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ПРЕДУЧИЛИЩНОТО ДЕТСТВО И ОТГОВОРНОСТИТЕ НА СЪВРЕМЕННОТО ОБЩЕСТВО

**ДОКЛАДИ ОТ НАУЧНА КОНФЕРЕНЦИЯ
С МЕЖДУНАРОДНО УЧАСТИЕ**

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Research Tendencies in the Area of Parent-School Cooperation

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The problem in context

It seems that in the area of family-school cooperation, as an integral part of the educational activities of every school and an object of research observation, the concept of cooperation/parent involvement hasn't been precisely defined. Our literature review, as well as our personal empirical study in this area has led us to the conclusion that in the last twenty years a new tendency has started to develop which, more often than not, is represented by the terms: parent involvement, parent engagement, parent support and parent-school cooperation.

Only about thirty scientific papers in this area had been published by 1978 on the American continent, when the book — *Worlds apart: Relationships between families and schools* — was published. Contrary to that, by 1998, the number of such publications had risen to 450. According to Ryan and Adams, (1998) this tendency was most probably initiated by the fact that the professional public (especially in the USA) had become increasingly worried that US pupils were doing relatively worse than their international peers. However, this cannot be accepted as a general explanation due to the fact that researchers all over the world had started to intensively deal with this issue almost simultaneously. This could have been prompted by the increasing remarks of those directly involved in the educational process (pupils, teachers, parents) that there are, indeed, barriers between schools and families which have a negative impact on the children's success in school. On the other hand the theory of Bronfenbrenner, (1979) that the most significant force driving this kind of research is the shift in the research focus of psychological sciences, from the study of intrapsychic processes as determinants of child development, to the study of contextual and situational factors.

Laurence Steinberg, in a four-year study of a sample of 20 000 teenagers and their families, concludes that "... the low school success in the USA is determined

more by what goes on in the life of pupils outside the school, than by what goes on within school walls" (Steinberg, 1996, pg. 184). His research supports the attitude that there are barriers between the two most responsible institutions in the area of youth education: two out of ten parents are not involved in any way in the school life of their children; only one out of five parents follows the school curriculum, and only 40 % follow it continually; one third of pupils stated that their parents have no idea about their school activities, and that their parents do not worry whether their grades will be good or not; one half of parents stated that a "C" (3) grade is good enough; and only 30 % of pupils stated that their parents dedicate a sufficient amount of time to talk to them on a daily basis. Anna Henderson relates to Steinberg's findings and concludes that when parents are involved in their children's educational engagement and cooperate with the school, the children receive higher grades, have a higher success rate on tests, work harder and more successfully on their home assignments, behave positively and have positive attitudes, and often tend to continue their education after high school (Sexton, 1997).

Despite of the existence of evidence to support the benefits of parent involvement (worldwide), in our schools, this program and legal obligation is regarded as a peripheral task, while teaching is continually prioritized, without taking in consideration the fact that schools, society and families are inevitably connected when it comes to the vision and mission of the education of children. In that context, the concept of connecting families and schools in this part of the world is mainly a part of the annual programs of schools and is of a formal, rather than a substantial, nature. In fact, the acts of building shared values between schools and families, having mutual trust in the benefits of the cooperation, as well as treating this cooperation as a process, have to be essential guidelines in the creation of school policies for the development of this educational field.

Flaws, in terms of correct and precise delineation of the term — cooperation, in the sense of failure to reach agreement on what should be included in the concept of cooperation, as well as in the sense of the ineffective existent practices, may as well be the greatest challenge to all those attempting to create models founded on mutual knowledge and understanding (family, school), which have precisely defined expected outcomes and which are measurable and comparable in a simple manner.

Research approaches: Parent-school cooperation and school success

Research has shown that there are a great amount of activities that can create a relationship between the family and the school. Despite of the variety of this kind of research, in terms of content, philosophical and methodological conceptions, in general, there are two different approaches:

The first approach is usually called "within-the-family-stream" and is directed at studying systems of interpersonal relationships within the family and the ways in which these relationships can affect pupils' success in school from a social and edu-

cational aspect. The research is mainly founded on the accomplishments in the area of psychology, however, many, even though partially, devote attention to the pedagogical function of parents as well. Perhaps, Ryan and Adams' empirically-based model of parent involvement has had the farthest reach in terms of this approach (Ryan & Adams, 1998, pg. 1-33). In the attempt to bring order in an extremely diverse literature treating this issue, in this model, authors have included almost all variables involved by researchers, or could involve them in their work, especially when it comes to the study of "within-the-family-stream" processes. Ryan and Adams (Ryan & Adams, 1998, pg. 1-33) have done 17 studies using analytical methods in order to evaluate the relationships between family processes and children's success in school. In 16 out of 17 studies, the observed structures had fitted rather tightly in the concept of the model. In these studies, the order of the variables is consistent with the levels of the model (from 0 to 6), wherein the effects of variables which are remote from school outcomes (level 0) are widely mediated by other variables which are closer to the outcomes:

