

Project ALIEN

2nd meeting minutes

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, January 9-11, 2019

Participants

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9th of January

The meeting began with the welcoming of all partners from the ALIEN Consortium with starting speeches by Prof. Dr. Abrizah Abdullah, the Dean from the Faculty of Computer Science & Information Technology of the University of Malaya on the ALIEN project and the crucial importance of the participation by Malaysian universities in it. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Prof. Dr. Kamila Ghazali from the University of Malaya was also invited to give a welcoming speech and emphasized the need to step away from a passive and exam-oriented learning approach towards a more active approach and the need for infrastructure to support this practice, specifically, in Malaysia, where the participation of both partners from this country is seen as a step forward in the implementation of AL and PBL in classrooms.

Project Coordinator Hariklia Tsalapatas started by giving a brief overview of the ALIEN project and its main goals emphasizing how active learning and its connection with PBL in the Engineering field works and addressing the three-level approach to

ALIEN comprised of learning design, infrastructure and services and learning delivery.

For the learning design:

- a state-of-the-art has been completed in regard to PBL practices in each institution (even though some partners are still finishing this task).

For infrastructure and services:

- this has to do with the creation of the ALIEN platform, insertion of content and collaboration option inside the platform.

For learning delivery and supporting instructors:

- relates with instructor training where a session was given on this on the first day of the meeting (9th) in the afternoon on PBL training and implementation. This also relates with creation of communities and interest groups for exchange of information, reference material on how to use the platform, etc. This will be implemented in piloting sessions with students in a real classroom context (PBL deployment).

The meeting was followed by a group photo session and Project Coordinators Hariklia Tsalapatias restarted the session by addressing the status of the Work Packages of the ALIEN project. The purpose of this 2nd meeting was to assess WP2 and to initiate tasks related with WP3. The status of the WP related with the project is as follows:

- WP1. Preparation: completed.
- WP2. Infrastructure — services and labs:
 - o It's expected that this working package will be completed by the time of the interim report (April 2019).
 - o In what regards T2.1 (state-of-the-art analysis) almost all partners have provided their own document analyzing best practices in the use of AL and PBL, existing ICT tools and virtual community requirements. However, Prof. Carlos Vaz de Carvalho pointed out that even though the initial purpose was to have a single document for each partner country, some partners from the same country worked individually to produce this document. Since it is intended that a book will be published based upon results from these reports, partner institutions from the same country had the time to gather in this meeting in order to assess each other's work and to come up with a strategy to produce

a joint summary version of their state-of-the-art document in the following months. For single institutions from only one partner country, it is expected that they assess the work done from the other countries and to harmonize their own document with extra material or contributions, if necessary and relevant. It is expected that all partners produce a final version of this document in 2 months (until end of March 2019). Min. 10 pages to 12 pages, except for partners from the same country where the max. can go up to 20 pages. The template to be used for the future book will be Springer.

- In what regards T2.2 (draft institutional strategy for AL and PBL adoption and definition of PBL Lab requirements) partners are expected, firstly, to provide a description on their own PBL Lab for each country (including photos, models of usage for collaborative work or others, equipment, etc). Partners also have to come up with a strategy for the adoption of AL and PBL at an institutional level. This task was one developed and acted upon on the 10th.
- In what relates to T2.5 (setting up of labs, purchase of equipment, it was emphasized that each partner from Asia has to provide 3 different offers in order for them to receive the sum of money expected from the European Commission (namely those who have not done it yet). Overall, partners have been requesting similar configurations, thus agreeing similarly on what a PBL lab should be comprised of. Furthermore, all financial issues related with transference of money to Asia have been mostly resolved. Great emphasis added on the need for partners to provide the in-voices from the purchase of the equipment. It's very important and urgent that all partners build their labs as soon as possible in time for the interim report in April 2019.
- WP3. Implementation and piloting – to be put in motion from this meeting on:
 - T3.1. Teacher training sessions: Carlos Vaz de Carvalho emphasized that teacher training is for all countries involved in the project. For this specific work package, a training session was devised for the afternoon of the 9th. All partners participated in this training with the goal of then later on implementing these actions in their own institutions with at least 15 teachers per organization. All PBL labs should be deployed

until March and/or April 2019 and partners should have a rough idea of scheduled activities for the rest of the year on the usage of PBL.

