# Creating Pupils' Internet Magazine

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*Abstract*

This article presents an action research, which aimed to improve pupils' literary creativity and enable them to use computers connected to the internet. The study was conducted in a small disctrict village school in Croatia. Creating a pupils' internet magazine appeared to be an excellent way for achieving the educational aims of almost all subjects. Participation in the project was presented as a challenge to pupils to encourage their creativity as a way of life. Providing the possibility of representing their creativity and getting positive comments from readers increased pupils' self-confidence, made them proud of their published accounts and enabled them to develop their significant learning in an amusing way. These are all reasons that indicate pupils' internet magazines should be more often present in our schools. However, traditional teaching cannot serve as a successful model for encouraging pupils' creativity. Instead, it is necessary to introduce methods of active and cooperative learning. Writing about different everyday life topics, pupils made connections with members of their local community, particularly with elderly residents who recognised and supported their activity and participated in it as well. Change that was initiated ten years ago was institutionalised in the school in which it was implemented. This demonstrates how action research can contribute to achieving significant changes in teaching, and the results of this study can be used to stimulate the creativity of other teachers and their students.

*Key words:* action research, classroom blog, change process, creativity in teaching, web-based learning

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

When the French teacher Célestin Freinet introduced students' magazines printed on the simple printing machine at the beginning of the last century, he could not begin to imagine that students' magazines could be created and distributed using the sophisticated devices which have subsequently become available, such as computers and the internet. Although contemporary technical capabilities are far bigger, the main idea stayed the same – to give students the freedom to express themselves through text in a way that surpasses plain writing exercises and develops into literary creations of their thoughts and feelings. That is why those words written by Freinet in 1927 still sound like the ideal to be achieved in contemporary schools:

"The dream of all the modem educators who are looking for a rational education is to make the life of a child and the life of the village the center of the life in the classroom. The necessity to teach reading from textbooks conceived, written, and printed by adults cannot be implemented to meet the needs of our students and their milieu. But if we have a printing device that would allow us to print what interests us, and if our students can put down on a page their thoughts, their feelings and narratives they wrote, then these pages become the centerpiece of their schoolwork." (Freinet, as cited in Acker, 2007, p. 53)

Computers and mobile devices connected to the internet are now easily accessible and have become an inseparable part of the modern way of living, especially for young people using them in various ways. Sadly, most of our schools do not use these multimedia devices for educational purpose, and, furthermore, forbid their use in school in general[1] . This results in children and young people being left to themselves in a very complex, but also very appealing, communicational space. Young people have a great freedom to express themselves using the new media. However, without the participation of the older generations – the digital newcomers[2] , the media space is often filled with superficial, infantile and even vulgar contents. In the eyes of the new generations, the school, due to its inertia and rigidness, has less and less meaning and becomes, for these young generations, a place where they learn about things that have almost no connection with the needs and lives of people in the modern society.

The school should, instead of the current praxis, recognise the educational possibilities of the new information-communication technologies. Teachers should use them more to enable learning that is not reduced to the mere transfer of knowledge, but give the students the possibility to participate in many joint activities with their peers and adults, because the learning process happens in relations to other people (McDermott, 1999, p. 16) and activities that are a part of everyday life (Smith, 1999). It is important that children and young people learn to express themselves clearly with words, and thus emancipate their human capabilities, which at the same time presents the goal of education:

"Namely, if education is development of human essential strengths, their human powers, and it is, then it is above all development of their creative powers, through which people establish themselves as free beings, as beings relying completely on themselves, as beings belonging to utterly themselves, and that is their essence as humans. Education is, therefore, activity which develops human strengths according to their maximum abilities, and that means that the way towards something possibly different stays continuously open." (Polić, 1993, p. 21-22).

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[1] That refers to using mobile phones in the classroom.

[2] Prensky (2001) thinks that all those born before the general digitalisation of the everyday life, i.e. before the internet, find it difficult to adapt to the new surrounding. It is a very serious problem, especially for education because ″our Digital Immigrant instructors, who speak an outdated language (that of the pre-digital age), are struggling to teach a population that speaks an entirely new language" (p. 2)

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Since this study is focused on improving existing practice, we chose action research as the most appropriate research design. Namely, "action research provides a means for teachers or educators in the schools to improve their practices of taking action and to do so by participating in research" (Creswell, 2011, p. 577).

