



Learn2Lead

Progress/Final Report

Public Part

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Executive Summary

This report is addressed to different target audience: teachers, at all educational level; VET trainers in public and private organizations; ICT specialists, research centers and laboratories, in the area of Lifelong Learning, Advanced Learning Technologies, innovative teaching methodologies, leadership and team working training; other EU-funded project in the area of lifelong- and adult learning, for networking; educational and training institutions, professional associations of teachers and trainers; Policy Makers; SMEs and NGOs.

Nearly all productive activity involves work by teams of competing and collaborating individuals, each with their own personalities, motivations and skills. The effectiveness and efficiency of the team is an emergent property of the dynamics that develop within the team. Effective team leaders manage these dynamics in ways that help the team to meet its objectives. As well as technical skills related to their area of business, they thus require competencies in “people management”, resource management and organization. Effective training in these areas is scarce and is usually available only in high quality MBA programs or in major corporations. In this setting, the goal of Learn2Lead is to design, implement, and test a novel, online approach to training in team leadership, suitable for use in SMEs, small government offices, NGOs and individual learners.

The training provided by the Learn2Lead project is based on an online game. In the game, each learner manages a simulated team of employees, which competes against other teams to maximize its objectives (e.g. profit, volume of services delivered, customer satisfaction). An underlying computer model shows the effects of player’s decisions on the dynamics and efficiency of the team. The game is suitable for use, both for self-learning and for learning in a blended learning environment with the support of a tutor.

Learn2Lead will last for 24 months. 12 months of the project have already been covered and they have produced: an extensive literature review and benchmark on serious game for leadership training worldwide, a study of user requirements through interviews of trainers, human resources directors and university professors, followed by the definition of the training methodology, the design of the underlying team dynamics model, the game design and the implementation of required software components, in order to develop Learn2Lead game.

During the beginning of the second year of the project (January 2011), an initial version of the game will be subjected to a pilot study to eliminate technical problems and guarantee usability. This will take place on three sites in Spain, Italy and France with approximately 10 “friendly users”/site. User feedback will be used to refine the methodology and the software which will then be subjected to a large scale “summative evaluation” (approx 30 users/site). A key goal of the project is to ensure the effective “valorization” of project results. Two training companies belonging to the partnership will use the game to offer tutor-supported training to their commercial customers. In parallel with this effort, the partnership will provide free access to the standalone (non-tutored) version of the game, through servers maintained by one of the partners for at least 1 year after the conclusion of the project.

The Learn2Lead Consortium comprises 6 partners from France, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom. ISTC-CNR, part of the National Research Council coordinates Learn2Lead. ENTROPY KN is an Italian SME specialized in training and consultancy, especially in soft skills. UNIVERSITY OF NAPLES FEDERICO II is specialized in cognitive technologies and Artificial Life and their potential for learning and in other areas. MAXIME FERRETTI & PARTNERS is a French SME specialized in training and business consultancy. UNIVERSIDAD JAUME I is specialized in the use of ICT to modify behaviour and has long experience in “serious gaming”. UNIVERSITY OF LINCOLN is specialized in the design of online games, both for commercial purposes and for “serious gaming”. In Learn2Lead ULINC is responsible for game design. For more information visit www.learn2lead.unina.it

Table of Contents

- 1. PROJECT OBJECTIVES..... 5
- 2. PROJECT APPROACH 6
- 3. PROJECT OUTCOMES & RESULTS..... 9
- 4. PARTNERSHIPS 10
- 5. PLANS FOR THE FUTURE 11
- 6. CONTRIBUTION TO EU POLICIES 12

1. Project Objectives

1. Learn2Learn proposes an online game for training in team leadership. The service are designed both in blended (part of the training will be provided face to face and part online) and self-learning mode.
2. Learn2Learn provides training in team leadership. Leadership skills are in high demand by employers. Learn2Learn offers an affordable, scalable approach, both for organizations (SMEs, local government offices, NGOs etc.) wishing to offer this kind of training to their employees, and to individuals seeking to develop their personal skills and improve their employability.
3. In pedagogical terms, the simulation-based techniques proposed by Learn2Lead supports learners in acquiring practical skills complementary to the theoretical knowledge acquired in conventional training. A key emphasis in the program is to build learner awareness of the complexity of team dynamics and the sometimes unexpected consequences of apparently straightforward managerial decisions.
4. Learn2Lead introduces the use of “serious games” as a technique for adult learning. The use of a professional developed game, based on well-validated theories of group dynamics, is a guarantee of the quality of the training; at the same time, the competitive element of the game is likely to prove very attractive to users, especially from younger demographics.
5. The scope of the Learn2Lead project is to reach a huge number of individual users, SMEs and NGOs employees who do not usually have access to soft skills training, since it is very expensive. The Learn2Lead project aims at offer a free access to online version of the learn2Lead game.

