



OECD/CERI Innovative Learning Environment (ILE) project

Template for submission to the ILE 'Universe' of innovative learning cases

Name of the Innovative Learning Environment (ILE): Scuola Città Pestalozzi

Location/Address(If available): Via delle Casine 2 FIRENZE (ITALY)

Website:

<http://ospitiweb.indire.it/~fimm0011/english/index.html> (English)

<http://ospitiweb.indire.it/~fimm0011/index.html> (Italian)

ILE submitted by: Valentina Giovannini

Questions answered by:

A leader of this case

A teacher/facilitator of this case

A student/learner or family related to this case

Someone from the local, regional or national education authorities

Other PhD Researcher*

* Teacher of this case, currently on study leave



1. Rationale: Why is this ILE so worthy of international attention? How does it respond to 21st century learning challenges? Please tell us about how/why this case is innovative in its own context.

If innovation is a phenomenon of communication and social cognition and it is distributed, then you must create, in schools and in the territories, adequate professional, organizational and technological changes that allow its "cultivation" (Wenger, 2007)

Scuola Città Pestalozzi is a primary and first grade secondary school in Florence, the student's range in age from six to fourteen years.

This school is engaged in a project aimed to modify the organization of primary and secondary school traditional in Italy, facing the need to offer learning opportunities and motivation to all children according to their abilities, so that they can learn actively and independently, assess their own work and learn to cooperate.

The school is different from all the other Italian schools as:

-It is catering for eight class levels, subdivided into four two-year groups, with close links to the infant school and second grade secondary school. Every year pupils of a class work with the lower or upper level ones.

-In the third of the two-year groups, pupils and teachers of the last class of primary school and those of the first class of 1st grade secondary school work together, with input from both teachers in the areas of project work and discipline

-It is experimenting a set of innovations very uncommon in Italian schools: a new time and space organization, fostering autonomy and personalization.

The organization in terms of school time, group organization, class activities, teaching methods and tools takes inspiration from the history of the school (see below), from authors, experiences



and researches of the past, strongly oriented to an active conception of learning and teaching, from recent researches about the nature of learning, individual differences, emotional and civic education, collaborative learning, adult and peer tutoring.

All teachers are involved in planning, organizing, reflecting and documenting their projects both in weekly meetings and discussions on a digital platform forum. Teachers observe each other's practices (inter-vision) and attend each other's lessons in order to develop evaluation instruments collectively. The school provides teacher-training programmes in collaboration with the University of Florence and it is an experimental school open to visiting scholars and students.

In the period 2010/2012 the school will carry out an experimental project focusing on the following topics:

- organisation of learning environments (school time, group organization, class activities, teaching methods and tools) that best suit the characteristics and learning styles of students, promoting their autonomy;
- use of technologies for designing new original ways of learning;
- knowledge production as an effective mean for promoting active learning through problem-solving approaches;

In summary, the actions to be taken during the new plan regard:

The learning community

- Community of practice
- Activities which fit the characteristics and needs of individual students and the new tasks that the school is called to fulfil in society (forming broad competences such as learning to learn, problem solving, working together, learning skills, self-analysis, self-evaluation and self-control), with a particular focus on the use of cooperative learning strategies.
- Metacognitive approaches



Curriculum, learning environments

- Procedures for the adaptation of vertical curricula, simplification of the contents.
- Strategies for social inclusion, creation and strengthening of intercultural skills-oriented development
- Sharing and exchange of experiences at the local, regional and national level
- Reduction of traditional teaching methods and development of methods promoting experiential learning
- Overcoming the rigid association between class time and traditional class grouping

Technologies

- Digital literacy of students, critical and creative use of technologies
- Digital learning environments.
- Communication through the use of technology,
- Differentiated teaching materials
- Experiences of distance training programs with integrated pathways in blended learning

Network

- Sharing of expertise in education and teaching by expanding the network of communication among teachers, between teachers and pupils, pupils and pupils.
- Documenting the process of educational experimentation through an on-line platform
- Disseminating expertise and experiences through publication of relevant pedagogical documents and didactic materials,
- Participation in training courses / conferences
- Communication with digital tools, in and outside the classroom, with students and parents

