



PROGETTO REALIZZATO DALL'INSEGNANTE DANIELE PONS 1997
PARTECIPAZIONE AL CONCORSO THE 1998 ROLEX AWARD FOR ENTERPRISE

Project synthesis

The intolerance, the lack of understanding, the racism to which, unfortunately, we witness every day all over the world, are hindrances that can be knocked down only through a multicultural and multiracial education.

Thanks to the today's technology of the Internet web supported by the suitable software and hardware, we are able to communicate and to send and receive information from all over the world. It is using Internet that I intend to create “ *The school of the Children in the World* ”, which using the web resources will form only one big classroom attended by teachers and children coming from ten primary schools of ten countries in the world.

The development of an intercultural path through common teaching plans, will allow us to share experiences that will foster new knowledges and values.

The school, especially during the first years, plays a very important role in the development of the personality and the of the fundamental feelings such as tolerance and solidarity. To give to children, even to the ones living in the most disadvantaged places, the chance to exchange opinions, tales and images with other children living far away in very different countries, will represent a terrific experience that will help them to grow up without prejudices and build up a better world.

Title: “The school of the children in the world”

An interracial education for one race, the human one.

I have been teaching for many years to people belonging to different age groups: primary school children, high school students, adults.

Teaching gave me great satisfaction and I have learned a lot from all of my students, but only children still astonish me for their extraordinary ability of understanding, inventing and loving.

The intolerance, the lack of understanding, the racism to which, unfortunately, we witness every day all over the world, are hindrances that can be knocked down only through a multicultural and multiracial education. Unfortunately the lack of comparisons and the ignorance, more or less consciously, make people convey to their descendants knowledges and moral standards that are tightly connected to their ethnic group and their religion. This results in an egocentric culture that runs the risk of creating values and traditions that become unique and intransgressible.

The school plays a very important role in the development of the personality and the of the fundamental feelings such as tolerance and solidarity. To give to children the chance to exchange opinions, tales and images with other children living far away in very different countries, will represent a terrific experience that will help them to grow up without prejudices and build up a better world.

The primary school and the new technologies.

A new idea of teaching of literacy skills has been introduced in the primary school, that has to take into account the extraordinary technological “pick up” that we already have and still are experiencing as well as of the consequent new important opportunities that it opened up to communication.

The knowledge spaces that a computer can open up are stimulating as well appropriate for the education of the youngest ones, but it is only in the high school that students have access to all information sources.

The loans for primary schools are unfortunately not enough thus reducing the opportunities for the teachers to take part to training and updating courses: this strong cultural distinction must be overcome.

It is now time that all relevant bodies, starting from the political ones, take this big responsibility.



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Thanks to the commitment and the will of “lively teachers”, who are not tired preservers of old traditions, the steps made by primary school to approach the new technologies have acquired a big meaning.

Also thanks to special weather and environmental conditions, informatics laboratories have been set up in primary schools, where children could learn playing and where all disciplines have been integrated; I am proud to state that the children benefit a lot from this experience.

With my project I intend to prove that it is very important that primary school benefits from the technological processes and that it should have the same opportunities the other school groups have.

The opportunity to open a window on the world using the computer and Internet, could represent a chance even for the most disadvantaged children: the chance to participate to something and to raise oneself above an alienated position, which is the result of geographical, social or economical marginalization.

In several countries, big projects and new ministerial programmes for the primary school are in course of development: in the U.S.A., Japan and in many countries in Europe the computers and Internet have been introduced in the school at all levels.

To build up a school for everybody that belongs to everybody: “The school of the children in the world”.

Thanks to the today’s technology of the Internet web supported by a suitable software and hardware, we are able to communicate and to send and receive information from all over the world.

It is using Internet that I intend to create “ *The school of the Children in the World* ”, which using the web resources will form only one big classroom attended by teachers and children coming from ten primary schools of ten countries in the world. The development of common teaching plans, always complying with an intercultural path, will allow cultures, knowledges and opinions exchanging and comparing and it will result in unique experiences of high educational value.

At the beginning my job, together with my colleagues of “*The school of the children in the world*”, will be to identify the first steps to “begin the lessons”: first of all we will promote socialization activities, then we will identify the contents and the activities to be compared and on which we should work together. The educational goals will be the followings:

- awaken people to values as solidarity and to a culture of peace,
- learn to listen, to get new knowledges and to respect other people,
- bring out other cultures,
- learn to respect nature and protect animals.

