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To: Professor Emeritus Dr. Seymour Papert
MIT Media Lab 77 Mass. Ave., E14/E15
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Invitation to comment on OECD report

Dear Professor Papert, sir.

I'm writing to you as a member of the **Hellenic Informatics Union's (HIU)**¹ board. As a Greek teacher of Informatics and as a zealous supporter of Computers in Education business worldwide. What I am... begging for is your **invaluable aid** in dealing with this OECD statement ("*Computers 'do not improve' pupil results*")², which I'm sure you too will find explicitly wrong and problematic.

To make a long story short, I copy: "*The OECD's education director Andreas Schleicher says school technology had raised "too many false hopes".*" I personally believe what he really meant and **should have stated** would be something like: "*[...] the great misuse of technology in schools is the only to blame for having raised false hopes*". Unfortunately though, he did not say that.

Having studied much of your work, articles and posts related to the "computers in education" business, I can not imagine a single teacher of Informatics to agree with OECD. Nevertheless, one can certainly fear that the particular ar-

¹<https://www.linkedin.com/company/hellenic-informatics-union>

²<http://www.bbc.com/news/business-34174796>

ticle will cause great problems in the ongoing effort of spreading the use of new technologies in education worldwide, even though it is about a false statement and a wrong conclusion. You see, they seem to rely on the (in)famous Pisa tests to conclude that *“education systems which have invested heavily in information and communications technology have seen “no noticeable improvement” in reading, mathematics or science”*. But how valid are those Pisa tests anyway? A simple Internet search reveals several studies against the accuracy and even the very utility(!) of this test run by OECD. I really need to cite just a few links:

- How accurate is the Pisa test? (BBC News)³
- Pisa rankings are ‘utterly wrong’ (TES network of teachers)⁴
- How PISA testing may be ruining education (Deseret News)⁵
- OECD and Pisa tests are damaging education worldwide (The Guardian)⁶

One could also argue against the OECD’s thesis simply by citing the very recent study⁷ by ITU, a United Nations agency for ICT issues. The study confirms that: *“...Around 4.2 billion people or 57 per cent of the world’s population do not have adequate access to the Internet... more than 90 per cent of people in the 48 UN-designated least developed countries – such as Somalia, Nepal and Vanuatu – can’t access the Internet. Further, 65 per cent of people in developing countries are also without access.”* By OECD’s viewpoint, this should result in peak performance and students’ grades and learning capacity in these countries; sadly, we all know that the exact opposite is true.

Specifically for Greece, demographic statistics for ICT use in Education show⁸ that our schools continue to fall way back from the EU averages; at the same time, Pisa rankings illustrate⁹ Greek schools as *“the worst in EU-28”*. Clearly, this is highly contradictory, since PISA ranking standards *“...are examinations devised by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)”*. **In other words, the OECD is refuting its own thesis with its own methodologies and previous results.**

³<http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-25299445>

⁴<https://www.tes.com/article.aspx?storycode=6343921>

⁵<http://national.deseretnews.com/article/1520/how-pisa-testing-may-be-ruining-education.html>

⁶<http://www.theguardian.com/education/2014/may/06/oecd-pisa-tests-damaging-education-academics>

⁷<http://www.cio.com.au/article/585061/57-world-population-can-t-access-internet/>

⁸<https://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/sites/digital-agenda/files/Greece%20country%20profile.pdf>

⁹<http://www.ekathimerini.com/159776/article/ekathimerini/news/greek-education-ranked-worst-in-the-eu>

Of course, no Computer Science teacher, nor any teacher who uses computers in his tutelage, needs the above information to prove what she or he already knows; what s/he has already experienced in class. I am talking about the magical “bonds” between children (or adolescents), computers and learning; this -already aged- explicit relation. One can simply copy your words/ words of an old, famous Teacher of “computer assisted education”, written two decades ago:

“Across the world there is a passionate love affair between children and computers. I have worked with poor children and rich children; with children of bookish parents and with children of illiterate families. But these differences don't seem to matter. Everywhere, with very few exceptions, I see the same gleam in their eyes, the same desire to appropriate this thing. And more than wanting it, they seem to know that in a deep way it already belongs to them. They know they can master it more easily and more naturally than their parents. They know they are the computer generation.”

We fear now that the above, dangerous I dare to say, OECD thesis, also instigated by this worldwide economic crisis, could impel Greek government and other poor countries’ governments to “oust” computers from education!

Thus, we believe that a **public argument** of a person with your profile and influence, perhaps an **Internet post** that would -again- support computer usefulness in education plus the undoubted value of programming teaching even from the early ages, would certainly be an **invaluable asset**. It would add another weapon in the battle against technophobia and computer illiteracy in public Education. A battle we here, all HIU members consider as extremely critical for society and, above all, for students themselves.

Sorry for -possibly- tiring you; hoping to hearing from you. Always grateful for your whole, great tribute to Teaching. Best regards for your health and longevity.

Yours sincerely,

Fotis E. Alexakos
HIU, Special Secretary

cc: Hellenic Informatics Union (HIU) - Secretarial Office