

Project ALIEN 5th (Virtual) Meeting, May 13-14, 2020

MAY 13, 2020

Project implementation updates

Project coordinator, Hariklia Tsalapatas welcomed everyone on the 5th (virtual) ALIEN meeting. Currently the PBL services and the labs have been implemented and completed and the project is in the implementation phase, meaning that what is important is to use the project outcomes, including PBL services, active learning content, and labs, with students and educators in the context of real life courses and to promote the capacity of educators to deploy the ALIEN PBL learning intervention through training, community events, and other activities.

The following are the main goals for project implementation in the coming months.

- The platform should be used in online courses (the target is 10 courses)
- Problems should be published on the platform (at least 10 by each partner)
- Also, instructor training can be conducted online, e.g. through webex or zoom (the target is 4-5 sessions per partner)
- Webinars about ALIEN project can be conducted on online (at least 6 webinars are foreseen)

All of the above activities can be implemented to some degree on-line, with the exception of using the PBL labs.

The partners discussed the difficulties presented by the COVID 19 virus. All universities have now moved lecturing on-line and there is no face to face communication. Universities in Asia experience challenges in implementing the on-line lectures. Some of the reasons include:

- Students have moved back to their families, many of which live in rural areas. Students do not have sufficient network connections in order to follow virtual lectures.
- Instructors face significant challenges in converting their courses for on-line delivery. This has resulted in the investment of significant time on behalf of the instructors for reorganized course content and activities.

Challenges are also faced by European partners, where significantly reduced attendance is experienced in on-line courses. In some cases, such as in Greece, on-line attendance is very strong, but in most countries this is not the case. The partners agreed to move activities on-line to the extent that this is possible, but believe that on-line implementation will be less effective than face to face activities.

Based on the above challenges, the partners expressed opinions about extending the implementation period of the project in order to implement activities as desired and according to the project proposal. The partners were informed by Hariklia Tsalapatas on the related communication with the project officer, who recommended to move on-line all activities that are possible to be implemented in this way and to request an extension for the activities that cannot be implemented on-line. The partners discussed using the ALIEN PBL platform for delivering PBL activities starting in this academic semester and continuing in the following academic semesters. Partners discussed the additional time that they estimate may be needed in relation to a project extension. Suggestions were made for 6 or 12 months, and the partners agreed to discuss this issue again in the near future. The consortium plans to submit a request for an extension sometime in July in order to allow enough time for the request to be processed.

After that, Hariklia Tsalapatas kindly asked from every partner to do a short presentation on the problems posted on the ALIEN platform, as well as the instructor training activities they have been conducted so far. Every partner did a small presentation on the problems they have currently posted on the platform. Many partners are planning to post new problems until the end of May. Some new instructor training events may be conducted online from some partners as well. All partners have published problems to the PBL platform. Currently over 130 problems have been published. The goal is to have 10 problems published by each partner. The problems could, for example, be related to 10 courses in which the ALIEN PBL platform and labs will be used. Several partners have already used the PBL services in courses starting as early as the spring of 2019. All partners will have a target of using the services in 10 courses by the end of the project, engaging colleagues. Furthermore, all partners have already conducted some instructor training sessions, most 2 to 3. The partners aim to implement 4 to 5 instructor training sessions by the end of the project.

The following were agreed in terms of implementation for the running academic semester:

- Use PBL problems from the ALIEN platform in on-line and virtual lectures
- Organize instructor training on-line
- Organize webinars that develop the ALIEN community and help build instructor capacity to deploy PBL

The partners agreed that the consortium will monitor the COVID 19 situation and will move activities face to face when this is possible again, hopefully in the next academic semester, although at this stage adequate information is not available to make concrete plans. For this reason, the partners will make all possible efforts to implement activities on-line until the universities go to their normal operation. It is not possible currently to use the labs as these require physical presence and large groups. However, using the labs in PBL is a key activity of ALIEN, and the partners will need to wait to implement it when the situation is closer to normal university operations. For this reason, an extension is important.

