KeyCoNet (2012 – 2014) is a European policy network focused on identifying and analyzing initiatives on the implementation of key competences in primary and secondary school education. It is a constantly growing network of more than 100 members from 30 countries gathering together Ministries of Education/related agencies, universities/research institutes, European organizations, and practice related partners.

On the basis of the evidence collected through literature reviews, case studies, peer learning visits, country overviews, videos and exchanges between network members, the project’s final objective is to produce recommendations for policy and practice regarding the enablers and obstacles to a holistic implementation of key competence development.
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ABOUT THIS CASE STUDY

Part of a series
This case study is part of a series of case studies being produced by KeyCoNet, to highlight various initiatives concerning key competence development, taking place across Europe. Each case study analyzes the initiative’s implementation strategies in depth, and will feed into the network’s recommendations for policy and practice on how to implement a key competence approach in schools most effectively.

How and why was this case selected?
Each year the KeyCoNet network identifies initiatives concerning key competence development across Europe, and a case note is produced providing basic information about each one. Following this, network partners participate in an online selection according to pre-established criteria, as well as an in-depth face-to-face discussion, in order to select the most interesting initiatives to develop into case studies. This particular case study was considered of interest to the network as it is a national initiative open to all schools in Austria and at all educational levels, providing an opportunity for innovative teaching and learning through the regular use of mobile devices across a number of subjects. The use of mobile devices for learning not only allows students to develop their digital competence but also their media literacy and social competence amongst others.

Which methodology has been used?
Case studies are the main tool used by the network to probe beneath the surface of each selected initiative and provide a rich context for understanding the implementation issues involved. The initiatives selected by the network differ in many ways, according to the nature of the key competences addressed, the implementation process used, the number of students and teachers directly concerned, the type and number of actors involved, and the duration and stage of development etc. A multiple-case study design, whereby each initiative generates its own case study, but uses one single prism for a common analysis, was therefore chosen. This method makes it possible to explore diversity, as well as the enablers and obstacles to the initiative’s implementation, as perceived by the initiators and stakeholders interviewed. Moreover, through a multiple-case study design it is possible to identify choices, strategies, characteristics, situations or contexts leading to success or failure in a recurrent manner. This will particularly contribute to fuelling the set of recommendations for policy and practice at institutional, local, regional, national and European level, for the effective implementation of key competences in school education.

Each case study included interviews with the initiative’s coordinators and stakeholders, as well as desk research. In some cases, where considered feasible and fruitful, focus groups were also organized. This Case Study is based on the results of interviews with two key stakeholders of the initiative, Christian Schrack and Herman Morgenbesser in March 2014, and an analysis of documents including evaluation reports as well as material on the project website. Christian Schrack works at the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education and Women’s Affairs and is the coordinator of the project, and developed the initial project idea. Herman Morgenbesser is teacher at the Klosterneuburg International School in Austria and has been involved in the project from the beginning. He teaches Computer Science, Statistics, Digital Business and leads the ICT Management Department in his school.
| **Country:** | Austria |
| **Title of initiative:** | [DE] Mobile Lernbegleiter  
[EN] Mobile Learning Tutors |
| **Coordinator/Organization:** | Organisation: Bundesministerium für Bildung und Frauen (Federal Ministry for Education and Women’s Affairs)  
Coordinator: Mag. Christian Schrack |
| **Key competences addressed:** | [DE] Digitale Kompetenzen, Nutzung von mobilen Geräten (Notebook, Netbook, Tablets, etc.)  
[EN] Digital competences, use of mobile devices (notebooks, netbooks, tablets etc.)  
The project not only addresses digital competences but also key competences across a number of subjects. In particular: social competences, self-organisational skills, the ability to respond positively to criticism |
| **Type of initiative and channels used for implementation (e.g. curriculum reform introduced through legislation etc.)** | Initiative by the Federal Ministry for Education and Women’s Affairs to promote the use of mobile computers/smartphones in the teaching process. Use of electronic education content, internet etc. |
| **Partners:** | • eLSA  
• ENIS Austria  
• eLearning Cluster Austria |
| **Scope:** | Cooperation in a new teaching and learning process between teachers and learners. |
| **Learning context:** | Formal |

| **School education levels:** | (primary, lower secondary, upper secondary) |
| **Target groups:** | Students (who will learn not only subject knowledge but also digital skills). |
| **Time frame:** | Began as a one-year project in 2009/2010; has been renewed on a yearly basis until 2012/2013. After a break during the school year 2013/14, it will start again in September 2014. |
mobile Lernbegleiter project website: [http://www.eeducation.at](http://www.eeducation.at) |
SUMMARY