- Level 0 — children's results in school
- Level 1 — child's personal characteristics — competences and traits
- Level 2 — school-focused parent-child interactions
- Level 3 — general parent-child interactions
- Level 4 — general family relations
- Level 5 — personal characteristics of parents
- Level 6 — exogenous social-cultural variables — demography

Research results have shown that the socioeconomic status leads to an increasing level of social support, which in turn leads to reduction of the amount of parent depression. On the other hand, a lower level of depression makes families become less dysfunctional and reduces the hostility of parents. Such parent attitude promotes greater focus on school in children, which leads to higher achievements in school. Commented in this way, the results are of a one-way character, however, authors comment on them in the context of their mutual connection as well.

The validity of the model is also confirmed by the results of the research done by R. Adams & Corville Smith (1994) and Ketsetzis, Ryan&Adams (1998). Using a moderate amount of purposely chosen samples of primary school children and their parents, these researchers have found that processes within the family and characteristics of children are combined in schemes suggested by the model, wherein, the fundamental processes within the family, for example, conflicts and cohesion affect school-focused supportive or repressive relationships between parents and children. The effects of these two types of relationships are manifested indirectly through the child's characteristics: study efforts and intellectual effectiveness (Adams & Ryan, 2000, pg. 1-3).

Despite of the content and methodological complexity of the study of relationships within the family and their implications on the educational outcomes of chil-

dren, NLSCY's data (National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth), on the basis of which research has been done, did not provide an opportunity for the study of the effects of variables related to school-oriented relationships between parents and children and educational outcomes.

Supporters of the other approach study this issue on an institutional level, while treating the family and school as separate institutions focused on mutual support for the same cause. Oriented in this way, Sara Lightfoot (Lightfoot, 1978) critically discusses the insufficient and unsubstantial cooperation between these two institutions. On the one hand, she criticizes the inability of schools to involve families in their activities, and on the other hand, she points to the disinterest of families to get involved in school activities. This study approach, called "*between*", focuses at studying issues related to educational policies, administrative practices and parent counseling. Schools are advised on how to best communicate with families, and how to attract families to cooperate, in terms of meetings or more significant voluntary activities. On the other hand, a part of the literature is aimed at parents, and the basic purpose is to enable parents to seek information about the school and about the way they can support the realization of educational goals.

Perhaps, the most prominent attempts to connect families and schools (on the American soil), by animating their mutual relationship, are *Epstein's model* of parent-school partnership and IDRA's parent leadership model.

Figure 1

Epstein's model	IDRA-model
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parenthood 2. Communication 3. Volunteering 4. Studying at home 5. Decision making 6. Cooperation with local environment 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parents as teachers 2. Parents as resources 3. Parents as decision makers 4. Parents as leaders and trainers

All of the foreseen areas of involvement of parents in their children's education, in the two models, are conceived as processes of development which, in essence, are not remarkably different.

The first and the fourth area in Epstein's model are compatible with the area of IDRA's model marked as: Parents as teachers. This covers the realization of educational activities which will enable parents to understand the development of children and youth and will help them create relationships within the family that promote and support learning, as well as educational activities which will help schools understand family problems and differences. Moreover, this area covers activities of the school aimed at involving parents in the realization of school obligations at home.

"Communication" is realized in all four phases of IDRA's model and it in-

cludes activities in which parents and schools exchange timely and exhaustive information on the realization of programs and the success of pupils. Epstein's "volunteering" corresponds to "parents as resources Cooperation with the local environment as the sixth area of parent-school partnership covers the two steps of IDRA's model marked as "parents as resources" and "parents as leaders and trainers".

Despite of the fact that these models have been widely accepted in the American school practice and in hundreds of papers devoted to the involvement of parents in the education of children, the need to promote school practice in this area is emphasized. Perhaps, a good part of the issues which the school practice and researchers who are trying to build an optimal model of parent-school cooperation are facing arise because of the fact that these issues are researched separately from the findings of research done in the field of the motives that induce parents to accept the role of partners in the education of their children. The basic problem is that the fact that good knowledge of the partner is the primary requirement for effective cooperation is not taken into consideration.

