

Name of the project: Seniors as tourist guides: paths in the city of Leiria

Partner: Polytechnic Institute of Leiria, Portugal

Students: Senior students

Course time: 2 classes of 3 hours per week, during 30 weeks

Why the use of a PLE methodology

Under IPL's Project 60+, that aims to promote active ageing in senior students as a way of social inclusion of elders, we found that our senior students enjoy meeting foreign senior students and wish to be good hosts, guiding them through city touristic tours and showing them the main touristic points. Wishing that these tours are highly personalized, it is expected that students reflect on what a tourist point of attraction is, specifically to certain types of tourists (ex: religious tourism, nature tourism). Senior students are, therefore, expected to collect photos and videos of their favorite touristic points, discuss them with the other members of the class, reach a consensus on a set of point that should constitute a touristic path and then present these paths online to foreign students. This requires competences that are very oriented for a PLE approach: students must use technological tools to gather content (photos & videos) discuss its relevance, edit those contents, and present a final product (touristic paths) online.

Content of the course (framed in the context of Lifelong Learning)

The course contents are mainly technological, having seniors learn the tools to build a PLE to complete this project.

Pre-requisites of the course

Students must have the basic competences on ICT and some familiarity with Social Media tools. Knowing how to use a digital camera is also a plus.

PLE Tools explored in the class

- Blogs (as storage tools, aggregation tools and presentation tools)
- Facebook (as a communication tools)
- Videoconferencing through Google Hangouts (as communicating tools)
- Google translate (as translation tools)

Pedagogical approach in the class

Presential:

Students use the class to learn the technological tools and use them to build their PLE. Discussion about the course content (touristic points of interest) is approached by the use of communication tools under a social constructivist theory (learning is constructed by the class as a whole, decision making and consensus building is the point).

A teacher's blog, to centralize several aspects of the project was needed and, therefore, created.

Autonomous:

Students must acquire and collect content (ex: take photos of the touristic point of interest), try to insert that content in their PLE, read other student's content on their PLE and use the communication tools to change perspectives on common content.

Results

Overall results:

Students adopted the PLE approach with some success, concerning the individual aspects of the tools: they used to store content, edit it and discuss it. However, they were not able to deliver a final product (a presentation tool) that could be used as a portfolio. Blogs didn't seem to be a good platform for this, and the use of Google

Maps as a visual representation of the interest points and paths seems to be a better strategy. This might be explored during the next year.

Advantages over traditional course delivery strategies:

PLE as a methodological approach had the advantage of allowing students to follow in real time, as autonomous work, the work of others and engage in discussions. Also, as all information gathered, collected, edited and published is in digital format, PLEs seemed to offer an interesting tool to manage the whole learning process.

Challenges over traditional course delivery strategies:

Students may have shown some difficulties in managing a learning process that has a live, classroom environment and a virtual, e-learning environment. For example, “live” communication is not stored digitally, so when students engage in discussion in classes, paper notes must be taken (or e-notes) to manage the information/decisions. On the other hand, sometimes students feel the need to store everything digitally, in their PLE, even when some things could potentially be more accessible in other formats (paper based).

We feel that these methodologies are very recent, even for the professors, and good practices must be collected from time to time, to improve the learning processes that are PLE based.

Other aspects of importance

None.