

INTRODUCTORY NOTE
BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE PEDAGOGICAL INSTITUTE

Educational systems are dynamic in that they have a potentiality for continuous adjustment and modification, conditioned by the interaction between school education and society. The fact that we live in an information and knowledge society, aiming for a society of quality necessitates the enrichment of our educational system with the characteristics of quality education. Changes in social construction, the growing tendency for globalization, multicultural reality and strong competition that appears in all sectors of social activity are conditions that make the redefinition of the role of school necessary. At the same time the aim of school education should be restated as follows: the development of a strong and pedagogically sound school environment that will facilitate the smooth and successful integration of pupils in society.

Educational change in Greece at the present time should focus on the preservation of our national identity and cultural heritage on the one hand, and the development of European citizenship awareness, on the other. It should also be supported by educational planning and practices that promote and safeguard equal opportunities for people of both sexes, for groups of people with special needs and for minority groups with their own ethnic, cultural and language characteristics. The improvement of the educational system should contribute to the upgrading of general education as an institution that can shape social reality, providing answers to social problems like unemployment, social exclusion and injustice.

Within this framework the Pedagogical Institute attempts a long term strategic educational planning aiming at the upgrading of compulsory education (Primary and Junior High school) and extending to pre-school education (Nursery school). Nine-year-long compulsory education constitutes the foundation of the educational system in our country, therefore its solid structure and effective function constitutes a matter of national priority and is a precondition for the upgrading of senior high school and STVI (Secondary Technical and Vocational Institutions). Moreover compulsory education has a creative function to play in the shaping of individuals and the development of citizenship awareness and of a positive attitude towards life-long learning.

For all the above reasons our educational system should no longer be governed by the principles of traditional field-centered curricula, that promote a rather passive attitude towards learning. School education should instead promote student-centered and creative

learning, involving all participants in the learning process. Moreover, school should become an institution that promotes joyful and creative living, breaking away from sterile and ineffective teaching practices.

Thus, adopting new educational practices that promote the development of critical thinking, collaborative skills and creative activity constitutes a social demand of our times. New practices should be accompanied by curriculum change, changes in the organization of school time and the development of new teaching materials. Teacher support and training are also important for the success and effectiveness of the whole endeavor.

For this purpose the P.I. has worked since 2001 on the development of the new Cross Curricular/Thematic Framework (C.C.T.F) introducing a cross-thematic approach to learning. This innovative endeavor aims to the adjustment of teaching aims and methodology, while focusing on the balanced distribution of teaching content among all grade levels and the horizontal linking of all subject content, seeking to cover a greater variety of topics. It also focuses on a fully comprehensive analysis of basic concepts and the cross-curricular thematic approach to learning implemented in school practice, a process that can greatly improve education in general.

The C.T. will contribute to the improvement of teaching practice through cross-thematic organization of content, and the support of inquiry-based and holistic teaching approaches and the development of common standards for new textbooks that will be in accord with cross-thematic principles and promote respect in student work. In order to motivate students these new textbooks should look attractive, and their content should be up-to-date including substantial information and knowledge.

Within this framework, the “Flexible Zone Program” was implemented by the P.I. as a pilot project in compulsory education (Nursery, Primary and Junior High School levels). This is an educational project that substantially promotes a cross-thematic approach to learning and is supported by specially designed educational material. In some classes therefore (grade/year 6 and grade/year 9) the C.C.T. Book-Portfolios are introduced which include cross-curricular activities that support and motivate student creativity. The C.C.T. Framework together with the related Programs of Study (Syllabi) and the Flexible Zone Program will greatly contribute to the reinforcement of the educational environment of the school.

The C.C.T Framework and the related programs of study were initially presented in three volumes after the revision-improvement of the original proposal of the P.I. that was made by

internal evaluators as well as by members of the educational community. Their suggestions resulted from the dialogue between the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs (M.N.E.R.A) and the teachers, educational administrators and scientific societies with the intervention of the P.I. Their dialogue was based on the official proposal of the Ministry of Education (Governmental Paper 1366/τ.B'/18-10-2001, 1373/τ.B'/18-10-2001, 1374/τ.B'/18-10-2001, 1375/τ.B'/18-10-2001, 1376/τ.B'/18-10-2001).

The final proposal (presented in two volumes, Governmental Paper) is the end product of a long, strenuous and collaborative effort of all members of the P.I. (Counselors, Vice-Counselors, teachers seconded to the P.I. and secretarial staff) to whom I would like to express my warmest thanks for their collaboration and efficiency, and for their endurance under my exhausting pressure. My special thanks to those Vice-Presidents of the P.I. who supported and contributed to our efforts, to the Counselors and Vice-Counselors who bore the heaviest burden of this endeavor and to the external specialists who reviewed our texts and offered their useful remarks and revisions. Last but not least, I would like to express my special thanks to the educational administrators of the M.N.E.R.A, especially to the Minister Mr Efhymiou who embraced our vision and contributed to the completion of our project for the upgrading of compulsory education.

It should also be noted that our efforts and proposals were not fragmentary, but instead they reflect an holistic process of adjustment of the educational system as far as compulsory education is concerned, and an important change of attitude towards educational practice and its effectiveness. Needless to say that success of this innovative project will depend greatly on the contribution and support of all those who are involved in the educational process as well as the scientific and social bodies that are directly or indirectly involved in educational affairs. The present endeavor is in accord with the aims of the Council of Ministers of E.C. concerning the improvement of the quality and effectiveness of educational systems, and consists a proposal which is adjusted to our own social reality and needs.

To sum up, we plan to introduce the new books, which are now being written, in the academic years 2005-06 and 2006-2007. Moreover, we hope that through the suggested C.C.T. Curriculum and the related Programs of Study the student will be 'equipped' with an educational 'armor', which will help them form their own role model and principles, their own perception of the world ('cosmo-idol') and cosmo-theory and be fully prepared to overcome life difficulties. This educational reform should be the response of our country to the present society of knowledge-spread, of information- explosion, of know-how and to the society of quality

we aim at, as well as to the challenge that ongoing processes within the European context pose.

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