Carr and Kemmis (2004) distinguish technical, practical and emancipatory action research. Unlike technical action research, in which the control over the research is not in the hands of the practitioner, and practical action research, in which the accent is put on better understanding of practice, critical-emancipatory action research tends to create basic changes that influence social formations in which the practice is conducted:

"Thinking of these social formations as (…) practice architectures allows us to think of them as made by people, and thus as open to be re-made by people. People involved in critical action research aim to change their social world collectively, by thinking about it differently, acting differently, and relating to one another differently—by constructing other practice architectures to enable and constrain their practice in ways that are more rational (in the sense of reasonable), more productive and sustainable, and more just and inclusive." (Kemmis, McTaggart, Nixon, 2014, p. 14)

In our case, the intention was to emancipate the creative potential of all participants in the case study, especially of the students, and to change the routine way of the educational practice. Teachers and the students were actively included in "designing and implementing the changes, so it becomes participatory and more democratic, and hence socially critical" action research (Tripp, 2005, p. 456).

This action research is also created as the case study. Case study represents systematic research focusing on individual cases. Cases can be individuals, programmes, institutions or groups, even whole states. Data gathered on each case can be versatile: interviews, observations, documentation, statistic ratios, impressions and opinions of others about the case, personal logs and other. Although more teachers were involved in realisation of the idea about the students' internet magazine, this study describes only one of these cases. In so doing, we tried to cover all features of a case study:

- "It is concerned with a rich and vivid description of events relevant to the case.
- It provides a chronological narrative of events relevant to the case.
- It blends a description of events with the analysis of them.
- It focuses on individual actors or groups of actors, and seeks to understand their perceptions of events.
- It highlights specific events that are relevant to the case.
- The researcher is integrally involved in the case.
- An attempt is made to portray the richness of the case in writing up the report." (Hitchcook & Hughes, 1995, as cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2005, p. 182)

Taking into consideration that we conducted this research with children, we asked for and gathered written permissions of their parents to videotape, photograph and publish the materials in scientific and professional publications. We tried to avoid publishing students' names, but since they undersigned the published literary works in the magazine, which was published on the internet, it was impossible but also unnecessary to preserve their complete anonymity. The ombudsman for children interpreted the law, which says that "filming children with the aim of promoting the work of a kindergarten or a school and children activities in the positive contest, generally should not harm the child, but the parents should be given a chance to declare whether they give their consent." Our case included positive children activities that made both them and their parents proud.

### 3. CONTEXT AND RESEARCH PROBLEM

This action research was conducted in a small district village school in Klakar, part of Primary school "Vladimir Nazor," Slavonski Brod. During the time of the research (January until end May, 2006) classes were organised in a combined four-class group of 12 students, held by the schoolteacher Vesna Šimić. Branko Bognar, at the time of the research, was the school pedagogue and later became assistant on Faculty for Humanities and Social Sciences in Osijek.

During the time Branko was a pedagogue, he started a learning community in which we discussed various professional issues such are cooperative learning, communication in the classroom, creativity inside the class and similar. At the beginning, a few other teachers from other schools joined this learning community, and some even started such a community in their schools. Using a virtual space for cooperation[3] (http://mzu.sbnet.hr/) put at our disposal we designed and started a project "Network of Learning Communities". The main aim of the project was professional cooperation and exchange of experience between members of learning communities from different schools, some of which were situated in other cities.

In the learning community in our school we learned about technical possibilities of the blog system, which we decided to use for publishing students' magazines, and we held multiple workshops about class organization, which encourages students' literary and art creation. Vesna Šimić, a schoolteacher, was also actively included in the learning community activities and had the conditions for creating a students' internet magazine in her district school in Klakar. That school had only the morning shift classes, and the classroom was furnished according to the needs and ideas of the students and their parents. This classroom was the other home for the students. They could use various educational tools, most importantly the new computer that was in constant use. Beside the computer, they could also use the colour printer, for which they often had to buy cartridges and paper themselves. They also had at their disposal a CD player and TV with video recorder. Other equipment and materials were also obtained by the students and the teacher This made a rich collection of educational materials (colour chalks, buttons, small stones, shells, seeds, threads, wool threads, sticks, books, newspapers and so on) that students could play with and use for creative work. The classroom, which was newly renovated, had large windows that were used for displaying students' works and nice curtains chosen and decorated by the teacher Vesna and her students. Cleaning of that classroom was also one of the responsibilities the students willingly took on, which gave the cleaner a pleasant surprise.

The school is situated in a restful plain village Klakar in Posavina, 14 km away from Slavonski Brod. The school building goes back to the time of Slavonian Military Frontier when it was used for military purposes. It has been used as a school since 1880. During the implementation of the project, the school façade was decrepit and only the roof of the building was newly renovated. Inside the school building there is one other classroom, the hall, toilets and a two-bedroom apartment for the schoolteacher. Around the building there is a yard, whose spring and summer blossoms and smells invite students and many of the passer-byes to actively spend their time in it or just to relax in the shades of the hundreds of years old walnut and pear trees (http://youtu.be/YL9ecq77-D8). The students, the teacher, the janitor and the cleaner do maintenance of the yard.