The project “Mobile Lernbegleiter” is a network of schools coordinated by the Federal Ministry for Education and Women’s Affairs. The underlying objective is to enable innovative teaching and learning by using mobile devices in class on a regular basis and to develop students’ digital competences, but also their media literacy, social competence, self-organisational skills, and ability to respond positively to criticism.

It is open to all schools in Austria at all school levels. The participating schools experiment with 1:1 pedagogy using different mobile devices e.g. netbooks, smartphones, tablets. The project started in 2009/2010 and is renewed on a yearly basis (with a break during the school year 2013/14). Each year, the project coordinator organises two meetings for all participating schools. During the school year, each school implements its own project. Since 2011/12, the cooperation of secondary schools with their feeder primary schools in the region is promoted in particular. Each participating school has to ensure that the participating classes have mobile devices. In the past, the project coordinator helped to organise netbook offers for the schools; in recent years schools make increasing use of the Bring Your Own device (BYOD) concept.

INTRODUCTION

Christian Schrack developed the idea for the project while he was still working as a teacher at an Austrian tourism school in the late 1990’s. At the time, the growing interest of teachers in using computers created a problem as regards the availability of computer rooms at the school. The use of notebooks was seen as a solution in order to avoid the fragmentation of the lessons and having to switch rooms. In 1998, he coordinated the research project “Futor” for the Ministry of Education. Successful elements of this project such as developing the project by establishing a focus group at the school and the idea of a “gradual didactical transformation” inspired the current project “Mobile Lernbegleiter”, which was then initiated by the Ministry. The particularity of the project is that schools have a lot of flexibility on how to implement the project based on these principles. The peer exchange between schools is a core aspect of the project which schools appreciate. Schools are actively shaping the focus of the project, e.g. the future focus on tablets reflects the schools interest in the topic.
1. CONTEXTUAL INFLUENCE

Which contextual factors have been perceived as enablers to the implementation of the initiative, and why?

The project was the first one in Austria to include several school types and school levels in an e-learning project, which called for a consideration of different pedagogical cultures and management issues, depending on the different administrative responsibilities for each school type. The Ministry was interested in the use of small size, energy efficient mobile devices in class to foster new forms of teaching and pedagogical settings in schools. 1:1 initiatives in the US and Germany but also national experience with notebook classes at secondary level since 1998 (in the framework of future Learning and eFit21) served as an inspiration. Moreover, with mobile devices becoming more and more affordable, the project aimed to improve school lessons by making them more competence oriented.

The initiative is embedded in a general framework “Building Blocks of Pedagogy 2005-2018 competence oriented teaching” aimed at making teaching in Austrian schools more competence oriented. The starting point for this framework was setting educational standards in 2005 (see Image 1), based on the competence model developd by Anderson/Gratwohl; Weinert.

Image 1: “Pedagogical building 2005-2018 competence oriented teaching”
Which contextual factors have been perceived as obstacles to the implementation of the initiative, and why?

The funding of the mobile devices is an issue to be tackled by the schools and raises the question of social equity, in case parents cannot afford to buy the device. The schools interested in the project are responsible for ensuring that each participating class is equipped with devices. In the beginning of the project, the project coordinator organised a special netbook offer for schools. This approach has proven to be less successful than expected. The netbooks purchased showed deficits like a low battery performance and the dialogue with the provider was difficult. This caused frustration among students and parents. Therefore, later on the project coordinator helped organising several netbook offers and schools also organised the purchase of the netbooks themselves. Since 2012/13, the project also promotes the concept BYOD. Support is offered to families having difficulties to finance the devices, but this is usually not taken up.

| IT agendas |
|------------------|--------------------------------|
| IT competence catalogues | Competence oriented assessment |
| Digital student administration | School career – upper secondary level new until 2017/18 |
| ePlatform school leaving exam (as of 2018) | Standardised maturity and diploma examination as of 2015/16 |
| Mobile devices as Learning buddies | Competence oriented teaching |
| ePlatform educational standards | Competence oriented curricula as of 2012/13 |
| | Educational standards (start in 2005) 2011/12 |

2. Substance related issues

Which substance related issues have been the most difficult ones to fix when deciding on the content of the initiative, and why?