2. Background: Who initiated it? When? For what reasons was it started and with what purpose? Have these changed since?



The school was founded by Ernesto Codignola in 1945 with clear objectives to provide:

- a social service to needy families (school daily time was, and still is, eight hours and was including lunch break),
- formation of democratic citizens, in a context to be rebuilt not only materially but also morally and democratically after fascism. Over the same period, these very same purposes stood at the basis of the internationally-renew experience of Municipal early childhood education and care institution in Northern and Central Italy. These goals were realized in practice in a co-management of the school (*gestione sociale*), both adults and pupils, as if it were a city, complete with a mayor, councilors, a school magazine etc ... This organization gave the name to the school.
- Operative and manual tasks were strongly valued, such as printing, carpentry, vegetable gardening and also two important structures for the education of children: the magazine and the library (Codignola, 1954).

More than fifty years after its founding, Scuola Città Pestalozzi is now a public experimental school strongly committed to implement organization and teaching methodology that seek to get everyone to participate effectively in the preparation and implementation of educational projects. At the same time, the school seeks to renew the community lifestyle by placing at its core the importance of personal relationships with its various components, students, teachers, parents, personnel. It acts in a dual capacity as an experimental school and resource centre for teacher training, and collaborates with the university through conventions, through tutoring, and through laboratories for students in training as primary school teachers.

In 2004 Scuola-Città joined up with two new networks, both of which were promoted and established by SCP itself. On a local level, this is the network of Florence area schools and a network called “Schools and Cities” on the base of some shared principles (inclusiveness, formative success of students, development of professional skills). On a national level it is the Network of Experimental Public Schools (Rinascita of Milan and Don Milani of Genoa).



The new project for the years 2011-2013 “From the laboratory to the wiki school” was shared with Rinascita and Colombo schools as a wiki product.

3. Learning Aims/Intended Learning Outcomes of the ILE: What are the core learning aims and which knowledge, skills or attitudes are to be acquired by learners? What curriculum is used?

The core learning aims of the school can be summarized as follows:

- To develop learning environments that use thinking, making things, moving, imagining and emotional involvement to best suit characteristics and cognitive styles of students, in which meaning making processes originated by sharing significant experiences play a crucial role
- To create an articulated didactic itinerary of activities and events that serves to educate the students in the importance of assuming responsibility and achieving personal independence
- To develop a community school in which the values of democracy are central
- To guide the students to undertake an active approach to knowledge, including the use of multimedia languages and technologies

The school adopts a curriculum defined by the adaptation of the national guidelines . (See for example the maths curriculum <http://curricolomatematica.wetpaint.com/> and the drama curriculum <http://sites.google.com/site/teatroscuolacitta/Home-page>).

4. Learners: Which group(s) of learners is it aiming at? Who is eligible to take part? How many learners are there and in what age range? Are they in the same place or are some participating at a distance?

The school is open to any student from the local district including those with disabilities. There are 20 students in every class; special needs students are included in integrated classes . There are 180 pupils catering for eight class levels, subdivided into four two-year groups.



5. Teachers/Facilitators: Who are the teachers/facilitators? Who are the leaders? What are their professional backgrounds? What are their roles? Are they involved at a distance as well as face-to-face? Are families and communities involved in teaching/facilitating?

The staff includes the headmaster, 24 full-time teachers and three support teachers catering for children with disabilities. All teachers are qualified at tertiary level (bachelor degree in education or pedagogical sciences).

There is an effective collaboration between the primary School teachers and first grade secondary school teachers that occurs in various forms depending on the age of the children, the programmes and the specific needs of each two-year group. In the third of the two-year groups, special emphasis is placed on the passage between the Fifth Class of Elementary School and First Class of 1st grade secondary School with input from both teachers in the areas of project work and discipline.

A fundamental principle is that every member of the staff is responsible for the successful functioning of the school. The school staff regularly (on Wednesday afternoon at least, often on other days too) holds meetings where it discusses the educational situation.

