



Ministero dell'Istruzione Università e Ricerca
Direzione Generale Affari Internazionali



TEMATICA NAZIONALE
di SCUOLE STATALI

DUCARE ALL'EUROPA



In cooperation with



Agenzia Intercultura e Mobilità

**Il Tempo del Cerchio
Association**

Pilot Study Report on the Project

“The Social Capital School. Parents, Volunteering and Community”

Cristina Cimmino, Claudia Di Marco and Paola Grande

(Il Tempo del Cerchio)

Translation: Paola Trussardi

In order to enforce the Project “The Social Capital School. Parents, Volunteering and Community”, *Il Tempo del Cerchio* - in collaboration with AIM, *Rete Educare all'Europa* - has developed an International Research on **Social Capital** at School and how it expresses within two contexts: such as the urban one and the rural context.

The term **Social Capital** is widely used since the late 1990s.

c/o ISTITUTO TECNICO STATALE “G. MAZZOCCHI”

Linguistico “Erica” | Biologico “Brocca”

Relazioni Internazionali | Biotecnologie

Polo Scolastico – Via Marche, n. 01 – Pennile di Sotto - 63100 – Ascoli Piceno

Tel. 0736 – 343969 / 0736 343978 – Fax. 0736 349930 – e.mail: apte010007@istruzione.it

WebSite Istituto: <http://www.itsmazzocchi.eu> - WebSite Rete: <http://www.europa2010-2020.eu>



The American-Canadian author, **Jane Jacobs**¹, wrote about the value of informal interpersonal relationship. Although she did not explicitly define the term **Social Capital**, she pointed out how these relationships are crucial for functioning of complex and highly organized societies.

According to the above-mentioned quote, we started our research as below.

1. General Goals

This research intends to investigate *Social Capital* in two schools by highlighting differences and similarities.

2. Specific Purpose

Particularly, this research wants to figure out:

- ⤴ Features of the *Relationships between School and Community*
- ⤴ Actions supporting *Social Capital*

3. Research Context

This pilot study takes place in two schools:

1. one is a secondary school, **Liceo Niccolò Machiavelli**, located in a **urban district** (city of Rome)

1 Jane Jacobs (1961). *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Random House ed., 1961.



Ministero dell'Istruzione Università e Ricerca
Direzione Generale Affari Internazionali



TEMATICA NAZIONALE
di SCUOLE STATALI

DUCARE ALL'EUROPA



2. the other one is comprehensive school (from kindergarten to secondary school), **Istituto Comprensivo di Susa**, located in a **rural district** (Val di Susa, TO)

4. Methodology

The methodology of the research has a qualitative approach, based on **focus groups** and **semi-structured interviews**.²

Two (2) focus groups - one in Rome and the other in Val di Susa - have been arranged with a team of teachers, a facilitator (who keeps the group on task) and an observer (with the role of recording the focus group).

Ten (10) semi-structured interviews have been addressed to teachers: 5 in Rome and 5 in Val di Susa.

This sample group, composed of ten teachers, has been formed thanks to the teachers' personal involvement in the project.

5. Data Analysis

Interviews and focus groups, carried out to investigate *Social Capital* in both schools contexts, have been analysed according to the following markers, which can be gathered in **3 clusters**:

² Interviews are semi-structured when are conducted with a fairly open framework. Unlike the questionnaire framework, where detailed questions are formulating ahead of time, semi structured interviewing starts with more general questions or topics. Relevant topics are initially identified and the possible relationship between these topics and the issues such as availability, expense, effectiveness become the basis for more specific questions which do not need to be prepared in advance. In semi-structured interviews not all questions are designed and phrased ahead of time. The majority of questions are created during the interview, allowing both the interviewer and the person being interviewed the flexibility to probe for details or discuss issues. Semi-structured interviewing is guided only in the sense that some form of interview guide, such as the matrix described below is prepared beforehand, and provides a framework for the interview. Cf. Zammuner V. L. (1998) "Tecniche dell'intervista e del questionario", Bologna, Il Mulino)

c/o ISTITUTO TECNICO STATALE "G. MAZZOCCHI"

Linguistico "Erica" | Biologico "Brocca"