The project fosters in particular the development of students’ digital competence. The definition of the *ICT use in school* currently used in the project was only developed in 2013 (see Image 2). A clear definition of the term became necessary because for some schools the difference between “ICT as a subject” and “e-learning” was unclear; a clear distinction between both terms was missing. The developed definition, an important outcome of the project based on the experiences gained, focuses on three dimensions (Pedagogy, Didactics/Learning theory, Technical didactics) and five different levels of use of ICT in school. The definition is based on a previous overview developed by the project coordinator Christian Schrack in 2006 (see Image 3).
3. Partnership related issues

Which key aspects should be taken into consideration when defining the partnership?

School types in the project

The Federal Ministry for Education and Women’s Affairs coordinates the project. Participation in the project is open to all schools in Austria, provided that participating classes are equipped with mobile devices. The secondary school level was the starting point of the project, as these schools are usually better equipped and parents are more willing to invest money in their children’s education. Different school types at primary and secondary level are involved in the project. One difficulty with fostering the collaboration between different school types is that their school culture, administration, pedagogical concepts, way of working and budget possibilities can differ. While the national Ministry is responsible for higher general secondary schools, the provinces are responsible for schools at primary and lower secondary level (‘Volksschule’/’Hauptschule’). To connect different school types is a more innovative approach but also more complex.

Mix of “new” and “old” schools

Peer exchange between schools is an important element of the project. Each year, a certain percentage of “new” schools is taken on board which can take advantage of the experience of the “old”
“Vertical competence” collaboration

In 2011/12, the project started a particular type of collaboration between schools: so-called “vertical collaboration”. The project supports the forming of local and regional school clusters, with one secondary school exchanging with their feeder primary schools in the region on the use of mobile devices in class. Each of the clusters selected its activities itself and activities were very different in each cluster. Typical activities were projects on specific topics allowing for the exchange between students, exchange of knowledge and experience, further trainings together and school visits. Examples for project topics schools collaborated on are e-safety, preparation for the job market, healthy nutrition, and the use of mobile devices in science subjects and language classes. In the school year 2012/13, 13 of these clusters were in place, compared to 9 the year before.

Synergies with other networks

Of the 45 schools participating in school year 2012/2013, 15 schools were also eLSA schools and 12 schools were part of the ENIS network. The aim of the eLSA network, initiated by the Federal Ministry for Education and Women’s Affairs, is to make e-learning part of regular school life. ENIS is a European network of innovative schools. Several project schools were also part of the eLearning Cluster Austria which has been existence for 11 years. The fact that this project is partly embedded in existing networks enables synergies between the different networks, e.g. some schools also take advantage of support offered within the ENIS network and synergies exist in terms of dissemination activities.

4. Strategy related issues

Which aspects of the strategy implemented for the initiative have proved to be particularly effective, and why?

Central support

Firstly, the concept of one organisation providing central support, inspiration and guidelines to the schools while leaving flexibility to each school on how to implement its own project, proved to be an efficient approach welcomed by the schools. On the other hand the project benefits from the ideas coming from the schools themselves, which is encouraged at central level. Along the same lines, the free choice of devices for the school is seen as an enabling factor, as it raises the acceptance of the project both by students and their parents.

The project coordinator published 10 step guidelines for the implementation at school level. The first steps are to define the motivation to use mobile devices in class, identify a target class and convince parents. Then each school should develop a pedagogical concept for the school, conclude agreements with each student on the use of the mobile device and check whether infrastructural/technical requirements are in place. As a next step, the pedagogical concept should be implemented together with several teachers (including the visits of each others lessons). Finally, there should be an exchange with other schools and a strategy for the sustainability of the project. The evaluation report 2010/11 showed that most of the schools had implemented the 10 steps programme entirely or partly by the end of the school year.
**Student responsibility**

A second element that worked well was to give students responsibility for their own device and to allow for the use both at home and school (for educational and non-educational purposes). As mentioned earlier, the project coordinator recommends participating schools to conclude an agreement with each student on the use of the mobile device.