- T3.2. Identification of groups: the students, teachers and curricula/courses to be involved in the implementation process of PBL. For the interim report, all partners should have a clear idea on who the students and teachers are to be involved in the testing and piloting phases.
- WP4. Virtual Community is not so urgent at this point in time. It's planned for after April 2019.

Hariklia also addressed the evaluation process of the ALIEN project – how the work is going, if the short- and long-term goals of the project are being reached according to the proposal, etc. This will be done in two ways: project partners' discussion and debate during the meetings on the scheduling and completion of activities associated with the ALIEN project and, additionally, through an external evaluator. A report is to be produced on this until April

In the afternoon a keynote speaker (Dr. Aishah Abu Bakar) was invited to talk about and share her own knowledge, practice and expertise on “Embedding E-assessment in PBL” adopting a storytelling approach on the evolution of PBL throughout the years. Other topics addressed were related to PBL assessment planification, PBL cases design, importance of feedback from students when applying AL and PBL and support of ICT in this field.

Training on AL

Carlos introduced the “Training on Active Learning” – a team building exercise based of Active Learning and PBL – where partners were distributed among different groups from different institutions in order to form teams and complete the “Tallest Card Structure Challenge”. The goal was to build the tallest structure that holds a weight with cards.

10th of January

The morning session started off with Carlos prompting all partners to reflect and share feedback on the teambuilding and PBL exercise from the previous afternoon. Different partners shared their own experience on the exercise: some expressed feelings of frustration while working with their peers, others mentioned the difference in pace between working alone vs working in team, others emphasized the feeling of empowerment by being part of a team in solving a problem and the importance of innovation and team effort. Overall, the exercise prompts all partners to learn about the process of thinking, team work, achievement, communication, working together and solving problems or crossing obstacles related with the challenge using PBL – there is no correct method with PBL, therefore there isn't a particular method to problem solving in this field.

Workshop

Following this first activity, Carlos and Hariklia went back to discussing WP2, specifically, T2.2 (draft institutional strategy for AL and PBL adoption and definition of PBL Lab requirements) where, as briefly mentioned on the 9th, partners are expected to provide a description on their own PBL Lab for each country and come up with a strategy for the adoption of AL and PBL at an institutional level. Partners should provide this description following some general ideas:

1. What facilities are there available;
2. What equipment is going to be deployed into the facilities and how;
3. Modes of usage or what kind of use is inherent to these labs: collaborative learning, PBL, etc. This is used as prove that the equipment acquired is essential and is going to be used in the future and is associated with the ALIEN project;
4. How to manage this learning space: opened for everyone or with some restrictions, etc.

Each partner had the opportunity to provide and give feedback on their status on the PBL labs. For this, partners gathered around and discussed their own labs and shared information on this matter one by one. Some most common elements pointed out to be implemented in the PBL labs were:

- Moveable space;
- Drones;

- Learning kits;
- Smart video car kit;
- Workstations;
- Tablets (to support the teacher in the PBL lab);
- 3D Printer;
- Screen projector;
- Computers;
- VR/AR equipment
- ...

Moreover, while some partners are still finding suppliers for the equipment, others have already gotten some offers for it and are currently in the process of deciding for one of them (each partner has to provide 3 different offers). An issue was raised by the Pakistani team related with exchange rate fluctuations, which then in turn created problems when the prices changed afterwards. Hariklia's suggestion was for the Pakistani partners (and others who might experience a similar problem) to get new quotations for the material and purchase immediately with these new quotations once they have the sum of money necessary.