The contents will be programmed and discussed by the teachers on-line and will refer to the social, ecological sphere as well as to specific disciplines such as mathematics, languages, history and geography.

It will be possible to build activities based on the different ways of telling, on the different customs and traditions, on the games, the rites and the music, on the environmental protection and on particularly meaningful experiences such as a school trip. It will be possible to prepare a range of activities to learn one or more foreign languages: the field of action is very fertile.

The single experience will become the experience of everybody and will favour the development of common knowledges and of a common conscience..

Also teachers will greatly benefit from this exchange and will have the chance to compare their methodology, initiatives, and teaching methods with one another; this will happen in the field of



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teaching to handicapped children as well , which requires always new methods and new psycho-paedagogical interventions in order to carry out an effective education activity.

The meaning of “being on Internet”

Internet revolutionized informatics and communications and now we are taking the first steps of a walk that will bring us to unimaginable horizons.

Nevertheless Internet is a planet of which we still can not clearly define and identify the set up: often the topic one is looking for is hidden or indecipherable and the fact that information come in many foreign languages still represent a big problem.

It is not sufficient for a school to be on the web to profit from all the benefits that this could mean.

Already now one finds on Internet stuff which is not really interesting; I think that the school, even in the “cyberspace”, should keep its image of a training, expressing and creative body.

In this way the Internet system represents the mean, but it is up to children and teachers to create the work in the classroom, in the laboratories and in the open spaces: only in this way “being on Internet” makes sense.

How, when and to who this project will be proposed.

For the project “*The school of the children in the world*” we will prepare an announcement of competition, (by December 1998), to be forwarded to the biggest number of primary schools all over the world, (children from 6 to 12 years of age), using all the channels at disposal: bodies and institutions with foreign relations such as consulates, Local Education Superintendency. I already got in touch with some of these bodies and achieved encouraging success as well as an offer for collaboration (CIES, Turin, whose president is the MP Rinaldo Bontempi; Local Education Superintendency of Turin, section for European programmes; IBM, section for the national coordination of schools, directed by Mr. Paolo Bonucci). The announcement of competition will be on a web page as well and on some Internet sites in different languages; in theory everybody all over the world will have the opportunity to read it (to serve this purpose I am getting in touch with some big software companies, that will host the project on their sites).

Every school, private or public, will have the chance to enter the competition; there will be no geographical or cultural restrictions, maybe the technical one of reaching the telephone plug with the computer to get the connection.

I hope I will be able to involve countries which are not much known, as well as schools that are in disadvantaged geographical or social conditions or schools that are having particular experiences.

The schools that will enter the competition will have to send by January-March 1999 their project, that will have to conform to this plot and spirit and must include a programme with the goals to be reached, the activities to be developed together and must identify the group of children that they intend to involve.

The entering schools must have a teacher with informatics skills, who will co-ordinate the project as well as an operative team of teachers of different topics.

Unfortunately only ten schools of ten different countries, including the school where I am now working, will be selected by the jury; I will be a member of that jury together with other people working in the school field, in politics, in technological-informatic research, who I know and that support my project and carry out activities in the school-educational field.

Schools will be selected according to the following criteria:

- Informatics skills of the teachers, which are essential to operate on advanced hardware and software peripherals;



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- the originality of the project, that will have to follow an intercultural path with contents that, from time to time, one can connect to different topics and areas;
- the informatics experiences already carried out by the classroom and the hardware and software equipment at the disposal of the school (the last one is not a bonding requirement).

Each school that will enter the competition will have to commit itself for at least two years; one has to take into account that to different geographical locations correspond different school holidays and the duration of the school year is not the same, so the activities to be developed together will have to be planned in very carefully defined periods.

During the two years, schools will receive different loans, that will be calculated also depending on the requirements each school has; the loans will be used to purchase materials to develop the informatic system as well as to train the team of teachers involved in the project.

The informatic system will be structured as follows:

- one multimedia computer;
- one or more peripherals for pictures/documents/video acquisition (scanner, digital camera, video acquisition card);
- one print peripheral;
- Internet access.

When the announcement of competition will be published, I will provide detailed technical information on the most advanced peripherals on the market, that will be as well the ones that will be for certain further developed.

