



Case studies

19. Osnovna sola Louis Adamič, Grosuplje, Slovenia

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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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This study has been commissioned by the European Commission, Directorate General Education and Culture.

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1. CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL

The school Louisa Adamica has six buildings and approximately 1,160 pupils.

The first and most extensively visited was the school in Smarje-Sap. It has 281 students and is the only location where all grades from 1 to 9 are taught. The school has 29 teachers, 1 social worker plus a secretary and cleaning staff.

- The deputy headteacher would prefer for the school not to be a subsidiary to the larger unit and to be given independent status. She strongly believes that this would help in reducing time for meetings and paperwork, while the advantages of cooperation could still be maintained. The principal of the school agrees, but independence is not legally possible at this point in time.
- Pupils at the school are mainly from the local neighbourhood, which is a rural area close to Ljubljana. Some students are from other parts of the former Yugoslavia, while a few are of Albanian origin, having initial difficulties with the Slovene language. Teachers stress that the atmosphere in the school is good, and that children are less demanding than those from the inner city. The school has relatively small class sizes.
- The environment is a special focus of the school. A specific topic is highlighted each year.
- The school leader encourages teachers to use their initiative, and supports them in innovation.
- The school stresses the importance of providing pupils with a solid basis for further learning. Half of the pupils move on to the Gymnasium, the other half to vocational schools. The school tries to maintain contact with parents after children finish their primary education.
- The school takes part in an international project with a school in Spain and also has exchanges with a school in The Hague, The Netherlands.

The other location visited, albeit more briefly, was the main building of the school. It has 350 students, all in Grades 6 to 9.

2. EXAMPLE OF PRACTICE

The most striking feature of the visit was that, in all of the observed classes, the teachers had developed the lessons themselves using materials from different sources, mainly the internet.

A Grade 4 class in Slovene language mixed information, grammar, vocabulary, and speaking, all around a topic full of funny and surprising elements. The teacher used a computer and data projector throughout the lesson.

Children were shown four short films, without sound, showing someone preparing a recipe. Pupils then worked in groups of four or five, with one pupil from each group presenting a commentary to one of the films, and the others evaluating their performance. The evaluation exercise covered different aspects, such as vocabulary, fluency and clarity.

For the next exercise, pupils were asked to recognise and indicate terms from a strange recipe (one of the ingredients being cat's hair). They were given turns at the computer, with their answers appearing on the screen. Results and mistakes were discussed within the group.

Finally, the screen showed a huge green monster. Pupils were asked to create a dessert recipe for the monster for their next lesson.

A 2nd grade mathematics class used an interactive whiteboard in an active way, taking full advantage of the ability to display colours, text, symbols and numbers. Additional verbal explanation was given by the teacher, and then students were asked to solve tasks using their own computer.



In an 8th grade English class, an exercise in listening used projected information combined with information found in hard-copy resources.

Pupils watched a short film on ecological problems in Costa Rica with the narrative spoken in different English accents. Students then had to answer questions to show whether they had understood what was being said.

A 9th grade biology class on blood made extensive use of internet-based materials, including text, film and animation. The teacher had used a variety of resources to create the lesson.

The chemistry teacher used internet-based sources to explain the periodic table. Pupils first had to identify elements, using resources such as Wikipedia to find the answers. The next assignment required them to calculate the molecular weight of elements. The teacher again used a combination of projected information and screen-based information to deliver the content of the lesson.

Each student then received an envelope with the story of how a compound was invented. They were asked to prepare a PowerPoint presentation about that compound, stating its name, the calculation of the relative molecular weight, and the use of the compound. They then retold the story of its invention to their classmates.

3. IMPACT, BARRIERS AND ENABLERS

3.1 SCHOOL

ICT DEVELOPMENT PLAN, IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY, ORGANISATIONAL CHANGES AND ATTITUDES

- **Impacts**

- The principal has a clear vision for the future development of the school, and the school has an ICT plan.

- **Barriers**

- The fact that national policies change very frequently is considered problematic. Schools and teachers have to respond almost continuously to new ideas and demands. Additionally, and partially as a consequence of this, the curriculum is very full.

RESOURCING

- **Impacts**

- The schools have a good infrastructure in terms of computers and internet connectivity. However, if all teachers were to fully use ICT, this infrastructure would be insufficient. Teachers would like to have more computer labs than the one now available, more interactive whiteboards, and laptops. Teachers use data projectors, but feel that the interactive functionalities of digital whiteboards could offer many more opportunities.

- **Barriers**

- The schools lack budget to expand and renew ICT equipment.

- **Enablers**

- Teachers are positive about the technical support, which is externally organised and available when needed. In the main building of the school, instructional support is available for teachers in all locations.