After this initial description of the lab, partners were prompted to consider ways of disseminating and promoting said PBL labs. As mentioned by Hariklia and Carlos, this is important not only for the ALIEN project, but also for each institution. In this regard, all partners are expected to produce a small document with inclusion of these activities of dissemination/promotion of each partner's own PBL lab. The draft of this document (that should include description and later on photos of the facilities, modes of usage, etc) should be uploaded on Dropbox after the end of the meeting. This document is to be updated along the process of setting up and implementing the lab. This task is to be finished by the time of the next meeting in June 2019.

Regarding T2.6 (PBL platform development), Carlos mentioned the fact that the goal for this platform would be to create a Virtual Community, a collaborative platform where one can create and share content and problems, that later on can be used by teachers from different countries. As so, both Carlos and Olivier showcased two types of platforms in order to prompt discussion and for the partners in the meeting to get a chance to voice their opinions on what design the platform should adopt. It was decided that for the ALIEN project, the goal would be to combine the two different types of platforms to give

birth to a new one based of these two preexisting platforms. Debate and discussion among partners about the ALIEN platform issued where each had the opportunity to provide potential functionalities and/or other contributions/suggestions or ideas for the ALIEN platform. Having agreed on this subject, the Porto Polytechnic will create and deploy the ALIEN platform draft.

11th of January

Carlos opened the last day of the meeting by addressing, once again, WP2 – specifically T2.6 in what regards problem development. The Project Coordinators provided a template for this task (available on Dropbox) and the first hours of the morning were left for partners to define and produce a first draft of their problems divided in groups. All problems created were uploaded then unto Dropbox.

Afterwards, the last section of the meeting was handled by Hariklia who addressed dissemination and exploitation of the project. As mentioned by Hariklia dissemination is crucial and one of the most emphasized points throughout the meeting in order to comply with short- and long-term goals of the project. Each partner has to make the project and its outputs and goals known to the wider public through social media, attracting people to the project portal or via the ALIEN Facebook page, publication of press releases, academic papers, etc.

In what regards the interim report, Hariklia needed input from all partners in some specific questions (3-4 lines). Therefore, in the last section of the meeting, partners had some time to reflect on the following aspects and then send the answers to Hariklia and Olivier:

1. Engagement of educational authorities and how;
2. Names of universities to which you will promote PBL;
3. Description of planning for the engagement of students and instructors (how many students, teachers, courses, planning of instructor training);
4. Description of the impact of the project (added value for the organisation and at national level in your country).

Before the closing the session, it was decided among all partners that the next meeting will be held in Porto, Portugal from the 26th to the 28th of June 2019. Carlos and Hariklia also cleared up some doubts on the scheduling of the following meetings and financial management reporting.

Action list for the following months:

WP2:

- **T2.1. State-of-the-art and book publication:** partners have to provide a summary version of their state-of-the-art document per country. For institutions from the same country, it is expected that they produce a single document per country. For countries in which only one partner institution is involved, it is expected that they assess the work done from the other countries and harmonize their own document with extra material or contributions, if necessary and relevant. Min. 10 pages to 12 pages, except for partners from the same country where the max. can go up to 20 pages. Deadline: end of March 2019
- **T2.2. Draft institutional strategy for AL and PBL adoption and definition of PBL Lab requirements:** partners are expected to provide a description on their own PBL Lab (including photos, models of usage, equipment, etc) as well as a strategy for the adoption of AL and PBL at an institutional level. Deadline: mid-February 2019
- **T2.5. Setting up of labs, purchase of equipment:** for those partners who have yet to define their own PBL and get offers for it, you have to do it as soon as possible due to the interim report in the next two months and additional funding from the EC. Deadline: March 2019

WP3:

- **T3.1. Teacher training sessions:** PBL labs should be deployed until March and/or April 2019 and partners should have a rough idea of scheduled activities for the rest of the year on the usage of PBL. Deadline: mid-February 2019
- **T3.2. Identification of groups:** partners should have a clear idea on who the students and teachers are to be involved in the testing and piloting phases. Deadline: mid-February 2019

Dissemination: all partners should continue disseminating activities inside and outside their own universities and update the associated Excel document on Dropbox regarding these activities along with evidences for them.