



Interactive Educational Multimedia, Number 6 (April, 2003)

<http://www.ub.edu/multimedia/iem>

Guest Editor's Introduction

Pedro Hepp K., Ph.D.

Instituto de Informática Educativa

Universidad de La Frontera

Temuco, Chile

phepp@iie.ufro.cl

<http://www.iie.ufro.cl>

This is a special issue of Interactive Educational Multimedia, with all papers addressing different initiatives with ICT in education in Latin America. Some of the most important and long standing projects are presented here by their actual leaders, providing a fresh and up to date perspective of the many issues facing developing countries when integrating ICT into their educational system. Some of these projects have more than ten years and all have faced very tough challenges, including low budget, teacher training problems and a poor communication infrastructure at their beginning, but all have succeeded by using creative solutions and adapting existing technologies and methodologies to their reality with scarce resources.

The World Links paper presented by Jorge Gutiérrez offers an ample perspective of the progress made in many Latin American countries (and world wide). Thanks to this initiative from the World Bank, World Links has pioneered ICT projects in education in over 900 schools in 26 countries, sharing with them the experience gained in each new project. As a result, World Links offers today one of the most comprehensive strategies for introducing ICT in education in developing countries with proven teacher training materials and activities, pertinent learning content and technology deployment alternatives.

The Argentinean case, a well known initiative called Red Telar-iEARN is presented by Paula Perez et. al. This is a pioneering network of schools and people that had to overcome numerous challenges to grow and establish itself as a leading initiative in Argentina. The paper addresses some of the critical factors for collaborative projects identified by the authors in their work with schools, many of which are isolated and depend on the voluntary work of their teachers. Its alliance with iEARN has proven one its most successful strategies for helping students and teachers to use networks as learning aids.

The Colombian initiative, known as Conexiones, is presented by Claudia Zea and her team from the EAFIT University in Medellín. Conexiones is a project with more than ten years of experience in schools in Colombia, with a strong emphasis on teachers and networks. It has developed its own colourful

human-computer interface –la Pachamama- and has included evaluation as one of its components from the very beginning.

The three Chilean papers have been written by researchers from the Instituto de Informática Educativa (IIE) of the University of La Frontera, in Temuco, Chile. The Chilean ICT in education initiative is known as Enlaces and the IIE has been Enlaces' think tank for more than ten years. The papers deal with different aspects of Enlaces work: teacher training, impact of Internet on students and evaluation. Together they give a broad view of Enlaces main aspects and lessons learnt in the last ten years.

In all these papers, a pattern of common factors emerge as central to ICT in education. One major factor is the high importance of teachers for effective changes inside a school and therefore the necessity to include long term training and support for them. Another factor is the relevance of networks for students and teachers, as a source of educational resources and a means to reduce isolation and implement collaborative projects.

Because of its high costs, developing countries need to apply technology in education very carefully and also very creatively, learning from the broad experience available from other projects and adapting well proven strategies to their particular realities. This issue offers many guidelines for developing countries in search of proven strategies for introducing ICT into their educational systems.