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The School 2001 Project
in Pendao, Portugal

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THE SCHOOL 2001 PROJECT IN PENDAO, PORTUGAL

This article is an extract from a presentation made by Isabel Mendinhos to the PEB Steering Committee in June 1999. The project she describes, School 2001, concerns a school for lower secondary education, School E.B. 2,3 Professor Galopin de Carvalho in Pendao, Portugal where she teaches.

This project emerged from the convergence of several factors. A new school, based on a innovative project and eagerly awaited by the school community, is soon to be constructed. This provided the ideal moment to reflect on and plan for multimedia and computer equipment, networking and Internet connections. Moreover, at our school we have to meet the needs of a disadvantaged student population and to improve a deprived environment.

The existing school is located on the outskirts of a Lisbon neighbourhood in an area characterised by buildings erected with no planning permission, poor living conditions and rapid new urban development. Most of the population came from the country or the Portuguese ex-colonies. The school building is a "temporary construction" that has been in use for fifteen years and has constant problems with its installations and functioning. It is a small and discouraging space.

Most of the parents have little or no hope for their children's education. There are many broken families, and many of our students spend much of their time in the streets, often in organised gangs. For them, the school serves only as a place where they can meet their friends; it is no longer a place where they experience learning. They seem indifferent to failure and unconcerned about their future. This situation leads to absenteeism and to growing disciplinary problems. Even when the family situation is not so bad, parents often have difficulty helping their children study due to lack of time or their own lack of education.

In recent years, a growing number of children arrive from primary school without basic skills in the Portuguese language, some of whom have the additional challenge of learning two languages. We have offered various types of pedagogical help and extra-curricular activities, though we are always limited by the problem of space. We have given students as much access as we can to the few existing computers – working with

computers is a completely new experience for most of our students, and it rapidly increases the interest of the less motivated. In a socially and culturally lacking environment, our old and unattractive school with its poor resources is inefficient, in spite of our best efforts.

The new school, equipped with computers and video and audio equipment, will function with a defined Educational Project that includes the use of new resources in the learning process and extra-curricular activities to stimulate and motivate the whole school community. Our students will have the access they so urgently need to new learning opportunities. This will be an enormous improvement for them and will help compensate for the socially deprived situation in which many of them live.

The new school will have a multimedia resource centre with access to Internet and to a school-wide network. There will also be an audio and video projection area. The centre will play a central role in the acquisition of information skills by supporting curricular activities, transversal projects and independent learning. It will contribute decisively to changing the learning and teaching process into one based on the search and investigation of information that our school does not currently possess. The school will have to change, adopting new methods of learning and teaching better adapted to today's information society.

The teacher will have a new role of guiding and facilitating access to information and creating new, constantly changing ways of learning. Information technology and communications (ITC) are now essential resources in schools. Their use can produce deep changes in the learning process, and everyone should have access. The school must make these resources and information available to students and teachers.

One of the main tasks of ITC in education is organising the information that exists in schools. The centre will play a fundamental role in processing information, organising access to it, producing and publishing information and transforming the school as a whole into a resource centre.

Our new school will have a network providing access, in the form of "information points" in every classroom, to existing resources and to data in different formats, including video. A powerful server will allow resource sharing and simultaneous access to Internet. We will also have a computer room equipped with a computer for each student in the class. In the laboratories and other specialised classrooms, there will be enough computers for group work. The administrative services and work related to class management will be computerised.

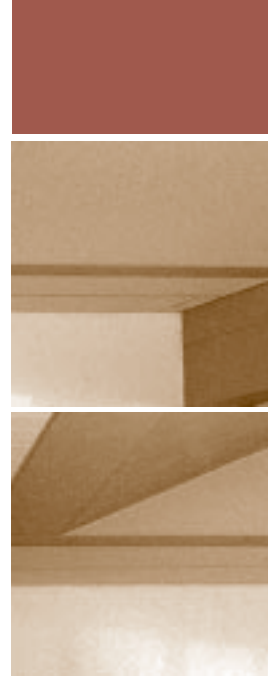
The School 2001 model gives particular importance to the Education Project intended as both a factor of innovation – introducing and bringing about educational changes – and a structuring element of school planning and action. The whole educational community should participate in defining the Education Project. There will also be an Activity Plan for each year which will set out ways of achieving the principles established in the Project.

Development of the new Education Project will soon begin. It will try to resolve the problems mentioned above which are particular to our school, while aiming at a more human, creative and intelligent environment and leading to the students' full development.

The multimedia resource centre will contribute greatly to the planning and development of a new and more flexible curriculum. Based on the national curricula, it will make class and school-based projects possible, using many sources of information and developing new skills and attitudes in students and teachers. Plans may include activities such as inter-class debates, presentations to the class or school and exchanges with schools of other regions or countries.

The centre will accommodate numerous extra-curricular activities (a school radio, video production, a school newspaper, a science club, an intercultural workgroup, an environment club and a photography club) as well as various types of pedagogical help for students with difficulties related to integration, motivation or mastering the Portuguese language. It will promote family involvement through a parents' association, sessions on the school/family relationship and sessions for students and parents about professional or educational alternatives.

The centre's management team will include five teachers, each with a different responsibility: co-ordination, documentation, video, network, dynamics. There will also be four auxiliary personnel, one of whom will be a computer and network technician. This team, as well as teachers, auxiliary staff and administrative personnel, will receive training according to their specific needs. A training programme is being developed in co-operation with teacher training centres in the area. In the future, the school may itself serve as a training centre for teachers from other schools that will carry out similar projects.



AUSTRIA'S TRAINING FIRMS

Austria proudly claims to be the first country to make training firm work compulsory in secondary commercial schools and secondary colleges for business administration. In its other secondary schools offering vocational training and colleges, training firms may be chosen as an additional programme.

These practice firms reduce entrepreneurial risks by providing hands-on training for business students. Their roots can be traced back to the 17th century when the *Musterkontor*, or model office, was set up in commercial colleges in the days of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy.

The number of training firms in Austrian schools has increased from 50 in 1992/93 to 780 in 1997/98, in addition to those in institutions for adult education. Furnishing and equipping a training firm with the latest office technology costs one million Austrian schillings per school, approximately 73 000 euros.

Students become employees of their training firm. According to their line of business, they will market products and services, do accounting tasks or take personnel management decisions, and they have to cope with all the administrative and commercial craftsmanship one needs in a true business. A training