

WEILER 2013: Workshop on solutions that enhance informal learning recognition

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Abstract. The increasing presence of Web 2.0 media and tools in the workplace makes informal learning increasingly important and its recognition there becomes especially relevant since this can enhance employability, producing positive benefits for managers and companies, and give employees opportunities to learn and keep their skills up-to-date, etc. Thus, taking into account the technological and organizational innovation and the affordances of the Internet, it is necessary to define new methodologies and tools to make visible and manage this informal learning. This workshop will gather experiences about informal learning recognition, focusing on, but not limited to: validation of informal learning experiences, institutional management of informal knowledge, making use of representations of informal learning, decision making informed by informal learning experiences and using of learning analytics to document or promote informal learning.

Keywords: Informal Learning; Competences; Knowledge Management; Personal Learning Environments; Learning Ecosystems

1 Rationale

The increasing adoption of both web-based and mobile technologies, and their convergence, has for some years been making the existence of informal learning more and more transparent, especially among young and older adults in both Higher Education (HE) and workplace contexts [1].

The individual, as a social animal, learns in a range of different contexts, from her interaction with other persons, from her experience, etc. In many contexts the learning is neither planned nor structured. The concept of informal learning was coined in the middle of the twentieth century there are several definitions [2, 3], and more recent ones [4, 5]. Today, informal learning is becoming again the centre of discussion for several reasons: 1) The recognition that Bologna process is giving to informal learning [6] as a basic element in lifelong learning; 2) The pressing need to be able to demonstrate learning that in many cases is obtained by observation and experience

[7]; and 3) because of the emergence of the Internet, mobile devices and 2.0 Web tools that facilitate this kind of learning [8-10].

In the workplace the recognition of informal learning is especially relevant because among other reasons [11, 12] it enhances employability and produces positive benefits for managers and companies; it can develop task skills and knowhow and communicates “social” norms and preferred patterns of behaviour; it gives employees the opportunity to learn and keep their skills up-to-date, while being part of the overall workplace culture rather than just its training regime; etc. These issues have given rise to an interest in informal learning in the corporate world, driven by the desire to capitalise on the intellectual assets of the workforce and manage organisational knowledge and the recognition that informal learning may prove a cost effective way of developing competence [7].

Given this it is necessary to define new methodologies and tools to make visible and manage this informal learning. Such methodologies and tools should have the following characteristics. Firstly, these tools need to enable learners to identify the competences that they have achieved through activities in informal environments. Secondly, they should enable users to claim their competences across the range of contexts in which they are active. Thirdly, users should be provided with a view of the competences, which are most relevant for the institution that they are addressing, and the fit of their profile to the institution. Fourthly, users should be enabled to find other people with similar interests. The resulting system should be of value both to private individuals, in demonstrating their learning, and also to representatives of employers and education institutions in orienting and responding to informal learning. The workshop will gather methodologies and tools that address one or more of the aspects of the management of informal and non-formal learning which we identify above. This will form the basis for the topics of the workshop:

- Validation of informal learning experiences.
- Institutional management of informal knowledge.
- Making use of representations of informal learning.
- Decision making informed by informal learning experiences.
- The use of learning analytics to document or promote informal learning.

2 Methodology

In order to take part in the workshop prospective participants should send an 8-page manuscript in LCNS format. Each paper will be subject to a blind peer review process and if approved it will accepted to be presented in the workshop and be published in a conference post-proceedings volume published by Springer. Selected papers will be invited to be extended for a Special Issue related to informal learning experiences. At least 10 papers will be presented at the workshop.

Contributions will be sorted in sessions by topics. The different sessions will be held as panels consisting of a maximum of 5 presenters, with a chairperson moderating.

For each session, authors will briefly present an overview of their submission, with a maximum time allowance of 10 minutes. This presentation will be a summary of the submission but also could include a general description of their research.

Following the presentations, the moderators will start a debate with the authors addressing the main contributions of each paper, focusing on common and divergent points. This debate will have duration of between 30 and 45 minutes, and may include active participation from the audience via social networks –e.g. microblogging tools–. At the end of the debate, an open round of questions will be held, with a maximum of thirty minutes.

3 The workshop team

This workshop is edited by PhD. Miguel Ángel Conde (who is also the organization committee chair), PhD. Francisco J. García-Peñalvo (who is also the Programme Committee chair) and Prof. PhD. Dai Griffiths.

Doctors from different universities compose the scientific committee for the workshop. Most of them are or have been involved in projects related to informal learning, such as TRAILER project [13], TEN Competence project [14, 15], etc. The components are:

- PhD. Dai Griffiths, University of Bolton, UK
- PhD. Francisco J. García-Peñalvo, University of Salamanca, Spain
- PhD. Miguel A. Conde, University of León, Spain
- PhD. María José Rodríguez-Conde, University of Salamanca, Spain
- PhD. Marc Alier, Tech University of Barcelona, Spain
- PhD. María J. Casany, Tech University of Barcelona, Spain
- PhD. Peter Sloep, Open University of Netherlands, The Netherlands
- PhD. Francis Brouns, Open University of Netherlands, The Netherlands
- PhD. Gustavo Ribeiro Alves, Polytechnic of Porto, Portugal
- PhD. Clara Viegas, Polytechnic of Porto, Portugal
- PhD. Miroslav Minovic, University of Belgrade, Serbia
- PhD. Milos Milovanovic, University of Belgrade, Serbia
- PhD. Mark Johnson, University of Bolton, UK
- PhD. Ricardo Colomo-Palacios, University Carlos III of Madrid, Spain
- PhD. Ángel Hernández-García, Tech University of Madrid, Spain

The scientific committee will be in charge of the peer review of the workshop papers in order to ensure the quality of the workshop.

3 Accepted papers

For the workshop 6 papers have been accepted and 3 rejected because they do not fit with the workshop topic.

The six accepted papers could be classified in to three groups:

- MOOCS and Informal Learning. The paper is entitled: Supporting crowdsourcing in MOOC informal face-to-face meetings. It poses an approach to lead face-to-face informal meetings and to gather the main conclusions.
- Situated Informal Learning. The paper is entitled: “Tag-based Experiences for Supporting Collaboration at the Workplace”. It describes the potentiality of the use of mobiles and Quick Response (QR) Codes to enhance informal learning activities at the workplace.
- TRAILER project. There are four papers related to this project:
 - “Enhancing informal learning recognition through TRAILER project”, that presents the project, its aims and some of the outcomes.
 - “Considering a pull mechanism for an Informal Learning Activities Collector“. It describes the ILC TRAILER project component and poses a way to improve it based in a pulling technique.
 - “Managing Informal Learning in professional contexts: the learner’s perspective”. It presents the results of some of the TRAILER project pilots carried out to check the methodology and framework defined.
 - “What is Lifelong Learning About? – Reflections on the TRAILER Project”. This paper explores the experience of TRAILER project and poses possible solutions to problems that have appeared during it, opening in this way new possibilities of research.

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