2. Project Approach

During the first year of the project, the Learn2Lead Consortium has developed the work concerning WPs1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11 and 12. The Work Program has been followed very strictly and this has facilitated the accomplishment of each task.

From the managerial point of view, the Consortium has assigned each Work Package to a coordinator; technical development activities (development of the model of team dynamics, software implementation, game design) have been assigned to single partners, avoiding integration problems. Activities requiring close interactions among partners (needs analysis, development of the learning methodology, organization of the trials, quality management, dissemination, exploitation planning) have been assigned to larger groupings. Testing of the methodology and technology is deliberately designed in two cycles - the first to identify and correct methodological, technological and usability issues - the second to assess the effectiveness of the program as a learning tool and the satisfaction of users. The interval between the two cycles is dedicated to revision and testing of methodology and software. The project has clearly defined procedures, tools and criteria for Quality Management and for the evaluation of project results (see description of WP10). A well defined management structure (see description of WP1) ensures rapid problem-solving and effective collaboration with the EU.

From the content point of view, Learn2Lead presents a number of innovations at several levels, compared to existing training in leadership management:

- Learn2Lead is designed to reach individuals and organizations (SMEs, small government offices, NGOs etc.) who have not previously access to training in this area. Individuals and organizations will be able to use the system even when they cannot afford to invest in “blended learning”. The project’s exploitation plan envisages the possibility of free services. This approach represents a major innovation.
- Learn2Lead represents an important pedagogic and methodological innovation. The combined use of gaming and simulation allow learners to gain new insights into team dynamics, to practice their skills and to test alternative strategies in a “safe”, highly motivating environment.
- Learn2Lead introduces important scientific and technical innovations. The underlying model of team dynamics is based on consolidated theory. Nonetheless Learn2Lead is the first attempt to apply the theory to a practical learning application. The model uses techniques from Artificial Life to simulate emergent dynamics within teams, providing learners with insights into the way the unintended consequences of their decisions and allowing them to “train” simulated teams with specific characteristics. To the knowledge of the authors, this is the first time these techniques have been used in leadership training.

During this first year of work, different methods and approaches have been used to fulfill tasks and activities.

Concerning the WP 2 - Needs Analysis - the following methods and tools has been put in place to reach the WP objectives and build the network among the different stakeholders around the project:

- LITERATURE REVIEW, in order to provide an extensive overview of the current practices in leadership training in Europe and especially in Italy, Spain and France.
- INTERVIEWING stakeholders and process owners (HR Managers, Training Managers, Policy Makers) among the three different targets of the Learn2Lead project. Questionnaire and interview template have been designed on purpose to collect data in the three regions.

- USER NEEDS ANALYSIS of the three target group and potential beneficiaries who will be involved in the pilot trials (WP 7), in order to understand and collect their learning strategies and needs.
- ANALYSIS OF CURRENT PRACTICE in leadership training.

The goal of the mix of different approaches was to raise awareness, collect necessary information and selected potential users of the trials.

Concerning WP 3 – Definition of training methodology - the following methods and tools has been put in place to reach the WP objectives and guarantee an effective learning experience during the trials:

- Adaptation of the major findings of the D.2.1. User needs analysis Report as a consistent base for designing the teaching methodology of the Learn2Lead project.
- Set up of an internal REVIEW PROCESS (see WP 1 and 10) in order to provide effective feedbacks for the improvement of the teaching methodology and above all for the customization of some part of the contents according to the three targets of users.

The role of the internal reviewer was perceived as necessary in the finalization of each deliverable. Having a counterpart, collecting contribution from each partners, was a real added value, which also helped the project leader in the correct supervision of the project work.

Concerning the implementation of the WP 4 - Model of team dynamics -, the leading partner, University of Naples developed a complex model on team dynamics based on a literature review of the major theories on Leadership, motivation and stress management. This literature, which is downloadable from the Learn2Lead website (www.learn2lead.unina.it) has provided a solid foundation for the creation of the model which has been validated by Claudio Barabanelli, one of the most well-known expert of the Big Five personality traits. Prof. Barabanelli has been hired on the project as external evaluator.

Concerning the WP 5 – Game Design – the tasks have been coordinated by University of LINCOLN, which has design all the major features of the Learn2Lead game according to the specification provided by the D.2.1. Report on needs analysis. There has been a close connection between WP 4, 5 and 6, since the model of the team dynamics, the game design and the software implementation are different sides of the same coin, which is the game. For this reason, a joint team composed by UNINA, ULINC and ISTC CNR has been created the most suitable way to implement the game design and the team dynamics model within the software.