THE CURRICULUM AND ICT

- **Impacts**

- ICT is not used in all subjects, but is instead dependent on individual teachers. Although the National Curriculum includes ICT elements, it is not prescriptive about how these are delivered.

- **Barriers**
 - Slovenia represents a very small commercial market for learning resources, and this leads to a lack of suitable resources.
- **Enablers**
 - Teachers are very active in producing materials themselves, helping to overcome the lack of commercial resources.

ASSESSMENT OF ICT AND ICT FOR ASSESSMENT

- **Impacts**
 - Assessment of ICT, and using ICT for assessment, is dependent on individual teachers. In observed classes, there was evidence of ICT being used to support testing. ICT is not used or assessed in national examinations.
- **Barriers**
 - There is a lack of ready-made assessment materials.

ORGANISATION OF SUPPORT

- **Impacts**
 - See Resourcing above.
- **Enablers**
 - School leadership is very supportive of teacher-led initiatives.

3.2 TEACHERS

ICT AS A TOOL FOR COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION

- **Impacts**
 - Teachers use email extensively.
 - The school has a detailed website with information for teachers and parents, information about the school, projects and so on. The website also contains information on accounts and other financial matters and provides reports of meetings, as well as information on education laws and other regulations relevant to teachers.

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

- **Impacts**
 - ICT is used extensively for administration, time-tabling and other planning.
- **Barriers**
 - Teachers find the burden of paper work excessive. They all have to file an overall plan for all of their classes each year, as well as plans for individual lessons.

THE PEDAGOGICAL ROLE OF ICT TO IMPROVE LEARNING AND TEACHING

- **Impacts**
 - Teachers who use ICT report a positive impact on motivation. They also find the different ways of presenting information helpful and feel that a combination of spoken word, sound, images and animation leads to better pupil understanding. At the same time, teachers stress the importance of hands-on experiments and of going out of the school building: ICT should never endanger these important activities.
- **Enablers**
 - The endless supply of online resources allows teachers to present new materials constantly. This is important for maintaining the interest of the students, many of who become easily bored. The teachers have good contact with each other, and have also started to observe and discuss each others' lessons and exchange the materials they prepare.

ICT SKILLS

- **Impacts**
 - A relatively large number of teachers still do not use ICT, possibly due to lack of confidence in their skills and abilities.
- **Barriers**
 - There is no way to force teachers to change their practices if they do not want to.
- **Enablers**
 - Teachers are developing their ICT skills, and many of them consider themselves self-taught, although more training is now available. The enthusiasm of staff to work with ICT is taken into account during staff assessments, which can result in opportunities for career progression.

PARTICIPATION, MOTIVATION, CONFIDENCE AND PERFORMANCE

- **Impacts**
 - There is a divide between those teachers that use ICT, and those that don't. Those that do are enthusiastic and see many advantages. They also tend to put in a lot of extra hours.
- **Barriers**
 - There is no way to force teachers to change their practice.
- **Enablers**
 - The deputy-principal would like to be able to reward teachers that 'go the extra mile', but has no means to do so.

3.3 LEARNERS

ICT SKILLS

- **Impacts**
 - Students tend to acquire their ICT skills on their own, at home and from each other. Almost all students have internet access at home. They use it for games, chatting, visiting forums and completing school assignments.

MOTIVATION, PARTICIPATION AND CONFIDENCE

- **Impacts**
 - Students are aware of the limitations of ICT. In many instances, students prefer to receive a detailed explanation of a concept from their teacher rather than finding the information themselves. Additionally, they often find hard-copy searching to be more effective than online searching. Essentially, schools must not expect all students to direct their own learning or to learn best when exploring on their own. They prefer and ask for instruction and guidance. Students also feel that in some cases, paper-based tests are more appropriate than computer-based tests. In their view, use of ICT must be balanced and not too dominant: a well-taught lesson is very effective.
- **Barriers**
 - The curriculum is felt to be too directed. Students would like more opportunities to make their own choices, and be able to concentrate more on subjects of their choosing. They also would like to be allowed to specialise earlier in their school career (currently only available after 9th grade).



PARTICIPATION IN ALL ASPECTS OF SCHOOL LIFE: ACADEMIC, SOCIAL, PERSONAL

- **Impacts**

- Students have a positive view of their school, and feel well supported to develop in all areas of life.

4. REFERENCES

- **Sources:**

- Interviews with school leaders, teachers and students.
- Observation of lessons in mathematics, English, chemistry, Slovene, biology and physics.
- Case descriptions provided by the school.

- **Further information:**

- Louisa Adamica Group website (www.oslag.si/tovarniska).
- Smarje-Sap school (www.oslag.si/smarje-sap).