

Introduction to the Minitrack on E-Learning, Online Training and Education

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The E-Learning, Online Training and Education (OTE) minitrack this year has several exciting papers that offers innovative methods towards delivering distance education effectively, including practical and theoretical innovations. The presentations in this minitrack are certain to benefit audiences from a wide variety of disciplines, particularly educators. The world is going through one of the extended pandemic in recent times that has forced teachers and students to interact away from traditional classroom settings. While bringing the classrooms to student homes presented a technical challenge, various considerations such as individual student background, their preferred ways of learning and communication need to be taken into account. The papers in this track address many of these issues and describe the results of various innovative distance learning studies. The track will also be of interest to software developers with some of the papers discussing the design and implementation of autonomous bots. It may also encourage instructors who might be motivated to developing their own customized bots. We can all benefit from these presentations in understanding what approaches work best and adapt to suit our own individual settings.

In all there are seven presentations in this minitrack. An abridged content of three of the papers are outlined here.

The first paper discusses about student perception of differences in their peer engagement while using an online platform vs. being physically in the same classroom. The authors describe how a course was adapted to hybrid delivery mode to mitigate the differences. Their solution centered on the use of a professional communication platform called Slack to align individual interests and participation opportunities in order to facilitate peer learning. They also used specific tools and techniques to mitigate online fatigue.

The authors critically evaluate the results and summarize their experiences from which conference attendees can all benefit.

Another paper compares perceived differences in student group project presentations in traditional face-to-face classes vs. those watched online. The authors examine the limits of student engagement and learning in an asynchronous online context. The online learning platform collected behavior data for each student through objective observation as a proxy for engagement which they compared to self-reported attitudes. Based on their analysis, suggestions are offered for improving the design of online presentations and peer-review assignments. Conference attendees who use online presentations often, particularly in class case study assignments, will find many helpful guidelines in improving the attention and effectiveness of their students/ audiences in their own settings.

The minitrack also includes papers that contribute theory in the area of learning analytics. We live in an era where knowledge is accelerating which is increasingly distributed and learned through a variety of digital media tools. Current literature shows a proliferation of learning analytics use cases without a systematic structure. The challenge here is how do we provide the right knowledge in an individually tailored manner. This paper contends that to make platforms intelligent, the use of learning analytics in its multifaceted forms is the best approach. Based on a structured literature review, this paper organizes existing literature contributions systematically into four use cases. Attendees with theoretical bent will find this presentation provocative and summon them for a targeted scientific discourse in setting a direction for the development of future learning analytics.