ELEARNINGNEWS ARTICLE

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The digital transformation in the Italian school: where are we now that schools are suspended?

With the outbreak of the covid-19 emergency, the Miur makes some resources available to schools to implement distance learning. What is the approach adopted in Italy and in the other countries where schools have been suspended?

The **suspension of Italian schools** decided by decree of the Council of Ministers on 23 February 2020 and extended until 3 April, has confronted schools with a reality: digitization is now a must. In this regard, the distance learning page has been created to guide schools in the heart of eLearning. Will this initiative be enough or will the initiatives of individual institutions make the difference? What is the approach to eLearning in other countries such as South Korea, France and Spain, where school classes have been suspended due to coronavirus?

The platform for distance learning at the Miur

The distance learning portal is a site in continuous evolution because it is open to the participation of companies that, for free, provide hardware and software that promote eLearning. In order to be able to make its contribution, it is necessary to comply with the requirements of the open call for proposals on the Protocols site. In particular, companies offering software are required:

- Free access and use of the systems.
- Compliance with the criteria of "security, reliability, scalability and compliance with data protection regulations" by content platforms. They are asked that the data collected is not used for commercial purposes.
- The qualification of PA *cloud service provider* for online collaboration platforms.

In addition, it is essential for the Miur that there are free guides and tutorials to support teachers and families in using the new tools. There are currently three certified platforms: Google Class, Microsoft and TRIS, a joint public and private initiative to promote distance learning for hospitalized students.

Distance learning: every school is for itself from the electronic register to distance learning.

All this tells us that Miur's approach to eLearning is highly decentralised. There are guidelines on the requirements that companies have to meet, but there is no common system for all schools. This means that every school, independently, manages this forced transition from classroom to online teaching. The trend is to use the same provider for the electronic register service, until now the first and only step towards digitization made by schools, but not without problems.

From electronic registry to online teaching: what are the difficulties?

The process is certainly slowed down by the lack of familiarity of teachers first, and then of families, with these tools. The first approach with distance learning is to help teachers and families to become familiar with the new tools. The second issue concerns the uniformity of the systems adopted. Even within the same institute there are cases where different platforms are chosen, creating many difficulties for teachers. Moreover, with 8.4 million compulsory school students potentially connected, there have been phases of overloading the site, effectively preventing access to teaching resources. Finally, this first meeting with eLearning seems to result in the assignment of texts to be filled in at home. The time will come to measure yourself against the multimedia character of eLearning, using video, audio and virtual classrooms.

An overview of eLearning for public schools in France and Spain

After Italy, other European countries have had to take measures to restrict teaching in the classroom. Let's take two examples at the antipodes to describe their approach to eLearning: France and Spain. France plans to close schools from 16 March with a centralised eLearning strategy. Distance learning is carried out via the CNED website, Centre National d'Einsegnement à Distance: each of the 12.4 million French students has a code to access the site where they will find their school's online materials and virtuous classrooms in the "Ma classe à la maison" section. According to the French Ministry of Education, owner of the site, the system is able to support 15 million users simultaneously. Spain closes the doors of the schools from Friday, March 13, with different timing according to the decisions of the local authorities. Currently, no form of online education has yet been provided for the 8.2 million compulsory school students. The only initiative seems to be aimed at children from 4 to 10 years old and is organized by the Spanish Ministry of Education together with the TV channel Clan: it is called Educlan is a platform with audiovisual content provided by publishing houses for free. Despite its educational resources, the channel seems more oriented towards entertainment than compulsory schooling.