
Editorial

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Biographical notes: Margriet Simmerling is Peer Consultant/Senior Manager in R&D projects in the area of e-society and web-based communities. She participates in the Advisory Board for the Dutch Ministry of Economical Affairs and is active as expert and reviewer for the European Commission. She designs and moderates e-learning modules and workshops in the domain of education technology and psychology at the PhD level.

Dr. Piet Kommers is Associate Professor at the University of Twente and part time Lector at the Fontys Academy in The Netherlands. His specialties are advanced learning tools like Concept Mapping, Virtual Reality and Mobile Learning. His research and teaching stretches from teacher education via European Joint Research Projects to international projects under the auspices of UNESCO.

His recent publications are on learner's preconceptions and representations that express pre-intuitive ideas before the actual learning may start: *Cognitive Support for Learning* and *Imagining the Unknown*. He is editor in several research journals and organises conferences in mobile learning, e-society and web-based communities.

1 Introduction

With the knowledge of, and experience in web-based communities, we can make a major contribution to successful learning. In this issue of the *International Journal of Web Based Communities*, we focus on collaborative learning in virtual learning environments.

Research done on the theoretical aspects of the WBC framework are combined with new findings on the practical integration of WIKIs, mobile phones, educational portals and Digital Educational Repositories.

Finding new ways of education and teaching is recognised as an urgent issue. The goal stays the same: to help the students prepare themselves to take advantage of the opportunities that will occur in the near future.

The traditional educational model is excellent for teaching traditional knowledge, but let us look into the near future. Creativity and cooperational skills become important to face the future challenges.

How can this be integrated into education and training?

Glasser (1986), pointed out that the learning results of students are at a maximum, when they are allowed and stimulated to formulate their own thoughts and share/discuss them with others. He indicated a relation between how we learn (the approach) and the end result (effectiveness of that what we have studied):

“We learn . . .
 10% of what we read
 20% of what we hear
 30% of what we see
 50% of what we see and hear
 70% of what we discuss
 80% of what we experience
 95% of what we teach others.”

The crucial notion in cooperative learning is that learners benefit from additional roles like expressing prior knowledge and experiences. Complementary to formal learning scenarios, WWW-based communities offer just-in-time help so that learners become aware of alternative ways of thinking as well. This is in contrast to school-based learning that propagates ‘ideal’ solutions, which are sterile and abstracted from real situations as well.

Learning in WWW-based communities has a great potential for consolidating the marginal borderlines of expertise. Articulating the best practice solutions can be circulated but also commented on if exceptions are at stake.

- The article by Demetrios Sampson demonstrates the synergy between course-based learning systems and the concerted interactions among members of learning communities.
- Elaine Maher and Pramod Pathak elaborate further on the repositories that emerge when sequences of WWW-based consultation spreads around learning communities. Inevitably, these anchoring points of earlier exchange encourage newcomers to start with their own risks and opportunities.
- The article of Haruo Nishinosono, Shiho Mochizuki and Hitoshi Miyata signals the danger of too large massifications and pleads for new teacher roles in which PDAs and synthetic concepts play a dominant role. Designing autonomous learning environments rather than orchestrating instructional uniformity are the solution. On top of that, the MACETO model highlights the need for teamwork competences.
- Naomi Augar, Ruth Raitman and Wanlei Zhou see the importance of WIKIs for fostering WWW-based communities. The power of democratic annotation is the more in-depth appeal on students’ imagination and self-reflection. Self-efficacy and identity relying on social status are the potential incentive for altruistic motives here.
- Felix Schmitz-Justen and Adalbert Wilhelm focus on online forums. Remarkable in their article is the distinction between ‘perceived service quality’ and ‘perceived quality of content’ plus the dependency of ‘perceived service quality’ and ‘perceived quality of content’.

- Javier Vélez, Beatriz Barros and Felisa Verdejo zoom in on the aspect of web-based tools for welding new and existing groups. An awareness of the social-level schema helps forums to monitor and reinstate policies.
- Peter Hester brings forward learners as global scientists. In Hester's view, the network has more potential than the tightly knit communities. Versatility is the main asset as already signalled in the other articles of this journal's special issue.

The above trends have been signalled and confirmed during the recent WBC conferences, where experts in the field took the opportunity to meet and discuss the latest findings.

We are confident that this issue again contributes to this process and we kindly invite you to join us. May many new research perspectives be discussed during the coming years.

Reference

Glasser, W. (1986) *Control Theory in the Classroom*, New York: Harper & Row.