

Name of the project: Recycling, health and environmental issues

Partner: Porsgrunn Voksenopplæringscenter, Norway

Students: Immigrants - adult students

Course time: 2 test classes/groups

Why the use of a PLE methodology

The subjects and practices learned from this project will be implemented at our school in two different ways. The first is the implementation to one concrete student group with a given number of participants. The second part of the project will be to introduce the use of PLE to our colleges and staff of teachers.

Our PLE will be on the subject of climate and environmental issues, both local and globally. We have chosen that subject because our school is certificated as an Eco-Lighthouse entity (Miljøfyrtårn). That means we have a lot of things to work on to keep the school sustainable and environmentally friendly.

The main aim with this project is to use the blog in the process of raising our student's awareness concerning sustainable behavior and lifestyle, and more conscious about their way of life.

Another aim was to introduce PLE and the use of it to our secondary school group. They will use this PLE for many purposes. This is the group at our school which is best suited for the use of a PLE. This group is working with a single subject throughout a whole year. This makes it easier to make social media and a PLE to work. Another goal (long term goal), regarding this group, is to teach the students how to build their own space on the web for additional learning and exchange of knowledge and experiences.

The third aim is to implement that our teachers use the PLE in their daily lessons, as a tool to explain and as mentioned, to raise our student's awareness concerning sustainable behavior and lifestyle. All our learners are immigrants and second language learners.

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

The main aim with this project is to use the blog in the process of raising our student's awareness concerning sustainable behavior and lifestyle, and more conscious about their way of life. The course contents in the long run are also technological, having to teach immigrants/second language learners how to use a blog, and how to build a PLE.

Pre-requisites of the course

Students must have the basic competences on ICT. They need ground level skills in the use of computers and the internet.

PLE Tools explored in the class

- Blogs (as the main medium to learn, as a storage tool, aggregation tools)
- Google translate (as translation tools)
- Links to related websites

Pedagogical approach in the class

Presential:

In the class, the students learn all the technological tools needed to be able to use the blog as a central platform for learning. Discussion about the course content is approached by the use of communication tools under a social constructivist theory.

Many of the students are immigrants, often with little or no skills on computer, and no knowledge about blogs. We chose to have two test groups at our school.

Group 1: Consisted of a diverse mix of people from our introduction program. These students are refugees and asylum seekers.

Group 2: Consisted of a class in our high school department. The students we choose are reading the subject science.

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

Autonomous:

Students had lessons about the subject/theme conducted by teachers up front. They had to use the common blog for the further work and to gain knowledge. They worked in groups and alone. The object of this was both to gain knowledge about the subject sustainable development, sustainable behavior and the responsibility within this subject, which we all, as citizens of a modern society, have to take into consideration. To obtain this, the focus was also on learning the Norwegian language and all new words needed when working across language borders towards the common goal.

Results

Overall results:

Students adopted the PLE approach with some success, concerning the individual aspects of the tools and discussed 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. This is due to the number of students attending and the time limitations. To let each student create their own blog would take up too much of the regular education. 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 the work of others and to be engaged 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 when it's performed live, in a classroom environment and an e-learning environment. 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). This is because of the limited language skills of some students. The

positive side is that students are involved in the project and they can use the blog for later work or tasks as it is always available on the internet.

We feel that these methods are very new, both for the learners and for the teachers. Good practices must be collected from time to time, to improve the learning processes that are PLE based.

Other aspects of importance

We think the idea is great. In our opinion it was a success. We will use this in our future teaching in our classes. The feedback from the teachers differed a lot. A few of them just fell back on their own styles and routines. Two of the teachers were substitutes. They do not have a lot of experience with foreign students, and their needs.

In order to make these things work, we need experienced teachers. They need to feel comfortable when using social media as a platform. There is a great need for information on the field, but it is also time consuming, so it must be decided when this information should take place.

Good planning is everything!