The teachers involved in the innovative experiences are recruited to teach at Scuola Città Pestalozzi after an interview and the approval of the whole staff of the school. They elaborated the main project shared with other three schools in Italy (Scuola Rinascita, Milano and Scuola Colombo, Genova) as a wiki product. All the teachers have a role in the project in addition to the teaching work. The headmaster is responsible for the project, assisted by a co-ordinator and a study group of teachers, the other teachers coordinate or participate in planning, developing, documenting or evaluating boards.

These boards involve theoretical inputs, team preparation of teaching activities, classroom visits by observers, formative meetings, and shared moments of reflection and discussion on the experiences carried out. It is important to note that particular attention is paid to the social, communicative and interdisciplinary competences that help students face their learning challenges successfully. All teachers are connected on a digital platform, Moodle, to share materials, discussions and plans.



6. Facilities, Resources and Technologies: How are resources used for learning? How are technology and digital resources used? Are families/communities used as a resource? What does the physical learning environment look like and are there particular uses of learning space?

The most important resources are personal, communicative, problem-solving and collaboration capacities.

The physical learning environment is characterized by the presence of laboratories dedicated to specific activities (theatre, music room, woodwork room, library, art and crafts room) by classrooms, open spaces and a wide garden with a vegetables garden area.

ICT (PC, interactive whiteboards) are located both in the classrooms and in special areas; their use is strongly integrated in the daily activities. Pupils have a dedicated server, a digital magazine, a blog of book reviews.

In the current year the school is planning an important investment in digital resources and ICT. The project called "School 2.0" aims to create first and foremost a didactic renewal, experimenting with new learning environments, a reorganization of space and time of learning, a renewal of didactical instrumentation, a re-design of learning through intelligent use of technology.

.7. Organisation of Learning in the ILE: How is learning organised – over a typical learning day, week or longer? How do learners and teachers/facilitators interact? With what kinds of pedagogies and in what mix? How are learners grouped? What sequencing of learning activities? What assessment strategies and forms of feedback are used?

The school has always been working full time: school time is 40 hours a week for primary school children (from 8:30 am to 4.30 pm Monday to Friday) and 36 hours a week for secondary students. Lunch is provided by the city administration and paid by families. The school staff, families and the administration have agreed to provide fruit at break-time in the morning.

This year project focuses on a new time and space organization, autonomy and personalization. The new model, identified by timing, space setting, grouping and learning activities, is



characterized by a balance between individual and collaborative, cognitive and social, operational and digital, motion and reflection activities. The main goals are to improve the motivation of learners and their learning success through a set of innovations, which are very uncommon in Italian schools.

➤ the typical learning week has been changed with the introduction of:

- a consistent amount of time for the development of the curriculum, in which teachers aim the achievement of strategic skills and a basic knowledge level for ALL students (individualization)

-an “open learning” time for 4/6 hours a week, when learners are involved in optional activities in groups different from the class, responding to different aims: needs, interests, competencies, insights. Sometimes the choice of the activities and the composition of the groups are oriented by teachers and sometimes they are selected by pupils (personalization)

Activities are designed by teachers with the participation of pupils through different criteria, such as learning outcomes, interests, social issues, and are conducted by teacher with specific skills; some of these activities are conducted together by more than one teacher .

-time for personal training and individual study is designed approximately in an hour a day

➤ the learning development of each learner is monitored by a teacher-tutor through periodic interviews and the compilation of a personal booklet. The booklet has been carefully organized and its effectiveness is ongoing under the attention of the school staff.

The school is also engaged in carrying on some fundamental issues stated in the previous years of work:

-definition of a “core-curriculum” centred on cross-curricular competencies (six annual monitoring meetings are planned);



-use of formative assessment and evaluation of abilities in real situations (a specific project involves teacher in planning, monitoring by a “ship’s log” and observations, evaluating and documenting a “real learning environment” ;

-development of a “curriculum for emotional education” (The emotion of democracy);

-practice of a board of the students in partnership with the local City-council.

8. Learning Context: In which social and cultural contexts does learning take place? Are parents or community resources involved in the learning? Does the social and cultural context importantly shape the content of the learning?

