

## Finland

### Second Life - Virtual world

*This secondary school (students aged 13 to 17), makes use of “Second Life”, a virtual world that is accessible via internet, for students’ entrepreneurship studies. After a preparation course, classes of students set up a working company in Second Life. This requires students to cooperate with their colleagues (departments of the classroom work on different services of the company), and to virtually interact with clients and real world company representatives who can give advice. During such contacts, students often use and practice English (as a foreign language). Learning is problem-based, requires active learning-by-doing and introduces the students to entrepreneurial work methods. Teachers receive a special training to use Second Life as instructional tool.*

**Main focus of Innovation:** RESOURCES, ORGANISATION

**Other keywords:** blended/non-formal, learning space, technology-rich

#### General Information

**Name of the ILE:** Second Life - Virtual world

**Website:** <http://2ndhy.blogspot.com>;

<http://slurl.com/secondlife/Paijat-Hame%20Edu%20Island/123/121/32>

**ILE submitted by:** Organisation Salpaus Further Education

**Rationale**

*Why do you suggest that it should be included in the project? How does it respond to 21<sup>st</sup> century learning challenges?*

We are using this innovative platform in the frame of the project Hyvä Yritys funded by the Finnish Board of Education. The objective of the project is to promote the use of Second Life in Entrepreneurship studies. So far, it has been proved that Second Life provides an immersive learning in the virtual classrooms, increases collaboration and socialization and it is an outstanding simulation tool. Moreover, it is easier to attend classes' regardless geographical considerations.

The interactivity offered by virtual worlds in general is far more efficient than a traditional e-learning platform as we deal in a virtual world like Second Life with one's visual and virtual self; consequently the sense of presence and identity is reinforced by the environment. Role playing is by far facilitated by this dimension.

Role playing is for instance very important when running a junior company as we are doing in Salpaus Further Education. Students have set up their business idea and very easily exported it to Second Life. According to published white papers on the subject, 80% of the world's Internet users will be in a virtual world by 2011.

**Evidence**

*Is there any evidence or indications showing that this initiative achieves the outcomes that it is aiming at?*

About 1000 Educational organisations (schools, vocational institutions, Universities...) around the world mainly in the United States of America already use that medium in their curriculum for instance Harvard, Columbia Universities. In Finland, we can already find for instance the universities of Joensuu, Turku, Helsinki and vocational institutes like Salpaus Further Education. Salpaus Further Education develops new learning processes in this virtual world. Many large companies (Nokia, Mercedes, Michelin...) also use Second Life as an innovative way to meet with their staff and organise conferences or meetings in one place reducing consequently travel costs. Art, music, social events are organised in Second Life by real life artists. A very good and interesting survey has been conducted in 2008 among educators using Second Life in their classes. The survey can be found at this address: <http://www.nmc.org/pdf/2008-sl-survey.pdf> Another very interesting research for us as it concerns vocational education can be found at this address: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/7063696/The-Autumn-2008-Snapshot-of-UK-Higher-and-Further-Education-Developments-in-Second-Life>.

**Learning Aims / Intended Learning Outcomes of the ILE**

*What are the core learning aims and which knowledge, skills or attitudes are to be acquired? (These may include outcomes related to learners' social, interpersonal, or meta-cognitive development)*

Second Life surely gives the learner information, open space to develop close co-operation with others, different and new immersive environments plus flexibility of space, real time and direct interaction (interaction also with visitors who can enter the class 'other instructors for instance'), socialization, face to face virtual meetings, ability to more spontaneous responses to assignments, better awareness to one's surroundings consequently better awareness in RL, feeling to belong to a community, presence, sense of class community, high level of engagement, strong bond between students, simulation, role playing, discussion group possibilities, participation to social events, conferences and seminars, data visualization and activities based on socio-constructivism.

It gives also a physical representation of learner's "self" and consequently higher capability to express much more easily his/her own personality, closer relationships (students talk also about their dressing, look like in a casual conversation in RL...), unrestrained environment violating the laws of physics.

We also can add that it gives shy, discrete, intimated, emotional, sensitive or less talkative students a way to better express themselves as for instance nobody steers at your avatar when you talk or write to others.

In Second Life, the instructor speaks student's language so the gap instructor-student diminishes. The gap then between instructor-student diminishes.

We can also add that according to our experience Second Life enhances students' metaskills in an efficient manner.

