

FUN AND EFFECTIVENESS IN THE SCHOOL CLASS

Ava Chalkiadaki

Laboratory of Art and Literature, Department of Primary Education,
University of Athens

achalk@otenet.gr

***Abstract** – The aim of this article is to contribute to a discussion on a truly high-quality and effective school that both the students and teachers will love and where they will feel happy. Within this framework, the article presents the philosophy, goals, methodology and the encouraging results of the research programme at the University of Athens “When Robinson Crusoe Met Harry Potter...”. This programme was planned after taking into account the complex and difficult reality of the sixth grade of primary school and was aimed at a happy, fun and creative school year that would also provide effective learning opportunities for all the participating students and teachers. The success of the programme, implemented in 25 primary schools, allows us to surmise that there are indeed ways for a school to be both fun and effective and that a school which both the students and the teachers can identify with and consider their own is not a utopian pursuit.*

***Key words:** class activities, children’s literature, fun at school, teaching and learning, transition to lower secondary school.*

The question of a high-quality and effective school has been discussed in Greece in the past few years by policy-makers and educational scientists. At the same time, the efforts made to improve the Greek school by both institutional bodies of education and active teachers are quite remarkable and have included the following: a new intercurricular framework for studies, new curricula, new textbooks, new teaching methods, new didactic approaches, innovative educational activities, interdisciplinary projects, teacher training projects, numerous congresses, publications and articles. The Greek educational community is making an earnest effort to deal with the needs of our times; it is desperately trying to find ways and means to provide students with the knowledge, skills and abilities that will help them adjust to and survive and advance in the era of globalisation and in a knowledge society.

However, the school, apart from being a place preparing the adults of tomorrow, is also a place where the students spend twelve and the teachers thirty-five years of their lives; unfortunately, these years are years of weariness, stress and boredom rather than years of fun, pleasure and creativity for both sets of people. "If boredom were lethal, then schools would be cemeteries" was written by an unknown hand on an Athens school wall (Katsiki-Guivalou, 2007, 112).

Despite good intentions and, unprecedented for Greece, concerted activity, the "high-quality" and "effective" school, which is everybody's goal and desire, is still a place which most students do not feel as their own. This is plainly shown by the apathy, the indifference and the aggressiveness frequently encountered in the classrooms, the substantial number of "inadaptable" students, the debasement of the institution of school communities, student absenteeism, incidents of violent and bullying behaviour, and the destruction of classrooms and teaching material during stay-ins.

The Children's Ombudsman of Greece has been steadily recording the students' request for communication and their complaints that school turns a deaf ear to their needs, that it does not respect them but disregards them. The recent research project conducted on a national scale by the Pedagogical Institute of Greece on the quality of the Greek school confirms the unpleasant reality: to the question "to what extent are your interests satisfied at school?", 49% of the students answered "a little" and 26% "not at all" (Pedagogical Institute, 2008, 57), while to the question "what are your feelings when you are at school?", 68% of them answered "weariness", 58% "pressure", 53% "boredom", 52% "tenseness", 32% "disappointment", 27% "gloom", 23% "anger" and 15% "loneliness". Positive feelings were found in less than 25% of the students, while "joy" is felt by a meagre 22% (Pedagogical Institute, 2008, 61).

How can school have quality when the children feel no joy? How can school be effective and achieve its goals when the students feel that their needs are disregarded? How can teachers be effective, regardless of the background, curriculum and infrastructure they might have, when the students are weary, pressed, tense and disappointed? Why do more and more research studies point to teachers' stress and professional burn-out? What could be behind teachers' attempts to "escape" from the classroom by using all kinds of leave? Could the teachers also feel weary, pressed, tense and disappointed? Is it possible that they also miss fun? Is it possible that they also have needs that the school ignores?

It is clear that school would be more humane and much more attractive if it respected the needs of everybody involved in the learning process and considered all the years the students and the teachers spend there as unique and precious, as both the children and the adults have the right to spend them happily. Could it be that in this case school might also be more effective?

This is not an easy question to answer. Nevertheless, we believe that there should be discussion about the search for a truly high-quality and effective school that both students and teachers will love and where they will feel at home. Within such a framework, this paper presents the research programme at the University of Athens entitled “When Robinson Crusoe Met Harry Potter ...”. This programme was planned after taking into account the needs of those in the high grade of primary school and was aimed at a happy, fun and creative school year that would also provide effective learning opportunities for all the participating students and teachers.