In this context, the findings which reveal the reasons why parents get involved in their children's educational engagement are of significant importance (Hoover-Dempsey, Kathleen V., Battiato, C. Angela, et. All, 2001; Petrovska, 2009):

- Parents get involved in pupils' homework because they feel that it is a mandatory thing to do;
- They are convinced that their involvement is of significant importance and contributes to the child's success in school.
- They hope that such action is expected by both, children and teachers;
- Parents perceive this role as a need and a responsibility which stem from parenthood itself.

Biddle B. J. (1986) explains the establishment of the parents' role in the process of involvement in the child's school engagement as a reflection of the parents' expectations and beliefs, in the sense of what they should do about the education of their children. Applied to the parents' involvement in the education of the children, the establishment of the parents' role should be grounded on the activities which parents perceive as significant, necessary and available to their personal engagement in that process. In that sense, schools should be obliged to develop a process in which parents will take this role seriously.

Our belief that the school bears the responsibility for the level and quality of the involvement of parents in the education of children is supported by the findings of a great amount of research. These show that when schools invite parents and successfully organize activities, this has a high motivational power and influences the decision of parents in terms of whether or not to get involved in that process. (Balli i dr., 1998; Epstein & Dauber, 1991 i 1993; Anesco & Ramsey, 1994; Shumow, 1998) Schools must not expect that all parents are equally available, due to different reasons: social, cultural, personal, etc. The findings of an extensive research which we carried out on

a sample of 578 pupils in the 7th and 8th grade and their parents indicate that the amount of the parents' initiative to get involved in the education of children determines the intensity of the cooperation: 78.16 % of the parents get involved in educational activities only if invited by teachers or children (at home or school), 57.19% go to the school when invited, 29.29% of parents avoid going to their child's school, and only 13.52% go to the school whenever they feel a need to do that. Despite the fact that 54.94% of parents involved in our research regarded the cooperation with the school as insufficient, the findings are optimistic and confirm the parents' readiness to cooperate. A high percentage of 75.74% expressed their positive attitude towards the meaning of the parent-school cooperation to the success of children in school, and 78.16% of parents stated their readiness to participate in the planning, organizing, realizing and evaluation of school activities. (S., Petrovska, 2009)

Conclusion

Facts show that there is a need to creatively and critically apply empirical findings in the process of building models of the involvement of parents in the education of their children. In a longer period of time, worldwide and at home, the parent-school cooperation was built on the basis of a paradigm grounded in the following attitudes: parents should go to the school only when invited by teachers; they go to the school only when they need to attend manifestations being organized; parents can only be used to provide additional financial means; housewives are merely mothers who are incapable of making a significant contribution to the education of their children. However, at present, when the school is no longer the sole "medium" of the education of children and youth, there must be a radical change in the attempt to animate parents in that process, due to the fact that the manner in which schools care about pupils reflects the manner in which they care about their families. In that sense, the old philosophy on which the facilitation of the process of cooperation between the family and the school is grounded needs to be abandoned, and a new one which is based on scientific indicators needs to be accepted:

<i>A philosophy which impedes parent-school cooperation</i>	<i>A philosophy which promotes parent-school cooperation</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents that rarely visit the school do not care about their children's success at school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not all parents can equally visit the school, as maybe not all of them find it convenient to do that, which does not mean that they do not care about their children.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents should visit the school on their own initiative, as they should be the people who care the most about their own children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents are motivated by the school initiative for involvement; schools are institutions in charge of the modeling of this process.

<i>A philosophy which impedes parent-school cooperation</i>	<i>A philosophy which promotes parent-school cooperation</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less educated or unemployed parents are not able to help their own children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All parents have the potential to contribute to the improvement of the children's success in school.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is not worth if teachers care about realizing cooperation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The involvement of parents inevitably improves the child's success in school and intensifies the cooperation between the school and the local environment.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All parents should be treated the same. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families and parents are all unique in their own way (in different respects). An individual approach is mandatory.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent involvement should be realized when needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent involvement is a process which requires a continual engagement of the school.

