

Croatian e-Kids programme

Description of e-Kids

Croatian e-Kids programme is in fact an integral approach for achieving computer literacy among children. It contains three main components :

- Multimedia CD-ROM for preschool age children (currently in development)
- e-Kids BOX (fully developed product)
- e-Kids Magazine (monthly edition - 10 issues already published)

The approach is meant to develop computer literacy at the early age in order to enable the children to use ICT efficiently in any life situation : in school, at home, for fun and for variety of other purposes.

This makes huge difference to 'playing computer games' and 'communicating skillfully by the SMS messages on the mobile phone'.

The e-Kids BOX is meant to get the children to acquire the basic knowledge and skills of using ICT. Therefore the box contains a manual (written as a series of cartoons and illustrated with numerous cartoon characters), a CD-ROM with two games (that can be used to learn ICT usage in interactive way through a game) and a certification programme (that can be started to test the knowledge of a candidate and in case the candidate has correctly answered the randomly chosen series of questions). The teacher has to testify on the skills card (there is one provided in the box) with his signature that the child has done the test himself without any outside help.

After that school or test center send's the skills card to Croatian Information Technology Society which print's the certificate and ID card (with magnetic strip or a chip containing all necessary data) and give it to the child as an identification of computer literacy. The card could be used for many other purposes and certainly whenever is necessary to prove the basic knowledge and skills of using ICT.

Product validation

During the early stages of development many teachers, children, computer specialists and psychologists were engaged in finding the right solution for this purpose. They have taken into consideration the educational goals, interest of the children, presentation of the content, psychological issues etc.

After finishing the product it was initially tested in one school class in Varazdin (town in north-west of the Croatia, headquarters of editor PRO-MIL) and during

the summer camp for young informaticians in June 2006. The results were very promising. In school the children accepted very well the product (e-Kids box) and scored very good results (80% of the children who attended the sessions passed the certification test while 100% of the summer camp children passed the test – it has to be noted that camp children had previously good knowledge of ICT). The most important part after interviewing the children was that they themselves ranked the product as attractive, interesting and easy to use.

Therefore the conclusion was to present the product to the educational specialists and authorities (Ministry of Education and Institute for Education). By the end of June 2006 the e-Kids box was promoted to the public. The Assistant minister Dr. D. Schwarz welcomed the product as well as A. Spiegl, the president of Croatian Association of Informaticians (HSIN) and M. Glasendhardt, the chairman of Croatian Information Technology Society (HIZ).

In August 2006 official document was issued by the Institute for Education to allow the use of e-Kids magazine in schools. Both products (e-Kids box and e-Kids magazine) are available in public distribution places. The magazine is also distributed directly to all elementary schools in Croatia.