The Programme “When Robinson Crusoe Met Harry Potter...”¹

Starting point

The concurrent transition from primary to lower secondary school and from childhood to adolescence is without doubt a difficult period, not only for the students but also for their parents and their teachers (Gavriilidou, 2000, 185-186).

Sixth graders, the self-confident “grown-ups” who know all the facts and figures about all the teachers and have scrutinised the school inch by inch, are about to leave primary school. A few months later they will become first graders in the lower secondary school, lost in new places, feeling awkward and frightened in front of new teachers and new learning material. In the same period, their body is starting to transform: pimples appear on the face, pubic and underarm hair emerges, sleeves become short and shoes are suddenly small. The children look at themselves in the mirror and find it difficult to get used to their new image. They cannot decide whether they are beautiful or ugly, whether others like them or not. Their mood changes easily. They have frequent ups and downs. They are irritable and sometimes aggressive.

Children grow up. They say goodbye to their childhood and rush into adolescence. Everything inside and around them changes amazingly fast. Nothing seems to last. Nothing seems easy. Nothing is easy.

The parents of twelve-year-old pupils were at their children’s age years ago and know exactly what it means to grow up with everything inside and around you changing. But they do not know what it is to grow from being the parent of a little child to being the parent of an adolescent. They watch their

¹ The research programme was developed by the Humanities Sector of the Primary Education Department of the University of Athens and was carried out by the Laboratory of Art and Literature of the same Sector during the academic year 2005-2006. The scientific supervisor of the programme was the Professor of Greek Literature at the University of Athens, Ada Katsiki – Guivalou (Ms). The programme received the IBBY (Greek Chapter) Award for the promotion of reading (2007).

children recede from them, avoiding their cuddles, and distrusting and ignoring them. They realise that their “nest” is empty and the family relations disrupted (Tsiantis, 2000, 23-29).

The teachers try to do their job: “to teach” children that are full of insecurities, doubts and fears, children with constantly changing moods, children lost in their thoughts, children always in a state of reverie, children getting easily angry, children feeling lonely, children mourning for a stage in their lives that is ending (Tsiantis, 2000, 22; Gavriilidou, 2000, 183).

The starting-point for the programme “When Robinson Crusoe Met Harry Potter...” was the complex and difficult reality of the sixth grade of primary school: with the principles of Empirical-Communicative Teaching (Chrissafidis, 2002) and the Reader-Response Theories (Holland, 1968; Rosenblatt, 1978) as its theoretical background, the programme tried to transform this reality into teaching activities offering fun to the children and actually leading them into the world of knowledge.

Aims, expectations and “bets”

The aim of the programme – and its highest aspiration – was to offer the sixth graders of primary school some of the following opportunities:

- to feel touched, happy and delighted after reading a good book and to realise that literature can open up thousands of windows helpful for understanding the world inside and around us;
- to “meet” their parents and teachers, to talk with them, to learn something about the children the adults once were, to find out something the children themselves are experiencing today;
- to foster an understanding of the process and the different stages passing from the known to the unknown, from the vague to the concrete, from framing a question to searching for an answer, from analysis to synthesis, from concept to action;
- to discover the links connecting literature with other forms of art and with science;
- to cultivate and improve a series of skills necessary not only for their school but also for their adult life, such as to communicate, collaborate, work in teams, collect, elaborate and interpret data, recognise their errors and correct them, select and reject information and material, develop manual creative skills as well as skills in using information technology, present their work in a concise, accessible and compelling manner, evaluate critically their own work;
- to share reflections and feelings with their classmates and celebrate as a class what has been learned and lived through during the six years of primary school;

- to feel pride and joy in their achievements and to feel less frightened in anticipation of the difficulties ahead and of the challenges of a new life cycle marked by the passage to the lower secondary school and the adult world.