Values that we tried to create in our praxis are freedom, creativity, cooperation and entertainment. Freedom means the students' choice to decide on and participate in deciding

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[3] It is CMS (content management system) and e-learning system whose author is Željko Klindžić, computer programmer from Slavonski Brod. Later on we used Moodle – „a learning platform designed to provide educators, administrators and learners with a single robust, secure and integrated system to create personalised learning environments" (https://docs.moodle.org/27/en/About_Moodle).

about important aspects of educational process. Only free students can be highly motivated for achieving quality in what they are doing (Glasser, 2004).

Plucker and Makel (2010) think that creativity "is the interaction among aptitude, process, and environment by which an individual or group produces a perceptible product that is both novel and useful as defined within a social context" (p. 49). However, usefulness or adequacy in children's creativity cannot be evaluated in the same way as the creativity of adults:

"We can consider children's efforts appropriate if they are meaningful, purposeful, or communicative in some way. If students successfully communicate an idea or endeavour to solve a problem, their efforts can be considered appropriate. If they do so in a way that is original, at least to them, we can consider the efforts creative." (Starko, 2010, p. 8)

Cooperation is the organisation of the classes in various sociological forms that contribute to the learning in the wider sense of the word. It includes development of social skills that are a part of the group of important competences of a modern human being (Klippert, 2001).

We also think that learning should be saturated with humour (Matijević, 1994), conducted in the relaxed class atmosphere and in a fun way (Dryden and Vos, 2001). Only in those conditions are students capable of expressing themselves and developing their creative potentials.

Despite the awareness of the importance of these values, they were not always fulfilled fully. Creativity of the teacher sometimes dominated the students' creativity. In addition, Branko's "optimistic" expectations from the students and the teachers were soon exceeded by their creative ideas and performances. The biggest problem at the beginning was Vesna's lack of trust in her abilities and those of her students. She thought that she and her students had insufficient knowledge for editing a students' internet magazine. Branko encouraged her by telling that editing an internet magazine is not so difficult and that it would be a learning process for all of us in the realization of that idea.

In order to realise her values, Vesna tried to provide her students with different ways of developing their literary and art creations (http://youtu.be/d-vSsF4k7hw), some of which were included in the class magazine called "Klik-klak." At the beginning, students wrote this magazine by hand and later on the computer and then they printed materials and bound them on a bookbinding machine. Although these magazines enabled students to publish their literary and art creations, the students and their teacher faced a number of technical difficulties. Due to the lack of financial means, they published a very small number, namely only two copies of their magazine. Students had to supply paper and cartridges for the printer themselves. Only a small number of people could read their magazine as students borrowed them and took them home for their parents and friends to read. After the donation of new computers with internet connection, "Klik-klak" has been published on the internet. Hereby started our new action research in which we wanted to improve students' literary creation and teach students how to use computers and the internet.

## 4. ACTION RESEARCH PLAN

During the school year 2004/2005, the activities of creative writing and publishing materials on the class blog were conducted spontaneously and without planning, supervision and evaluation of the results. In the second semester of the school year, 2005/2006 editing the students' internet magazine was included in the project "Network of Learning Communities" and grew to be an action research. The important step was making the plan that, according to our wish, had to include students' ideas. Their ideas were gathered during the homeroom class, and in the art class. They expressed their ideas through art works

Figure 1. Students illustrate the action research plan



Some of the students' proposals were:

I. G., 1. c.: "I would like to take pictures with my camera! I took your pictures at [the pond] Bebrinka, so I know how to do it."

I. B., 2.c: "It would be good if everyone would write, not only the older students."

I. S., 2. c.: "We could draw unusual characters and write only using our imagination, about something that is not real."

I. S., 3.c.: "How about writing a funny weather forecast, on Monday and Friday?"

M. B., 3.c.: "We could write about animals, we haven't done it till now."

S. A., 3. c.: "We could write about the past times, old customs and games."

F. G., 4.c.: "Let us make it funnier, it is so serious now."

I. M., 4.c.: "How about finding something in that book on history of our school?"

(Students from Klakar, personal communication, January 16, 2006)

Acknowledging students' ideas we agreed to try to achieve four main goals: improvement of children's literary creation; training of students and the teacher to use a computer; preserving local domestic culture and especially the blog system and; the satisfaction of the students in participating in those activities (Table 1). We intended to: use creative writing methods; research local customs, costumes, games, toys, folk songs, tools, trades, ways of living, all done by talking to the local people; read and gather old books, items, and then writing texts in WORD programme; take photos and do graphic processing on the computer; use the internet browser, E-mail and other curricular and extracurricular activities of the students.