By doing business in Second Life, we got an excellent combination of Junior companies set up in Real Life focusing their business in the virtual environment of Second Life. Those "real" Junior companies were created in the frame of the program "Junior Achievement Young Enterprise".

The results show that students doing business with their companies in the virtual world learned the following concepts besides all those already mentioned above in more general words:

- Students followed a preparation course whereby they got acquainted to the virtual world and started to analyse the virtual world's rules and boundaries. By learning and analysing this new world from the Entrepreneurship angle, students surely learn to work and do business in different environments in the same way as to move to another country and get acquainted to another culture.
- Students learned to work entrepreneurship wise (attending clients in the best way, customer service, practising English (as it is the most used in Second Life), and communication skills of their own field of activities, in our case Tourism.
- Students found innovative and creative solutions to their new challenges (chose themselves the company they wanted, some created virtual environment creating for instance rooms, offices and furniture)
- Team work, students were divided in two groups but both worked as one group in Second Life when doing business (for instance, the choice of uniforms for their own avatars in-world).
- Students felt encouraged to get contact in-world with people working in different communities whether in English or in Finnish with the Finnish community well present now in Second Life. Contacts were also taken with real world company representatives (funding and banking organisations). Our objective to attract as well those real world companies to do business in-world.
- Students learn how to do business in real as for instance: everything needed when starting up a business and further on how to run a business and bring profits to the company, how to market products and services, learn the rules and legislation of a new environment, virtual world or not.
- Students took controlled risks. The material risk was small as the input in terms of money was really small (five Euros per students for the capital of the company). The psychological risk also was very limited as students worked through their avatar and consequently it also was easy to hide behind their virtual self.
- The teacher have been able to supervise students in different ways whether in the classrooms and via Second Life. Students felt more confident that way knowing that even if they working in a virtual world, the teacher was always physically nearby if support or advice needed when facing a problem. This was a real win-win situation as often when a youngster sets up a company in the real world and do business in it, support and advice are more difficult to get.

### **Learners**

*Which group(s) of learners is it aiming at? Who is eligible to take part? How many learners are there? What are their ages?*

In Salpaus Further Education, mainly young students over 18, upper secondary schools, vocational students. We started with 2 pilot groups in total 30 students. Their ages vary from 18 to 27.

But in general, all pupils from secondary and upper secondary schools in between 13 and 17 can enter Second Life. They will be given access to the Teen Grid (Second Life for teenagers). Universities are also involved in Second Life like Helsinki, Joensuu Universities in Finland. Being a student in Second Life requires being computer literate which is not an issue as young students are digital natives.

**Facilitators**

*Who are the teachers/facilitators? Who are the leaders? What are their professional backgrounds? What are their roles?*

The teachers come from our Institution. They are all qualified teachers in the subject they teach and have been trained to the use of Second Life by the project manager. The leaders of the project are Salpaus Management and Georges Segura, project manager whose background is engineering with 14 years of teaching experience in foreign languages in Finland. The role of the project manager is to ensure that the teachers and the students get enough training in the use of the ILE in our case Second Life and provide technical expertise during all the duration of the project.

Salpaus Further Education provides the physical environment and computers, Linden Lab provides the ILE meaning the virtual world Second Life i.e. the virtual environment with their 15 000 servers located all over the world.

**Organization of the ILE**

*How is learning organised? How do learners and facilitators interact? What kind of pedagogy do they follow? What curriculum is used?*

The objective of our project is to bring part of Entrepreneurship studies into Second Life and see if Second Life is a suitable ILE for those studies.

Although, we are now in the middle of the investigation process, feedback from teachers has been excellent and teacher community sees in virtual worlds an endless source of tools which can be used inside any curriculum.

Interaction:

Generally, students gather in a classroom Second Life geared. All computers are equipped with good graphics cards to render as well as possible Second Life graphics. All students and teachers are also equipped with microphones and headsets to enjoy Voice interactivity.

So teachers have the choice whether to interact with students in a traditional way, or via SL chat or voice chat.

The pedagogy is a fine combination of Problem Base Learning, data processing, search and production. Group work was also very important and special emphasis was given to personal work. We also have Second Life entrepreneurs who come to be interviewed. Those interviews are organised by the project manager. Students are invited to follow the interviews as valuable tips were given on entrepreneurship, tips which can be used in Second Life but also in Real Life. Consultants from the "real" professional life are also invited to discuss with students about entrepreneurship. Those discussions are held virtually in Second Life via Chat or Voice chat.