The main core of the programme was research on “The childhood and adolescent reading habits of the parents of primary school pupils”. The research was focused on the favourite childhood and adolescent books of the pupils’ parents, and – according to the research plan – the pupils should participate as interviewers and analysts of the outcomes. The research subject was not of course a random choice and the research process did not just aim to teach the pupils the proper way to carry out the research, improve a series of skills, get acquainted with literature and discover the kinds of books today’s adults used to read when they were children. The research was mainly the Trojan horse that would allow us to bring into the classroom the stimuli and material necessary for planning activities, games and events indirectly or directly related to books and reading (Katsiki-Guivalou, 2003, 65-75), as well as for creating the conditions for a dialogue that would go beyond the boundaries of reading and literature and would spread outside the narrow space of the classroom and school. We pursued an informal and relaxed dialogue – but one that would not lack depth – between the young children growing up and the adults who once were children; we pursued conversations evoking dreams and concerns, thoughts and fears; conversations to bring memories to the foreground and encourage confidences, narrations about the people and places of today and of yesterday, real or fictional.

However, research is by its nature a serious and difficult matter with its rules, tools and methodology. Would children of this age be able to consistently participate in a research process involving specific methodology and schedules, and would they be able to complete the research in the right way? How would the parents react? Would they agree to participate? Would they answer frankly the questions, given that the interviewer was their own child? What issues might arise in classes that included children with functionally illiterate parents or children with a deceased parent? Would the teachers be able to guide the research and deal with any such problems?

There was a further point: the adult readers who would “invade” the class through the specific research would not be alone; they would “bring” with them some special “baggage”; their childhood readings, their childhood books and their memories of the children they once were. What would happen when all this entered the classroom? To what extent would a large or small number of readers inside the classroom be activated and to what extent would they in turn “unpack” their own baggage? And after the adults and the children had unpacked their baggage, what would become of the content? How could we exploit it in order to achieve our goals? How could we handle this? In what

way could we finally manage to combine educational activities with the psychosocial needs of the students, with the curriculum requirements and with the peculiarities of the class and the particular school?

Selection and “involvement” of teachers

There were numerous and sizable “bets” in the programme and the teachers were the only persons who could deal with them. But what kind of teachers would be willing to assume the responsibility and the risk of conducting the research, and planning activities based on the research results? What kind of teachers would be willing to forego a significant part of their free time without any sort of remuneration? What could the University offer them as a reward?

What the University could offer them was: a) training; b) support for their efforts to implement the project; c) time to think; and d) the opportunity to experience a creative and happy school year with their students, a year different from anything else they had known before.

In September 2005, the Primary Education Department of the University of Athens announced its intention to implement the programme “When Robinson Crusoe Met Harry Potter...” in fifteen classes of Attica primary schools and invited the teachers of the sixth grade interested in participating to an open informative meeting about the content and the aims of the programme. Out of a total of 97 attendees, 28 agreed to participate in a 30-hour seminar without commitment to implement the programme in their classes – the final decision could be made after the completion of the seminar.

At this point, it is necessary to refer to the content and role of the seminar, which was an integral part of the programme and was planned so that the teachers might:

- discuss, understand and share the philosophy, aims and expectations of the programme;
- prepare themselves to conduct the research in a proper way;
- investigate through practical methods alternative creative educational activities connected with books;
- put themselves in the students’ position and contemplate as teachers the issues that the classroom environment and conditions, as well as the requirements of the specific programme, would pose: the difficulty in approaching the parents for the interview; the attitude towards adult and adolescent non-readers (who should by no means experience an unpleasant feeling or be isolated from the overall process); the treatment of children living in difficult family conditions (Chalkiadaki, 2008, 143, 146, 150); the issues arising while drawing conclusions; the difficulties and challenges of team work; the management of students’ disappointment through mistakes or

lack of success in meeting ambitious plans; the designing of alternative action plans, and so on.

In order to achieve these goals, the teachers attended three lectures on the promotion of reading in childhood and adolescence, and approached the programme through empirical methods: they conducted pilot research, worked in teams and elaborated the questionnaires, played games and wrote texts based on the research results and tested their own art and drama skills in special workshops. The practical artistic activities in which the participants took part were of an absolutely personal character. During the art workshops, the teachers: a) recalled their favourite childhood hero and changed into him with the technique of collage and the help of a small ID photograph; b) looked for material from their past and present reading habits in order to create personal three-dimensional compositions under the title “my reading biography”; and c) painted covers for their favourite childhood books. During the drama workshop, they acted out events from their own reading past.

Special mention should be made of the particularity of the specific seminar, which contributed decisively to further enhancing the programme: its enrichment with simple activities mainly aimed at sensitising the teachers towards the children’s psychosocial needs, such as personal expression, play, teasing, relief, amusement, support and reward.