Financials

After the partners' presentations, Dr. Tsalapatas welcomed the auditor, Mr. Mandilaras, who gave the partners valuable information on reporting. The auditor said that the partners need to submit the following:

- Timesheets and joint declaration forms

- A list of staff involved in the project and their positions
- Travel reporting documents, including boarding passes and travel report forms
- For equipment, in addition to invoices, partners need to present proof of payment
- Accounting summaries listing all expenses on the project. The accounting summaries must be generated by the formal digital accounting system of the organization. If an organization does not have a double entry system then the organization must submit a formal letter documenting that and stating the law under which this is not a requirement
- If a partner declares VAT to the project, then the partner needs to submit a formal document from authorities (not written by the organization) stating that they cannot retrieve the VAT

Partners are declaring financials regularly, every 3 months. For the partners that have absorbed the first 3 instalments, the coordinator has forwarded the 4th instalment. The partners that have not yet absorbed the first 3 instalments will continue to submit financial reports; the 4th instalment will be forwarded as soon as absorption is achieved. The final instalment of 10% will be forwarded to the partners, pending approval of the final report, once the coordinator receives it from the administrative agency.

MAY 14, 2020

Project coordinator, Dr. Hariklia Tsalapatas welcomed the consortium partners on the second day of the online meeting.

Community activities

The main issues discussed were the community documents. The following presentations were made:

- Martin Sillaots from TLU presented the document of PBL and gamification. The document is build using content published by ALIEN PBL platform users in the corresponding forum session of the platform
- Janet Read and Gavin Sims from UCLAN presented the document on PBL and AI
- Raja Jamilla Yusof presented the document on PBL and software engineering. The document consists of reports by 4 partners, including UM, UNITEN, FAST, and ISRA on experiences on using PBL in related courses. The content has already been published in several publications
- Christina Taka presented the document on PBL methodologies and tools. The document includes a description of pedagogies, such as PBL, active learning, and experiential learning, as well as digital tools used in PBL, including MOOCS, learning games, simulations, and more

The partners agreed to completed the documents by July, after which they will be reviewed and finalized.

Furthermore, the partners discussed the community on-going webinars. These webinars are becoming even more important now that ALIEN activities need to be implemented on-line as much as possible. The following webinars have already been implemented:

- Problem-based methodologies, delivered by UTH in December 2019

- Experiences with PBL in the classroom, delivered by UCLAN in January 2020
- Gamification and PBL, delivered by TLU in May 2020

The following webinars are planned for the coming months:

- PBL on-line services, to be delivered by PP at the end of May 2020
- Experiences on using PBL labs, to be delivered by UM in June 2020
- Design thinking and PBL, to be delivered by UTH in July 2020

Additional webinars will be planned after this. This will exceed the originally planned number of 5 to 6 webinars by the end of the project.

PBL services implementation

The consortium went back to the discussion of using ALIEN outcomes, including PBL services, content, and labs in courses. The partners agreed to use the ALIEN PBL services this semester and to report implementation of PBL in at least 1-2 courses for this semester, including what happened during the course, some of the student work, as well as some pictures.

Presentations were delivered by Aishah Abu Bakar, Hazleen Aris, and Hariklia Tsalapatas, each of whom presented the use of the ALIEN services in several course (at least 5). In addition, Aishah Abu Bakar and Hazleen Aris presented pictures and content from several instructor training sessions and dissemination activities that include scientific publications, social media publications, internet publications, and more. All activities will be published on the project portal and social media pages.

At the end of the project there will be a report on all PBL activities that took place in courses at all partner sites. It is important to demonstrate that project results were used in many courses and ideally by several people, not only by people in the consortium, but also from other colleagues. They can also join the platform, post problems and use ALIEN PBL platform in their course.

1. The commission wants to see that the project is being used in Asia, because the focus of the project is Asia, that's why we should show that the project has been used in different courses and from different people.
2. The implementation teams should not be isolated. The results should be used by other people/colleagues. You can ask from new problems by your colleagues and post them under their name.

PBL platform

Carlos Vaz de Carvalho discussed additional functionality for the ALIEN PBL platform that promotes the on-line direct collaboration and communication of students. The platform will become a full fledged collaboration service. The new services will be presented in the webinar at the end of May, and all partners will have the opportunity to provide feedback towards their optimization.

Next project meeting

The next project meeting is planned to take place in Battambang, Cambodia on October 5 to 11. However, the exact dates will be determined by the evolution of the COVID 19 virus.