1. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT
   1.1. NAME OF THE PROJECT AND PROJECT TEAM MEMBERS p. 2
   1.2. BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT p. 2
   1.3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT p. 2
   1.4. TARGET GROUP OF THE PROJECT p. 3

2. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION p. 3
   2.1. RESOURCES OF THE PROJECT p. 3
   2.2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK p. 4
   2.3. SOLUTION p. 5
      2.3.1. Counselor’s page in the school website p. 6
      2.3.2. Blog p. 6
      2.3.3. Facebook page p. 7
      2.3.4. Doodle p. 7
      2.3.5. Users of the tools p. 8
   2.4. IMPLEMENTATION AND TIMETABLE OF THE PROJECT p. 8
   2.5. RISKS AND CONCERNS p. 10

3. PROJECT OUTCOMES p. 11
   3.1. RESULTS OF THE PROJECT p. 11
   3.2. MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT p. 11
   3.3. REPORTING THE RESULTS p. 13

REFERENCES p. 14
1. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

1.1. NAME OF THE PROJECT AND PROJECT TEAM MEMBERS

The name of the project is “Stay informed”. Implementation of the project took place is the context of high school counseling. One of the main aims of student counseling at high school is to provide necessary information, orientation and help to students about their studies and career opportunities, or, in other words, help students stay informed about those aspects.

The project team members are: Aleksandra Lazareva (project manager), Antonella Conte (contact person, secretary) and Salvador Dukuzumuremyi (expert in web design).

1.2. BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT

Implementation of the project took place in the Oulu Lyseo IB school (the school counselor being the client). Besides of the Finnish National Program, the school offers also an International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Program for students of 16-19 years old. IB Diploma Program includes three study years, the first one being preparatory.

Students of the National Finnish Program have a compulsory course in counseling, where the school counselor gives them all the necessary information and assistance. For example, students get help with planning their studies, choosing right courses, and preparing for the final exams. Students also get help with planning future studies at university and career. It is also possible for students to make personal appointments with the counselor if they want to discuss specific issues.

Students of the IB Diploma Program do not have such a compulsory course. The counselor organizes optional lessons, but not all the students attend them. Counseling for IB Diploma students is mainly provided through personal appointments with the counselor.

The counseling system for IB Diploma students can be improved. Since there is no counseling course, other ways to deliver information can be found. This project suggested technological solutions for solving the problem, which can make counseling system more accessible and student-centered.

1.3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

The main aim of the project was to improve the counseling system for Oulu Lyseo IB Diploma
students by means of technological tools. The main goal was specified through the four objectives (see Figure 1).

1. Make counseling more accessible and student-centered;
2. Systematize existing materials for IB Diploma students and provide them in such a way that it would reduce the counselor’s workload;
3. Optimize students’ time management by providing alternative resources for obtaining necessary information;
4. Enhance interaction among students, counselor, teachers and Alumni.

Figure 1. Project objectives

1.4. TARGET GROUP OF THE PROJECT

The target group of the project is Oulun Lyseo IB Diploma program students. The project aimed at improving counseling for the target group. However, solutions suggested in this project can be applied in any similar context, i.e., high school counseling.

2. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

2.1. RESOURCES OF THE PROJECT

The team consulted experts in the spheres of technology and self-regulated learning in order to provide solid theoretical and practical reasoning for suggested solution. Consulting an expert in self-regulated learning made it clear how individuals can self-regulate not only in educational contexts, but also in other aspects of life. The expert provided links to theoretical material which was used to support the solution. Consulting an expert in technology gave several new ideas and perspectives on how the counseling system can be improved with the help of social networks and collaboration with Alumni.

The project team made use of scientific literature to understand and implement self-regulation in the context of the project. The technological resources the team used during the project were mainly computers or laptops and the Internet. The team was working in Google Drive with shared documents and spreadsheets, so that all the members of the group were able to contribute. The team also had own Facebook group for discussions and announcements. Finally, the
team also used Skype for arranging meetings when it was not possible to meet face-to-face. The team kept constant contact with the client through e-mails.