WP 6 - Software implementation – is still in progress and at the beginning of January 2011, during the third meeting of the project, a first release of the game will be presented to the Learn2Lead Consortium in order to get feedbacks and decide what will be improved. Learn2Lead Game will be released at the end of March 2011.

WP 10 - Quality plan, project monitoring and project evaluation – the Learn2Lead Consortium has put in place a set of procedures and tools, which combined with the ones provided in WP 1, has guided partners in the development of deliverables and outcomes. Especially the role of the internal and external reviewers has guaranteed the coherence and the accuracy of the work done during the first year of the project.

Concerning WP 11 – Dissemination – a strong relevance has to be given to the dissemination plan issued as an extra deliverable. The Learn2Lead Consortium realised in fact that in order to have a very synergic action within the Consortium an overall direction was necessary. This direction was provided by the Dissemination Plan, created by the Coordinator ISTC CNR and the Partner MF, in this way the dissemination strategy was clear to each partner, which has contributed accordingly (see on the learn2lead website, dissemination section). A major part of the dissemination will take place in the second year of the project.

In the end, concerning the WP 12 – Exploitation – even though the beginning of the WP was planned for the second year of the project, the Learn2Lead Consortium anticipated it to the first year, in order to have a clearer overview of the major issues in term of IRM (Intellectual Right Management) and possible exploitation strategy to be applied at the end of the project lifecycle.

3. Project Outcomes & Results

During the first of the project the Learn2Lead Consortium has reached interesting results which the community can benefit from.

Basically the five goals of the Learn2Lead have been addressed by each of the deliverable realised but in particular by the D.2.1. Report on needs analysis, the D.3.1. and D.3.2. on evaluation and training methodology, D.4.1. Model of Team Dynamics (with the extensive literature review on Leadership theories), D.5.1. Game design and D.6.1. and D.6.2. on the software implementation.

Each deliverable has realized the innovative traits of the Learn2Lead project, in term of teaching and evaluation methodology, technological solution implemented, prototype of the model of team dynamics, which can be very useful to easily understand which are the dynamics into a group according to the major leadership theories. Also the needs analysis has been addressed as a user centred experience which has helped in designing also the successive step of the project.

WP DELIVERABLES

- D1.1. Management manual
- D1.1. Annex Template
- D1.1. Annexes
- D1.3. List server
- D 2.1. Analysis of current practices and user needs
- D 3.1. Manual for the evaluation of learning outcomes v.1
- D 3.2. Teaching Manual v.1
- D 4.1. Model of team dynamics v.1
- D 5.1. Game and design document v.1
- D 6.1. Functional and non-functional requirements
- D 6.2. Software architecture specifications
- D10.1. Quality plan
- D11.0. Dissemination Plan
- D11.1 Learn2lead Website
- D11.2 Learn2lead brochure
- D11.3 Learn2lead Poster
- D11.5 Presentations and Publications

Please the Learn2Lead website (www.learn2lead.unina.it) for downloading the public deliverables which have been produced during the first year of the project.

4. Partnerships

The Learn2Lead Consortium comprises 6 partners from France, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom. Three of the partners are universities; one is a major national research institution; two are SMEs specialized in training and business consultancy. All the partners have previous experience in the use of ICT for learning (and other applications), acquired both in research projects under FP5, FP6, and FP7 and in previous projects in the LLP. In addition to this general competence, the partners bring to the project a broad range of complementary know-how and skills.

ISTC-CNR coordinates Learn2Lead. The group responsible has already coordinated previous projects in the LLP. In addition, CNR-ISTC contribute a team of dedicated software developers with experience in previous LLP projects. This team is developing Learn2Lead game within the project.

ENTROPY KN (ENT) is an Italian SME specialized in training and consultancy, especially in soft skills. ENTROPY will be responsible for the development of Learn2Lead's training methodology. ENT will coordinate the Italian trials (in which the company will involve its own commercial customers).

UNIVERSITY OF NAPLES "FEDERICO II" (UNINA) is specialized in cognitive technologies and Artificial Life and their potential for learning and in other areas. In Learn2Lead, UNINA has developed the Model of Team Dynamics.

MF & PARTNERS (MF) is a French SME specialized in training and business consultancy. In Learn2Lead, MF led the Needs Analysis and will assume, during the next year of the project, responsibility for the French trials.

UNIVERSIDAD JAUME I (UJI) is specialized in the use of ICT to modify behavior and has long experience in "serious gaming". In Learn2Lead, UJI has contribute to the development of the needs analysis and of the Learning methodology and will coordinate the pilot trials and the large scale trials (and the Spanish branch of the trials).

UNIVERSITY OF LINCOLN (ULINC) is specialized in the design of online games, both for commercial purposes and for "serious gaming". In Learn2Lead ULINC has been responsible for game design.