**Parental involvement**

A third key aspect is the involvement of parents in the project. Parents need to be informed in advance about the advantages of working with a mobile device in school. Since 2011/12, the project recommends to schools that students be encouraged to bring and use several devices (BYOD). In that setting, parents’ consent is even more crucial. It proved to be helpful to show parents what happened in the classroom and explain to them that mobile devices enable new forms of innovative pedagogy. Another enabling element seems to be a quick start of the project after the decision on using 1:1 devices in a specific class has been taken, to avoid frustration on the side of parents and students.

**School management**

Without the support of the school management and the headmaster it is not possible to run such a project. Another enabler is to build a “focus group” of teachers which initiates and implements the project at school level. This group has to receive training.

**Peer exchange**

One key aspect of the project is to enable face-to-face peer exchange between teachers. Both the big project meetings for all schools and the cluster activities have been very well received. The main benefits are the possibility to exchange, getting to know new problem solving strategies and learning from each other. The exchange encourages schools to try new things. It is also helpful for the schools to know that other schools face the same problems. Visiting each other is also a recognition of the school’s work from outside which is perceived as motivating. School to school collaboration can also foster the successful completion of a project as everybody involved undergoes some “peer pressure”.

Online collaboration is the basis of the cluster activities, but cannot replace the personal contact. The step from “meeting virtually to meeting face-to-face” has been seen as an important enabler for the project work between schools. Therefore, the schools being located close to one another can be beneficial to the project.

In the school year 2012/2013, so-called “Buddy-systems” were often developed and tested: older students taught younger students from other schools. This concept has proven to be a win-win situation for all students involved.
Which aspects of the strategy implemented for the initiative have proved to be most problematic, and why?

School infrastructure

For the schools new to the project (in particular primary and upper secondary level), technology and equipment were still an issue: the infrastructure at the school and a reliable internet connection had to be put in place. At school level, there should be rules in place regarding the maintenance of the infrastructure; one person at the school should be responsible. In particular, at primary schools, these structures still had to be put in place. Even when a school opts for the BYOD concept, it still has to ensure that it has a certain infrastructure in place. The concept brings new challenges for the school infrastructure and the lesson delivery in terms of compatibility of different devices.

When introducing mobile devices in class, an orientation phase is necessary in the beginning both for teachers and students, especially if they have no prior experience of working with the devices. For the “old” project schools, technology and infrastructure have not been an issue anymore.

Organisation at school level

At the school level, for some schools the project implementation was limited by budget limitations, e.g. no travel budget. For others, it was difficult to be absent from their work at school to attend the project meetings. One way to address these issues is the plan for project meetings to take place not only in Vienna but also in other cities in the future.

Training

All evaluation reports highlighted the need for more training and professional development opportunities for teachers. Teachers expressed the wish for more training on the use of mobile devices in general and adequate software in particular.

5. MAINSTREAMING RELATED ISSUES

If the key competence initiative aims/aimed at mainstreaming, what are/have been the major obstacles encountered to generalise it?

First phase: pioneer phase

The project has been divided in three phases, starting with a small number of pilot schools. In 2009/2010, 7 pioneer schools already experienced with e-learning tested the use of netbooks with regard to the possibilities for new teaching and learning methods. 6 of these schools participated in an evaluation which was decisive for the further development of the project.

Second phase: Pilot phase

In 2010/2011, further pilot schools started using netbooks, with the support of the experienced schools and experts within the network. In total, 25 schools participated. These pilot schools had, in contrast to the pioneer schools, only an average level of infrastructure and limited experience with e-learning. It was envisaged to develop a model for the general introduction of netbooks
in schools, setting out framework conditions. Upon completion of this phase, a strategic decision was taken concerning the next phase of the project.

**Third phase: Regular implementation**

Since the school year 2011/2012, the possibility to test the developed model is open to all Austrian schools, provided that the participating classes are equipped with mobile devices. The project supports the schools in their dissemination activities. That school year, 27 schools participated. Since 2012, the project recommends the use of the BYOD concept which allowed for a major enlargement of the network. For the school year 2012/2013, 45 schools participated.