In brief, these activities involved the following:

- During the first meeting, the teachers were asked to recall the time they were at their pupils’ age and to share with the group an event from that period directly or indirectly connected with reading. These narrations were particularly useful for the teachers to get to know each other and for the cohesion of the team, while they were also helpful in making them realise the highly emotional nature of childhood reading, as this is recalled by our memory and “*maintains the originality and emotional charge of the childhood experience*” (Zervou, 1998, 134), as well as the purely personal character of the reading process.
- In the second meeting, “relief boards” were hung on the walls: they were large cardboard sheets decorated with heroes from children’s books and comics, where the participants could until the end of the seminar record their joy, anger or disappointment resulting from the seminar, comment on incidents, and jot down funny things that happened in their “class”, write verses or slogans – in other words, they could express things similar to what students write on walls, albums and blunder collections. These boards were soon filled up with all kinds of texts and became interesting material for the impulsive evaluation of the seminar’s content and progress.

- Prizes were prepared and awarded to the teams that put in the greatest performance in the games played during the seminar, while the team that failed to shine in all games was awarded a humorous “non-Prize”. These prizes exhilarated all the teams and gave the teachers the opportunity to realise the fundamental importance of humour in solving problems arising during team work.
- Small groups of teachers interviewed the seminar instructors in order to discover the reading habits and the favourite childhood books of their “teachers”. These interviews gave the teachers the opportunity to become aware of the personal moments of the speakers and fostered relations between the two sides, helping at the same time to create a good atmosphere in the “class”.

The above activities, as well as the evening outings of the “class” in taverns and the little Christmas party with a cake and presents were catalysts that created an atmosphere of fun and creativity. They decisively contributed to achieving all the seminar aims and to sensitising the teachers to the children’s psychosocial needs.

The first encouraging outcome came at the end of the seminar: 27 out of 28 participants stated that they wished and felt able to implement the programme in their classes, while it should be noted that four of them decided to inform their peers at school so that the programme could be implemented in their classes, too. The programme was eventually implemented in thirty-seven (37) classes of twenty-five (25) primary schools of Attica with the participation of eight hundred and forty-nine (849) pupils.

Implementation of the programme in the classrooms.

The teachers informed their students about their participation in the programme in December 2005 in a very simple way: “the University is going to conduct research in order to record the favourite childhood and adolescent readings of the previous generation; our class will collaborate in the research project.” The message the teachers tried to convey to the children was that they trusted them, they considered them mature enough to collaborate with the University in a scientific research project and were expecting their consistent and responsible response. The pupils of all schools reacted positively to the challenge, while in many classes great enthusiasm was displayed, particularly when the children realised that they would play the part of the “interrogator,” while their parents would have the role of the person interrogated.

At about the same time, the teachers informed the parents; they told them that the class was going to participate in a University programme on the promotion of reading, and for that purpose, in February, the children would bring home two questionnaires and would ask them some questions con-

cerning their childhood readings. They were asked to find time to answer the pupils' questions and to hold discussions with them, irrespective of whether they read or not when they were young (Chalkiadaki, 2008, 142-143). There were very few negative reactions from the parents. The only discordant note in some schools was the indifference of a number of parents; according to the teachers, these parents were generally indifferent to anything happening at the school. However, all the parents that were informed reacted positively, and many of them expressed their satisfaction with the participation of the school in the programme and with their own personal involvement.

The research was officially implemented in classes in late January 2006. The teachers dedicated two school hours to inform the students in detail about the aims of the research, to show them the questionnaires, to explain the questions and the process to be followed, and to give them an idea of the methodology and the tools of the empirical research. They explained all the questionnaire details to the children: the meaning and the use of the code number, the role of the open and closed questions, the reason why the name of the interviewee would not be disclosed, the reason for including questions about the gender of the parent and the school he or she used to go, etc. The aim was to help the pupils understand that **everything** included in the questionnaires had a clear and specific purpose, and that in a properly structured questionnaire there is nothing to spare and nothing is missing. Of course, we also wanted to enable the children to explain to their parents how to provide the answers. At the end of this process, the children were handed the questionnaires, the badge and the researcher's notebook (Chalkiadaki, 2008, 144) and were finally ready for the interview.