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Operational System Edubuntu

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Introduction

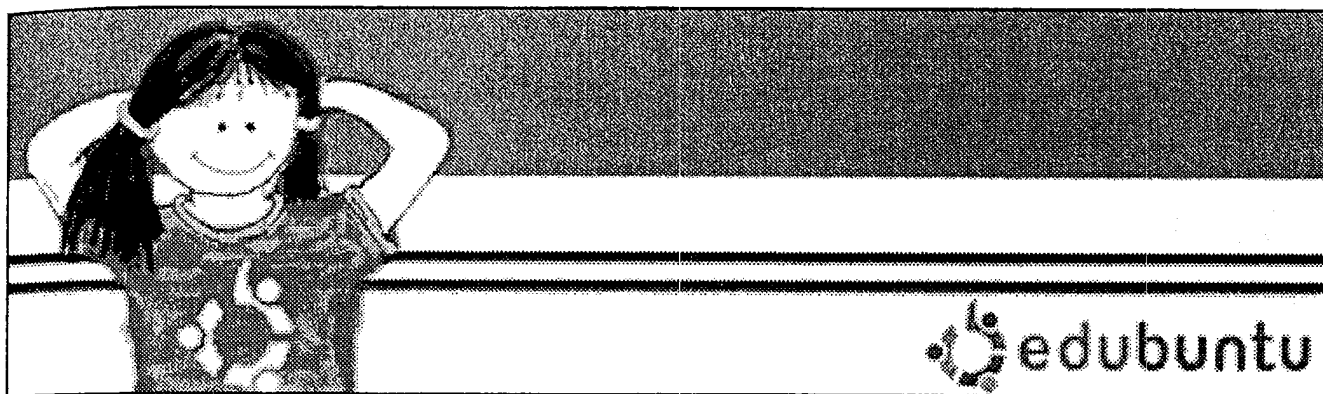
As the children grow, their needs for acquiring knowledge also grow at the same time, as well as the necessity of using a computer. Most countries in the world enable their pupils for these two components of the educational process, putting greater significance on training them to use computers. In our educational system for years back training pupils to work on computers and realizing teaching by means of computers was almost impossible because our schools were not equipped enough with computers and computer equipment. The teachers' plans connected with such activities were almost infeasible because of a simple fact that he/she could not realize any such planned activity because the number of computers in schools was smaller even than the number of teachers teaching in the respective school.

However, our country is trying to reach and realize European tendencies on its own terrain. It proved this tendency by the realization of the project "Computer for each child" which is now in its final stage. Its aim was to equip schools throughout the country with a sufficient number of computers so that each pupil has one in the course of teaching. These computers were installed with the Linux operational system, or, to be more precise, with its educational edition Edubuntu. Technology occupies a great deal of our everyday life and the children should be aware of its importance while they are growing up. That is why there was need to introduce Edubuntu into the teaching process; it became a mediator between the teacher and the teaching content, striving to achieve balance between the usage of computers in teaching and the need of children to acquire knowledge from all areas.

Each pupil in Macedonia uses Edubuntu

The Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Macedonia equipped and put in action around 180 000 computer workshops, as part of the project "Computer for each child". Half of the pupils attend classes in the morning, and the other

half in the afternoon so this means that the number of 180 000 workshops will enable the entire school population of Macedonia to have access to computers. The first 7 000 computers with Edubuntu were installed on September 4, 2007. With this project Macedonia showed a great and beautiful vision of changing its destiny by making the decision that its pupils should study and learn with the help of computers and enjoy all the benefits his decision offers. This project will enable the usage of a great number of innovative educational programs in teaching so that a lot of teaching subjects could be taught by means of the same programs on the whole territory of our country.



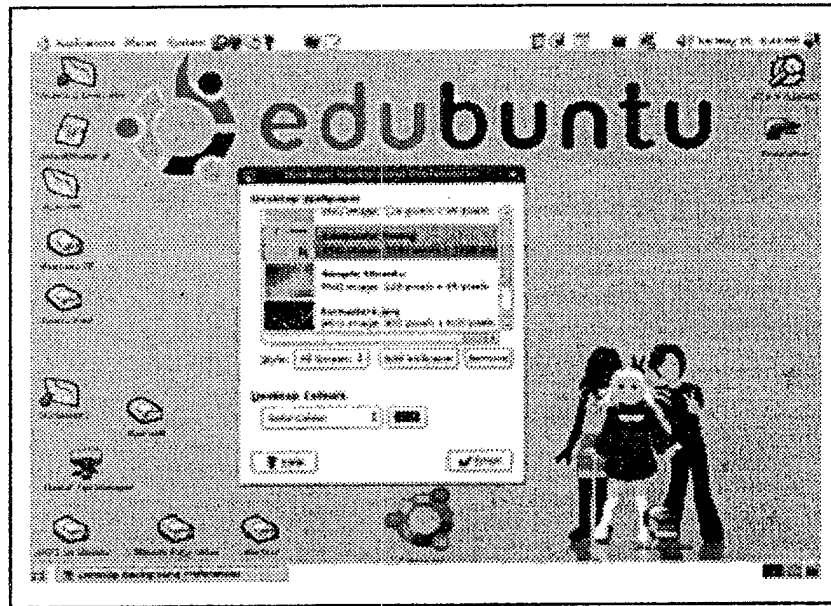
By choosing Edubuntu as an operational system for all computers in schools in Macedonia our country will be able to provide education based on work and learning with computers for all pupils. Macedonia has chosen Edubuntu because it is oriented towards ordinary users, it is easy to install and use, supports a number of applications for various purposes, it is very popular and has good Internet support. There are numerous Linux distributions but most of them use the standard package of applications. A great number of tasks done by users are applications for office work, such as text editing, tabular calculations, creating presentations, drawing and creating relational databases, etc.

