connection to other collective social categories like values and culture but in individual behaviour which results from individual subjective experiences. The scale is made up of a number of elements chosen to be to measure the degree of social acceptance of every social group, national or not. Those elements have been ranked, starting from the respondent’s wish for an intimate social relationship to being totally indifferent. The respondent’s distance is measured on degree of intimacy that he/she is willing to accept (Φίλιας, 2004).

<sup>15</sup> A concept mapis a graphic representation of concepts, in which the connections and relationships between the concepts are demonstrated with arrows and lines that could be showing towards one





direction, both directions (double arrows) or non. Their use in teaching was first applied by J.D. Novak on the grounds of the Ausubel theory according to which “meaningful learning” preconditioned the adjustment of the new concepts to the already existent knowledge. The concept map facilitates the learning of new concepts by relating them with other relevant concepts, while the organised knowledge presentation helps to understand, memorize and recall that knowledge (Novak, 1991; Jonassen, 2000).

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