



## Case studies

### 12. I.C. di Villa Santina and D.D. di Gemona del Friuli, Udine, Italy

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*This is one of 25 case studies produced for STEPS, the Study of the impact of technology in primary schools, to illustrate the impact of ICT, on schools, teachers and learners, and to highlight barriers and enablers to its effective use in the school. Further information can be found at <http://steps.eun.org>.*



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## 1. CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL

The 14 partners in the SBILF school group are situated in a mountainous area to the north of the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region in north-eastern Italy. The school network includes more than 500 pupils.

Most of the schools have few classes and a limited number of pupils per class. The origin of the 'Network Experiment for Growth' project was to offer teachers and pupils practical opportunities to work together.



Each school in the network has a computer lab with a video projector and internet access. ICT is regarded as fundamental in helping schools achieve their teaching aims. In particular, the SBILF project is considered as an added value that helps solve the teaching problems faced by small schools that are isolated in the mountains. There is a deep awareness of the need to offer teachers appropriate tools to face the challenge of teaching ICT and so enable them to better educate 'digital kids'.

The SBILF schools are very active in participating in local community initiatives, as well as in national and European projects, such as Comenius.

## 2. EXAMPLE OF PRACTICE

The aim of the project is to guide pupils 'to learn through the net as well as within the net'. This network is especially interesting because it links distant schools and pupils: an innovation in this mountainous area. Pupils belonging to very small communities are offered the opportunity to overcome their isolation and become active members of a wider, yet virtual, community, with the help of ICT.

A second innovative element is the development of teaching-learning paths that aim to highlight a co-operative approach to using the internet and sharing experiences. The web portal is the core of the project, which includes school information, work progress, teaching software, and activities.

A database documenting all the materials produced by the schools is also available.



### 3. IMPACT, BARRIERS AND ENABLERS

#### 3.1 SCHOOL

##### ICT DEVELOPMENT PLAN, IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY, ORGANISATIONAL CHANGES AND ATTITUDES

###### ○ **Impacts, barriers and enablers**

- The two headteachers interviewed highlighted the main national policies in support of ICT. These policies were introduced in 2000 as part of a primary school reform, making ICT a compulsory national curriculum subject from the first year of primary school. The situation has changed recently: schools are currently receiving reduced funding, and so obsolete hardware is creating communication difficulties.
- Headteachers and teachers are highly motivated in giving priority to the use of ICT as a tool to help overcome problems of communicating in the small schools of this mountainous area, as well as using it as a teaching tool for innovation in classes. ICT has helped increase the level of professionalism among teachers and has stimulated a new attitude towards change and innovation: the project has forced many teachers to face the challenges of teaching ICT. However, there is still a need to get more teachers involved in using ICT, adapting their teaching methods as required.
- Most teachers and pupils are generally in favour of ICT, and pupils are particularly motivated.

##### RESOURCING

###### ○ **Impacts, barriers and enablers**

- Over the last six years, sufficient national funding has been available to buy hardware, software and learning materials. Funding is now provided mainly at a local level (provincia and comuni). This project started within the Euroleader project (European funds and the Provincia of Udine), which allowed the development of the web portal in particular.
- Software (funded by the schools) is selected on the basis of the pupil age and level of ability, and mainly includes games for all subjects.
- Teachers prepare and edit digital materials, sometimes assisted by pupils.

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## THE CURRICULUM AND ICT

- **Impacts and enablers**
  - ICT is a compulsory subject from the first year of primary school, and is used in cross-curricular teaching.
  - Many activities among SBILF schools are carried out as part of the curriculum within each school, and across the 14 schools of the network.

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## ASSESSMENT OF ICT AND ICT FOR ASSESSMENT

- **Impacts, barriers and enablers**
  - There have been some attempts at using ICT for assessment at school level, but no systematic procedures exist. For example, a questionnaire was issued to teachers, parents and administrative staff to assess satisfaction with school activities.
  - No evidence at national education system level.

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## ORGANISATION OF SUPPORT

- **Impacts, barriers and enablers**
  - At a national level, in-service teacher training courses (such as Agenzia Scuola and ex-Indire) provide specific training for future tutors.
  - At a regional and local level, in-service teacher training courses are open to all teachers.
  - There is a part-time ICT co-ordinator for the network, who works closely with teachers from each school to plan, exchange information, and monitor activities.
  - Scientific support (such as modules on the teaching of science, maths, and museum material) is provided in co-operation with the universities of Udine and Macerata.
  - External suppliers are responsible for the maintenance of the web portal and repairs to technical equipment. However, there is a noticeable absence of technical support in each school to help teachers overcome day-to-day problems.

## 3.2 TEACHERS

### ICT AS A TOOL FOR COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION

#### ○ **Impacts, barriers and enablers**

- The web portal is the core of the project, providing links to the network schools' websites, projects for teachers, activities for pupils, 'a virtual class' for headteachers, and various documentation.
- Pupils and parents can use the portal to find general information such as timetables, programs, and documents. There is also a bulletin board for meetings and projects.
- 'Virtual classes' allow pupils from different schools to communicate, and create stories and cultural projects.
- Courses for adult learners are also provided, so promoting co-operation with the local community.

### ICT AS A TOOL TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY AND EFFICIENCY OF PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION

#### ○ **Impacts, barriers and enablers**

- Teacher and staff-specific training courses are provided, offering continuous contact with tutors and co-ordinators for further help and advice.
- A new initiative of co-operation has begun this year with the local high school: an experimental vertical net.
- There is interaction with other schools in the SBILF network, and with those beyond the group.

### THE PEDAGOGICAL ROLE OF ICT TO IMPROVE LEARNING AND TEACHING

#### ○ **Impacts, barriers and enablers**

- The project has introduced a new vision of ICT as a useful support for teaching.
- The integration of ICT with teaching is considered as the most effective strategy to implement ICT in daily class routines. The use of ICT as a cross-curricular subject facilitates the exchange of opinions and materials between teachers within a school, and between the schools in the network.
- ICT is also important for collaborative learning.

## ICT SKILLS

### o **Impacts and enablers**

- o Teachers can plan teaching paths and materials with the support of ICT (virtual classes, virtual museums, online school newspapers), and organise the documentation of teaching experiences.
- o Webquests are used to assess learning skills in specific subjects, as well as for self-evaluation by pupils. They are particularly useful for measuring how pupils have worked on specific tasks, and how they have used the internet.



## PARTICIPATION, MOTIVATION, CONFIDENCE AND PERFORMANCE

### o **Impacts and enablers**

- o Teachers are generally motivated, and use of the web portal has increased their self-confidence.
- o The creation of a 'spontaneous community' among schools has been, and still is, a great stimulus for teachers to exchange experiences and materials.
- o There is a sense of an important framework of 'shared knowledge'.

## 3.3 LEARNERS

## ICT SKILLS

### o **Impacts**

- o Pupils have learnt how to use new communication tools such as forums, mind-mapping software, shared boards, and collaborative writing resources.
- o There have been improvements in creative writing, along with an increase in knowledge and skills. There is also evidence of improved communication for disadvantaged pupils.

## MOTIVATION, PARTICIPATION AND CONFIDENCE

### o **Enablers**

- o The creation of a 'spontaneous community' among schools has been, and still is, a great stimulus for pupils to exchange experiences and materials.

## 4. REFERENCES

- **Sources:**
  - Interviews with headteachers and teachers, and observation of lessons.
  - Italian policy reports.
  - School survey.
- **Further information:**
  - SBILF school group ([www.sbilf.eu](http://www.sbilf.eu)).