Resources that were implemented as solution are free Internet software (i.e., Wordpress blog, Facebook, and Doodle). The team also took into account own experience in working with those tools when the tools were considered. It was important to choose such tools that are user-friendly and functional.

Very important resources were the instructor’s feedback and help, and feedback provided by other classmates.

The planned 120 hours (i.e., university course requirements) were enough for project work.
Funding of the project is not discussed here since this issue is not relevant in the context of this particular project.

2.2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The main educational theory behind this project is the theory of self-regulated learning. All the four main phases of self-regulated learning described by Pintrich (2000) can be related to the project. Goal-setting, the first phase, is strongly dependent on students’ knowledge of the context and opportunities. Knowing what kind of possibilities they have for future studies and career, students can consciously set goals for a long study period. Monitoring, the second phase, occurs when students evaluate their success during studies. Student’s plans for future can change completely, as well as understanding of some particular field of study or career can change. These factors will require some changes in a student’s current study pattern. Controlling, the third phase, takes place when students actually adjust their study efforts when they see that the current way of studying is not efficient, or when they understand that their goals have changed. At this point the notion of help-seeking can be also mentioned: when a students can not find the way to control their studies themselves, they are likely to seek for a piece of advice from the counselor. Help-seeking will be adaptive and productive if a student thinks about what are the right and good questions to ask from the counselor in order to coordinate his or her studies efficiently. Reflection and making attributions, the last phase of self-regulated learning according to Pintrich, is also very important. Students need to reflect on their own success and failure in order to make the right choice when thinking of future studies and career orientation. It is usually a hard choice, and an objective opinion from the counselor can give a better picture of student’s achievements and particular abilities.

According to Zimmerman’s model of self-regulated learning (2005) there are three main phases: forethought, performance and self-reflection. The three phases should be linked in such a way that “learners see positive cognitive, motivational and behavioural consequences of their efforts
and hence develop feelings of competence and control” (Zimmerman, 2005: 270). When the solutions were considered by the team, these phases, there main features and processes were kept in mind.

Since there is no compulsory counseling course provided for Oulun Lyseo IB Diploma students, students themselves are in charge of their actions and information they are looking for. They might be asking themselves different questions and look for particular pieces of information (see Attachment 2 for particular examples of the questions). The solutions were designed in such a way that students can find answers to their questions independently, or have an opportunity to seek for help. Student-centered solutions are emphasized in this project.

One more theory that can be discussed in the context of this project is the theory of collaborative learning. Collaborative learning can be defined as “group meaning making”. In this case it is possible to think that IB Diploma students, Alumni, teachers and the counselor are a community. Members of this community have different roles in the context of counseling, and this community may serve as support for counseling. For example, teachers and counselor are students’ guides. Alumni could also take this role partly in specific contexts. Students can be not only recipients of help, but they can also support each other with an opinion or a piece of advice. Therefore, members of this large community can communicate, provide help to each other and orient each other.

Dillenbourg, Baker, Blaye & O’Malley (1996) discuss three approaches for collaborative learning: the socio-constructivist, the socio-cultural and shared cognition approaches. The one most related to the project is the social-cultural approach, and it explains the point described previously. The socio-cultural approach is focused on the relation between social interaction and cognitive change. The mechanism can be explained as a loop where inner and social speech are involved. Individuals use inner speech to talk to themselves, while social speech is used to interact with others. In the beginning the individual has an own view of the problem or context, and after the interaction with others the individual can change own understanding, with that creating a new level of internal perception.