Scuola Città Pestalozzi is located in the centre of Florence, an area characterized by a population of both prosperous and needy families. There are several opportunities for learners out of the school: sport, language and music courses, public libraries, museums. The school has an important relationship with local authorities and associations and the curriculum includes many activities in collaboration with them.

The participation of families to the life of the school has a long and important tradition at Scuola Città Pestalozzi: parents are organized in a committee and linked in a social network. They support school activities and organize initiatives i.e. annual meetings, movie visions, school facilities purchasing.

9. Funding: How is it funded now? Are there specific plans to change the funding?

Financing human resources is a part of the experimental project authorized by the Ministry of Education therefore Scuola Città Pestalozzi can employ some additional teachers compared to others public schools.

In the year 2011 the school participated to the call for projects “Scuola 2.0” of the Ministry of Education which aims the massive introduction of ICT in the school environment. In the year 2012 the school has received a special financial support for implementing school facilities providing learners facilities and teachers training.



Others funds are raised participating to tenders of local and national institutions (i.e. the school won in the last three years the annual award of the National Agency for the best documentations on didactical projects), with activities organized by the committee of parents and with the annual quota of ministerial funds and family funds for students.

10. Evidence on Outcomes - Cognitive and Non-cognitive: Is there information regarding the learning outcomes achieved, including academic, social, interpersonal and meta-cognitive outcomes – what does this information show? What about motivation and learner engagement?

The school is involved in the national program of evaluation of learning. Pupils are also assessed twice a year on learning achievement in school subjects and at the term of fifth and eighth level on cross-curricular competencies. In the current year a periodical monitoring activity is shared by each pupil and her/his tutor.

Evidences on outcomes show learners positioning at a high level of learning achievement, but teachers are aware that processes related to the achievement of complex, deep, transverse, longlife skills, require long-lasting time and ongoing discussions.

11. Documentation describing or evaluating the ILE: Is there documentation on this learning environment? Is there a website? Films? Research reports or evaluations? Other forms of documentation? (please supply references or links)

<http://ospitiweb.indire.it/~fimm0011/english/index.html> (English)

<http://ospitiweb.indire.it/~fimm0011/index.html> (Italian)

<http://www.genitoripestalozzi.it/nuovo/Sito/Home.html> (student's parents website)

The insights of the whole documentation (retrospective assessments of the experience by the coordinator, annual global reports; working reports written by the teachers involved, working materials, class materials, presentations) are contained in a Moodle digital platform <http://pestalozzi.wikischool.it/> (reserved area only, info stefania.cotoneschi@tin.it)

A film on the life of school is forthcoming.



www.oecd.org/edu/learningenvironments

References to recent published materials:

Orefice-Del Gobbo-Dogliani, *Competenze trasversali a scuola. Trasferibilità della sperimentazione di scuola-città Pestalozzi*, ETS, 2011 ISBN 978-884673059

[http://www.lafeltrinelli.it/products/9788846730596/Competenze trasversali a scuola Trasferibilita della sperimentazione di scuola-citta Pestalozzi/Paolo Orefice.html](http://www.lafeltrinelli.it/products/9788846730596/Competenze%20trasversali%20a%20scuola%20Trasferibilita%20della%20sperimentazione%20di%20scuola-citta%20Pestalozzi/Paolo%20Orefice.html)

http://firenze.repubblica.it/cronaca/2012/02/25/news/alla_pestalozzi_tablet_per_tutti_la_prim_a_scuola_per_nativi_digitali-30462310/

Seminar on innovation in the school organized by Regione Toscana:

http://www.regione.toscana.it/regione/multimedia/RT/documents/2011/02/11/30c4d60f8b45971501c74a49fba9f222_programmaa4arezzonuovo2.pdf

Seminar on quality of the school

http://www.toscana.istruzione.it/novita/allegati/2011/maggio/programma_convegnoSCP13_14giugno2011.pdf

12. Other Information you consider to be relevant to describe the ILE.

Codignola, E. (1954) *Un esperimento di scuola attiva: la scuola-città Pestalozzi*. Firenze, Nuova Italia