Relazioni Internazionali | Biotecnologie

Polo Scolastico – Via Marche, n. 01 – Pennile di Sotto - 63100 – Ascoli Piceno

Tel. 0736 – 343969 / 0736 343978 – Fax. 0736 349930 – e.mail: apte010007@istruzione.it

WebSite Istituto: <http://www.itsmazzocchi.eu> - WebSite Rete: <http://www.europa2010-2020.eu>



Ministero dell'Istruzione Università e Ricerca
Direzione Generale Affari Internazionali



TEMATICA NAZIONALE
di SCUOLE STATALI

DUCARE ALL'EUROPA



| 1. School and Social Capital | 2. Teachers and Social Capital | 3. Students and Social Capital |
|---|---|--|
| a) Relationship toward Community | a) Team Work | a) Students personal interests are explicit at school |
| b) Leadership awareness of the connection between School and Outside | b) Teacher's background eases the building of extracurricular activities | b) Extracurricular experience improves relationships among students |
| c) Relationship with Families | c) Teaching methodology, such as extracurricular activities | c) Extracurricular experience improves relationships between students and teachers |
| d) Collecting Best Practices | d) Subjects Cross-over | d) Cognitive and emotional growth |
| e) Overall organization of Functioning and "School Culture" ³ | e) Observation upon Knowledge, Curricula, Teaching methodology and Evaluation tools | |
| f) Practices meant to link school levels (primary school, junior school, secondary school, and eventually University) | | |

3 School connections toward Outside, such as relationships with students' families, associations, other schools, etc.

c/o ISTITUTO TECNICO STATALE "G. MAZZOCCHI"

Linguistico "Erica" | Biologico "Brocca"

Relazioni Internazionali | Biotecnologie

Polo Scolastico – Via Marche, n. 01 – Pennile di Sotto - 63100 – Ascoli Piceno

Tel. 0736 – 343969 / 0736 343978 – Fax. 0736 349930 – e.mail: apte010007@istruzione.it

WebSite Istituto: <http://www.itsmazzocchi.eu> - WebSite Rete: <http://www.europa2010-2020.eu>



Ministero dell'Istruzione Università e Ricerca
Direzione Generale Affari Internazionali



TEMATICA NAZIONALE
di SCUOLE STATALI

DUCARE ALL'EUROPA



6. Main Results

The preliminary results of this pilot study on *Social Capital* show as relationships toward Community are essential and quite common.

Relationships that **School** composes with Outside (**first cluster**) are part of the whole school system. This is a need, which can be felt in both contexts (cf. Extracts no. 1 to no. 3).

Extract no. 1

Interviewed (I): "The opening toward Community is vital. I work with secondary schools as well, which means I carry students to visit secondary schools". (Val di Susa)

Extract no. 2

I: "Inside my school there are connections with sporting teams and with mountain community". (Val di Susa)

Extract no. 3

I: "School usually works with institutional channels such as the local Health authority (ASL), 3rd Municipality, university... since they have been validated, are recognisable, but anything else is widely distrusted". (Rome)

Rural district shows a strong aptitude for linking connections toward associations and local groups, such as sporting teams and mountain community, as well as validated Institutions, such as Local Government and Municipality. This lets us believe that schools in little towns are considered as an important part of that area. In addition, they are simplified in creating relationships, because they are closer to local resources.

In urban area, difficulty in keeping connections outside School is widely conveyed as follow:

Extract no. 4

c/o ISTITUTO TECNICO STATALE "G. MAZZOCCHI"

Linguistico "Erica" | Biologico "Brocca"

Relazioni Internazionali | Biotecnologie

Polo Scolastico – Via Marche, n. 01 – Pennile di Sotto - 63100 – Ascoli Piceno

Tel. 0736 – 343969 / 0736 343978 – Fax. 0736 349930 – e.mail: apte010007@istruzione.it

WebSite Istituto: <http://www.itsmazzocchi.eu> - WebSite Rete: <http://www.europa2010-2020.eu>



Ministero dell'Istruzione Università e Ricerca
Direzione Generale Affari Internazionali