To all schools a kit will be delivered, that will include many Internet and Intranet, videotyping, drawing and multimedia project development software packages; I will choose the kit according to my experiences and to possible suggestions that may come out from the projects sent by the different schools (I will try to involve some software companies to get favourable terms)

How to solve the problem of different languages

The school entering the competition will speak different languages. We will solve the problem of the exchange of information in different languages with the support of one or more Italian Universities or of other special centres; since teaching a foreign language in primary schools is now a widespread practice all over the world, we will be able to use the language skills of the teachers of the team as well. The task will be to translate all written and spoken messages of the different children and teachers of *“The school of the children in the world”*.

To serve this purpose I already got in touch with different University faculties and foreign language teachers, who are interested in discussing this project, that will require the identification of rules, costs and timing; this programme will be the base for the following steps.

The “Poem on peace” written by a Japanese child in Japanese, will have to reach the Italian, Brazilian, Canadian, South African, Chinese, etc. school already translated in their respective languages. The translation will be necessary mainly for the written messages; to guarantee this service it will be necessary to decide number and timing for these messages. As for the universal languages such as drawing, gestural expressiveness, sounds I do not see any limit, because they will be understood immediately by everybody.

The technical aspect

Once the classrooms and the teachers will be selected, the first step will be the “technical trial”: every school will have to be provided with the necessary instruments to communicate and send its first message that could be something like “Hallo, we are ready....what about you?”.

Experience taught me that set up a system is not always easy, but one that works with computers knows the problems and how to face them.



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After this first “contact” it will be necessary to use software instruments to plan the work, communicate, take care of the post, send documents, use web sites on Internet.

The IBM section for the national co-ordination of the Italian schools, directed by Mr. Bonucci, provided me with some very useful technological equipment. Following their advice I carried out an in-depth research on the hardware and software platform that is necessary to support the procedures of such a complex Intranet among schools with exchanges among teachers, students and translation centre.

The server, that will work as web site and that will be co-ordinated by some collaborators and myself, will have different access levels:

- intranet (for students, teachers, translators);
- internet (for the whole world).

The more interesting activities of “*The school of the children in the world*” will be on the site in different languages so as to promote the project worldwide, maybe achieving an experience-sharing with a larger number of schools, and collect opinions, criticisms and advice useful to the development of new ideas.

The system will as well:

- create and run different P.O.Boxes at different levels,
- run a common timetable to check immediately and automatically when the other teachers are available for the common discussions, and that includes suggestions on when the best period for the meeting could be.
- send documents, HTML pages, programmes, images and audio and video segments coming from different systems with automatic conversion.

The teachers and the children of “*The school of the children in the world*” will meet in this “park” and will simply have to collect and give information.

Conclusions

I thought of this idea two years ago when I “shyly” began to sail on Internet.

I understood at once the great chance this could represent for the school.

When I showed the Internet world to my pupils they were astonished and they expressed the wish to “meet” other children.

I discussed the idea with friends and colleagues and achieved success, even though it appeared complicated to overcome the hindrances on the way: first of all the economical problem and the number of people to be involved. To face all this I had to find a strong motivation.

Some months ago I read an article on a newspaper, it was about “The 1998 Rolex Awards for Enterprise” and entering this contest gave me new strength to keep on with my task..

All the bodies and VIPs I spoke to, supported me and made me believe that this dream could come true.

I am now sure that, if I had the extraordinary chance to be among the candidates for the Rolex awards, I will face with great determination all the problems that could arise, in order to realize my fascinating project.

I thank Rolex for this opportunity and the Jury for the time they took.

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Project timing:

Creation of a web page on Internet about the project and that collects criticisms, suggestions and support, (by July 1998).

Develop the co-operation with the public and private bodies with which I already got in touch, in order to render the support offered and the assignments of everybody official, (by December 1998).



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Define the hardware and software platform of the web site and of the systems that will be set up in the schools to allow their connection to Intranet and Internet, (by December 1998).

Create the web site *“The school of the children in the world”*, (by December 1998).

Meet the universities and the other institutes in order to plan the translation service and establish rules, timing and ways, (by November 1998).

Forward the announcement of competition to the various schools, (by January 1999).

Collection of the schools entries, (January-March 1999).

Jury selection of the candidates, (by May 1999).

Grant the loans to the participating schools, connection of the schools to Internet, (by September 1999).

Beginnig of the educational planning among the teachers of *“The school of the children in the world”*, (by October - November 1999).

Year 2000 and 2001 development of the teaching plans.

Year 2000 and 2001 maintenance and updating of the web site.

From year 2001 on ...

