

Chapter 8

Acer: European Schoolnet Pilot Netbook Project

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ABSTRACT

The idea of one-to-one computing (1:1C) with instructional material tailored to the individual learner is not new. However, a continued adherence to the "broadcast model" of learning where the teacher directs the whole of a lesson is holding this approach back. Concepts like "one-computer-one-child" (OCOC) have been in existence since the start of the century, but new one-netbook-one-child policies are making this system more affordable. Other concepts, such as eTwinning have also existed since that time, and a more possible today with affordable network coverage. The chapter presents a case study into a European Union funded programme, called the Acer-European Schoolnet Educational Netbook Pilot Project (AESENPP) which seeks to implement eTwinning and a OCOC policy that takes advantage of blended learning approach alternating different activities, in the form of an online or offline approach that is supported with interactive pen. Six countries participated in AESENPP, with schools interested in exploring how this approach can have an impact on the processes involved in teaching and understand and documenting how learners and teachers can use netbooks in various educational contexts. The chapter describes how three Italian teachers from three schools in Rome and Viterbo are explaining how they coped with this challenge and what the outcomes of their experimentation are. As the experiment is still in action, the Italian teachers decided to give only evidence of their positive experience.

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of one-to-one computing (1:1C) and 'eTwinning' has been envisaged for a long time. The "DCOT" (Digital Classroom of Tomorrow) Project in Wales being one such notable example of the "Classroom 2.0" concept, which is utilized herein (Bishop 2004, 2007). Other implementations include "Escuela 2.0" in Spain, and "CAPITAL" (Curriculum and Pedagogy in Technology Assisted Learning) in England. The European Union's new strategic framework for learning in the information age, known as "ET2020", was approved by the Council of the European Union in May 2009, and used in order to extend schemes like DCOT to wider use. The main objective for ET-2020 is to support and develop the education systems of member states, aimed at ensuring the social realization and professional integration of all citizens, the economic prosperity and employability, promoting at the same time, active citizenship and intercultural dialogue.

The four benchmarks are:

1. Make lifelong learning and mobility effective
2. Improve the quality and effectiveness of education and training
3. Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship
4. Encourage creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship at all levels of education and training

The strategic goal here, we are interested in is the second (i.e. Improve the quality and effectiveness of education and training). For this reason, we will deal in this article in relation to the pilot project, Acer Netbook Schoolnet that was promoted in Italy by both the Minister of Italian Education, University and Research (DGSSI Ufficio V), European Schoolnet and Acer.

European Schoolnet is a network of 31 European Ministers of Education created more than 10 years ago with the intention of bringing innovation in the way of teaching and learning in the class-

room through technology. Among the intervention activities of the European Schoolnet, there are three particularly significant: the implementation of policy, research and innovation in the provision of school services. Following the success of the DCOT Project in 2004, which involved eTwinning two schools in Wales in the United Kingdom which taught in different languages using '1:1C', the EU-wide pre-pilot project began in early 2010. This involved using five teachers per class, and 10 classes in each of the six participating countries, was completed in June 2010. This pilot project, however, took place from September 2010 to December 2011 and has expanded to 50 classes in each country (France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Turkey and United Kingdom). European Schoolnet, and the participating schools selected in Italy, mainly with teachers involved in eTwinning projects, have signed a partnership agreement that defines the duties, rights and responsibilities of participants in relation to equipment supplied. The tools available to each class are:

- One Mobile computer per student
- A Mobile computer for teacher
- A desktop computer to be used as mini-servers
- An interactive white board
- Access to a multilingual instruction with various resources
- An online community of teachers available to develop and share ideas

Integrating Netbooks in Everyday Lessons Using the DCOT Approach

An approach for achieving 'Classroom 2.0' based on the DCOT Project is presented in Figure 1, was devised. As one can see it suggests that teachers should develop an educational project involving the use of mobile computers (i.e. through scenarios) for teaching and learning, providing detailed feedback through questionnaires and participate in an online community.

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