**Free minds:**

For teachers to learn a new tool, they should be supported by school leadership like principles. Without this support the desire to learn something new can remain own initiative.

**Adaption of PLE within teachers in primarily and secondary schools in Finland**

While new PLE in being developed, it is already clear that the development of it results in innovation and the biggest challenge with a software, and especially with that software which includes something totally new, is to sell it to actual clients. For pupils to be able to get all mentioned above advantages of using a new PLE, it is necessary that schools adapt it in their teaching activities. Thus Almerin clients are actually schools and to be more particular – teachers, who will actually be using the new software and whose opinion has a big weight in schools’ overall decision on whether to take it into the use or not. That’s why I want to study primarily teachers in the context of adoption of a new PLE. As a result of my research I want to find answers on the basic question of ‘why teachers would want to adapt new PLE in their teaching activities?’ in order for Almerin to use these answers as arguments in their selling campaign.

The vision of Almerin is to be in every school in Finland by 2017, in every schools in Nordic by 2020, in every school in Europe by 2025, America by 2030, worldwise by 2040??? (ask this from Teemu)

Since initially Almerin target at Finnish schools, I will do my research in the context of them.

**State of Art**

ICT may help promote educational change only if students and teachers have an access to the new technology and it is intensively used as a tool for learning in various subject domains. The students and teachers need to have sufficient skills in using and working productively with the new technology.

(Hakkarainen et al., 2000)**.**

Thus any adaption of ICT in the context of educational institutions at least two things are necessary:

* ICT environment (laptops etc)
* ICT confidence of teachers who apart of using PLE themselves supposed to give initial teaching on how to use a new PLE to students

The *Survey of schools in Europe* showed that “at least 80% of students in grades 4 and 8 are in highly digitally equipped schools with fast broadband and relatively high connectedness in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden where almost all students in grade 11 are in such highly equipped schools” (Wastiau et al. 2013).

What comes to ICT confidence then situation is different.

Students’ use of ICT for learning during lessons is related to teachers’ confidence

in their own ICT competences, their opinion about the relevance of ICT forT&L

and their access to ICT at school. The *Survey* shows that students ICT most

frequently when they are taught by teachers with great confidence in their own

digital competence (operational and social media skills) and in their ability to use

the Internet safely and responsibly, with positive opinions about ICT use forT&L,

as well as facing few obstacles and having broad access to ICT infrastructure at

school.These teachers are defined in the *Survey* as *digitally confident and supportive*

*teachers*.

On average across the EU countries covered by the *Survey*, between 20–25%

of students are taught by *digitally confident and supportive teachers* having broad

access to ICT and facing few obstacles to their use at school. Here again, there

are great differences between countries. 30 to 50% of students at grade 4 and/or

grade 8 are taught by such teachers in Bulgaria, Estonia, Ireland, Portugal, Slovakia,

Slovenia and Sweden; conversely, less than 10% of students in the same

grades are taught by such teachers in Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, France, Finland,

Greece and Luxembourg.

(Wastiau et al. 2013).

It is possible to conclude that Finnish schools has all necessary equipment to implement the new PLE while digital confidence of staff remains to be quite weak. Even though this might be seen as an obstacle we tend to believe that it is possible to overcome it by training the school staff to use a new PLE should they just wish to adapt it after being demonstrated with outstanding benefits of its usage in comparison to existing teaching tools and methods.

Thus Finland has favorable environment towards adapting new PLE.

One of requirements for Almerin PLE is that it should be applicable to any mobile device what theoretically can create appropriate ICT environment constructed by student and teachers own devices. The service should be provided for any pupils equally despite of whether he/she has own mobile device or not that is why it is necessary that school initialy provide everything necessary for pupils to be able to use new PLE.

**Personal Learning Environments (PLE)** are systems that help learners take control of and manage their own learning. This includes providing support for learners to:

* set their own learning goals ( with support of their teachers)
* manage their learning, both content and process
* communicate with others in the process of learning