The founder of Edubuntu is Mark Shuttleworth who, in 1999, founded his company for security software which he sold for more than half a billion dollars; he has also made two things by which he will be remembered: one is his holiday in space about which he had dreamed since his childhood, and the other is the foundation of the company Ubuntu.

Edubuntu — an experiment taking place in real life

Edubuntu is a product of a philosophy based on the freedom of software for which we hope it will expand and represent its benefits as a software technology all around the world.

Edubuntu is a project created with the aim of creating an operational system and a number of application and software which is open and free. The foundations on which Edubuntu is built are:



— Each computer user should have the freedom to copy, distribute, study, exchange, change, and improve his software without any special reason and not pay great sums of money for a license for it;

— Each computer user should have the opportunity to use his software in his mother tongue;

— Each computer user should be given the opportunity to use the software he wants despite not having necessary skills and knowledge for working with it.

This philosophy is reflected on the software that is produced and on its distribution.

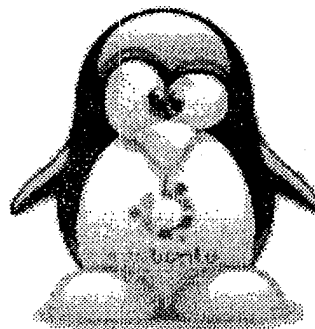
Linux for people

Ubuntu is an African word which has two meanings:

— **humanity to others**

— **I am what I am because of who we all are**

Edubuntu represents itself as “Linux for humanity”. This means that it is intended to ordinary people, i. e. to users who need an operational system and a well chosen group application that they can use in order to complete some work or task, without worrying about technical details.



In order to make it different from other systems, it had to offer something more, such as the following:

- Choice of applications — consists of more than 15 000 programs;
- Absolutely stable program versions;
- Edubuntu chooses the best and the most useful;
- Edubuntu is Linux where you can do anything!
- Predictability of support term that is provided for future.

In fact it is not so difficult to pack up one's own version of Linux and release it into the world signed by one's name with the suffix — ix or — ux. Even if it is well built, some additional conditions are necessary for greater success:

- The package should first be tested to a plausible number of different hardware configurations that have reasonable processors, mother boards, graphic cards and multi-media and communication additions.

This could rarely be done at home or with one's friends. But it could be made by a company such as Canonical, supported by a budget of several million dollars at annual level, but there is also a guarantee that distribution will last more than two seasons, i.e. that a period of constant development is provided with an anticipated cycle of new, improved and richer versions.

Each new version of Edubuntu appearing every six months will be better than the previous one and is supposed to provide complete support in the next year and a half. So far, what has been promised has been done so we hope this trend will continue in the future?

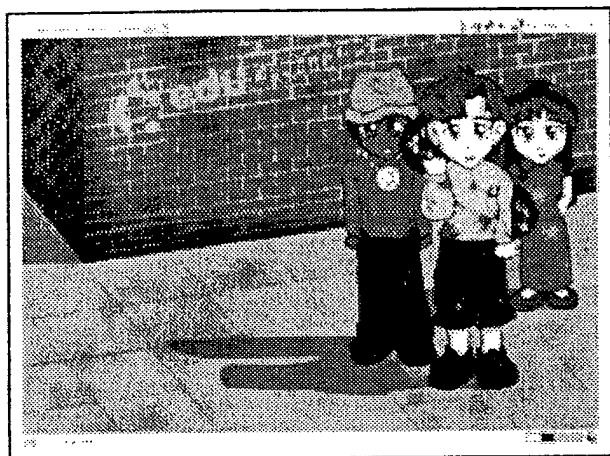
- Not only is the distribution of Edubuntu free but there is also a form on their home page that you can fill in with your details and in the course of several weeks you could receive the latest version of Edubuntu; and even the postage is paid. The aim is to make it possible for everyone to get their version of Linux, which is especially important for people who live in poor and distant countries.