2.3. SOLUTION

The team came up with four technological tools. The tools provide the features that are necessary to meet the objectives of the project and contribute to the main aim of the project. The tools are a counselor web page inside the school website, counselor’s weblog, the school Facebook group, and Doodle polls (see Figure 2).
2.3.1. Counselor’s page in the school website

The counselor’s page is built in the school website, and it functions as a starting point for IB Diploma students looking for information about counseling. The page includes basic information about Oulu Lyseo IB counseling, counselor’s contact information, links to the counseling tools and guidelines for students in using these tools. Full description of the contents of this webpage can be found in the Attachment 2. The page was edited by the counselor together with the project team.

2.3.2. Blog

The counselor’s blog is a place where all the updated information is published, useful links provided, and frequently asked questions answered and stored by the counselor. The posts are tagged and categorized, which makes it easy for students to navigate the blog and find exactly what they are looking for. A blog is very easy and intuitive to use also for the counselor. The counselor is the only one who is in charge of what appears in the blog, so she has full control over it. Appearance of the blog and widgets can be changed at any time, published information can be edited, updated,
or deleted easily. It is also easy for students to follow the blog. For example, students can subscribe to new posts and get them to their e-mail addresses, or they can also add feeds to their Google Reader.

The blog was created and designed by the project team in Wordpress. What is also important is that Wordpress offers a great amount of features free of charge. Full description of the contents of the counselor’s blog in Wordpress can be found in the Attachment 2.

2.3.3 Facebook page

As it was mentioned before, collaboration and communication is considered an important resource in the context of the project. Students are not alone, they can ask for information and help from other people.

Facebook is the most widely used social media and most probably students already have accounts. Oulu Lyseo IB School Facebook page can be created, where school-related issues could be discussed by students, teachers, and Alumni. Counseling would be one part of this page. In case of this project, the Facebook page could connect students, teachers, the counselor and Alumni into one community. It would make it easier for students to contact people who can share own experience and give a piece of advice (e.g., Alumni). On the other hand, a Facebook page would be also a good place for students to share some information that they have found. Therefore, a Facebook page could become a virtual platform for a specific community - a place for information sharing and mutual help.

Since the Facebook page is going to be not only for counseling issues but also for other school-related issues, school personnel are going to be responsible persons for creating the page. The project team prepared and provided a description of technological, pedagogical and social affordances of Facebook (it can be found in the Attachment 2).

2.3.4. Doodle

Personal appointments with the counselor are necessary and extremely important. Doodle can be a useful tool to schedule meetings faster and easier without exchanging e-mails and keeping paper-and-pen schedules. It is possible to choose a specific setting when creating a Doodle poll, which will ensure that students who are booking a time do not see each other’s names in a poll.

During the project implementation the counselor tested and approved Doodle as an effective tool. However, she reported that she would prefer to postpone using Doodle polls from the beginning of the new semester in order not to confuse already scheduled meetings.
One more advantage of Doodle is that polls can be synchronized with different types of electronic calendars (e.g., Outlook calendar).

2.3.5. Users of the tools

Not only students and the counselor are going to be using the tools, but also other individuals, such as teachers and Alumni. Figure 3 represents the counseling tools and how different users approach each of the tools.