**(IMAILE PORTAL)**

Learning on demand is becoming a type of lifestyle in modern society (McLoughlin & Lee, 2007). Learners constantly seek information to address a problem at work, school, or to just satisfy a curiosity. To do so, they take advantage of digital and networked technologies not only to seek information, but also to share information. Thus, learners should not be considered as passive information consumers; rather, they are active co-producers of content. Additionally, learning in the context of social media has become highly self-motivated, autonomous, and informal, as well as an integral part of the college experience (McGloughlin & Lee, 2010; Smith, Salaway, & Caruso, 2009; Solomon & Schrum, 2007). **(Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2012 )**. Thus young generation of today primarily learn by being interactive. This in its turn requires interactive classrooms in educational institutions with personalized ICT solutions. The present situation in European schools is such that they show a **teacher centric** classroom with teachers using technology, interactive whiteboards and LMS systems. While the actual trend goes to towards **student centred** learning where all students have access to devices, digital content and software in a personalised way. **(IMAILE PORTAL).** Additionally, traditional platforms such as course and learning management systems (CMS/LMS) do not capitalize on the pedagogical affordances of social media for example allowing learners to manage and maintain a learning space that facilitates their own learning activities and connections to peers and social networks across time and place (McGloughlin & Lee, 2010; Selwyn, 2007; Valjataga, Pata, & Tammets, 2011; van Harmelen, 2006) **(Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2012 )**.

By marrying the principles of personalised learning with the tools of technology some educators believe that they have the chance to create the kind of customized learning environment that can finally break schools out of industrial age model of education to bring the true 21st century school reform **(IMAILE PORTAL.**

By developing a new PLE it is believed that it is possible to provide participatory learning in a student centric way.

and that’s what PLEs are supposed to provide because technologies needed for that are already existing.

COMPARISON OF PLE AND LMS

* Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2012. PLEs, social media... (**page 2**)
* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zDwcCJncyiw>
* A PLE is frequently contrasted with a learning management system in that an LMS tends to be coursecentric, whereas a PLE is learner-centric. At the same time, a PLE may or may not intersect with an institutional LMS, and individuals might integrate components of an LMS into the educational environments that they construct for themselves. (7 thing you should know about PLE)
* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vlJjvqKlQac> (PLE, its pluses and minuses)
* Martindale, T., & Dowdy, M. (2010). Personal learning environments. *Emerging technologies in distance education*, 177-193.

The concept of the PLE has been emerging in recent years via the work of online theorists, researchers, and developers, as the result of the limitations of learning management systems, a recognition of the importance of informal and lifelong learning, and the growth of social software. (Martindale & Dowdy, 2010)

PLE is meant to support LLL, informal learning and different learning styles (Attwell, 2007) (PLE is described as concept). According to Felder & Silverman (1988) learning styles are the following: active/reflective, sensing/intuitive, visual/verbal and sequential/global.

With PLE it could be possible to represent the knowledge and skills got by the person through the demonstration of completed projects and courses. All these competences could be collected in e-Portfolio for further demonstration to potential employer because those wish to see evidence of the ability to apply skills and knowledge in a particular context (Attwell, 2007).

If previously, learning was divided between theory to be acquired in schools and practice which often takes place on the workplace, then with the help of PLE it is possible to bring this two together through facilitating access to learning in different contexts by using different devices and interfaces (Attwell, 2007).

Attwell (2007) believes that by attempting to drily reproduce classical forms of learning, i.e. conforming to a classroom or a lecture hall metaphor, inside of a software like Learning Management Systems (LMS) or Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) can make the whole learning experience quite ineffective and lonely because this approach may have a lack of a social aspect of it and may have a limiting effect on self-directed and self-regulated learning as tasks are pre-selected and resources are prescribed rather than negotiated (Hotrum, 2005; Lee, 2005; Sheely, 2006; Lane, 2008). According to Martindale & Dowdy (2010), learners have always depended on the support of their peers and peer networks to facilitate learning. If in a physical world this usually happens through lunchtime discussions, student organizations, hobby groups and other different communities, then in virtual world this is to be achieved through social media tools. The issue with current LMSs used in institutions, according to McLoughlin &Lee (2010), is that they “do not accommodate the social connectivity tools and personal profile spaces that students might choose, and that would assist them to integrate their experiences”. To change this, apart of just file sharing, inside of systems like PLE should be place for instant messaging, social networking, bloggings. Attwell (2007) continues, that it is not only communication which is drawing young people to these technologies but the ability to create their own identities through the opportunity to create and share ideas, to join groups, to publish.