We gathered data from published articles and readers' comments in the students' magazine (http://www.cvrcak.net/blog/klik-klak/default.htm), E-mails with comments from professionals, interviews with professionals, local people and students, video recordings of the students' activities, photo collections, audio recordings, research diaries and comments of critical friends put on the web forum.

Table 1. Goals and criteria for evaluation of success

| Goals | Criteria |
|---|---|
| **Improvement of children's literary creation** | More inclusion of the students in literary work for publishing on the BLOG. Positive review of professionals and positive readers' comments. |
| **Training of students and the teacher to use a computer** | Students can write MS Word document, process a photo in graphic programme, copy and paste text in BLOG editorial, write and publish articles on BLOG and on forums, use internet browser, write and send E-mails. |
| **Preserving local domestic culture** | Students show interest in learning about the local culture, they can name and understand the use of items from the past, they revive old games, communicate with the elderly villagers. |
| **Satisfaction of the students in participating in planned activities** | Students express their content in the evaluation papers. Video recordings and photographs show the satisfaction of the students with their participation in the activities (e.g. smiles on their faces). |

In action research, critical friends play an important role. A critical friend is mostly a person who shares the professional context and helps the practitioner in the implementation of the action research by advising him/her and giving feedback information (McNiff & Whitehead, 2009). During this action research, Branko was Vesna's critical friend and he often visited and video recorded her class, talked to her about possibilities in dealing with certain issues, gave advice and emotional support. Besides that, critical friends became other teachers in one-teacher education from other district schools, who themselves started publishing students' internet magazines. This close group of critical friends also joined other participants in the project "Network of Learning Communities" through the Moodle electronic system, which Vesna used to publish her research diary.

## 5. PROCESS OF CREATING STUDENTS' INTERNET MAGAZINE

At the beginning of the project and with the help of the computer programmer Željko Klindžić, who created and installed the blog system, Branko helped all interested teachers to create class internet magazines. Students and their teachers chose names and interfaces out of several given options. Students needed to be trained in order to edit the internet magazine. With the help from Branko, students from Klakar learned very quickly the first steps. However, our wish was to help the students from other district schools, who also wanted to participate in the project. So we arranged for Vesna's students to create instructions for creating class internet magazine. We thought that they could do that in a simpler way that is more understandable to their peers than we adults could ever do. Branko thought that they should do it in the form of written and illustrated instructions. Instead of doing that, they surprised him with their creativity. Namely, a few boys made a blogger rap song in which they, in a very comical way, explained how to publish articles on the blog (http://youtu.be/LvYdbx5x59A).

Two professional journalists soon noticed students' blog creativity: Anita Benić, news correspondent of the national daily journal "Vjesnik" and Dunja Vanić from the weekly newspaper "Posavska Hrvatska". The journalists wrote their comments on the students' blog. As publishing articles on a blog is connected with a journalist's profession, we arranged that students contact the journalists and invite them to come for a visit. Students also prepared questions and sent them in E-mail and soon they received very interesting and useful answers and suggestions. The journalist A. Benić suggested following themes that students could write about in their magazine: "like the ZOO in Ruščica, granny who makes dolls (P.S. invite me to the exhibition), local customs, your school success, old customs in Klakar, are students

satisfied with the local transport to their school…" (A. Benić, personal communication, January 17, 2006). The journalist D. Vanić wrote: "Stay honest and cheerful as you are. Write a lot and as often as you can! Explore your surroundings and present it to the whole world. Texts do not have to be long, important is that you know what you want to express." (D. Vanić, personal communication, January 18, 2006).

Students chose topics, prepared texts and interview questions for the local people and chose pictures for publishing. The materials were then read in the homeroom class, Croatian language class and during the informatics class. Other texts and articles were completed and put in folders (portfolios) or were displayed on the panels in their classroom. In that way all their materials were saved and available for presentation[4] .

