Edited by Pierpaolo Limone & Michele Baldassarre

ICT in Higher Education and Lifelong Learning

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Introduction

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The present proceeding collects thirty-one papers exposed during the scientific meeting SIREM 2013 "ICT in Higher Education" held on November 14th and 15th, 2013 in Bari, Italy.
There are another ten full papers presented at the conference that were collected within the Volume VI, no. 1, June 2014 of REM - Research on Education and Media Journal.
The conference engaged in an interesting interdisciplinary debate about the role of technology in higher education and lifelong learning, presenting an accurate analysis on new strategies for instructional design, innovative teaching approaches methods, and effective assessment systems.
The conference also enabled SIREM scholars to collect the state of the art of the Italian scientific research and the best teaching experiences on the following topics:

- Technologies in higher education
- Digital skills and lifelong learning
- Technological innovation and vocational training
- Digital literacy and adult education
- Technologies for lifelong learning
- Innovative methods and techniques for e-learning
- Models and assessment tools of e-learning
- Mobile learning environments (M-learning) for adult education
- Social learning and lifelong learning.

The conference has been a very important scientific event to establish a dialogue among scholars from several Italian universities. During the conference, they met to examine and discuss emerging issues in the educational field, presenting different but complementary points of view and studies, aiming to map an evolving scene.
This proceeding is divided into three main sections, representing three categories in which contributions were organized during the conference:

- *Full Paper*: contributions referred to results of an original research work.
- *Short Communication*: information about research projects not fully completed.
- *Experience*: innovative educational experiences.

All contributions collected here represent an important record of the interesting ongoing research courses and live cultural debate around educational technology and media education in the national scientific context. In addition, many of the researches presented here demonstrate how collaboration and openness to international environments can bring significant benefits in terms of intercultural development, in order to weave paths with unprecedented and innovative thinking.

Diana Laurillard, a scholar from the Institute of Education in London, participated in the conference with her keynote presentation "*Teaching as a design Science: investigating the integration of technology with pedagogy*" and with this contribution opened the space for international research and reflection about innovative strategies in learning design.
The annual conference organized by SIREM represents a fruitful discussion about new frontiers on media research in the national and international scene with a significant openness to innovative lines and research horizons.

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Romany children: digital culture and educational experiences

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Abstract
The Romany question is considered from a historical, anthropological, social and cultural point of view. Difficulties in integration and social interaction are extremely high. We must ask ourselves if the sharing of common digital languages, which characterises the modern age in a social, professional and educational context, could be the beginning of a way to develop an intercultural approach, not only at school but in a wider social context. Our research put forward the hypothesis that even a basic foray into the field of digital language could assist them to not feel enclosed in a subculture on the margins of society. The research project focussed on the learning methods and recognisable connections in groups of young Romany from primary and secondary schools from the area of the Santa Candida canal (in Bari), who were given the opportunity to use a personal computer (provided by the research group) outside school hours.Starting with basic literacy, their needs were based on their individual motivation.The theory of digital learning initiated and or facilitated the development of skills relative to their educational level and provoked an improvement in the learning abilities of the young Romany.

Keywords
Romany, Digital Learning, Skills Development, Education

1. Background

The Romany question is considered from a historical, anthropological, social and cultural point of view. Difficulties in integration and social interaction are extremely high. Among the various Romany camps in the city of Bari, the one on the canal of Santa Candida (on the outskirts of the Poggiofranco area) presents particularly complex perspectives when compared to the other Romany camps situated on the outskirts of Bari.The camp is composed of 40 families with an overall total of 152 inhabitants, of whom 30 are under 18 years old.They all belong to evangelical or Pentecostal religions and are from the city of Sucheava in Moldova. For the past 13 years they have been living illegally in a makeshift camp, which was originally part of an olive grove.Their living conditions are dire with the shacks being made from discarded materials.There is neither running water nor electricity and numerous rodents. This meeting of diverse cultural realities calls for a mutual understanding. We must ask ourselves if the sharing of common digital languages, which characterises the modern age in a social, professional and educational context, could be the beginning of a way to develop an intercultural approach, not only at school but in a wider social context. Our research put forward the hypothesis that even a basic foray into the field of digital language could assist them to not feel enclosed in a subculture on the margins of society.

2. The theory behind the project and the objectives of the research

The research project focussed on the learning methods and recognisable connections in groups of young Romany from primary and secondary schools from the area of the Santa Candida canal, who were given the opportunity to use a personal computer (provided by the research group) outside school hours. Starting with basic literacy, their needs were based on their individual motivation. The theory of digital learning initiated and or facilitated the development of skills relative to their educational level and provoked an improvement in the learning abilities of the young Romany (the framework of the research will be evaluated in the Italian language).To summarise, the research operates on 2 levels: firstly that of learning how to use a computer and ascertaining the incremental socialisation and secondly improving the knowledge, in this specific case of Italian, through the use of a computer.

3. Timetable

The project started in September with the aim of finishing at least the first phase by the following July.

