

THE IMPACT AND DEPENDENCIES OF DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

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Introduction

During the development of an educational curriculum, many decisions have to be made throughout all the development phases. All of them will influence the possibilities and eventual quality of education, and many stakeholders are involved with this process. The relation and interdependencies between the factors and aspects that eventually result in a curriculum are not always clear, nor can they always be influenced freely. This research focusses on the physical environment in which education takes place, and how these environments are designed, how they influence each stakeholder and how each stakeholder influences the design process thereof.

Objective

In this research it is not the aim to determine a general definition of positive learning environment, since this can be different from each perspective, depending on the performance indicators related to a stakeholders' role in the learning environment. The goal of this research is to get more grasp and insight in the design process of the environment in which education takes place. The aim is to facilitate and stimulate the decision-making process towards a most appropriate environment, and to understand and give insight in the relations and dependencies different stakeholders of the environment have with each other.

How are the demands for a learning environment from different stakeholders related to each other, and how do they influence each other?

What are, in the perspective of the individual stakeholders, the key characteristics and/or elements of the learning environment that will have a certain impact on the quality of the environment.

Result

An approach to make all the information visible and to relate information to each other can be found in the use of graph overviews. These information repositories relate information to each other by adding meta data to the collected information. This meta data will consist of adding tags that contain information about the relation of information to the provided data from each individual stakeholder or external source. These tags will contain for example information about the form of education, the number of participants, the type of stakeholder, the costs involved, etc. These tags will be used to visualize similarities and relations between the different parts of an educational environment and the influence stakeholders have on it.

The graph can be considered as an information repository where everybody can add information. This information is directly put into context by linking it to other elements in the environment. Also, information available from current learning environment could be added, and used to recognize clusters or visualize unknown relations between stakeholders. Since the number of relations is endless, and not predetermined, everybody can add the information from their own perspective. Navigation through the information can be done from every perspective.

Implementation

Visualizing the information makes it communicable and will trigger discussion, but also requires that the tool should be kept up to date. From a managerial vision the decision must be made to use this tool as the standard information repository for learning environment. In that case it can also include future visions or wishes from individual stakeholders. Every desired functionality can be added to the graph with a relation to for example a lecturer, study programme and form of education. These open initiatives could trigger others to make a link to the new desired functionality themselves. This collective data source has not a single owner but should be a collaborative initiative. The goal should be to also add the rationale and decisions-making process of each learning environment. If that information is available, the impact of changes to the environment can be visualized on beforehand, and the risks can be better managed.

Conclusion

Using a shared information repository, accessible via a graph interface, can stimulate and facilitate this process without steering the outcome or adding more overhead. Since this is only a tool, it can only become useful if it is being used. The provided approach will not provide automatically the most appropriate solution in the form of a learning environment, but it will enable all stakeholders to contribute to it, and to see the impact of decisions. The expertise of each individual forms the base for the intelligence of this system.