One part of the articles that were published in the students' magazine was created during the regular classes. One example of that is a video recording of the Croatian language class (http://youtu.be/c7ZnC3i2K_o) held on February 16, 2006. The task was to create a story with an ending, but without the beginning. As a motif for creating a story students used the class computer to view and listen to the video recording of an elderly woman telling a story of how she once lost a ducat, which was very valuable at that time. After viewing the video recording, the teacher suggested they wrote their stories alone or as a pair work. To the first year students she suggested, since they could not write yet, to rewrite the headlines of other students into their notebooks, on the blackboard or on the computer and to illustrate the story according to what they had seen on the video recording. In the background, a very relaxing music played while the students were working. Students were writing their stories for about 20 minutes, and those who finished early also illustrated their stories.

After they had finished, each pair of students read their stories. Other students gave them a big applause and the teacher congratulated them and shook their hand. After reading, students exchanged their papers, wrote their comments on them and gave points to each paper. Each pair of students read the comments and added up their points. The students with the largest number of points soon published the article by themselves on the class blog (http://www.cvrcak.net/blog/Klik-Klak/a001078). Other stories and illustrations were displayed on the class display panel. At the end of the class, students completed evaluation papers and all of them expressed positive feelings.

Even some parents took part in writing some of the literary works. One student, I. S., sent by E-mail his homework paper, which he wrote with his father (http://www.cvrcak.net/blog/Klik-Klak/a000948)



*I have talked with dad…*
*How my dad won my mum's heart*
*Dad and mum met at the promenade.*
*Dad was a student and he hung around the town all the time.*
*Mum went to school and she waited for a bus at the promenade.*
*Dad says that he liked mum, so he took her for a cup of tea, and mum says that she went with dad to tea only because it was so cold outside.*
*Dad enjoyed making mum laugh, and mum happily laughed at his simple jokes.*
*Dad says that he fell for mum's eyes, and mum says that even today she does not know what exactly she fell for.*
*Written by: I. S. with dad*

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[4] Sometimes students brought their portfolios home to show them to their parents and family members.

Some comments about this article were:

"I have never met a boy who is so familiar with the love story of his parents (till now)! The story about your parents really touched me with its warmth, simplicity (a lot said with so little words), sincerity and wit! I am so glad that you published your story so I could enjoy it. Greetings from the pedagogue of high school in Zagreb." (S. Milović, personal communication, January 22, 2006)

"I confirm that everything written above is true!" (I.'s mum, personal communication, January 29, 2006)

The teacher Vesna wrote the following note in her research diary:

"In the morning, at the beginning of the Croatian language class, we read I.'s message. He wrote his article with the help of his father. We enjoyed the story and it reminded me of the story when Tadijanović[5] met Jela[6] and how one slice of pear bound them for life.

What followed was looking for a tea mug that would best suit the student's paper. We browsed tens of data files from earlier collected photographs and chose the most suitable one. I. published his text in the new article, while F. processed the photograph and made it smaller and then added a photo as an illustration. We always award the authors and their work with applause. However, we were still working too slowly, so the planned article was not published immediately because we had to do the maths class. We published it, nevertheless, after the school." (V. Šimić, personal communication, January 18, 2006).

One of the subjects of students were interested in was the toys and games played in the old times in their village. Students gathered most information on the subject from their grandparents. During the preparation of the articles about games and toys of the old times, students also made these toys and played with them as their grandparents used to play when they were children:

*Old toys[7]*

*Grandma told me how they played in the old days. They made toys by themselves. Grandma made a toy from her childhood for me. This toy looked funny, but I noticed that younger girls were interested in this toy. I took a photo of Irena and Keti how they dragged the dish with cloth-dolls. It was a beloved toy of my grandma.* (Student I. M., personal communication, January 18, 2006)

Figure 2. Mutual help in using the computer



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[5] Dragutin Tadijanović was a renowned Croatian poet.

[6] Tadijanović's future wife.

[7] Student's article about old toys was published at http://cvrcak.net/blog/Klik-Klak/a000949

After some time, the students in the first grade also started publishing their articles. A few of the older students expressed their dissatisfaction with their slow writing and the fact that they had difficulties coping with the computer, but still they helped them publish their articles (http://youtu.be/tNez3nTwG7M). By helping each other, we all learned how to use the computer and various computer programmes (Figure 2).

January and February 2006 showed the highest level of activities in editing the students' internet magazine. Students prepared texts and published them on the blog almost every day. Figure 3 shows that during the implementation of the action research, from January until May 2006, the activities of publishing the articles in Klik-klak were higher than before and after that period.

