

Wiki and Student Models - a handshake in Distance Education field?

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Abstract: The current paper discusses the potential use of Wiki as an environment for the formation of student models during distance education sessions. The idea of student models is not novel, rather their benefits in distance education. The up growth use of Wiki environment signals the culmination of variety collaborative activities in the field of distance education. Is it proper and what is the possible benefit for instructors of using Wiki as an environment for co-development of student model?

Key-Words: Wiki, Student Models, collaborative Student Modelling, Distance Education

1 Introduction

A variety of definitions are available in literature regarding Student Models. According to Barr et al, "Student Model represents student understanding of the material to be taught with the purpose to make hypotheses about student's misconceptions and suboptimal performance strategies" [1]

Jim Greer illustrates in bullets, the different interpretations that a Student Model may have, by indicating that such model may be:

- An abstract representation of the learner.
- Teacher's conceptualisation of a learner.
- System's beliefs about the learner.
- System's beliefs about the learner's beliefs and skills.
- It may include history of learner actions (raw data)
- Interpretations of raw data.
- Explanations of behaviour [4].

Employment of Student Models as a valuable tool for instructors is not a new idea. Several different uses of Student Models had been reported in the literature [5], [10], [11], [15]. When it comes to distance Education, student models mean to help the teacher to achieve more effective educational sessions, rather than to act as monitoring and diagnosing tool for the

simulation of a virtual tutor. The Student Model act as an intermediate communication component between the tutor and the students, recording the tutor's suggestions and feedback regarding the students' progress in addition to the comments made by the students regarding their personal problems or the misconceptions occurred [14]. This new adopted role of Student Models in distance education has raised the issue of opening the access to them, also by the students and the teachers, for inspection and tuning reasons [8]. The so called Open Student Model [9] requires by its definition, the collaboration among students and tutors in order to negotiate and modulate its scheme. A lot of researchers from Suzan Bull [3] and J. Kay [6] to Zapata-Rivera and Greer [17],[18] alleged that, opening the Student Model to students/tutors can encourage the learner reflection, as the awareness about what have been mastered or not, and therefore enhance the learning process.

Though a lot of research has been dedicated to open student models to the students, few researches have been dedicated in opening them to tutors [17]. According to Mazza, "If the open student model has demonstrated to enhance the learning process for students, it's likely to be

