INTRODUCTION

Virtual campuses and educational organisations are experiencing a shift from the traditional sharing of learning material and applications as the main purpose of e-learning systems to an emergent paradigm, which locates learners at the very centre of networks and exploits the value of learners' connections and relations. Mobile and Web 2.0 technologies, among others, have come to play a major role in this context by enabling a new generation of social networks and communities for e-learning and dramatically changing the way all the actors involved use and interact with Web-based learning systems. In particular, intelligent networking opens up new opportunities for time management in the learning process from traditional time constraints and becomes an important factor to consider.

The aim of this issue is to respond to the need for methodologies and tools that support intelligent networking focusing on time as an important factor in the e-learning context. To this end, this issue comprises six articles selected for their originality, significance, and clarity of exposition that tackle current issues and challenges related to time in intelligent networking for e-learning. The six articles are organised in two sections, as follows:

From a methodological perspective, this issue distinguishes three relevant elements in relation to time within a networking environment. In Kordaki's work, time is considered as a context dependent factor and influences the role that online teachers undertake as researchers and model builders of learners' needs. Then, Casillas, in his work, considers time as an important element of effective collaboration in online platforms, by presenting an approach that analyses different temporal behaviours shown during collaborative learning, in particular participants' responsive immediateness to contributions made by their partners. Finally, Feidakis, in his work, incorporates time as an important factor in influencing the way feedback strategies should be constructed in order to address aspects of emotion and affect assessment more effectively.

From the technological perspective, the time factor is also investigated from the use of several technologies that support networking in e-learning. Pérez-Mateo et al., explore how wiki-based tools may favour the acquisition of key competences associated with a virtual environment in terms of interaction, organisation and planning and construction of knowledge. In addition, they study how the wiki can promote effectiveness in a networking environment and facilitate time management when students construct knowledge together. In his contribution, Moore identifies the need to personalise educational provision in a mobile context along with developing Web 2.0 technologies and provide anytime-anywhere e-learning networking, which forms an important component within an e-learning environment to provide a basis for collaboration on educational matters as well as social networking at times to suit the selected study times. Finally, Mora et al., introduce a new type of Learning Object called Collaborative Complex Learning Object (CC-LO) embedded into an innovative tool named Virtualized Collaborative Sessions (VCS) aiming at providing support to networking from both collaborative and social learning and the interrelations between the two. The time factor is implicitly incorporated in the VCS by providing just-in-time conversion of live collaborative sessions into an animated CC-LO so that learners can observe and receive immediate feedback of how people collaborate and socialise and how networking is produced and consolidated.

We hope that the readers find this issue fruitful and that it helps them accomplish their research goals. We hope you enjoy reading this issue!

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