4. The composition of the group and the research methodologies

The group was composed of 8 Romany children between 6 and 16 years of age (6 male and 2 female) from primary and secondary schools in Bari and of a team of 6 researchers (2 of whom belonged to the department of education, psychology and communication from the University of Bari “Aldo Moro”). Three personal computers were made available. The team was made up of L. Santelli, L. Carrera, A. Cassano, G. De Vito, R. Ferro, A. Fornasari. The methodology used included analysis of the Romany children who were given use of a per-

sonal computer (after a brief 3 hour introduction by the research team), a weekly observational session of the children at the camp, monthly meetings with the teachers and the participants, 3 focus groups with the children from the camp, informal group and individual interviews with the family members and adults of the camp every 3 months and 3 monthly interviews with the teachers of the group.

The research focussed on examining 5 principal aspects:

a) the time spent and methods of use of the computer
b) the dynamic relationship in terms of quantity and quality between the group and their peers and adults of the camp
c) the ways the computer was used in the class and laboratory
d) the dynamic relationship in terms of quantity and quality between the group and their classmates and teachers
e) the level of Italian.

Points c, d, and e were analysed in close collaboration with the group's teachers. The first problem which presented itself, after having presented the project and agreed the day and time of our meeting in the camp with the person in charge, was how to present ourselves in the camp in small groups of not more than 2 or 3 people so as to be able to interact with the Romany children. A large amount of attention was focussed on how to create a correct relationship with the young people and the different members of the community. With the young people we adopted a more playful approach which allowed us to involve them more closely and directly but which was strongly backed up by an educative message. The method of research used up to now has been that of "observer participant" which, as has been noted, let us conduct fact-finding missions into the situation and dynamics without interfering in the relationship of the participants (we had already noted that the only one of us in the group who had been taking notes was seen as a disturbance by the children and adults) and also a diary was used as a technique of observation.

5. Initial observations

During the weekly meetings we observed the a) dexterity b) the level of interest c) the attention span d) the questions put to the researchers e) the interaction amongst peers f) the operative choices (where the children chose to look at), e.g. video-games, social networks, watching films etc g) the use of Italian h) the approach of adults in the camp. The game of choice expressed by the participants veered towards the use of Paint (a drawing activity) by M. (6 and ½years old) to Memory (memorising cards) and Load Runner (completing a maze) by D (12 years old) and MI (13 years old).The older children (15 and 16 years old) inclined towards social networks whose navigation was unfortunately hampered by the slow internet connection. One particular problem was highlighted by the female children. They approached the computer hesitantly and when they did, it was only for a few minutes and without using it. They remained distant and secluded, a stance strengthened by the tradition which dictates that female members of the family should only be interested in matters concerning the home and family. Up to now contact has been limited to 2 females, E. 15 years old who sporadically attends the 3 year of middle school and L., 14 years old, who has recently arrived from Romania and has no knowledge of Italian.A very interesting aspect for the research, with regards to maintaining educational possibilities for the girls, was the helpful approach of the school T. Fiore and the headmaster L. Posito who allowed the laboratory to be used on Saturday mornings not only by the 3 Romany pupils who attended the school (among them E. And L.)but

also by other Romany children who attended neighbouring schools. We are currently ascertaining if we can use the facility, even partially, during the coming months to alternate Saturday mornings at the camp with ones in the school. If we have sufficiently high numbers of people interested in using the computers we can continue the project in an environment with an adequate amounts of computers for all participants in the research and sheltered from winter temperatures but also facilitating the rapport between the young people, researchers and teachers and supporting their education more effectively through socialisation and learning. During the weekly meeting we observed that only 2 participants had constantly attended (D. 12 years old and M. 6 and ½).The interest expressed in the use of the computer was moreover highlighted in the usage time, the 2 hours planned for the weekly meetings soon proved to be insufficient to satisfy the curiosity of the young people. The weekly meetings were seen to be too infrequent "a week is a long time to wait" said D. at the end of one meeting.

6. Possible further development

"If there were always a computer in the camp we wouldn't waste any time" observed A., 16 years old, who said this phrase as if he were speaking about an impossibility. The interest shown in this research project has been incontrovertible and is proved by the recent construction of a wooden hut (the only one in the camp where, as previously stated, all the materials didn't come from discarded materials).The person in charge of the camp informed us that we could use this during the winter months in order to be under cover with the computers. His wife added that the new construction was meant for the use of the 2 young newlyweds who were due to have a child soon, but M. hinted that "in 5 or 6 months the young people wouldn't use it any more". Recently our group has been using a table set up in front of the hut of the person in charge of the camp. This project has stressed the need, which was not one of our initial considerations, of a permanent place with the Romany camp (if the necessary funds are found) for 1 or 2 computers and a printer to be located in this small construction which has optimistically been called "the computer hut" by some people and could allow all people from the camp (not only children) to familiarise themselves with computers and perhaps feel less marginalised.

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