The questionnaires were collected after approximately ten days, were photocopied and double-processed: the originals were handed to the scientific supervisor, who drew conclusions about the childhood reading preferences of all the parents (Vernardakis, 2008), while the copies were kept by the students, who elaborated them and reached conclusions about the childhood reading preferences of the parents of the class.

The momentum and enthusiasm that developed during the course of the research, as well as the books that came into the classroom (even as titles), provided the teachers with many opportunities to bring literature into the foreground of the teaching process. Every teacher, bearing in mind the outcomes of the research and the specific characteristics of the class and the school, and, above all, the children's preferences and suggestions, designed in a spirited and imaginative way a programme tailored exclusively to his/her class. All the classes set up lending libraries, the children read books and discussed them with their classmates, wrote texts collectively or individually, conducted limited or extensive bibliographical research, while, as can be seen in Table A, some classes went further by conducting their own empirical research and interviews, visiting libraries, bookshops and book fairs, doing their own pub-

lishing and art projects, and proceeding to dramatisations, music creations, contests, events and all kinds of games. Between February 2006 and the end of the school year, every class put together its own unique book festival, its own unique **learning festival**. Some festivals were rich and imaginative and extended beyond the boundaries of the classroom, over the neighbourhood, while others were less ambitious and were confined to the classroom. However, all of them were successful and this was not by chance; both the designers and the participants were in high spirits, enthusiastic, industrious and active.

Table A: Activities that followed the research stage (Data involving 31 classes)

Type of activity	Number of classes
Setting up lending libraries in the classroom	31
Bibliographic research	31
Creative writing games based on the research results	30
Dramatisations: based on excerpts of books (21), on texts written by the pupils (9)	30
Oral presentation of the research results to the school community	29
Library activities: at the school library (21), at the local municipal library (8)	29
Painting of characters and scenes of books	27
3-D constructions with various materials	19
Interviews of writers, librarians, teachers, etc.	17
Hosting of writers at school	14
Creation of the favourite hero using the technique of collage	14
Music creations as an accompaniment to literary texts	10
Design of book covers with various materials	10
Creation of collective scrapbooks	9
Bookmark design	8
Illustration of stories and poems	7
Presentation of the research results to the press	7
Attendance of theatre and film adaptations of literary works	7
Research projects on the reading habits and favourite books of pupils of other classes (4) and of educators (3)	7
Visits to bookshops, publishing houses and book fairs	6
Organisation of book fairs in school premises	6
Bookbinding workshops	6
Participation in writing contests	6
Projection of film adaptations of books at school	5
Creation and publication of school newspapers	4
Oral presentation of the research results and art works at municipal festivals	3

Type of activity	Number of classes
Design of posters for the promotion of books and reading	2
Creation of a television spot for the promotion of reading	1
Decoration of a local bookshop window	1
Formation of "literary" football teams and holding of a "literary" championship	1
Chess game with live pawns impersonating book characters	1
Design of choreography based on excerpts of a book	1
Organisation of a poster design contest for the promotion of reading	1

Outcomes

The programme outcomes resulting from a) supervising the implementation in schools, b) studying the multifarious material produced in the classrooms, and c) elaborating the Programme Remarks and Evaluation Report, completed and undersigned by the teachers responsible for the implementation, were highly encouraging.

The first outcome was the exceptional response of the teachers to the increased requirements of the programme. Despite the fact that the programme was implemented in schools and classes with great dissimilarities (Chalkiadaki, 2008, 149) and although not all the parents reacted positively,² all the teachers adopted an exemplary attitude towards the research process, saw to the successful completion of the research, and dealt in an attentive and sensitive way to the numerous issues that arose from the involvement (but also the non-involvement) of parents. As regards designing and implementing the educational activities, their number, variety, quality and range were impressive. In 31 out of a total of 37 classes for which detailed data exist, 380 activities and events took place during a period of four months.