TEMATICA NAZIONALE
di SCUOLE STATALI

DUCARE ALL'EUROPA



Europa
dell'Istruzione

I: "Nearness simplifies connections, anyway I do not believe that only the centrality of the school creates connections with the the community (...) Local Government does not give often credit to our requests because we are just one of the many schools located in the same Municipality". (Rome)

To be *just one of the many realities* does not help in linking connection toward Outside. For this reason, a "School Culture" (cf. Note as above) can be strengthen if only leadership is aware of its potentiality. "School Culture" has also to simplify relationships toward diversified resources within the area. So, it is really important to overcome the sense of fear and cross the border beyond Outside:

Extract no. 5

I: "When school borders fall down, everybody feels a huge sense of fear". (Rome)

Relationships between school and families can be considered as connections toward Outside, as well. Such relations are very important for both the results of students' learning and improvement of school resources.

Relationships with students' families are pointed out by teachers as important and regular in primary schools, but less frequent in secondary schools, although they are as much important.

Extract no. 6

I: "Parents can do something specific, have single expertises, and in the primary school they are closer to their children, therefore closer to teachers. I would like to create same relation in secondary school". (Rome)

In secondary schools families are mostly involved in official meetings, such as the collection of students' achievements texts. In this case, no prolific connections is established, such as those developing resources for the right working of school.

Extract no. 7

c/o ISTITUTO TECNICO STATALE "G. MAZZOCCHI"

Linguistico "Erica" | Biologico "Brocca"

Relazioni Internazionali | Biotecnologie

Polo Scolastico – Via Marche, n. 01 – Pennile di Sotto - 63100 – Ascoli Piceno

Tel. 0736 – 343969 / 0736 343978 – Fax. 0736 349930 – e.mail: apte010007@istruzione.it

WebSite Istituto: <http://www.itsmazzocchi.eu> - WebSite Rete: <http://www.europa2010-2020.eu>



Ministero dell'Istruzione Università e Ricerca
Direzione Generale Affari Internazionali



TEMATICA NAZIONALE
di SCUOLE STATALI

DUCARE ALL'EUROPA



I: "In secondary school parents are involved in official events only, for example, during the meetings for achievements". (Rome)

Teachers, developing and easing this relationships, show utility in planned activities:

Extract no. 8

I: "When I wrote a report on how the class works, I asked for help to a student's parent to write the report from his/her point of view. He/she did it immediately, although it was Sunday. I see a lot of interest from parents' side". (Rome)

Also, practices meant to link school levels (Continuity) are clearer in primary schools than secondary schools, which has developed relations with universities to mainly orient students in their future choices.

Extract no. 9

I: "I am responsible for the process of linking different levels from kindergarten to secondary school and we (my group and I) are working on developing "vertically" students' skills". (Val di Susa)

The **second cluster** we have taken into consideration is about **Teachers**. The most evident result is the demand of a team work to develop complex and useful activities for students. This is evident in both realities (urban and rural), indeed they strongly show the importance of teachers' team work in order to carry out appreciable methodology consults. (cf. Extracts no. 10 and 11)

Extract no. 10

I: "It is unthinkable to undertake a project alone, at least a small group of colleagues is necessary" (Val di Susa)

Extract no. 11

c/o ISTITUTO TECNICO STATALE "G. MAZZOCCHI"

Linguistico "Erica" | Biologico "Brocca"

Relazioni Internazionali | Biotecnologie

Polo Scolastico – Via Marche, n. 01 – Pennile di Sotto - 63100 – Ascoli Piceno

Tel. 0736 – 343969 / 0736 343978 – Fax. 0736 349930 – e.mail: apte010007@istruzione.it

WebSite Istituto: <http://www.itsmazzocchi.eu> - WebSite Rete: <http://www.europa2010-2020.eu>



Ministero dell'Istruzione Università e Ricerca
Direzione Generale Affari Internazionali



TEMATICA NAZIONALE
di SCUOLE STATALI

DUCARE ALL'EUROPA



I: "I have realized that it is quite dry if you work alone within your class. You could even obtain good results from students on your subjects, but if you co-work with colleagues on other subjects and topics, this has that extra oomph". (Rome)

When fruitless collaboration with other colleagues can be undertaken, work becomes more difficult: too much time without extra compensation.

