

The Role of Blogs in the Approach of School and Society Through the Promotion of Achievements in the Classroom: One Example

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Abstract: Blogs created by school units can effectively contribute to the opening of the school to society. In the case of the blog on which this article focuses, educational programs implemented in a public nursery school are presented. For each program are published in detail its objectives, the methodology followed, the conclusions that result from its implementation. But mainly the results of the programs are published, which consist in the expression of the creative thinking of the toddlers. The original texts and drawings of the toddlers posted on the blog, allow the toddlers to experience the feeling of satisfaction for their creativity, in the context of universal cooperation and communication with their classmates. Furthermore, by publishing the participation of toddlers, their close and wider social environment is allowed to “communicate” with them and share the joy of their creation and the optimism that comes from the quality of their thinking.

Key words: open school, blogs, creative thinking

1. Introduction

The opening of the school to society, the creative interaction between them is the goal and pursuit of any modern educational system. By opening the “door” of our classroom to our social environment, we contribute to communication and understanding between different generations and offer everyone optimism and hope.

The “good practices” that we develop in the classroom, as we usually call them, have their place in pedagogical conferences and educational magazines, but rarely the value of their results is perceived by the wider society. When teachers seek in particular the promotion of children’s creative thinking and expression, as manifested in the context of innovative, pioneering educational practices that we apply, we are usually concerned about the means at our disposal for its notification and dissemination.

In the recent past, the opportunities to communicate the achievements of our students to the wider community and in particular to each local community have been very limited. I mention, for example, the collaboration with local magazines or the publication of special forms, which had the opportunity to make only a small portion of teachers. However, such activities are dramatically limited, mainly due to the financial difficulties faced by municipalities, associations, organizations, etc. in recent years.

Fortunately, at the same time, internet is creating new, extremely lucrative, financially and ecologically, opportunities to highlight the achievements in the classrooms, which can be used systematically by a large part of

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the educational community. Among these, the blogs that have the ability to be created by every school, every teacher and every student in the Panhellenic School Network, to promote their educational work stand out.

The blog of both a school unit and a natural person, a member of the educational community, is representative of its administrator. It gives the opportunity to publish work, thoughts and reflections. It therefore gives the opportunity to communicate not only with the wider educational community but also with the society as a whole. The blogs that have been created in the Panhellenic School Network amount to many thousands while they have been set up by the members of the network and hundreds of groups. We point out the possibility and usefulness of the inclusion of school blogs in groups of the Panhellenic School Network so that their members are constantly informed about the new posts.

2. Presentation of a School Blog

In order to demonstrate how useful school blogs can be, especially in the direction of highlighting the educational programs that are designed and implemented and especially the role of students in them, we will focus on the history and content of the blog of a public nursery school, which is named *ekpaideutika programmata*.

2.1 The posted educational programs

This blog was created on the occasion of the participation of the Nursery School in the Panhellenic student competition “100 year later...”, of the i-create platform of Educational Television, in 2010. The participation of the students of the Nursery School focused on the poetry collection of Odysseus Elytis, *The Ro of Love*. The images that are formed in the perception of toddlers in listening to the lyrics are a result of the iconoclastic quality of poetic speech (Kallergis, 1995 – Benekos, 1981). The relevant educational program with metric title: “Ellinakia” travel/“Mikro Voria” is looking for/and “I Maya” the star/a letter will bring them/with children’s stories/from lyrics of “Songs” included stories of toddlers, with stimulus their paintings, which were an illustration of the poems of this collection. The blog included drawings for each poem and related stories by all students. Hundreds of internet users visited the blog and voted for it in the contest, including parents of toddlers and others in their social environment.

The blog was then chosen not to change its character and orientation. It is not used for anything but exclusively for the presentation of complete educational programs. It is updated two or three times a year with the programs of each new school year. The blog presents the sixteen different educational programs that were implemented in this Nursery School from 2008-2009 until today. The participation of all toddlers in them is also presented. The blog also presents in detail the objectives, methodology and conclusions of the various programs. Then, we will refer to some of the programs presented in this school blog.

The program “Readers and Friends” has as its main goal the cultivation of literacy and was awarded in the competition Excellence and Innovation in Education of the Ministry of Education in 2013. As part of this program, each student brought their favorite book to class and presented it to their classmates through an original narrative story. The main points of the program can be summarized as follows: a) The initiative of choosing the books belongs exclusively to the students b) The classmate becomes the main mediator in the contact with the book. C) Every student’s favorite book is a source of inspiration, a stimulus for creation for all.

