

A pupils' approach to a judicial conflict between rivers and humans

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- In early 2002, The Cross Curriculum Program became law in Greece. This Curriculum referred to the inter-disciplinary approach of all cognitive subjects taught at school and thus gave the opportunity to connect environmental education to geography.

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- The aim of the environmental education, as mentioned in the above curriculum, is to “...*make students... be sensitized about the problems arising from bad management of the environment and through EE students... will be active members in decision taking and materialization process...*”

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- This article presents a three months project, developed in three primary schools during the school spring period of 2002.
- Our intention was to make the pupils search for environmental impacts taking into consideration the fact that geography contributes greatly in understanding 1) the degree of the impact and 2) the reasons of being disastrous, in some cases.

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- In order to do so, we “invented” a story which could introduce the pupils in real life and give them an active role to play. The idea was to make the pupils work in small teams which were parts of a large team (the whole class), make them think about rivers and humans and their interconnection and discuss and support their ventures with data in front of an audience. So, the whole idea was based on a typical debate between teams.

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- *The “story”*
- The “story” is very simple and based on things that can happen every day among people. This is important because it is a way to rise the interest of the pupils.
- So, in March 2002,
- The rivers “sued” the humans for inappropriate and impetuous use of their water and asked for justice.

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- The “cast”
 - The cast was consisted of the six form pupils of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Pilot Primary Schools
 - The six form teachers of the three schools
 - Five groups of student teachers of the Department of Primary Education, AUTH
 - The writer of this article who was responsible for the project

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- The “bench”
 - The “judge” (who may be a teacher, in this case was the writer of this article)
 - The “public prosecutor” was grade six pupils of the 1st pilot primary school of the School of Education
 - The “counsel for the defence” was the sixth form pupils of the 2nd pilot primary school of the School of Education
 - and, because of the seriousness of the accusation, the sixth form pupils of the 3rd pilot primary school of the School of Education were appointed to be the “jury”.

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- The “public prosecutor”, the “counsel for the defence” and the “jury” had their advisors, student teachers of the Department of Primary Education of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. The venue of the trial was the main auditorium of the department of Primary Education and the date of the trial was fixed in June 7, 2002.

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- *The gathering of evidence*
- **Each party** (the “public prosecutor” and the “counsel for the defence”) **was organized into five teams** and each team was responsible for the gathering of evidence on a specific topic for the support of their “client”. Thus, **10 teams of pupils** were formed which were supervised by **five groups of student teachers**. *Each student teacher group was responsible for one team from each party so, they could participate in both.*

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Public Prosecutor		Student Teachers	Counsel for the Defense	
1 st Pilot School	Topics covered by the pupils		Topics covered by the pupils	2 nd Pilot School
	the destruction of the natural river bed and the discontinuity of the channel	1 st team	- recreation (sailing, fishing etc.)	
	- the pollution and contamination of the river	2 nd team	- transportation of goods and passengers	
	- the destruction of fauna and flora	3 rd team	- electrical power production	
	- the reduction of the water discharge	4 th team	- irrigation, water supply	
- the reduction of the delta formation	5 th team	public works against flooding (dams)		
The Jury – 3 rd Pilot school				
The Judge - a teacher from any of the schools (in this case the writer of the article)				

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- *The teams met with the pupils once a week for a couple of hours maximum, for three months. The student teachers acted as the advisors of the teams. Whenever they realized that the evidence was not sufficient or appropriate, they explained to the pupils the problems that may arise and encouraged them to look for new and stronger arguments. But they never revealed an argument to the opponent.*

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- *The trial*
 - The trial began with the announcement of the accusation from the judge and after that the public prosecutor asked to support the evidence. Each team revealed their evidence using various ways: they gave speeches, recited poems, used posters, displayed photographs and diagrams, they even performed a drama to play that they wrote for the occasion.

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- Both parties had many objections against each other, some overruled by the judge and some sustained. The trial ended almost three hours after its commencement.
- The foreman of the jury announced that the jury found the humans guilty on all charges and the judge sentenced them accordingly.

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- The “*sentence*”
 - “After the completion of the procedure, during which the jury and the audience, heard, understood and kept a note on all the evidence which both parts supported,
 - and the foreman of the jury gave the decision to the judge,
 - and taking into consideration that what humans did to the rivers was not made on purpose but was due to the ignorance of the consequences and the rules that the rivers follow in their life,

we decide the following

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Humans are guilty on all charges

- The court acknowledges the human's regret and imposes the following:
 - The humans should become aware of the importance of the rivers for the survival and should always remember the accusation.
 - Should respect the existence of the rivers and understand that each time they pollute a river this will turn against humans. Also, that this trial is not a revenge of the rivers against humans but an assert of the river's rights.

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- The rivers will reduce to the minimum their discharge so humans will learn to live with less water in the future and forced to better management of the water.
 - This is a suspended sentence for one year in order to give the chance to the humans to prove that they respect the rivers.
- The court will meet again after one year”

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Since then

Enjoy the beauty of the rivers with all the respect

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Conclusions

- The project can be divided in two parts.
 - The pre-trial (the theme)
 - The trial (the procedure)

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- The pre-trial
 - A two-way relationship established between teachers and pupils. The pupils learned: 1) how to use the available sources, 2) extract the appropriate information 3) how to present them to an audience in a more attractive way, 4) how to work in teams and what were the benefits from working as a member of a team.
 - They also found out that they can acquire more knowledge when working as a team, learning from what the rest of the members have found.

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- The trial
 - The pupils respond better whenever the teacher gives them the chance to have an active role and simulate real life while learning.
 - Many pupils acted like real lawyers and searched intensively for information in order to support their ideas.
 - The pupils learned how to debate and to respect the opinion of the others even if they don't agree. That means they learned to listen to the arguments of the opposite side, and find evidence to invert this. They learned that they have to filter each piece of information they read or hear before they form their own opinion or take a decision.

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Disadvantages

- The trial lasted too long
- The teams and the topics could be fewer
- The pupils didn't make a summary of what they read
- No time restrictions on the teams

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- The student teachers and the teachers
- The student teachers involved in the project found the procedure very interesting, innovative and productive.
- The pupils came closer to the teacher.
- The teacher co-operated with each of the pupils and had the opportunity to realize which pupil is interested in what and how the pupil works in order to achieve his/her objectives.

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Thank you