Figure 3. Number of published articles on Klik-klak blog in months
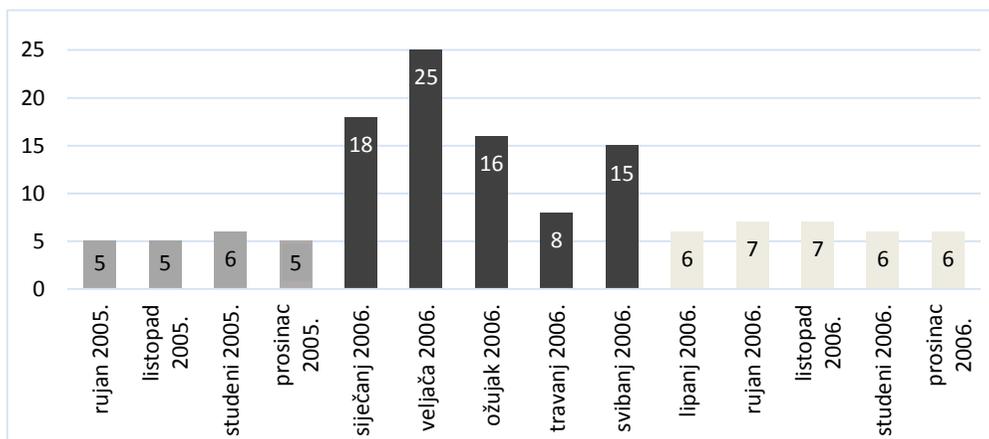


With the increase of published students' articles on the blog, the readers' comments also started to increase. Every morning before the class students would read aloud the readers' comments (http://youtu.be/CK8ilbAakCo). These comments were encouraging little bloggers, and if the article was without any comments, students showed a short-term dissatisfaction. Students of the other district schools, former students, relatives and friends of the students and the teacher mostly wrote the comments but unknown readers from other cities and countries wrote some of them too:

"Klakar-kids, you are great! Your page is a real refreshment, and I must give you a credit for doing also an excellent journalist work. Just keep on the good work, you and your teacher. See you soon." (D. Vanić, journalist of Posavska Hrvatska, personal communication, May 12, 2005)

"It is excellent that you talk to your grandparents about toys from the past in Croatia. We had something similar in England where we were supposed to try to hit something with a stick. It was called a 'tipcat'." (S. Davis, personal communication, January 26, 2006)

Even more important than readers' comments were suggestions of our critical friends who often visited our classes. Besides them following students' activities in creating students' internet magazine, participants of the project "Community of Learning Communities" also followed and commented on those activities over the web forum: "Vesna, I like your research diary. I think I have never read so interesting notes from your class." (M. Zovko, personal communication, February 16, 2006) On some occasions, students received a visit from students of the Faculty of Teacher Education in Osijek, Dislocated Faculty in Slavonski Brod.

Students gladly talked with their guests, who expressed their positive opinion on the young students' literary work, but also about the efforts of their teacher: "I think that this is a very useful way of working with students, but also for teachers. Not only does it motivate for cooperation, creativity and critical thinking, but also entertains people reading their articles." (Ostojić, 2006, p. 44)

Students had the chance of expressing their feelings during the action research and what they thought about each activity in which they participated in several different ways (e.g. evaluation papers, interviews and so on). They used evaluation papers to express their positive feelings, and in interviews with the one teacher education student Mirjana Ostojić, which she used for her diploma work, they said:

M. Ostojić: "What do you like in this way of work?"

I. S.: "I like when we write about something, then the others read it, and then we get many comments on it."

S. A.: "When we dig up something, when we find an interesting story."

F. G.: "When we write funny jokes and not the articles that can offend someone, and when other schools can see our work."

M. Ostojić: "What don't you like in this way of work?"

S. A.: "That we don't have a colour theme [in the blog]."

M. B.: "I don't like when I write an article and I make a mistake and then the others [pupils] say that it is not good and I should start from the beginning."

I. M.: "Everything is great, I just don't like that we used to hold a first place and now we're holding the fourth one [on the rank scale of the most read blogs]." (M. Ostojić and the pupils from Klakar, personal communication, May 4, 2006)

The teacher had a group interview with the students' parents and she talked with the elderly villagers with whom the students cooperated during the implementation of the action research. To her question what they thought about publishing the students' texts in the internet, granny L. I. answered (http://youtu.be/5okl0ao0USI):

L. I.: "I think that it is so nice and I was surprised how interested they were. They don't come just to talk to me, they visit also other grannies. We feel so glad that they remind us in that way of our old customs, and we are so happy to show them all of it…"

V. Šimić: "What would you recommend to our little journalists? How should they behave? What should they do?"

L. I.: "They don't need me to recommend anything, they soak up all our stories and they remind us... remind us of everything and we are glad to tell them all these stories and show them what it was like before. Moreover, we always tell them: "Come if you need anything" and they are already interested and they've sent so much into the world already, as I have heard from them. And it makes me happy that our school has all these gadgets that can send everything to the world." (V. Šimić and L. I., personal communication, May 2006).