2.4. IMPLEMENTATION AND TIMETABLE OF THE PROJECT

The original project schedule with the main actions and important deadlines can be found in the attachment to this report (see Attachment 1). The phases of the project work and their main contents are described in the table below (see Figure 4). Since the project was planned and implemented as a part of a university course, both course progress and project progress are reflected in the table.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHASES</th>
<th>PROJECT PROGRESS</th>
<th>COURSE PROGRESS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JANUARY: STARTING</td>
<td>1. The team got familiar with details of the project (18.01.13).</td>
<td>1. The team created the first idea paper (18-25.01.13).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. The team met the client for the first time in order to obtain more information about the counseling system and discuss the preliminary ideas (29.01.13).</td>
<td>2. The team created the Pecha Kucha presentation describing the progress and future ideas (28-31.01.13).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>JANUARY: STARTING</strong> During this phase the team began working on the project.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEBRUARY-MARCH:</td>
<td>1. The team prepared the first version of the project plan (01-14.02.13);</td>
<td>1. The team met with experts of theoretical background and technology to gather more useful ideas for the project (12-15.02.13);</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| PLANNING            | 2. The team met the client for the second time and agreed on particular solutions to proceed with (14.03.13);  
|                     | 3. The team prepared the final version of the project plan (15.02-20.03.13).     | 2. The team members read the articles which provided theoretical background supporting the ideas. |
|                     | **FEBRUARY-MARCH: PLANNING** During the planning phase the project team kept in contact with the client as much as possible and took in consideration all the possible solutions. |                                                                                 |
| MARCH-APRIL:       | 1. The team met the client for the third time to discuss the progress of the project work (11.04.13).  
| IMPLEMENTATION      | 2. The team designed the content for the counselor’s webpage.                    | 1. The team got peer feedback regarding the mid-project report, and provided feedback to other classmates’ mid-project reports (12.04.13). |
|                     | 3. The team designed and created the blog, published several test posts, designed blog pages and chose widgets. | 2. The team prepared the poster describing the project (21-25.04.13). |
|                     | 4. The team provided description of social, technological and pedagogical affordances of a Facebook page. | 3. The team collected pictures for the digital story (27.04.13). |
|                     | 5. The counselor tested Doodle.                                                  |                                                                                 |
|                     | 6. The team prepared the mid-project report, etc.                               |                                                                                 |
|                     | **MARCH-APRIL: IMPLEMENTATION** During this phase the project team implemented the planned solutions. |                                                                                 |
7. The team met the client for the fourth time for updating the webpage and consulting on the use of the blog (26.04.13).

| APRIL-MAY: PROJECT EVALUATION, REPORTING THE RESULTS | 1. The team collected the counselor’s feedback about the tools (26.04.13). |
| | 2. The team prepared the final project report (06-13.05.13). |
| | 1. The team presented the project poster to the client, classmates and instructors (03.05.13). |
| | 2. The team prepared the digital story telling about the project, and presented it to the classmates and instructors (27.04-17.05.13). |

**Figure 4. Timetable of the project implementation**

### 2.5. RISKS AND CONCERNS

The biggest challenge for the team was to suggest relevant methods that could help students get the counseling they need in a structured and organized way. The team members wanted to choose the tools that would optimize both the counselor’s and students’ time management. Doodle was chosen because it helps schedule personal appointments faster, and a weblog was chosen because such functions as tagging and categorizing help students find necessary information easily.

Students need counseling of different kinds. For example, someone is looking for particular information, someone else wants to set an appointment with the counselor, and someone else wants to know about other people’s experiences. Therefore, the targets of those needs are also different. It was kept in mind that different technological tools should address different targets, and do not “overlap” in the information provided. Each of the tools has a specific purpose (e.g., a blog is for providing updates and information on frequently asked questions, a Facebook page is for discussions and connection to Alumni, Doodle polls are for booking an appointment).

In addition, the tools used for counseling should be appealing and easy to use for students, so that it would promote their motivation in using the tools.

When it comes to the Facebook page, it should be mentioned that the counselor would need to follow the discussions related to counseling issues in order to make sure that no one is being
misunderstood or misinformed.

The counselor should encourage students to use the blog and Doodle polls, and stimulate discussions on counseling issues in the Facebook group.

3. PROJECT OUTCOMES

3.1. RESULTS OF THE PROJECT

As a result, there is a combination of technological tools, each of which is serving a particular purpose (the webpage is for giving directions about counseling, the blog is for updated pieces of information, the Facebook page is for discussions and interaction among students, the counselor, teachers and Alumni, and Doodle is for reserving a personal appointment). While the webpage and blog are fully implemented, use of a Facebook group and Doodle polls was only discussed and planned to be integrated in the nearest future. However, they are still considered as a part of solution. These tools provide necessary features that help the solution meet the objectives of the project (see Figure 5), through which the main aim of the project is achieved.