The program “Portraits: The Beauty and the Beast” was based on the well-known, homonymous, classic work of Jean-Marie Leprince de Beaumont. For the needs of teaching, it was divided into twelve chapters, in which individual titles were given. The toddlers, divided into fixed subgroups, after the completion of the reading

of each chapter, narrated the continuation of the case, expressing either their possible or the desired development in them. In order for the students to participate in the program, they had to utter the “magic words”, which were lyrics of folk songs, which were selected in relation to the narrative case. By presenting and later writing them, they had the opportunity to enter the world of history and choose their role and action in it.

The blog also presents the program “When the Little Princes grow up...”, where toddlers, modeled on the Little Prince of Exupery, a timeless hero of world literature, meet their adult selves. As this is a meeting that refers to their future, the role of imagination is crucial in it. Every toddler-narrator of this encounter projects in his story his personal desires, dreams of his evolution.

The same hero of Exupery inspires the creative writing of toddlers in another educational program, which focuses on the epilogue of the book “The Little Prince”. Here the pilot-narrator of the play, inconsolable that the Little Prince chose to leave in a painful way for his planet, asks the readers, if they ever meet him, to write to him immediately that he is back on earth: “If a child comes to you then, and laughs, and has golden hair, and does not answer when asked, you will of course guess who he is. Then, please, do me a favor! Do not let me be so sad: quickly write me how he came back...” The toddlers in this program write to the pilot about their own fantastic encounters with the Little Prince. Through these meetings, they also contribute to the realization of the Little Prince’s wish to meet new friends on earth.

In the program “Trelantonis Fan Club”, with the stimulus of the classic hero of children’s literature, who is still a brilliant literary model, the children proceeded to individual and group narratives on the subject of new mischiefs of their favorite hero, who invented themselves. Thus, matching with him (Booth, 1987, pp. 278-281, 378), they expressed their childish nature, which is characterized by the mood for mischief and the momentum in the adventure.

Three different educational programs were supported in the literary work *Aeolian Earth* by Elias Venezis, which has also been recorded on the blog. The program “The Aeolian Earth goes to...the Nursery School” offers the opportunity to toddlers to share their experiences that their little hero experiences in the Minor Asia countryside.

The programs “2012 Little Red Riding Hood” and “She was the Mermaid, Alexander the Great’s sister” focus on boxed narratives of the novel. They offer students divergent literary patterns from the classic narrative version of Little Red Riding Hood and the folk tale of the Mermaid, respectively, encouraging them to express their divergent thoughts about them (Guilford, 1956).

2.2 The Common Didactic Steps in the Production of Texts

The texts of the toddlers that have been posted on the blog have been created in their entirety based on the principle of declining guidance, which is used in the text-centered teaching models (Matsagouras, 2001). More specifically, it is preceded by the process of questions and answers, which gradually evolves into a single narrative, which takes place either individually or in groups (Huck and others, 1979). As toddlers’ answers become fuller and clearer, the teacher’s questions become increasingly limited. Students’ narrative choices move on the axes of creative imitation of a literary model or its modification or even overthrow (Matsagouras, 2001).

The stimulus for children’s stories is sometimes given by a literary work and sometimes by a children’s painting, which is the illustration of a literary work, poetic or short story. In other words, through their relevant paintings, toddlers express their reading approaches, impressions and experiences. The drawings and narrative texts created by toddlers are constantly alternated in the programs, sometimes each of them is the starting point

and sometimes the end of the programs.

The response of the students in the context of each educational program is recorded directly by the teacher as a single narrative text, in traditional or modern ways (writing on paper, writing on a computer, recording, videotaping, etc.). The recording is done for various uses of the produced children's texts, as this utilization is an important part of the whole educational process, acting for the students as an additional motivation for their creative expression in the ongoing programs (Ilia & Matsagouras, 2006).

The utilization of children's works in the context of the above educational programs has various forms, such as that of the theatrical performance. However, the school blog has a primary and irreplaceable role among the forms of utilization since with the completion of the programs the children's texts are posted on it immediately and completely, without the restrictions imposed for practical reasons in other cases.

