

## ➤ Introduction

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This book was produced in the scope of a research project entitled “Navigating with ‘Magalhães’: Study on the Impact of Digital Media in Schoolchildren”. This study was conducted between May 2010 and May 2013 at the Communication and Society Research Centre, University of Minho, Portugal and it was funded by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (PTDC/CCI-COM/101381/2008).

As we shall explain in more detail later in this book, the main objective of that research project was to analyse the impact of the Portuguese government programme named ‘e-escolinha’ launched in 2008 within the Technological Plan for Education. This Plan responds to the principles of the Lisbon Strategy signed in 2000 and rereleased in the Spring European Council of 2005<sup>1</sup>. These principles are based on the modernization of the information systems of European Union member-states and the integration of the European citizens in the so called Information and Knowledge Society, in order to reduce the social disadvantages and fostering job creation, based on ICT. From this commitment, EU countries created their own initiatives to better exploit the potential of ICT to foster innovation, employment and economic growth.

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1 After that, in 2010, the European Commission launched the Digital Agenda for Europe “to chart a course to maximise the social and economic potential of ICT, most notably the internet, a vital medium of economic and societal activity: for doing business, working, playing, communicating and expressing ourselves freely” (European Commission, 2010 p. 3). The Digital Agenda is one of the seven flagship initiatives of the Europe 2020 Strategy (EUROPE 2020 – A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth – COM(2010) 2020).

But it is not only in Europe that countries are in this XXI Century investing in innovative programmes to get the most out of digital technologies for creating inclusive societies and competitive economies. -Initiatives of this kind have been emerging all over the world with their own specificities and objectives. Several nations are also creating specific ICT plans for education. One example, and maybe the most publicized, is the One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) project, a non-profit organization led by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Media Lab (founded by Nicolas Negroponte), whose mission- “is to empower the children of developing countries to learn by providing one connected laptop to every school-age child” (<http://laptop.org/en/vision/mission/index.shtml>). According to the project’s site, “roughly 2 million children and teachers in Latin America are currently part of an OLPC project, with another 500,000 in Africa and the rest of the world”. Someway related to its technocentric vision, this project faced several criticisms (see, e.g., Warschauer & Ames, 2010; Leaning, 2010; Selwyn, 2013), which in any case should not disregard the positive outcomes arisen from the initiative (Selwyn, 2013).

Referring to OLPC project, Warschauer and Ames (2010) argue that “regrettably, there is no magic laptop that can solve the educational problems of the world’s poor”. In fact, there’s no laptop that solves the educational problems, in general. Shafiu Alam Bhuiyan (2008) argues that no technology ever brought social equality. Characterizing the society information as a postindustrial society where information and information technologies are the principal forces of growth, he speaks about the North and the South as unequal information societies. Shafiu Alam Bhuiyan (*idem*) states that the information society is a discourse of social progress and Pérez-Tornero (2008) says it is a ‘slogan’, corresponding to projects rather realities. Crossing these arguments with some research outcomes, a question that should be raised is if the educational ICT programmes are responding mostly to the commodification of education than to the true community’s needs. And about this, what is certain is that we need “an inclusive information society, which fosters equality and participation and functions according to the need of human well-being [rather than] the logic of commodification” (Bhuiyan, 2008, p. 114).

Therefore, putting the issues on the table: what is happening with the multiple 'one laptop per child' programmes around the world? What are their main focus and concerns? How are they being implemented in schools and experienced by children, teachers and parents? How are the 'global' trends influencing national policies and initiatives? These are some questions that this book seeks to address.

The book includes eleven contributions from six Ibero-American countries. The authors responded to a call for chapters launched within the research project 'Navigating with Magalhães'. From thirty-one proposals received ten were selected. Together with the first chapter coming from the founder project they constitute the content of this publication. All the chapters are of the responsibility of their authors as well as the English writing. The content was peer reviewed but the language proof editing was the author's responsibility.

The chapter that opens the book comes from Portugal and it is based on the main findings of the research project that supports this publication. Based on data coming from a set of interviews to key-actors involved in the conception and implementation of the 'e.escolinha' programme and the distribution of the Magalhães laptop and on questionnaires administered to primary schoolchildren, their parents and teachers, the authors analyse the political, educational and social impact of the Magalhães computer in children, families and school life.

The second chapter is from Latin America, more specifically from Uruguay. The authors analyse the One Laptop Per Child model in Uruguay under the Ceibal Plan. Based on quantitative and qualitative data, they show that there is almost no gap between rich and poor households but they found that poorest children have more difficulties in using technology and benefiting from it.

The third chapter is from Brazil but it presents three case studies on one-to-one programmes conducted in Italy, Ethiopia and Brazil between 2009 and 2012. The author uses these cases to illustrate the capability of these initiatives to effectively change teaching and learning practices, and foster digital literacy.

The next chapter, the fourth, comes from Spain. It examines the one-to-one projects developed in Spain in the last four years and proposes

a model for assessing these projects based on a European approach linked to media literacy.

The fifth chapter is from Peru and it aims to analyse the One Laptop Per Child programme from the point of view of children, parents, teachers and the principals of educational institutions from three rural regions in this country.

Following, the sixth chapter is from Uruguay and it aims to analyze how the experiences with the XO3 computer were appropriated by poor families benefiting from CEIBAL Plan. The authors concluded that although the XO does not have a significant role in the poorest families' community life, it starts to be a mediator between the "inside" and the "outside" of the community and also a mediator between a present of scarcity and a future with more opportunities.

The seventh chapter is from Brazil and it analyses the One Computer per Student Programme (PROUCA), implemented by the Brazilian government, based on a case study of a public school in Goiás. The authors examine the relationship between the pedagogical objectives of the project and teaching practices in that school.

The following chapter also comes from Brazil. Based on the same Brazilian government programme, the authors intend to discuss the appropriation of the digital devices by teachers, in their social and professional environment.

The ninth chapter comes from Argentina. The authors present a comparative approach of the differential computer and Internet appropriation methods by adolescents in secondary school coming from popular and middle classes. This is their base to discuss some questions that arise from the implementation of the Programa Conectar Igualdad (PCI) launched in 2010 in Argentina.

The tenth is from an author affiliated in Spain but who is a native of Argentina. He presents two Argentinian programmes: the Roots Program and the Programa Conectar Igualdad (PCI), seeking to discuss the scope and the limitations of the latter.

The book closes with the country and the governmental initiative that opens it: the eleventh chapter is also from Portugal and it examines the family adhesion to Magalhães computer and its uses by children in different contexts, discussing the inequality in opportunities and ICT

uses. This study is based on data coming from two towns from different Portuguese regions.

Ultimately, we hope that these diverse geographical voices contribute to a better understanding of the one-to-one computing policies and initiatives and their real impact *in situ*. But above all we hope that these voices can be heard so as to improve future initiatives.

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