

Design patterns for e-learning

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The e-learning field is growing from childhood to adolescence. Educational professionals obtain more and more experience with the design and implementation of networked-based learning environments. Unfortunately, this experience is not structurally collected yet and represented in handy overviews, so other professionals can profit of them in new design contexts. This is exactly one of the aims of the E-LEN project: it aims to develop and disseminate design knowledge tailored to the needs of people who are professionally involved in e-learning, such as the staff of e-learning centres.

To abstract and express the knowledge out of daily practice we use a kind of instrument: the idea of a 'design pattern'. For people who are now frowning a short introduction: design patterns originate in the work of the architect Christopher Alexander. They have been adopted in software engineering and are now flowing into other areas, such as educational design. A pattern 'describes a problem which occurs over and over again in our environment and then describes the core of the solution to that problem, in such a way that you can use this solution a million times over, without ever doing it the same way twice'(Alexander et.al, 1977, A pattern language, Oxford University Press). Design patterns provide a structure for integrating the analysis and solution of a problem, in a way that is sensitive to context and informed by theory and evidence. A pattern suggests rather than prescribes a solution. Solutions are intentionally incomplete: they offer guidance but require embellishment. The analyses of this problem-solution pair and the forces which are acting in the context are made explicit in a template which is accepted within a community. All community members try to describe their solutions to problems in the e-learning field with help of this template, so a kind of structured knowledge base is created.

Design patterns make best sense when they are seen in relationship to another. A pattern language is a structure of interrelated design patterns. As the members of the design team become immersed in the pattern language, they find better ways to talk about their educational beliefs – sharing their intuitions about good learning and teaching.

For people who have become interested in the phenomena 'design patterns' and want to obtain some experience with applying them, you can find a pattern who helps you to write patterns on: <http://hillside.net/patterns/writin...ritingpaper.htm> .

And, if you are satisfied with the result, you might even want to share them with us in this forum or through the E-LEN project site ?

More info on E-LEN:

<http://www.tisip.no/E-LEN/>

More info on patterns:

<http://hillside.net/patterns/>

<http://www.welie.com/patterns/chi20...shop/index.html>

<http://www.pedagogicalpatterns.org/>