2.3 The Posted Texts of Toddlers

In the ten years of operation of the blog, the toddlers whose texts are included in it, exceed two hundred. A total of two hundred and three individual and one hundred and twenty-seven group texts of toddlers have been posted on the blog. Indicatively, four of them, which were produced under two programs, are listed below. The first two texts refer to the poem entitled "The desert Island", which is included in the Collection "The Ro of Love" by Odysseus Elytis, in the section "Sea Clover":

- A little girl leaves with her dad's boat for the desert island. Her own father had talked about this island. The little girl wanted to go there to be with God, who says wise words. She stays with Him until she gets hungry, so she returns home. When she turns thirteen, she decides to live in the desert island forever. Her parents travel by boat to see her. Whenever she is hungry, she fishes, gathers wood and lights a fire with stones to grill them. The rest of the time she plants seeds from rare plants brought by her parents and collects the garbage brought by the waves to the beach of the island. With this rubbish, she makes a house to stay, she makes furniture and a bin for the rest of the rubbish. With the garbage from the bin she makes toys that she decorates with shells...
- In the only house on the island lives alone a child whose parents have died. The door of the house is broken and the wolf waits every night to eat the child who sleeps covered with his blanket. One day, two butterflies are flying over the house scattering gold. Then comes the storm. Water enters the house through the broken door and everything floods. The house is falling apart and its pieces are scattered in the sand. After the storm, a rainbow comes out of the sky and the magical heart of God eradicates the wolf forever and makes a seed in the sand bloom. Of the two butterflies, one that is funky, leaves away while the other stays with the blooming flower. Then, the child's grandparents come by boat to take him with them. They take all the pieces of the house in a package to make it again. They also take the flower in a pot and the butterfly follows.

The following two texts refer to the fairy tale "The Beauty and the Beast":

- "The Beauty's" father knocked on the door of a tower. It opened on its own because it was too old, without a latch. Dad climbed the stairs and saw a Beast sleeping. He tiptoed so as not to wake him up. He had his arms around his head. They were big, with long nails. As soon as it started to light up, dad cut a rose and headed home. On the way he thought that if his daughters expelled him, he would return to live in this palace and take the Beauty with him to show her the beautiful roses that are there.
- The Beast chased "the Beauty's" father who cut the rose and brought it back to his castle. The rose fell,

though, and one of his bad daughters found it. She tore it to pieces and left only the stalk because it smelled very bad. All the roses that the Beast had in his garden were magical. They smelled nice to the Beauty and her dad who were kind-hearted and they smelled bad to the evil ones. The Beast asked the father for one of his daughters and he chose to take him the Beauty because she always obeyed her father and she would love the Beast, as she loved everyone.

3. General Characteristics and Evaluation of the Role of the Blog

The emphasis on the blog is clearly given, to the recording and rescue of toddlers' works focusing on the respective stimuli. As all toddlers are represented by both their texts and their drawings, the blog expresses the wishes, expectations, impressions, characteristics, identity of all the participating toddlers.

Thanks to the blog, there is the possibility of a detailed presentation of each program. In particular, the results from the participation of all members of the school class in the program are presented. Posting the generated children's texts within the programs offers the opportunity to their creators to refer to the blog at any time in their later life and read them again. Furthermore, all students can search for their friends' texts on the blog both now and in the future. This process can even be done in groups in the classroom in the coming years. For example, classmates can re-read the texts they created as toddlers, along with their Primary School teachers. Parents, teachers and other people will get to know the younger generation through the recorded texts, who express their expectations and desires within the framework of the programs, at which time they will "communicate" more effectively with them.

All those who are interested have the opportunity to be informed about the objectives of each educational program, its stages and the processes through which it unfolded. Above all, however, they have the opportunity to identify and evaluate the overall response of students to it and the specific features of its approach by each different student. This results in the uniqueness of each child in a context of mutual acceptance and respect.

In addition, as the blog records conclusions from the implementation of each program in relation to the goals that have been set, the blog visitor makes his own assessments and reasoning. Moreover, the visitor of the blog, if he wishes, with a stimulus of children's creativity, as it manifests itself in the context of each program, shares his impressions, records them in the relevant column of the blog, participates in a dialogue with the protagonists of the program, "breaking" the walls of the classroom. This two-way process can be constantly evolving, unlike print publications.

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