Pupils who finished the one-teacher classes or who moved somewhere else stopped participating in editing the internet magazine in their new surroundings. Nevertheless, they all remember with a lot of joy the times when they were actively participating and they continued visiting the internet magazine pages, which were then edited by some other students:

V. S.: "I had so much fun last year. I feel very proud I was the main editor of Klik-klak."

I.: "In the fifth grade we have to learn very much, but we never use computer in school."

A.: "My brother and I visit your pages from Zagreb, especially since they are our pages, too."

M.: "I am not publishing any more, but I am helping my sister Ivana to publish the best she can. I am glad that they continued the work…"

V.: "It is good that we have so many photographs and video recordings that remind us on our happy blogging days." (Former students of Klakar school, personal communication, April 4, 2006)

After completing the research in June 2006, the teacher Vesna Šimić moved to another position as a school principle in primary school "Vladimir Nazor" in Slavonski Brod. Classes were then held by her colleague T. R. who was not participating in the project of creating students' internet magazines and could not use the computer, but Vesna's former students taught her how to use it.

"I must admit I was a bit scared of the responsibility, because I worked with the teacher Vesna and I know how good and with how much love and passion she did her job, but on the other hand it was certainly a challenge, and now I feel very content because I know how much I had to learn and how much my students, her former students, have taught me. I slowly learned everything and it was really interesting." (From the interview with T.R., personal communication, June 5, 2007)

Creating students' internet magazines was noted in other media, too. In the local weekly newspaper "Posavska Hrvatska" they published an interview with the teacher Vena Šimić and her students from Klakar. The example of the students' magazine Klik-klak was mentioned even in a few television programmes, and the teacher herself wrote a short paper in the magazine "Profil akademija" describing her experiences in creating this magazine.

## 6. INTERPRETATION

This action research contributed to achieving all the planned goals in accordance with the set criteria, which were almost completely fulfilled:

During the research period, there was an increase of the students' activities in writing literary texts for publishing in students' magazine Klik-klak. It can clearly be seen in image 3, but also on the video recordings, photographs and in the research diary from the teacher. Positive comments of the professionals (journalists, pedagogues, and teachers – critical friends) and the readers indicate the quality of the students' works, what is in accordance to the pedagogy of success as Freinet advocated in his time:

"Produce a beautiful school journal. Be technically well prepared so that without taking any undue risks your success will be recognized. Little by little, you will be able to accentuate – in your classroom and your life – the success that gives hope, drive and energy." (Freinet, as cited in Acker, 2007, p. 69)

Students found readers' comments very important and they encouraged them to write and edit their magazine. This was unlike the traditional education process where children rarely have the opportunity to get the feedback information about what they wrote in school or at home. Instead of creative expression and communication, writing very often is just a spelling and accurate writing exercise, which is without much sense for the children. In our case, the blog gave an opportunity to students to be authors whose works draw attention of a reader. This made them proud and happy, and made learning a meaningful result of the interaction with other people, some of whom were not a part of the narrow social context the students live in.

In the everyday activities concerned with creating this magazine, the students and their teachers learned to use computer programmes: text editing, digital manipulation of photographs, weblog editing, reading, writing and sending E-mails, browsing the internet and similar. However, all participants experienced the learning process as a challenge and a need, not as some boring activity in which they were forced to participate. Therefore, in our case we experienced significant learning, to which Rogers assigns the following characteristics:

"*It has a quality of personal involvement* – the whole person in both his feeling and cognitive aspects being in the learning event. *It is self-initiated*. Even when the impetus or

stimulus comes from the outside, the sense of discovery, of reaching out, of grasping and comprehending, comes from within. *It is pervasive*. It makes a difference in the behavior, the attitudes, perhaps even the personality of the learner. *It is evaluated by the learner*. He knows whether it is meeting his need, whether it leads toward what he wants to know, whether it illuminates the dark area of ignorance he is experiencing. The locus of evaluation, we might say, resides definitely in the learner. *Its essence is meaning*." (Rogers, 1969, p. 5)

Students paid a lot of attention to exploring their local heritage and culture, and as a result they communicated almost every day with the local people, especially with elderly people. The local community reacted very positively to the students' activities concerning editing the internet magazine and were very glad to help them. Instead of experiencing as a problem the gap between the generations, which often occurs with the new information-communication technologies, the gap served as a motivation for communication, cooperation and mutual learning. Students learned a lot about life in the past from the elderly community members, especially about old games and toys which, owing to the general commercialisation of childhood (Kenway & Bullen, 2001), were long forgotten and abandoned, although some of them had more educational values and potential than some modern toys. Old toys were, in fact, often made by children themselves from available materials and that allowed them to show their creativity and imagination. Unlike that, modern toys, being fabricated, do not allow such creativity and are often used as status symbol and not as stimulation for socializing and playing with peers.