**Mainstreaming within schools**

The number of schools involved in the project is only one aspect of the issue of mainstreaming. The second one is the number of teachers and classes involved in the project at each school. The average of participating classes changed in the course of the project. In 2010/2011, 1.4 classes per school participated. In 2011/12, schools participated with 2.4 classes. In 2012/13 only 1.8 classes participated per school. The high number of new schools joining the project caused the decrease of numbers of classes per school in average, as “new” schools often started the project only with 1 or 2 classes. For the same reason, the number of teachers involved in the project per school has decreased in comparison to the year before. In 2012/2013, 161 teachers were involved in the project in total, with an average of 3.7 teachers per school. These numbers indicate that involving the same school in the project over a longer period of time enables the involvement of more teachers and students at that school.

**Frequency of use of devices**

Finally, also the frequency of use of the mobile devices changes over the years. In 2010/11, there was a clear increase in use. In 2012/13, the frequency of use decreased, again due to the fact that many new schools joined. New schools typically start the use of the devices only step by step and project based. Nonetheless, 57% of the students stated that they had used the devices frequently that year.

**Challenges related to enlargement**

The project design and organisation is currently designed for a rather small group of innovative project schools. This fact also became apparent during the last project meeting organised for all 45 schools which showed time restrictions and limitations regarding the meeting venue. If the number of participating schools continues to rise, the project design would have to be adapted. New forms of exchange, other forms of moderating the exchange and a higher number of meetings could be envisaged.
6. SYSTEMIC ASPECTS

To which extent has the initiative been designed as a systemic one from the starting point, i.e. introducing changes in several areas related to the student curriculum (such as teacher training, assessment, school organisation, etc.)?

The project has not been designed as a systemic one from the starting point. The project, however, recognises the importance of factors like the school organisation and management, training and evaluation. The evaluation report 2010/11 recommends to embed the project in the general school development strategy: cross-subject projects including several classes, teachers visiting their colleagues’ classes, organisational development and evaluation are recommended.

Have some parts of the original design of the initiative (from the systemic point of view) been abandoned and why?

The design of the initiative, being renewed on a yearly basis, allows for a certain flexibility to take on board new upcoming issues. The focus topics only became apparent, as the project developed and the participating schools were very active in defining a new focus/areas of interest. The project started as a netbook initiative. Therefore, netbooks and the question whether these new devices could play a role for mainstreaming were at the focus of the school year 2010/11. Vertical collaboration between secondary schools and their feeder primary schools was the focus of the work of the two following school years. Since 2012/13, the project does not focus on a particular device anymore and promotes the BYOD concept. In the future, tablets could be increasing the focus of the project, as this is also a topic of interest for the schools. From school year 2011/2012 to school year 2012/2013, the percentage of schools that use tablets/iPads or smartphones has drastically increased, from 10 to 50 % for tablets and 13 to 36% for Smartphones.

If no systemic approach was thought of from the beginning, or if some components had to be abandoned during the implementation, would a step-by-step (or area by area) implementation be advisable, i.e. starting with introducing changes supporting key competences in one area and then introducing related changes in the other areas, and why?

The project is implemented on a yearly basis, which allows for a certain flexibility to integrate new questions/topics in the project and to develop some hypotheses further. According to the project coordinator, it is nonetheless important to outline requirements as regards pedagoggy, technological and organisational issues of the project, also to enable a comprehensive and continuous evaluation of the project.

7. EVALUATION RELATED ISSUES

An evaluation has been carried out since the beginning of the project on an annual basis. The project coordinator appointed the evaluators of the project. The first evaluation carried out by Prof. Baumgartner and the Donau-University Krems was the most extensive one. It used participative observation, interviews with teachers and students, group discussions with teachers and school management, protocols of user behaviour (via student blogs), doc-
umentation and analysis. The evaluator Prof. Baumgartner also actively brought innovative ideas like the “network theory” and its implications into the project. One particular focus of the first evaluation was also to evaluate the project itself to decide about its future on the basis of the evaluation. While the first evaluation round was quite complex and time consuming based on the the variety of qualitative methods applied, the next rounds focused more on quantitative evaluation tools, also in response to the need of including a higher number of schools, but also applying qualitative methods.