Today

- Permanent mathematics teacher and responsible for the informatics laboratory of the primary school of the 3° Circolo Didattico of Pinerolo.
- Technical Responsible for the informatics-administrative section of the 3° Circolo Didattico of Pinerolo
- Teacher in professional courses for computer operators-programmers organized by the company Elabora of Pinerolo
- Computer analyst, programmer and freelance informatics consultants for many companies:
 - Dbase environment development
 - running of Office on local nets and Intranet
 - graphics .
- Informatics teacher at the Istituto Professionale Statale Alberghiero of Pinerolo
- Author of two editorial projects on CD ROM:
 - *“Pinerolo e dintorni”* (Pinerolo and the neighbouring areas), under the sponsorship of the municipal authorities of Pinerolo
 - *“La più grande voliera del mondo”* (The world biggest aviary), scientific consultant Dott. Martinat
- Development of the project *“La casa nel computer”* (The house in the computer), that won an award at the IBM Leonardo 2000 national contest in 1995.
- Co-ordinator and organizer of technological stands on occasion of various exhibitions.

Professional experiences

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| 1983 | Military service: sporting centre of the Brigata Alpina Taurinense (Italian Alpine troops, Turin), middle-distance race athlete selected to take part to the national Championships. |
| 1984 | Educationist of the Centro Socio Terapeutico of Pinerolo (Socio-therapeutical Centre) for the recovery of handicapped people. |
| 1985 | Teacher of a travelling primary school-junior high classroom made up of the kids of the Wulber circus of Berlin |



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from 1984 to 1985	Educationist and bathing attendant for kids' summer camps organized and directed by the Highway company
1986	Winner of a scholarship of the Highway company that gave me a managerial assignment for the kids' summer camps.
from 1985 to the present time	Permanent mathematics teacher of the 3° Circolo Didattico of Pinerolo
from 1987 to the present time	Informatics teacher and responsible for the laboratory of the 3° Circolo Didattico of Pinerolo
from 1987 to the present time	Teacher in professional informatics courses for many private institutes
	- Istituto Aurora, Pinerolo
	- Istituto S.Luca, Pinerolo
	- Computer Line, Pinerolo
	- Società Elabora, Pinerolo
from 1987 to the present time	Informatics teacher in courses for teachers; I have been appointed by the local education superintendent of Turin
from 1987 to the present time	Speaker in informatics conventions
from 1987 to the present time	Computer analyst, programmer and informatics consultant for many companies
present time	in Pinerolo and in the neighbouring areas

Education history

1983	Teachers' training school certificate <i>Istituto Rayneri Pinerolo</i>
1984	Scientific supplementary course <i>Istituto Rayneri Pinerolo</i>
1984	Training course for children educationists <i>CEMEA - Centri di Esercitazione ai Metodi d'Educazione Attiva - Milano</i>
1985	Instructor certificate for the junior section <i>Federazione italiana di atletica leggera.</i>
1987	Bathing attendant certificate <i>Federazione italiana nuoto</i>
1986	Course for managerial staff of holidays resorts <i>CEMEA - Centri di Esercitazione ai Metodi d'Educazione Attiva - Milano</i>
1987	Professional course for operator - programmer <i>Istituto Aurora Pinerolo - Corsi professionali di istruzione tecnica commerciale</i>
1987	Professional course for D.BASE environment programmer <i>Istituto Maria Vittoria Torino</i>
from 1987 to the present time	Updating courses organized from IRRSAE, from the local education superintendency of Turin and from the Didactic direction of 3° Circolo of Pinerolo: - informatics applied to the other disciplines - informatics laboratories - computer and didactics - multimedia



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- school and computer
- didactics of the mathematics

VIPs

- MP Bontempi, European deputy, president of CIES (Centro Europeo Torino - European Centre Turin).
- Dott. Francesco Agli, school manager, member of NDR (Dipartimento di matematica, università di Bologna - Mathematics department of the University of Bologna), member of GIRP (Group international de Recherche en Pedagogie de la Matemetiche), Luxemburg.
- Dott. Paolo Bonucci, responsible for the IBM school national co-ordination.
- Prof. Alberto Barbero, mayer of the municipality of Pinerolo and responsible for its cultural activities.

Enclosed Table

10 illustrated tables that reappear the project stages and some technical details on the software and hardware that will be used.

The project has been approved from the teaching body and from the Institute board of the Didactic direction of the III Circolo di Pinerolo, where I work as a teacher.