

School information systems: the publisher Kosmos intends to tackle “complexity” with a cloud offer

By Cyril Duchamp



“We think that the information system in schools is too complex today”, it’s a “patchwork of different systems” going from the web portal to the tools of school life or library management, and “all of that has to dialogue” with the applications of the National Education system, says Jean Planet, CEO of multimedia software house Kosmos, talking to AEF on 22 September 2015. Having “merged” before the summer with N-France, a hosting company specialised in quality assurance, it intends, at the start of the school year, to propose a cloud service offer dedicated to schools in order to “cover all the functional areas” of their management. Moreover, Kosmos has just won a tender from Eure county council for the rollout of its Digital School Environment (DSE) across all secondary schools, which will enable it to cover Rouen’s entire regional education authority.

22 September 2015 — Jean Planet, Kosmos CEO, tells AEF that the multimedia educational solutions publisher, positioned in particular in the DSE market, is currently pursuing an investment strategy in order to “propose SaaS” for the management of schools. The idea is to become the “Salesforce.com of education”, with an online service available from the start of the 2016 school year integrating the “functional areas” of EPLE management. To do this, Kosmos made a “significant strategic movement before the summer” with the buyout of French open source quality assurance specialist N-France.

“We think that the information system in schools is too complex, it’s a patchwork of different systems going from the web portal to the intranet, tools of school life, messaging service, library management, etc. All of that has to dialogue with institutional legacy systems such as Siècle or small ERP systems for private schools and universities,” analyses Jean Planet.

Now at the head of N-France, he can count on a datacentre located in Toulouse and aims to “provide services with personal data protection thanks to hosting guaranteed in France.” Jean Planet emphasises that, with the third phase of decentralisation legislation that established the transfer of IT teams’ maintenance skills to local authorities, the background appears conducive for a SaaS offer while secondary schools have an average of five servers. Thanks to the merger with N-France, Kosmos has announced a turnover of €10m and about a hundred employees. The company intends to step up its investment in products and R & D, “increasing the part of its turnover dedicated to innovation from 30% to 40%.”

GENERALISATION OF THE DSE ACROSS THE ROUEN REGIONAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY

In the DSE market, Kosmos won a generalisation contract for Eure county before the summer, which will let it fit out all the state secondary schools in the Rouen regional education authority. Today, the Nantes company claims “over 52% of secondary establishments equipped with a Virtual Learning Environment in France”, which means that 2,200 secondary schools and high schools use its solution. In particular, it has rolled out the Arsène76 Virtual Learning Environment for 200,000 users in Seine-Maritime who will be able to use it from the beginning of the 2016 school year.

For Jean Planet, the DSE has to be a “citizen portal for e-education” integrating the “pedagogical dimension and the missions developed by local authorities.” The tool must also be able to “mask the complexity of the structure of governance between institutions, regional education authorities and local authorities” so that users can access a whole range of services managed by multiple players. The solution also enables “the running of school and university networks” for “cross-cutting, interdisciplinary collaborative projects.”

In practical terms, it may be a question of “pushing information to targeted populations in order to unite the educational community”, “organising disciplinary work between teachers”, exchange between staff such as chefs, and “facilitating academic communication by targeting teachers by discipline, technicians by job functions, etc.”