The second outcome concerns the pupils, who also reacted magnificently: they were delighted, dutiful and earnest. The research was properly completed by all the classes, with a particularly high response rate (89%). The students collaborated very well in their teams (even in classes without a history of collaboration) and demonstrated remarkable responsibility and professionalism in all the stages of the research process. Almost all the teachers noticed: a) the enthusiasm which was generated in the classrooms throughout the school year, leading to an explosion of creativity among the children; b) feelings of joy and pride among the students that came out of their partici-

² All parents responded in nine schools, while more than 90% responded in another nine schools. However, there were seven schools where the response was quite a bit lower: in five of them, it ranged between 11% and 20%, with lower percentages noticed in the other two schools (34.5% and 45.8%).

pation in the research project and the activities of the programme, as well as from communicating the results to the wider community; c) the programme's positive consequences for their pupils' self-confidence and initiative; and d) the responsibility and willingness to co-operate that the children demonstrated. Responding to the open questions of the Programme Remarks and the Evaluation Report about the most important benefits of the programme for their pupils (data involving 31 classes), the teachers recorded the following:

- Improvement in the atmosphere in the classroom (the easing of tensions among children, improvement in socialising between children as well as between children and teachers, the fostering of team spirit) (30 classes);
- Enhancement and improvement of skills (30 classes);
- Rekindling of the children's relationship to books and literature (28 classes);³
- Development of critical thought (27 classes);
- Acquaintance with the rules, methodology and tools of empirical research (27 classes);
- Involvement of the children in several activities and familiarisation with different forms of artistic expression (25 classes);
- Communication between children and parents (17 classes).⁴

The third outcome concerns the teachers themselves, who noted in the Programme Remarks and Evaluation Report their joy and satisfaction from: a) the knowledge they gained and the opportunity they had during the seminar to experiment with different forms of art and to test themselves on the research process; b) the success of the activities they planned and the positive response of their students; and c) the publication and recognition of their work.⁵ Finally,

³ As regards the promotion of reading, it seems that the pupils who were active (regular or occasional) readers benefited more. In any case, it should be noted that book borrowing increased markedly in 19 classes, while in 9 classes the pupils were particularly interested in the books their parents preferred when they were young.

⁴ At this point it should be underlined that the parents in some classes responded massively and even warmly, while in other classes a large number of parents were indifferent. However, according to the teachers, the research process in at least two-thirds of the families led to interesting discussions between the children and their parents, and offered both the children and their class useful stimuli and material to focus on and allowed them to investigate issues related to literature and even beyond.

⁵ The programme results were presented during the conference "Fondness of Reading and School" held by the Primary Education Department at the University of Athens on 10 April 2006. During the conference, the teachers presented the work carried out in seven schools, while a hall of the building accommodated an exhibition with photographic and artistic material from the activities in all schools. Finally, it should be noted that the programme outcomes were presented at schools and in events held by three Municipalities, while seven classes presented their work in the press.

it should be noted that when they were asked to answer the open question about their personal benefit from participating in the programme, 22 teachers reported they gained a better understanding of their pupils, their needs and their family situations, while 12 of them referred to the restoration of their personal relationship with literature.

In lieu of an epilogue

Two large teams participated in the programme “When Robinson Crusoe Met Harry Potter...”. The first team comprised 849 final graders of primary school: pupils on the threshold of adolescence, about to leave the safety of primary school and enter the unknown world of lower secondary school; pupils who need to express themselves freely, play and relieve their emotions; students who need love, attention, support and praise. According to the remarks of the teachers, as mentioned in the previous section, these pupils lived through a happy school year and had a lot of opportunities to play, to enjoy themselves, to take initiatives, to create, to share reflections and feelings with their classmates, their teachers and their parents, to celebrate with them all that they had learned, created and experienced during their last year in primary school, to feel strong, self-confident and proud of their work, of their teams and of themselves. They also had many opportunities to improve the skills necessary for their whole life and to discover the links connecting literature with the arts and science; they had several chances to travel to far-off and nearby lands through literature, as well as to grasp the process and stages of transition from the known to the unknown, from framing a question to searching for an answer, and from concept to action. To a greater or lesser extent, the students seized the opportunities. The programme aims were achieved and the overall evaluation was positive.

The second team comprised twenty-seven teachers: teachers who love their job, assert their professional independence and claim their own share of knowledge, creation and fun; teachers who pursue tests and challenges; teachers who cannot stand the fact that “*One monotonous day follows another equally monotonous*” and “*tomorrow ends up no longer like tomorrow*” (Cavafy, 1992). These teachers acted as partners in the children’s effort to learn, to discover and to become independent, as fellow travellers on the magical journey of knowledge, as architects and conductors in a learning process with game-like characteristics. They worked hard and were much more tired than they thought they would be, but, as they said, they enjoyed themselves tremendously during the school year and, as with the students, they felt equally proud of their work. At the end of the programme, all the teachers expressed their wish to participate in similar programmes in the future.

