

Symposium: Participatory design of web-based learning environments: Challenges and Responses

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Abstract

Calls for reforming education often stumble upon misinterpreted policies, conflicting priorities, misjudged expectations, and lethal adaptations of curricula from one context to the other. If the educational community is to overcome these problems we need to create learning communities that bridge the isolated paths of university researchers, classroom practitioners, scientists, and curriculum designers. However, little work exists about how teams with diverse backgrounds engage in collaborative and participatory design of learning environments. Even though engaging key players in the process of design is inviting, prior experience points to problems that arise due to diverse backgrounds. This symposium will present efforts for creating collaborations between teachers, researchers, and scientists in three different countries (Germany, Greece, Cyprus) with the goal of designing and enacting an interactive, web-based learning environment to support inquiry and decision making about a controversial socio-scientific topic. Even though the four collaborating teams (Local Working Groups –LWGs-) have worked together to establish a common theoretical framework, each team has autonomy in framing, designing, and implementing their interactive learning environment. Each collaborating team will explain their theoretical framework, and describe the process of collaborative and participatory design and the methodology they are using to document it. Data will be presented on the challenges that have emerged from their respective, one-year effort to work together, and the ways they attempted to address them. The discussant will synthesize the individual contributions and will highlight points of convergence and divergence. This symposium will describe the process of collaborative and participatory design of four LWGs working in three different national contexts, using cases studies from each LWG. Such discussion will contribute to a richer understanding of what happens during collaborative design involving teachers and researchers, foremost, and will inform the educational research community of potential challenges and possible solutions to address them.