The other advantage is that everyone can get the version of Edubuntu in their mother tongue. There is a version in Macedonian and it is used in school throughout the country.

EDUBUNTU FOR EDUCATION

Edubuntu is a package intended for education in schools and programming. Its creator Shuttelworth says:

"Edubuntu is a version intended primarily for school population, containing specific programs created for educational needs and continuously updated by means of Internet teaching aids and teaching documentation. This version is intended for poor regions among which is Africa where Shuttelworth himself comes from."



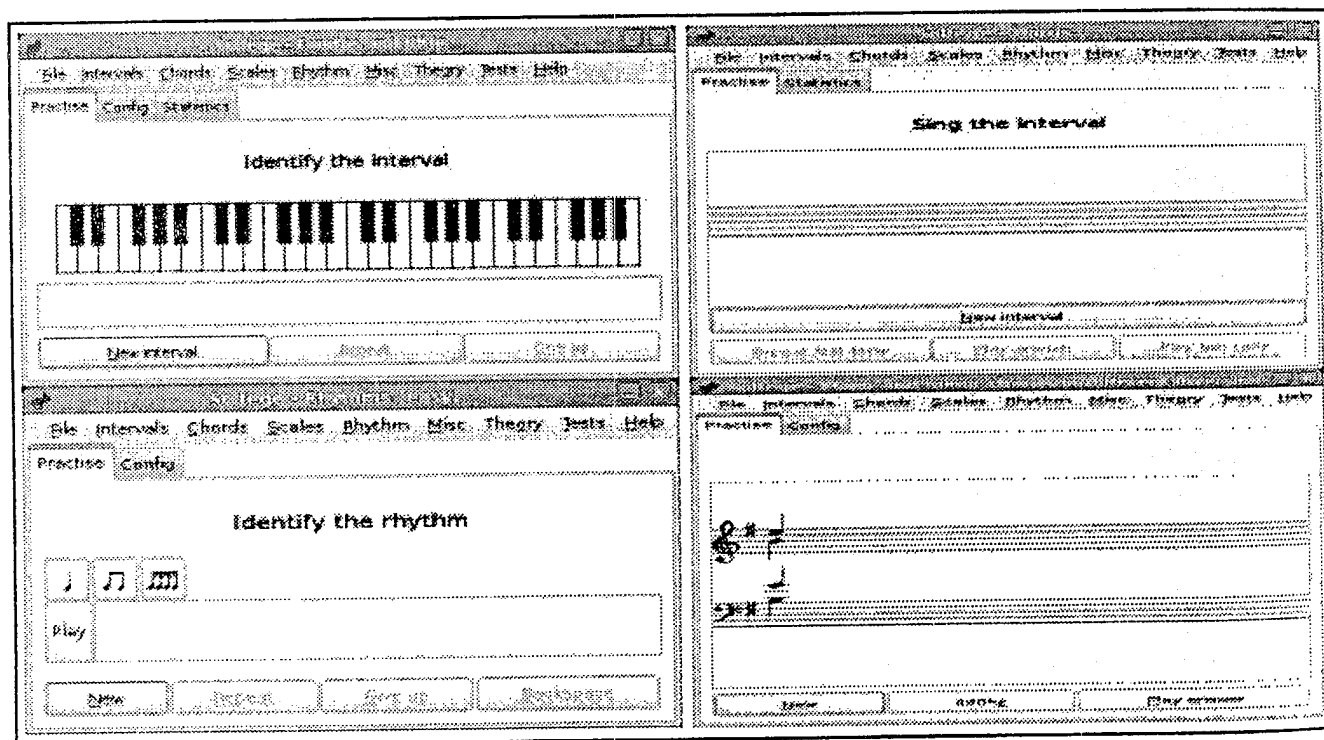
What can Edubuntu teach your children?

