# How OLPC project can help children to create PLE/personal learning environment?

# Abstract

*Some governments worldwide are distributing laptops for children in public schools with the support of the educational project called One Laptop Per Child (OLPC).* *The OLPC motivation is “…that Internet access and tools for expression (text, music, video, graphics) are the contemporary ’toys’ for learning”.  As projects like OLPC are introduced to the schools, learning environments become more complex and moved well beyond what our educators are taught to and regularly use to support student learning, concerns about the processes that underlie learning inside and outside the classroom have increased remarkably. And here, in this new reality, the study of personal learning environment (PLE) and the ways to develop it become important. This paper* ***examines/seeks to explore*** *some ideas on how OLPC projects can help children to create their PLE to support autonomous learning experiences regardless the present challenges facing the education system.*

**examine/explore** (Break an argument, idea, subject down into parts and examine them, showing how they relate to each other)

# Introduction

*What I understand about it?*

*We have always had a personal environment that we learn, although we may not have been aware of it and we have not needed to be, especially because the teacher-expert model was more than enough to provide us with the information relevant to living, even if we were still learning outside of it. Besides, there were limited sources of information and they were fully centralized in the educational institutions.*

*However, with the popularization of the small wireless devices such as laptops, tablets and smart phones and, the advent of Internet technology called Web 2.0[[1]](#footnote-1), things have changed. We are in an educational era that Weller (2011) calls "the abundance". Now we can access quickly and easily to a huge amount of information, resources and talk about almost anything, from different sources, with heterogeneous perspectives and multiple origins in an incredible variety of formats. The information environment is no longer exclusive, it become inclusive. We can make all this information comes to us through a lot of ways and presented it when best suits us, on different devices, languages, manners and places of our choice. Almost everything that might interest us is a click away. This means that the experiences, exchanges and activities that the use of technology has allowed us has extraordinarily increased, diversified and can also be customized according to our learning styles, to the point that learning environments centralized and common to all seem insufficient and impoverishing.*

*How is it Important?*

*The challenge is no longer to access information and supporting tools and becomes to filter and learn how to use them in the way that matters for effective learning. In this new context, not all the conditions necessary to leverage learning using the laptops are in place, for example, many of our existing educators do not have the same understanding of and ease with using technology to guide the students. The same can be said of many of the education leaders and policymakers in schools, districts and of the higher education institutions that prepare new educators for the field.*

*This gap in technology understanding influences program and curriculum development. Too often, this gap prevents technology from being used in ways that would improve instructional practices and learning outcomes.*

*Although children don’t need coaxing to take up digital technologies and their skills quickly improve relative to their elders as suggested XXXXX, without guidance most of the students will remain amateur users of information and communication technology (ICT). This raises concerns about how these children will develop their knowledge because they are not fully digitally literate, yet are deeply immersed in the digital technology. As pointed out in the report…. “they might not benefit either from traditional education – because there are a lot of distractions and time wasted to embed the laptops in the classroom activities - or from technology – because these children will not receive adequate guidance on how learning to learn in the digital age”. (ideal citar algum reporte para sustentar essa observação).*

*Consequently, it is imperative that technology plays a role beyond the mere information-diffusion and helps children learn to learn. This implies that technology must help children to tailor their PLEs whether in formal, informal, permanent or self-regulated learning/education.* **(add citations)**

*Which aspects I will deal with and why?*

*As a research topic, this paper analyses some of the ideas behind the Personal Learning Environment, reflecting individual children’s learning needs and ways of learning by using the laptops and the Sugar platform of the OLPC projects. The principal aim was to explore how OLPC can help children to create their own PLEs to leverage autonomous learning experiences regardless the present challenges facing the education system.*

*The paper is organized as follow: chapter 1 explores the most accepted definitions of PLE which can be found in literature, chapter 2 describes the foundations of the OLPC project, chapter 3 introduces the Sugar Learning Platform as a PLE for children, chapter 4 explores how children can create their own PLEs with their laptops and the Sugar platform and, finally, chapter 5 draws some conclusions and depicts some research ideas for the near future.*

