



Integrated program of education for environmental sustainability 2008

SUMMARY OF THE FIRST INTERIM REPORT

This reports relates to the initial few months of activity in the two main areas of the IRIS centre and Piedmont Region sustainability education framework.

Area A – Sustainability education for future primary school teachers

As part of this area, we developed and offered three interactive and experiential courses ('laboratories') aimed at students training to become primary school teachers and nursery teachers.

- **Level I laboratory: "Sustainability literacy" (2 groups)**

This laboratory was attended by 40 students for each group. Conducted by Dr. Daniela Marchetti and Dr. Daniele Gimigliano, the course was designed to give students some grounding into the concept of sustainability, by means of interactive, interdisciplinary and reflective learning and teaching approaches. The course was divided into four meetings of three hours each. Some of the topics included:

- students' ideas on the man-nature relationship
- ecological identity and the 'reduction' of nature
- environmental education and sustainability education: a reflection on their aims
- the concept of ecological footprint and its use
- students' construction of the concept of sustainability
- reflection and discussion of the concept of 'resource'
- evaluation

- **Level II laboratory: "Discovering natural resources" (1 group)**

This was the first laboratory introduced for nursery teachers and it was attended by 30 students. It was conducted by Dr. Andrea Caretto and Dr. Raffaella Spagna. In keeping with the experimental nature of the course, Dr. Marco Tonon participated in the role of observer. The course was organised in 4 indoor meetings and 3 fieldwork activities. It was aimed at future teachers of nursery school and had the objective of giving a conceptual and experiential understanding of the concept of 'natural resource' as an object embedded in a network of ecological relationships. Some of the topics and activities included:

- "Esculenta" – collective action of gathering and consumption of natural resources for feeding purposes.
- "Fibrae" - gathering and transformation of wild plants for fibre manufacturing.
- Visit to the Escosa cave for gathering of rock samples of various size, composition and texture.
- Visit to the Parco of Racconigi and examination of the woodland ecosystem.

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- Examination of selected materials, wood and clay.
- Activities of construction, transformation of materials and their use in the arts (e.g. painting with natural pigments).
- Collective evaluation and reflection.
- Afternoon tea with clay-based biscuits and drinks.

• **Level II laboratory: “Ourselves and Nature: a forgotten relationship” (1 group)**

This laboratory offered students the opportunity to investigate in a personal way one’s own relationship with Nature, with a view of achieving both personal and professional maturation. Additionally, the intention was to make students aware of the value of experiential learning and particularly, fieldwork activities, for the construction of personal knowledge, aided by interdisciplinary activities directly experienced and applied in the mountain context hosting the course.

This laboratory attracted 150 requests, with only 25 available places. A second course was then offered at the end of July and included an extended residential phase.

Area C – Sustainability education at tertiary level. From professional training, to post-graduate studies and extended public.

The IRIS workshop held in 2007 “Science and knowledge as common goods for a sustainable future” was a rich and significant experience of dialogue and reflection, which generated insights not only into current issues and problems but also for the future we can contribute towards creating. Central to this aim is the realisation of the need for a profound renovation of our ways of thinking and acting, both at the individual and collective levels, and the creation of new forms of knowledge and sustainable practices.

Starting from these considerations, we have activated new contracts of collaboration with a view to setting up a school of self-training, with the purpose of sustaining collective reflection on sustainability education and the creation of new, trans-disciplinary knowledge. At this stage in the planning phase we will focus on both the cognitive/disciplinary field of sustainability literacy and the realm of ecological awareness, which had been proposed as part of the learning experiences of AREA A. Drawing on the reflection on the various experiences and their reporting, we anticipate the creation of products which integrate the different levels of competence acquired in IRIS and which could be disseminated to a wider audience. Particular attention will be given to the science-technology-society theme and the creative processes of new knowledge construction.

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