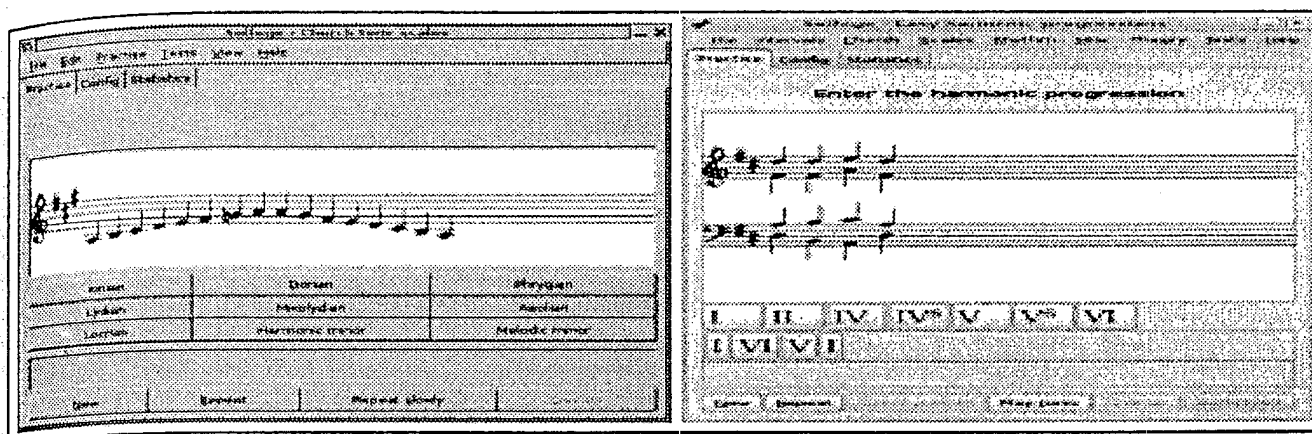
According to the experts in this field, Edubuntu has been made especially for young children. Its is adapted in such a way that children of all ages can use it, from those who are just beginning to read to teenagers preparing for university. There are tools and applications for almost any teaching subject in this operational system: mathematics, art, reading, computer science, literature, etc. Al-

though Edubuntu is intensively used in a number of schools around the world, it can still be easily installed in your computer. Unlike other operational systems Edubuntu includes games that children rather like; by means of these games they learn and practice reading, thinking and mathematical operations. Edubuntu aims at achieving a balance between computer usage in teaching and the need of children for gaining knowledge from all areas.

Gnu solfege

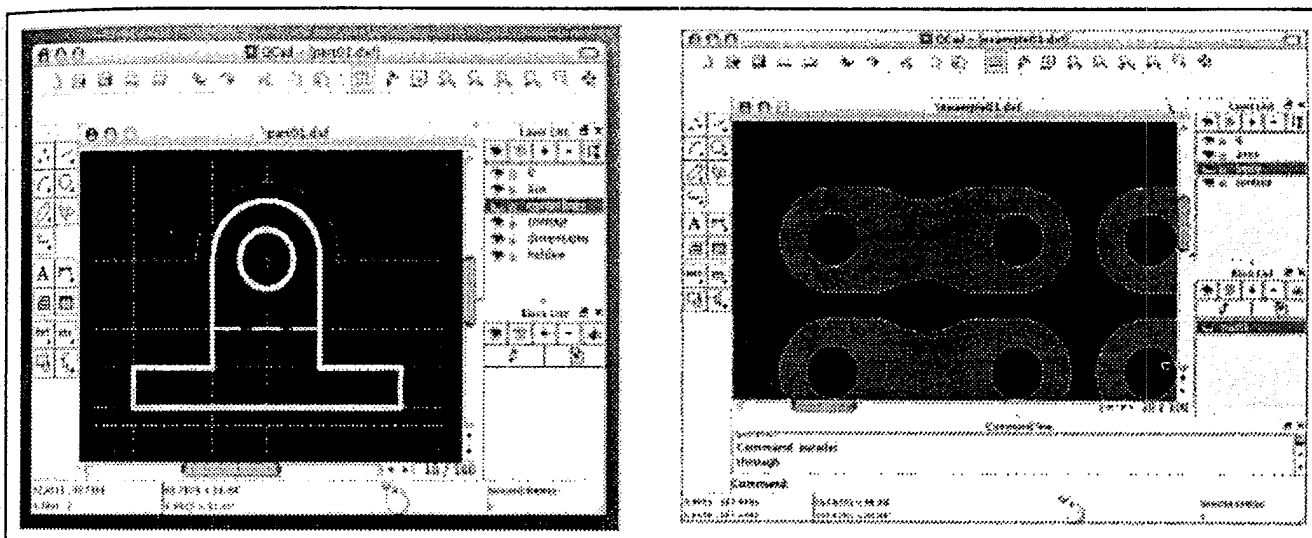
Gnu solfege is a program for practicing and training the sense of hearing. This is done through a series of lessons and exercises contained in this program. If you want to practice some special accord or practice a dictation with music that is not turned on, in that case this program is the right choice for you.