In exploring the local culture, this project managed to avoid different levels of disinvolvement of students that, according to Hart (1992), means manipulation[8], decoration and tokenism.[9] We should especially emphasize decoration that refers to:

"…those frequent occasions when children are given T-shirts related to some cause, and may sing or dance at an event in such dress, but have little idea of what it is all about and no say in the organizing of the occasion. The young people are there because of the refreshments, or some interesting performance, rather than the cause." (Hart, 1992, p. 9)

In Croatia it very often refers to participation in various folk activities in which children wear national costumes, they sing, play and dance trying to display past times without deeper understanding of it. This makes them only the decorative element in festivities organised by adults. Instead of that, our project enabled students to actively participate in making a culture product which became recognizable even outside their place of living, which is proven by the following comment of one reader: "My friend from Japan came across your blog and she loves it because she learns about Croatian language and culture! Your blog is very interesting and we can hardly wait to read some more of your works!" (Mariko and Kamegoro, personal communication, May 18, 2006)

We found it was very important that participation in the project was entertaining and fun for the students. That we succeeded in that is proven by testimonies of students, video recordings and numerous photographs (e.g. figure 4) that shows laughing faces of the students who participate in the activities they chose themselves and that they find meaningful: "I.S.: It is interesting to me that we can write and choose letters we want, we are allowed to publish photographs we like most and that we edit our page ourself. I.K.: It gives us real joy to publish something." (From the interview with students, personal communication, May 2006)

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[8] "Manipulation, or literally handling (from Latin manus=hand), and in broader sense management, is an act of using someone or something as means for achieving special goal." Therefore Polić thinks that "education can not in any way be what manipulation in its essence really is: instumentalisation or interpositoning of the child in achieving some predetermined and for that child external goal." (Polić, 2002, p. 11)

[9] "Tokenism is used here to describe those instances in which children are apparently given a voice, but in fact have little or no choice about the subject or the style of communicating it, and little or no opportunity to formulate their own opinions." (Hart, 1992, p. 9)

Figure 4. Joy and satisfaction on the faces of the former students in Klakar during inspection of the Klik-Klak magazine, in whose creation they themselves participated before



This action research presents the example how it is possible to create a process of change in the school context which, according to Fullan (2007), consists of three phases: initiation, implementation and institutionalisation. Sadly, in our schools these changes often stop in the first phase, and little of them become part of the everyday praxis of the institution. In our case, creating students' internet magazines was not just some temporary attempt, because most of these magazines have been, even after ten years, edited by new students and in some cases new teachers. It shows that the change we started ten years ago is well established, i.e. it is institutionalized on the school level, now run by the principle Vesna. That Vesna is now principle means she has been able to contribute to the institutionalisation of students' internet magazines, and, being a principle, can support teachers in this valuable practice:

"My moving to a new work position as a school principle did not stop the activity of the students. More importantly, other teachers embraced the idea of the class internet magazine, so we today have eight students' magazines in our primary school "Vladimir Nazor" (see http://cvrcak.net/blog). It is interesting to mention that during our research, different news about the students' misuse of the internet started to appear in the media. Our research showed that the new media, especially the internet, can be used for expression of the literary creativity of students, but only if it is a part of the well-thought educational activity." (Šimić, 2008, p. 11)

We feel that we need to add one more phase to the process of change, and that is the dissemination of the gathered experiences during the introduction of the changes. This can be greatly supported by the action research, for whose affirmation we advocate ourselves. Of course, "one family, one teacher, one psychologist, or one advocacy group alone cannot combat a $15 billion industry" (Linn, 2005, p. 117) and behavioural models people uncritically accept in the institutional context and everyday life, but some action research projects of the teachers that make significant changes can create hope that "the way to possibly different can always stay open" (Polić, 1993). We hope that the results of this action research project will serve as stimulation to the creativity of other teachers and their students[10] and as a challenge in building child friendly communities.

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[10] Our project partly ahieved that since five years ago it encouraged teacher Mario Gavran to initiate a journal at the Internet with his first grade pupils (Gavran, 2009), and several hundreds students and teachers have listened to and watched the multimedia presentation of this project. We hope that publishing this account will additionally contribute to dissemination of our experiences in creating the pupils' internet magazine

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