Learning happens throw-out people’s lives in different contexts and completely everywhere. According to Cross (2007), majority of what person learns occurs outside of formal instruction. Moreover, learning on demand is becoming a type of lifestyle in modern society when people constantly search for information to solve a problem at work, schools or just to satisfy curiosity (McLoughlin & Lee, 2007). Understanding this increase the recognition of importance of informal learning. Attwell (2007) believes that PLE has the potential to bring formal and informal learning together what is at present a major issue in educational sector. This synergy could be achieved via using social media and supporting student self – regulating learning (Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2012). Learning in the context of social media, apart of being informal, has become also highly self-motivated and autonomous (McGloughlin & Lee, 2010). There are technologies available (like Tin Can API) allowing to track learning activities outside of formal learning in ‘brick and mortal’ premises via any device whether it is online or offline. Data from these activities and from those of formal learning could be then gathered together in one system to represent the full picture of person’s learning.

Social software has a long history, and can be defined simply as software that supports group interaction (Allen, 2004). Using this software, learners can organize content that has meaning to them and easily share that content and their own interpretation of it. Further, learners can interact with other people with shared learning goals. **(**Martindale & Dowdy, 2010**)**

In peoples’ learning environments there might be various of programs like web-browsers, mail-clients, text / audio / video editors, instant messaging software and many more. All these might require installation, setting up and maintaining what might be beyond of somebody’s skills. According to Attwell (2007), the power of PLE, while being based on open standards and open Application Programming Interfaces (API’s), is to allow users to ‘plug in’ their favorite tools into the system and provide interoperability with other applications.

Second, learners may have experienced limitations with what we call institutionally centered learning environments, embodied by learning management systems (LMS)1. While LMSs have served universities well in tracking students and orchestrating online courses (“learning management”), the learner is left with a less than optimal environment. It may not be in the learner’s best interest to be “managed”, but rather to be guided and encouraged. (Martindale & Dowdy (2010))

The idea is for learners to exercise ownership and control over their experiences, rather than be constrained by centralised, instructor controlled learning based on the delivery of pre-packaged materials.( McLoughlin & Lee, 2010)

As the analysis of existing PLE solutions in the section 1.3 (???) of this theses showed there is no fully functional PLE solutions on the market to be recommended thus table 3, which shows key differences between LMS and PLE, is built upon assumptions and IMAILE vision of how a perfect PLE should look like.

The following is a rather comparison of current LMS systems with PLE which is according to IMAILE vision.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Key differences between LMS and PLE** | | | |
| **LMS** | **Source** | **PLE** | **Source** |
| LMSs tend to be more course centric. All resources are loaded and linked within the overall structure of a course | Martindale & Dowdy, 2010 | PLE is a learner centric platform | EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative (ELI), 2009 |
| The learner’s role is one of passive acceptance of content and limited permissions set by the LMS. | Martindale & Dowdy, 2010 | Learner can produce and receive information within the same system. A learner can have an ownership role. | Anderson, 2006 |
| Every learner experiences content exactly the same way. Each learner interacts  with content in identical fashion | Martindale & Dowdy, 2010 |  |  |
| Operation of an LMS is usually restricted to a single institution. Only approved by institution users can access the system. Data stored in LMS doesn’t travel with a learner. | Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2012. | Support life-long learning |  |
| Changing of the school would sometimes mean re-learning the technologies of access to learning (introduced different LMS) | Wilson, et al., 2006 | Platform stays the same throughout the period of individual’s life |  |
| LMS is not open to activities occurring outside of its realm. | Sclater, 2008 | Being a personal environment a PLE allows to collect learning experiences which are happening outside of PLE (there are technologies available for that like Tin Can API) |  |
| Teaching staff organize the environment for learners and decides which tools are available for them within LMS | Martindale & Dowdy, 2010 | Learners personally organize the environment and decide which tools to use |  |
| Learning in vacuum |  | Peer support through social media integration |  |
| Basic functionality of LMS is a content sharing platform |  |  |  |
| Lack of implementation of those emerging technologies which are nowadays in trend of technology enhanced learning |  | The following technologies are implemented:   * Cloud computing * Wearable technology * OER * BYOD * Blended learning * Gamification * Learning analytics * Automated online assistant | IMAILE portal |
| Teachers create communities (study groups) for learners to join |  | Learners are free to create and join any networks that make sense to them and offer value. | Martindale & Dowdy, 2010 |
| Limited possibilities for learner’s collaboration within LMS |  | Varies of third party collaboration tools are available for integration inside of PLE. |  |

**Possible topics:**

Why students of Finnish primary and secondary schools would want to adapt a new PLE

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