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Yves Alpe

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***TOWARD A EUROPEAN OBSERVATORY OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL:
FEASIBILITY STUDY FROM THE FRENCH EXPERIENCE
« OBSERVATORY OF RURAL SCHOOL »***

Yves ALPE
Lecturer in Sociology

Professional address
Observatory of Rural School,
UniSa - Università degli Studi di Salerno, via Ponte don Melillo – I-84084 – FISCIANO, Italy.

TOWARDS A EUROPEAN OBSERVATORY OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: FEASIBILITY STUDY FROM THE FRENCH EXPERIENCE « OBSERVATORY OF RURAL SCHOOL »

In the general framework of the CAENTI project, we started working on the specific objectives of the WP6E group operating: Toward a European Observatory of Elementary School: feasibility study from the French experience « Observatory of the Rural School ».

The fundamental questionings are about the relationship between the life territory, the students' scholarship territory and school success. We know that beyond the socio-cultural belonging, their school success depends on the life projects and the more or less precise representation they have of their professional future. However, this construction depends on multiple territorial factors: variety of the local economical grid, diversity of the training offer and involvement of the territorial actors on school issues.

Consequently, equal opportunity considerably varies from a territory to another one, for the children of a same socio-professional category. It is interesting to notice that the rural environments are not privileged with respect to the urban environments, in terms of school success in elementary school.

School does not operate in a close environment and lots of school structures implemented opening devices to their economical, social and cultural environment, which impact we will have to evaluate. The latest PISA inquiry shows that success is more important in the European countries where the links between school, families and territorial communities are the strongest.

In return, it is also interesting to measure the paper that school can play in the local development: it is often asserted, but rarely studied in a detailed way.

The Observatory of Elementary School has followed up since 1999 a cohort of 2400 students who are sent to school in different regions of France and different kinds of rural environments, to better understand the success factors and the links with the students' projects and their life territories.

The constitution of the data base rests on inquiries that are diffused to the students, to their parents and to their teachers and on information that are gathered from the official services of exams. The work of information gathering mobilizes the ground actors, that is to say teachers, who are also solicited for the interpretation of the results of the statistical data processing.

The methods and tools that are used are those of CATALYSE.

The objectives of the WP6E are to study the transferability to other European countries of the method that is experimented in France by the Observatory of Rural School: follow-up of a student cohort to valuate the specificity of the territorial impact on success, territories knowledge and on their links with school, territory social representations and local actors mobilizations. It will imply the valuation of the conditions of accessibility to the information about the students, the schools and the territories in the different countries, and the determination of the relevant criteria for a European comparative approach.

We suggest a provisional programme of the WP6E for the three years of the CAENTI project:

- Conference 1: Aix-en-Provence (France), July 2006 : First contacts and debates on the issues;
- Conference of Alba Iulia (Romania): Presentation of the ORS and of the suggestion of the working methods and preliminary issues on the observation fields;
- Conference 2 : Salerno (Italy), May 2007: Drafting of the pre-project;
- Conference of Huelva (Spain): State-of-the-art;
- Conference 3 (place and date to be defined): Tools and methods;
- Conference of Besançon: Presentation of the program conditions.