The following annual evaluations were carried out by Maria Gutknecht-Gmeiner (2010/11, 2011/12 & 2012/13). These evaluations used a mixture of different methods like document analysis and evaluation of existing data, online questionnaires to teachers and students and qualitative feedback and reflection with school management and the project coordinator. For the 2012/2013 evaluation, setting up, completing and analysing a dataset of school participations (school monitoring) has been included for the first time. For all evaluation rounds, the majority of questions for the online-questionnaires remained the same, in order to enable continuity and comparisons in time. Generally, the participants of the project also appreciated and used the opportunity to give verbal feedback. These comments were used as an additional source for qualitative feedback. School visits were part of all evaluations.

In case a simultaneous/real time evaluation process has been part of the initiative: What have been the obstacles to implement it, and why?

One difficulty with the evaluation was the percentage of teachers and students who filled in the questionnaire and identifying who is responsible for ensuring a sufficient response rate. The readiness of the schools to reply to the questionnaires differed between different school types. The response rate of the teachers increased over the years from 54% (2010/11), 69% (2011/12) to 85% (2012/13) in the last evaluation round. For students, it decreased from 48% (2010/11) and 56% (2011/12) to only 34% in the last evaluation round. One method that worked well to increase the response rate was to collect information about the school management already during the project implementation and only complete this information for the evaluation.

One issue during the evaluation round 2010/11 was that two teachers did not appreciate critical feedback from evaluators (who were also teachers) visiting their lesson. The evaluators did not give any verbal comment to the observed colleague but included it without further comments in the project report. This way to proceed had a very negative impact on the school’s motivation to participate in
the project. Lessons learnt were that the research design for the observation visits has to be selected carefully and that the teachers being observed should get the possibility to comment on the observation results before those are included in a final report.

8.ACHIEVEMENT OF INITIATIVE’S AIMS

Have the original aims of the initiative been achieved?

The aims of the project were to develop the pedagogical use of mobile devices in class and to foster the cooperation between different school types. The focus is on the integration of mobile devices in the lessons in order to make them more competence oriented and to improve the quality of the lesson. In general, the initiative has been perceived as quite successful. In particular, fostering the peer exchange between schools has worked well.

In particular, the following positive results of working with mobile devices have been highlighted: The majority of students and teachers think that mobile devices bring more variety in the classroom, increase students’ motivation and allow them to work more independently. 43% of the teachers think that the students’ learning success regarding key competences improved (evaluation report 2012/13).

During the cluster projects several achievements of the project became apparent: students digital competences and media literacy improved as well as their subject knowledge. Furthermore, social competences were fostered, e.g. empathic skills, collaboration skills, project management and pedagogical skills. The project work also improved the relationship between students and their teacher. Finally, the project fostered teachers’ professional development and motivation.

Other aims of the project have not been achieved yet. While there is a trend towards more group work, the levels expected have not been achieved yet. For 2012, 60% of the teachers stated that they encouraged their students always or often work individually (for 2013, it was 53%). Only 15% of the teachers were of the opinion that the use of mobile devices increased their students’ success in learning, 60% stated that it was the same, 17% did not know and 8% found it to be worse (evaluation report 2012/13).

One issue the project devoted particular attention to was the potential of mobile devices to distract the students’ attention. For the school year 2011/12, 42% of the students said that they got distracted by the mobile device. For 2012/13, only 29% were still of that opinion. This time, 20% of them stated that they were more concentrated in class when using the device. However, 55% of the teachers were still of the opinion that the students got distracted
by the devices. The majority of teachers, however, do not seem to see this risk of distraction as a fundamental problem for the use of mobile devices.

9. NEXT STEPS

What is planned next for the initiative?
After a break during the school year 2013/2014, the project will start again in September 2014. There could be a stronger focus on content (ebooks, MOOCs) and context questions (e.g. forms of intervention in the lessons). Other topics considered for the future of the project is using the flipped classroom concept to support media literacy and to engage in an exchange at international level.

10. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION


European Schoolnet is the coordinator of the KeyCoNet project.

European Schoolnet is a network of 30 Ministries of Education from across the European member states, leading educational innovation at European level. As a major international think tank, European Schoolnet operates key European services in education on behalf of the European Commission, member Ministries of Education and industry partners.

European Schoolnet’s activities are divided among three areas of work:

- Policy, research and innovation: information sharing and evidence building.
- Schools services: enhancing cooperation between schools across Europe.
- Advocacy: how ICT and digital media contribute to transforming teaching and learning processes.

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