The situation was organised in the frame of the program "Junior Achievement Young Enterprise". Students registered a so called NY company (NY stands for registration for Junior Enterprise) at the beginning of their Entrepreneurship courses in Sept 2008. Their objective is to work and do business in Second Life. Prior to this, students got acquainted to the virtual world under the supervision of their teacher and the project manager (specialist of Second Life). The teacher had taught how to set up companies and work in a group. All actors involved in this project (students, teachers and project staff) analysed the potentiality of the virtual world in terms of business and profits. This analysis was a central work for all. Thanks to this work, students started to search innovative business solutions.

The project team (project manager and pedagogues) gave the students and teachers the time and resources boundaries of the project. In addition to that, the project team described what kind of companies would have more chances of success given the short time of this first experience (10 credits = 4 months). Furthermore, the project team also gave examples of companies not being successful in the virtual world. Those advices were billed to students as consultancy fees. We strived that way to give the whole time of the project a sense of entrepreneurial responsibility to students.

Students were given the chance to contact any person/company organisations related to Entrepreneurship or the business world who could have helped them in their work and studies.

As the students were working in the classroom, teachers had the possibility to easily call them in regular meetings (every day one morning and afternoon meeting) during which matters related to their activities in Second Life were discussed. Generally, those meetings chairman was the CEO of the Junior Company. Objectives and tasks of the day were decided in accordance to every student's role in the company. Then students would return to their computers (1 computer per student). The objective of the afternoon meeting was more to discuss what had been done during the day and what kind of challenges they faced. Teachers followed the meetings but tried not to intervene unless advices were asked by the students. Opettajain roolina oli toimia ohjaajana tarvittaessa.

Five teachers were in charge of the course. An electronically journal was set up. This was to help to log all activities of the day for next teachers. The Students were in charge of keeping updating this journal.

Students and teachers were given the chance to keep up an open blog. The blog was a place to exchange ideas and even feelings. The blog also was a good way for shy students to express themselves and thus participate as actively as others to classroom activities.

Pedagogical methods:

- Learning by doing
- PBL
- Appreciation of risks
- Entrepreneurial work methods

Program of studies/Curriculum:

- Entrepreneurship studies in the field of tourism as part of the general curriculum

### **Learning Context**

*In which context does learning take place? What does the physical learning environment look like? Are community resources used to facilitate learning and how?*

We have 5 teachers involved in the project. The physical environment consisted in one computer classroom where Junior enterprises usually work in our organisation. Computers are equipped with separate graphic cards and RAM memory has been added (now 1 GB).

Important: there was one computer for each student.

The classroom has been built using the "pay sage structure", divided in different departments or boxes like in a modern office. A meeting table had been installed and even a coffee-machine was in service. In each department of the classroom worked different services of the Junior company meaning for instance box 1 = marketing department.

We used blogs (blogger technology), www, wiki technology <http://wiki.lamk.fi> (space Hyvä Yritys) and our own Moodle environment <https://elsa.salpaus.fi/course/view.php?id=427> (username: vieras, password: demo). Documentation is also built with Notecard-technology inside the ILE itself (notecard and Second Life). The project manager also uses Second Life community (**[www.secondlife.com](http://www.secondlife.com)**), SL Educators forums, to enrich his knowledge of Second Life and shares this information with the teachers.

Teachers were also able to give syllabus whenever needed using for instance the teacher computer and beamer and if needed PowerPoint presentations.

Those presentations could have been built also in SL and left there for those students who for any reason could not be present during the classical presentation (PP presentation and beamer).

### **History of ILE**

*Who initiated it? For what reasons was it started and with what purpose? Have these changed since?*

Second Life (abbreviated as SL) is a Virtual World developed by Linden Lab (American company [www.lindenlab.com](http://www.lindenlab.com)) that launched on June 23, 2003 and is accessible via the Internet. A free client program called the Second Life Viewer enables its users, called Residents, to interact with each other through avatars. Residents can explore, meet other residents, socialize, participate in individual and group activities, and create and trade virtual property and services with one another, or travel throughout the world, which residents refer to as the grid. Since Educators have started using this new platform as a new VLE Built into the software is a three dimensional modelling tool based around simple geometric shapes that allows a resident to build virtual objects. This can be used in combination with a scripting language called Linden Scripting Language which can be used to add functionality to objects. More complex three dimensional Sculpted prims (colloquially known as sculptures), textures for clothing or other objects, and animations and gestures can be created using external software. The Second Life Terms of Service ensure that users retain copyright for any content they create, and the server and client provide simple Digital rights management functions. The only changes are due to upgrades that eliminates bugs.