QCAD

Cad means design with the help of computer (Computer-Aided Design). Applications made with this program are different from programs for drawing and colouring, because drawings made with this application represent real objects with their precise original measures. Some of the main reasons for using this program are its simplicity, user friendly interface, and the possibility to operate on different platforms (Linux, Windows). It is estimated that more than 100 000 people all around the world use it.

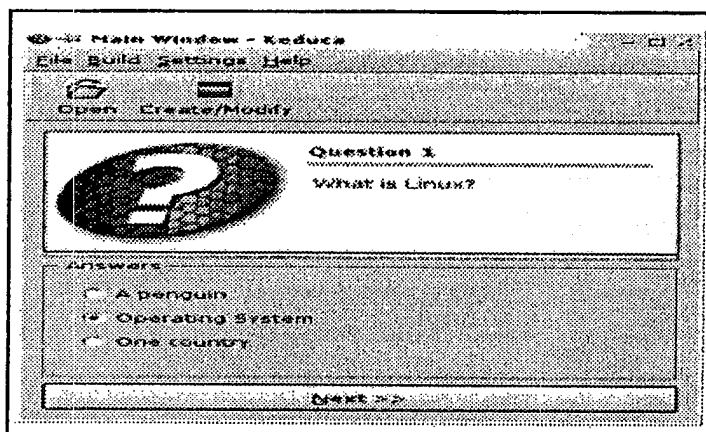


Keduca

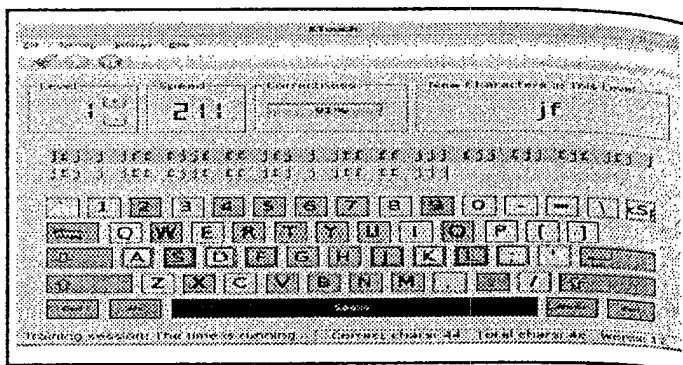
Keduca is a flash-card application which enables you to make interactive tests based on forms. Here is what it looks like:

Ktouch

Ktouch is a program that shows you the next key to press and which finger to use. The main screen of



Ktouch is an admirable instructor for blind writing. You learn how to write with all fingers, step by step, without looking continuously at the keyboard in order to find the keys; this makes it suitable for all ages and a perfect instructor for schools, universities, and individuals.



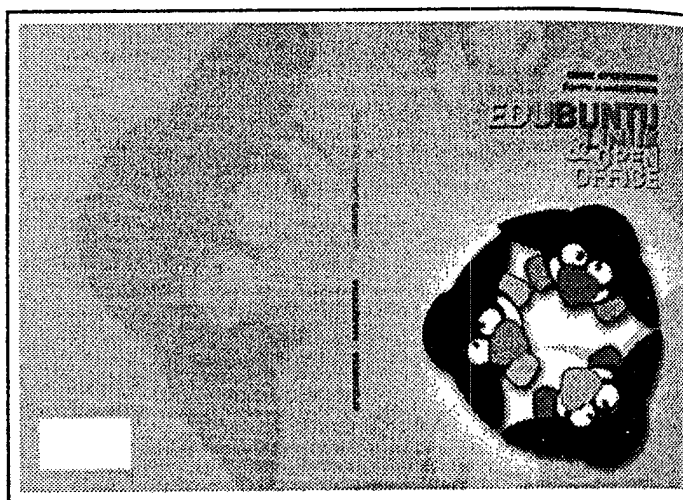
Stardick

Stardick is an international dictionary having rather powerful options, such as:

- Global search;
- Scanning of the chosen word;
- Free search.

Conclusion

Having a computer in the classroom is an asset to any teacher. With a computer in the classroom, teachers are able to demonstrate a new lesson, present new material, illustrate how to use new programs, and show new websites. Noisy classrooms are a daily occurrence, and with the help of microphones, students are able to hear their teachers clearer. Children learn better when they hear the teacher clearly. The benefit for teachers is that they no longer lose their voices at the end of the day. Without proper training, teachers and students cannot benefit from devices that will improve the quality of education.



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