# What is a Personal Learning Environment (PLE)?

*--Listar Core concepts do PLE estudados no IDEL—*

*The PLEs are not a theory of teaching but rather it can be perceived as a set of artefacts, cognitive processes, tools and physical connections gathered by the individuals that allow controlling and managing their informal learning process via web. The theoretical foundations on which to base the use of PLEs depend in great extent on the perspective in which will be introduced this approach. The concept itself is still developing and thus there are a number of definitions, which vary slightly from author to author. One of the first conceptualizations of PLE is found in the “VLE[[2]](#footnote-2) of the future”* (Wilson 2005)*, although the term itself already appears in “Lifelong Learning: The Need for Portable Personal Learning Environments and Supporting Interoperability Standards”* (Olivier and Liber 2001)*.*

*The following description proposed by Stephen Downes is intended to introduce the general nature of PLEs:*

*…not an institutional or corporate application, but a personal learning center, where content is reused and remixed according to the student's own needs and interests. It becomes, indeed, not a single application, but a collection of interoperating applications---an environment rather than a system. It also begins to look like a personal portfolio tool. The idea here is that students will have their own personal place to create and showcase their own work.* (Downes 2005)

*This description captures the following salient aspects, which seem to be common across all current viewpoints found in the literature and which will guide the analyses of this paper:*

1. ***Personal and Global:*** *The* ***learning experiences are centred in the individual*** *and he/she* ***controls*** *its own PLE* ***(i.e. autonomy and ownership)****, thus it is not tight to an institutional portal like the VLE. As* Wilson et al (2007) pointed out*, the PLE is considerate personal and operates in a global scope, as the range of services is not restricted within any particular organization.* (Wilson et al. 2007)
2. ***Aggregation:*** *One of the side effects of* ***Web 2.0*** *is the large number of services and tools available. Users spend a lot of time trying new services, creating accounts, profiles, user names and passwords, and adding them to their growing and dynamic* ***digital identity.*** *This situation can create disorder, confusion and distraction for average learner. To work around these constrains, Attwell (2007) suggested a PLE should provide framework and tools to facilitate the use and aggregation of different services. The PLEs can help users to concentrate and manage all services from a single point. Technically, the PLEs should act as a hub of content related to the learning experience of a single person. A good metaphor of a PLE as an aggregator:* ***‘online learning desk’****.* (Attwell 2007)
3. ***Space:*** *As we move into a world where information is fragmented and dispersed in multiple spaces* ***(i.e. decentralized information)*** *and formats shaped by the technology and, “…learning will take place in different contexts and situations and will not be provided by a single learning provider”*(Attwell 2007)***,*** *the PLE is an important concept that can help individuals to learn efficiently.*
4. ***Flow:*** *As the individual become the centre of the PLE, he/she can personalize its own learning environment reflecting his/her learning moods, styles (visual, auditory or kinaesthetic) and learning experiences. Indeed, these intrinsic interactions around his/her own learning events can facilitate the* ***embodiment*** *of "the holistic experience that people feel when they act with total involvement – as flow" (Csikszentmihalyi 1975).*
5. ***Digital identity & Identity:*** *While the individuals build, expand and manage their PLEs, they also gain experience in developing their own personal and professional identity and also their* ***personal portfolio****. As they gain experience in a number of skills related to identity in the online environment, they also strengthen the network that supports a large part of their learning. Dabbagh and Kitsantas (2012) afirm that the learner develops an online identity where the personalized learning environment provides cues (affordances or possibilities for action) that prompt the learner about what to share, what not to share, who they choose to share with, and how to effectively merge formal and informal learning.*(Dabbagh and Kitsantas 2012)*.*
6. ***Collaboration:*** *Collaboration is an important skill to encompass the diversity of knowledge available in a rapid changing and sophisticate society. Its essence is directly linked with the assumptions of the PLEs because by collaborating and exchanging information, learners can test their knowledge, receive feedback on their works and scaffold their learning. It has always been possible to collaborate, but the Web 2.0 and its social tools (such as blogs, wikis and all kinds of different personal knowledge bases including bookmarks and tags) have added a new dimension to the concept of collaboration by* ***empowering learners*** *to also become producers of learning material collections (Attwell 2007). Now it is easier, cheaper and faster to work with peers and experts regardless of time zone or physical distance.*
7. ***Connectivism****: Connectivism (Siemens, 2005 and 2006; Downes, 2006 and 2007) is defined as a learning theory for the digital age which underlying the use of the opportunities offered by technology to enrich formal and informal learning. Siemens (2005) has formulated the principles of connectivism briefly: (i) Learning and knowledge depend on the diversity of opinions. (ii) Learning is a process of connecting nodes or specialized information sources. (iii) Learning may reside in non-human. (iv) The ability to know more is more critical than what we know at any given time. (v) Feeding and maintaining connections is needed to facilitate continual learning. (vi) The ability to see connections between fields, ideas and concepts is a key skill. (vii) The update (current and precise knowledge) is the intent of all connectivist learning activities. (viii) Decision-making is itself a learning process.The act of choosing what to learn and the meaning of incoming information is seen through the lens of a shifting reality. A right decision today may be wrong tomorrow due to alterations in the information environment that affects the decision (Siemens, 2005). PLE using a part of a constructivist environment for learning can help them design the activities proposed to students.*