Extract no. 12

I: "I am a class coordinator, so I meet parents and psychologists who monitor students. Everything is cost-free and it takes a huge commitment". (Val di Susa)

Also, when there is no collaboration among teachers, teaching staff could have a negative perception toward those colleagues developing relationships with Outside. And, this situation can even cause a sense of loneliness in the teachers supporting that kind of activities.

Extract no. 13

I: "It seems colleagues consider you as that one who wants to do more than strictly necessary, who wants to show off". (Val di Susa)

Another important aspect is backgrounds of those teachers involved in extracurricular activities or projects with other institutions.

Their own skills and expertises are put to use in teaching activities with students. The strong involvement of each teacher in this kind of activities strongly encourages students - even problematic students - to learn.

To this purpose, we quote below the story of a teacher with a Degree in Literature, course of study in Archeology:

Extract no. 14

c/o ISTITUTO TECNICO STATALE "G. MAZZOCCHI"

Linguistico "Erica" | Biologico "Brocca"

Relazioni Internazionali | Biotecnologie

Polo Scolastico – Via Marche, n. 01 – Pennile di Sotto - 63100 – Ascoli Piceno

Tel. 0736 – 343969 / 0736 343978 – Fax. 0736 349930 – e.mail: apte010007@istruzione.it

WebSite Istituto: <http://www.itsmazzocchi.eu> - WebSite Rete: <http://www.europa2010-2020.eu>



Ministero dell'Istruzione Università e Ricerca
Direzione Generale Affari Internazionali



TEMATICA NAZIONALE
di SCUOLE STATALI

DUCARE ALL'EUROPA



I: "For example this year, before Christmas, we have organized a visit to an archeological site, and less disciplined students, who have had problems in paying attention during history classes, in that case have been involved and actively taken part in the visit. They have really paid attention, and the result has been very rewarding. I have carved out time for an extracurricular activity in hieroglyphics writing on papyrus". (Val di Susa)

In the end, the **third cluster** is about **Students**. According to teachers's phrase, it is clear how extremely noticeable are students' changes on a relational level, both between students and teachers and among students themselves:

Extract no. 15

I: "They have improved with students since I have arranged projects. There is an acknowledgement of authoritativeness... At school it is not expected that student respects you, but he/she does only if you make a good job with him/her, so he/she really respects your job" (Rome)

Also, extracurricular activities foster both cognitive and affective growth of students.

Extract no. 16

I: "When they realize that activity has a specific purpose, a meaning, relationship becomes easier. It becomes a peer relationship, like 'who teaches what': sometimes students teach something, and they lead in doing this". (Rome)

Extract no. 17

I: "Because they are the main characters, because school belongs to them and they are hosting people in their own home. School is not something outer, indeed they are the school owners. They feel themselves responsible for it". (Rome)

c/o ISTITUTO TECNICO STATALE "G. MAZZOCCHI"

Linguistico "Erica" | Biologico "Brocca"

Relazioni Internazionali | Biotecnologie

Polo Scolastico – Via Marche, n. 01 – Pennile di Sotto - 63100 – Ascoli Piceno

Tel. 0736 – 343969 / 0736 343978 – Fax. 0736 349930 – e.mail: apte010007@istruzione.it

WebSite Istituto: <http://www.itsmazzocchi.eu> - WebSite Rete: <http://www.europa2010-2020.eu>



Students show their own growth in such activities and reveal - otherwise hidden - managing skills and responsibility. Students are eventually made active key player of their own education, which implies a development of their personal identity and a cognitive, social and affective growth.

7. Conclusion

From the preliminary results of the pilot study no significant differences between the two realities (urban and rural) are expressed. One main difference is the Territory (Community) identity: it appears strong in rural area (Val di Susa), which eases connection toward Community and Local Institutions. On the contrary, the urban area considers itself as *just one of the many school realities within the same Municipality*, and for this reason it has more difficulties in creating relationships with Outside.

At the end, we have decided to deepen issues, which have been only partially outlined by teachers during interviews, as:

- ✦ Leadership Awareness of the Connection between School and Outside
- ✦ Collecting Best Practices

In fact, in our point of view, such issues are also very important in proving how school system encourages the development of ***Social Capital*** actions in school.