An isolated case study can prove nothing at all. However, it may reveal usually invisible sides of an issue and may lead to certain considerations. The specific case study provided material that was interesting for observation and thinking, while it allows us to surmise that: a) alternatives exist for a more humanistic, reflective and democratic education; b) teaching and learning can be processes rich in aesthetic value and creativity, for teachers and students alike; c) even in a rigid and tradition-ridden school system, a great deal can be achieved when educators make up their mind to act; d) a school open to real life, everyday experiences and to the needs of children and teachers, which both the students and the teachers will love and where they will feel at home, is not an impossible pursuit; and e) there are indeed ways for school to be both fun and effective.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Greek

- Chalkiadaki, A. (2008). "The multiple 'bets' of a research effort". In: Katsiki-Guivalou, A., Kalogirou, T., Chalkiadaki, A. (eds), *Fondness of Reading and School*. Athens: Patakis Publishers.
- Chrissafidis, K. (2002). *Empirical – Communicative Teaching: The Introduction of the Project Method at School*. Athens: Gutenberg.
- Gavriilidou, M. (2000). "The psychodynamic and the therapeutic role of the relation between adolescents and educators". In: Tsiantis, I. (ed.), *Introduction to Child Psychiatry, Adolescence*, Vol. 2 (1). Athens: Kastaniotis.
- Katsiki-Guivalou, A. (2003). *The Marvellous Journey: Studies for Children's Literature*, 10th edition. Athens: Patakis Publishers.
- Katsiki-Guivalou, A. (2007). *Literary Itineraries: Creators and Readings*. Athens: Patakis Publishers.
- Pedagogical Institute of Greece. (2008). *Education and Quality in the Greek School*. Athens. <<http://www.pi-schools.gr/programs/erevnes/>>
- Tsiantis, I. (2000). "Dynamic interrelations and processes in the relations between family and adolescents". In: Tsiantis, I. (ed.), *Introduction to Child Psychiatry: Adolescence*, Vol. 2 (1). Athens: Kastaniotis.
- Vernardakis, C. (2008). "Reading practices and habits of the parents of Primary Education schoolchildren in the Athens metropolitan area". In: Katsiki-Guivalou, A., Kalogirou, T., Chalkiadaki, A. (eds). *Fondness of Reading and School*. Athens: Patakis Publishers.
- Zervou, A. (1998). *In Wonderland: Children's Reading as a Meeting Place for Children and Adults*, 2nd edition. Athens: Patakis Publishers.

Non-Greek

- Cavafy, C.P. (1992). *Collected Poems*. Translated by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard. Edited by George Savidis. Revised Edition. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Children's Ombudsman, <http://www.0-18.gr/en/children/news.html>
- Holland, N. (1968). *The Dynamics of Literary Response*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Rosenblatt, L. (1978). *The Reader, the Text, the Poem. The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

ZABAVA I UČINKOVITOST U ŠKOLSKOJ NASTAVI

Ava Chalkiadaki

Sažetak – Ovaj članak želi doprinijeti raspravi o visokokvalitetnoj i djelotvornoj školi koju učenici i njihovi učitelji vole i u kojoj su svi zadovoljni. U sklopu toga, članak predstavlja filozofiju, ciljeve, metodologiju i poticajne rezultate programa istraživanja provedenog na Sveučilištu u Ateni pod naslovom „Kad Robinson Crusoe sretno Harryja Pottera...“, a koji je planiran nakon uzimanja u obzir složene i teške situacije u šestom razredu osnovne škole te stremljenja prema sretnoj, zabavnoj i kreativnoj školskoj godini koja će pružiti i učinkovite mogućnosti učenja svim učenicima i učiteljima sudionicima programa. Uspjeh programa, koji je proveden u 25 osnovnih škola, omogućuje donošenje zaključka kako zaista postoje načini na koji škola može biti kako zabavna tako i učinkovita te da škola s kojom se i učenici i učitelji mogu poistovjetiti i koju mogu smatrati svojom nije utopijska misao.

Gljučne riječi: nastavne aktivnosti, dječja književnost, zabava u školi, podučavanje i učenje, prijelaz iz nižih u više razrede osnovne škole, prijelaz iz razredne na predmetnu nastavu