*The following is a list of embedded aspects in the PLEs:*

1. *Learning experiences are centred in the individual.*
2. *Control: Individuals are the responsible for their personal information.*
3. *Autonomy.*
4. *Ownership.*
5. *Web 2.0 tools.*
6. *Online learning desk.*
7. *Decentralised information.*
8. *Embodiment.*
9. *Personal portfolio.*
10. *Empowering learners.*

*--Link entre o conceito de PLE e o OLPC –*

# Foundations of the One Laptop Per Child (OLPC)

*Inspired by the educational ideas of Jerome Bruner and Seymour Papert to create an autonomous personal-computer for children of all ages, the OLPC Project[[3]](#footnote-3) aims to “empower the world’s poorest through education” (OLPC n.d.), by providing each child with a collaborative and joyful laptop that could engage children in their own education. To achieve this end, the project worked in the development of a resistant, lightweight, low cost, low power and connected laptop specifically oriented for conditions in developing countries.*

*Talk about OLPC is therefore discover new uses and combinations for technologies to address old concerns such as universal access to information and knowledge* (UNESCO n.d.) *and, Education for All (EFA)*[[4]](#footnote-4)*. The OLPC have a view of learning known as constructionist learning, a philosophy inspired by the constructivist[[5]](#footnote-5) theory that individual learners/children construct their own mental models to understand the world around them (Wikipedia n.d.). The OLPC hypothesis is that children can unlock the potential that they have with a personal learning device with them at all times, hence the one-to-one model where each child owns their own laptop (the OLPC laptop). Rather then a more traditional instructional approach, the OLPC focus on self-empowered learning, enabling the children’s environment to facilitate a learner-centric approach.*

A mudança de paradigma em curso é análoga; ao criar as condições para a extensão da aprendizagem às diversas etapas da vida está-se necessariamente não só a advogar mudanças de método, com a centragem da aprendizagem no aprendente e a valorização da sua aquisição com os pares e pela prática em detrimento da feita ―com os peritos‖, como a potenciar uma revolução na produção da Informação e na geração de Conhecimento que não podem deixar de gerar a prazo mudanças sociais apreciáveis.

Este efeito de ―personalização‖ no acesso à Informação é porventura a característica mais distintiva do homo digitalis;

O objecto de estudo do mobile learning é pois abrangente o suficiente para permitir – se não mesmo impor - múltiplas aproximações.

*Even if OLPC has been criticized for its ineffectiveness in enhancing the learning experience of the children involved in the various deployments around the world (Fox Buchele, 2007), the fact that a possibility of building a PLE was given to those children is still there.*

*“The development of ubiquitous computing may offer new opportunities for the use of ICT for learning”* (Attwell 2007)*.*

# The SUGAR learning platform as a PLE for children

# How children can create their own PLEs with their laptops and the Sugar platform

# Conclusion and ideas for the future

1. The next generation of Internet applications and the underlying technologies that enable conversations and contribution to the online community. Examples of Web 2.0 include content sharing (video, photo, etc), social networking sites, blogs, wikis and mashups (Wikipedia n.d.). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Virtual Learning Environment [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. One Laptop per Child (OLPC) is a project supported by the Miami-based One Laptop per Child Association (OLPCA) and the Cambridge-based OLPC Foundation (OLPCF), two U.S. non-profit organizations (Wikipedia n.d.), established in January 2005 by Nicholas Negroponte. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The Education for All (EFA) movement is a global commitment to provide quality basic education for all children, youth and adults (UNESCO n.d.). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Constructivism is a theory to explain how knowledge is constructed in the human being when information comes into contact with existing knowledge that had been developed by experiences (Wikipedia n.d.). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)