### **Funding of the ILE**

*How is it funded?*

Linden Lab is a privately held American Internet company. According to its Web site, Linden Lab has over 300 employees worldwide. Although the company's main headquarters are based in San Francisco, it also has distributed offices in Singapore, Virginia, Brighton (UK), Boston, Seattle, Mountain View and Davis, CA. In addition, the company employs remote workers that communicate and collaborate on projects using Second Life Grid technology. Inside Salpaus Further Education, the project Hyvä Yrityks whose main purpose is to bring Entrepreneurship Studies into Second Life is funded by the Finnish Board of Education. The Finnish Board of Education decided in December 2008 after seeing the promising development of the project to purchase virtual land in Second Life and consequently bought an island which is now part of the virtual Finnish archipelago.

### **Learning Outcomes**

*What are the learning outcomes achieved by the ILE, including academic, social, interpersonal and meta-cognitive outcomes? How is learning assessed?*

The students involved in this project will get/got 10 credits. During that period, they will have built a working company in Second Life. Outcomes can be seen on a second island that the project manager bought on their behalf. The second island is called Salpaus Nature (it can be reached by typing Salpaus Nature into the Search field of the Second Life Viewer). Salpaus Nature is part of the Finnish virtual archipelago. The students have brought their Junior Company into Second Life. Setting up the Junior Company was part of their Entrepreneurship studies. The first clients have already started to come and visit this island. Social skills are surely been developed with the help of the ILE with low cost as we need to discuss with other avatars the same way we discuss with other people in real life and there is no need to physically travel to meet with clients. Evaluation skills are also developed and consequently analysis skills are needed to assess this new world and culture. The project manager often says that if you are successful in Second Life, you are successful in real life as Second Life - Virtual World is like a new "country" where you have to learn new habits, a new way to speak even if English is the most common language in Second Life. Students have to process those new habits the same way they would do it in a new "real" environment with their fellow students. They rely to the group and thus develop a real esprit-de-corps (thanks to team work) which is necessary in a very competitive environment. Decision-making is also improved as assessment and analysis skills are developed.

The learning is assessed by teachers of course but not only, Webropol surveys have been built by the project manager and his team to assess how this new ILE was perceived whether by students and teachers. These surveys/forms contain about 40 questions to which teachers and students have to answer anonymously.

And of course, because we have chosen 2 groups studying Entrepreneurship, a good way to measure their achievement will see how many customers they have made during this course. Teachers will assess this outcome together with the students.

Interactivity and initiative are two concepts that students have apprehended when working in Second Life. Students have become more aware of the world surrounding them (discussion with real clients through their avatars for instance), students have learned to work in a team and adapted their mode of action with others. Teamwork (for instance company meetings, brain storming, and achievements in Second Life) has been truly profitable to students as they have learned to work with others which is a very important skill in working life.

### **Documentation describing or evaluating the ILE**

*Is there documentation on this learning environment? Is there a website? Films? Research reports or evaluations? Other forms of documentation? (please supply references or links)*

Please have a look at [www.slideshare.net](http://www.slideshare.net) website and write Second Life in the Search field. There is plenty of material describing Second Life in Education.

The website of Second Life [www.secondlife.com](http://www.secondlife.com) itself provides with well documented information on Education in Second Life.

The site <http://wiki.secondlife.com> gives also valuable information on what can be done in Second Life. The website SLED for Educators <https://lists.secondlife.com/cgi-bin/mailman/listinfo/educators> gives also valuable information on Second Life and a way to interact with true actors/facilitators of the virtual world.

Really recent Papers have been written on Second Life.

1. Virtual or virtually U: Educational institutions in second life.

<http://www.waset.org/ijss/v2/v2-3-28.pdf>

2- Snapshot of UK HE and FE developments in SLEduserv Foundation.

<http://www.eduserv.org.uk/foundation/sl/uksnapshot102008>

3- Second life education workshop

<http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/recordDetail?accno=ED493670>

4. Educators in Second Life Survey. <http://www.nmc.org/pdf/2008-sl-survey.pdf>.

The blog of the Project manager <http://2ndhy.blogspot.com> gathers many links about Second Life and all opportunities given by this new approach of teaching and learning.