1. Counseling became more accessible - it is now possible to find necessary information not only at a personal appointment, but also in the blog or Facebook page. Counseling is also more student-centered - a student can choose the tool that can help him or her better when he or she is looking for a particular information or help. In addition, the Facebook page provides a constant opportunity to ask, discuss and interact for each student.
2. Such features of a blog as tagging and categorizing helps systematize materials and posts easily and efficiently. It makes it easy not only for students, but also for the counselor to find particular posts.
3. Students’ time management is improved with the help of Doodle - easy scheduling tool, and the blog, where they can find necessary information quickly and easily.
4. Interaction among students, teachers, the counselor and Alumni can be enhanced with the help of the Facebook page.

Figure 5. Project outcomes

3.2. MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

It is important to mention that the project team worked in close cooperation with the client,
and, therefore, the tools were discussed in detail together with the client on different stages of the project (planning, implementation, and final stage of the project). The team proceeded with their work only after the plan and suggestions were discussed and approved by the client. This way, the project team aimed at developing such a solution that would meet the client’s expectations better. Such way of work also helped the project team monitor the project progress. During the last meeting with the client, where the project team provided instructions on using the tools and presented final materials, the client gave a positive feedback about the effectivity and usefulness of the tools. She also reported that she felt comfortable using the tools (or learning how to use the new tools).

However, at this point it is possible to speak only about partial evaluation of the project results. It is yet not possible to evaluate the results of the project fully at the moment due to two reasons: firstly, a Facebook page is not yet implemented. Secondly, Doodle polls were only tested by the client, and, although she reported the tool to be effective, Doodle polls are not yet implemented as a tool to be used on a regular basis.

Moreover, although it can be reported that the client is satisfied with the implemented and tested tools (i.e., implemented blog and webpage, and tested Doodle), we do not yet know how students evaluate the tools. For example, although the blog is already available for students, it does not yet contain so much information. The page with frequently asked question still needs to be developed and edited by the counselor. Therefore, it will be possible to get a better, more objective and full evaluation of the project success, as well as project sustainability, later in the future.

The project team members asked several specific questions from the counselor in order to provide the answers in this project report (see Figure 6).

1. **Do the results of the project correspond to your initial expectations?**
   *Yes – now I have a way to offer counseling online and share information for students efficiently.*

2. **What do you think about the solution we came up with? Do you think these tools will help your work? In which way?**
   *Tools will definitely help my work. I can reach students more efficiently and share information. I don’t have to go through the same things with each student.*

3. **Do you think students will use the tools and will benefit from them? In which way will they benefit from the tools?**
   *I really hope they will use the tools, I just have to market them more. I was wondering that I might start the marketing in the beginning of next term.*

4. **Is there something you would have done in a different way? If yes, what (e.g., you would choose some other tools, leave out some tools, or organize them in a different way)?**
   *Not at this point.*
5. Are the tools easy for you to use in general? What are the main difficulties or challenges for you when you are using these tools?

They are easy to use. I just need to find time to update the blog that is one thing.

6. What are the disadvantages of the tools in the context of school counseling?

If the students don’t find the tools, for example if they don’t follow the blog. And if I don’t have the time to update the blog.

7. Give an overall evaluation of the team’s work in the project.

Very good work from all of you! Thank you!

Figure 6. Evaluation by the client

3.3. REPORTING THE RESULTS

During the project the results have been reported to the client twice: first, in the mid-project report (middle of April) and second, in this final project report (end of May). In addition, the project team created a poster telling about the project and presented it to the client in the beginning of May.

In the context of the university course, the project team created a digital story telling about the project work (in addition to the previously mentioned forms of reporting the results). The digital story was to be presented to the classmates and instructors at the end of the course.
REFERENCES