During this first year of work, the Consortium experienced two crucial moments: the first at the very beginning when partners had to make sense of the goals of the project. It was challenging to give a shared definition to the word "leadership" as set in the proposal because of the different background of each partners' organization and because of a wild literature spread all over the worlds. The second challenging moment concerned the different ways of working, so the intercultural aspects of the project management have been central during the first year of the project.

As a final conclusion on the Learn2Lead partnership, it is possible to state that working in team is not easy, especially when the team is distributed and dispersed, but keeping in mind the specific features and background of each partner, makes it is easier to find the most effective communication way to overcome difficulties and arrange the work at the best.

5. Plans for the Future

The first year of the Learn2Lead project has been fruitful and rich in findings, the Learn2Lead Consortium will develop the work of the second year with the same enthusiasm and interest, following the work programme of the proposal which has been of crucial importance during the first year.

Starting from January 2011, The Consortium will meet in Valencia in order to test the first release of the Learn2Lead game and provide the first feedback to the development team. Fine tuning of the model will be provided during the meeting especially from the partners who will be involved in the trials and have experience in the training.

Another important step of the second year will be addressed by the trials, WP 7 and 9 will be of crucial important in order to understand the consistency of the work carried out in the past months. A comprehensive report will be issued by UJI at the end of the large scale trial (WP 9) on the basis of the evaluation protocol designed by ENT and UJI.

A final central step will be in the end achieved with the dissemination and exploitation strategy, both will be essential to find conditions and stakeholders interested in further develop, use and test the Learn2Lead training programme.

A final evaluation of the Learn2Lead project will be published within the D. 10.2. Results of the Learn2Lead project, which will be available for consultation to a large audience and to specialized community as a basis for further development and improvement in the field of adult education and lifelong learning.

At the very end of the project a ultimate kit will be released with the final release of the Learn2Lead game and training programme, with all the necessary tools for teachers and trainers. In this way the Learn2Lead game will be available online in the standalone version for everybody to use it, and plus as a professional toolkit for trainers who will use it in their daily work as facilitators of training process.

6. Contribution to EU policies

The Knowledge Society envisaged in the EU's Lisbon Objectives requires forms of team work and group collaboration ill-suited to top-down management. In brief, the development of a knowledge society requires new styles of team leadership. Learn2Lead contributes to this goal by designing, implementing and testing an affordable, scalable training methodology for training in this area. Learn2Lead methods and technologies are suitable for use in all kinds of organization, large and small (SMEs, larger businesses, government, NGOs) as well as by individuals interested in their own personal development. The project is thus highly relevant to the general goals of the LLP.

Learn2Lead contributes to the development of innovative ICT-based content, services, pedagogies and practices (LLP-Obj-h). The training proposed by the project takes the form of online games, suitable for use both in blended learning and for self-learning. The methodology and technology is deliberately designed to be offered as a free service. This possibility allows a major expansion of the target audience, which today is largely restricted to MBA programs and major corporations. Learn2Lead's pedagogic practices emphasizes practical skills complementing the theoretical knowledge provided by traditional training. To this end the project makes use of a number of innovative simulation technologies, inspired by research in Artificial Life, much of it conducted by the participants themselves. This previous work is a strong guarantee that the project's technical objectives can be achieved. The use of gaming and presence of a group entirely dedicated to Game Design ensures that the final product will be attractive to learners, especially in younger demographics. This is a key priority for the Leonardo Programme (LEO-MultiProj-2).

The Consortium believes that LEARN2LEAD is clearly addressing the majority of the EU policies and objectives dedicated to education and training; nonetheless the Consortium is here stating the prominent indicators and competencies relevant for our project.

Indicator: Open Learning Environment (code LIS-E19)

Description: Population aged 25-64 participating in education and training

LEARN2LEAD provides training on Advanced Learning Technologies to large groups of direct and indirect beneficiaries who currently receive almost no training even though there is a large demand for it.

The forms of training offered by the project are likely to prove extremely attractive. If successful, the project will contribute to the number of adult participants in education and training both directly – by providing training to trainers and teachers – and indirectly – students, workers, managers - by making them aware of the opportunities provided by attractive online learning solutions.

Competence: Communication in the mother tongue (code KC1)

The LEARN2LEAD teaching program and the materials linked to it will be translated in the three languages of the Consortium, English, French, Spanish and Italian. A part from Italian the other two language are basically the “Esperanto” of the these days guaranteeing in this way also a deep spread of the work done.

Competence: Interpersonal, intercultural and social competences and civic competence (code KC6)

During the trials, the beneficiaries will be involved in the trial session which will give the possibility of use Learn2Lead Game as tool for learning. In this way they will experiment in first person how learning soft skills online and how technologies could facilitate this process.

