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Toward a model for the conceptual understanding of personal learning environments: A case study.

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Summary: The development of Personal Learning Environments (PLEs) is in the scope of research groups and educators aiming to propose suitable mechanisms for the organization of self-controlled and self-directed learning, providing students with tools and services for access to content and human intelligence inside and outside the educational institutions. The students' understanding about the PLE purpose, tools, and applications utilization according to their preferences and learning styles, arrangement of a learning process, social functions empowering is an important phase of the design of personal learning space. In the development and adoption of such environments, it is essential that students' opinion and viewpoints are taken into consideration, This provokes the present exploration of students' preferences, learning styles and needs in the point of view of their preliminary preparation and conceptual understanding of the technical and pedagogical aspects of PLE building. In this article, a model of PLE conceptual understanding is proposed. It is created according to students' perspective during the past year and it is elaborated with new students this year. Several surveys are developed to support students' self-cognition about learning needs, styles, and goals and to construct the vision of PLE organization. The results from preliminary understanding of PLE and opinions after working with the Personal Learning Environment Framework (PLEF), developed at RWTH Aachen University, Germany, are compared and analyzed. A 2-year project was held with bachelor degree students at Technical University-Sofia, College of Energetics and Electronics, Department of Electronics and Computer Science.

Classification: U50 R30 C20 C30

Keywords: CAI; web-based education; distance learning; educational research; interviews; adaptation; personal learning environment building; PLE building; PLE conceptual understanding; e-learning; computer as educational medium; information and communication technologies; self-cognition; self-organization; self-planning of personal development; PLEF; students' expectations; student attitudes; student opinions
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