

HÖGSKOLAN VÄST

Designing for Adaptable Learning

AMIR HAJ-BOLOURI

AKADEMISK AVHANDLING

som med tillstånd av Forsknings- och forskarutbildningsnämnden
vid Högskolan Väst, för avläggande av doktorsexamen i Informatik med Inriktning mot
Arbetsintegrerat Lärande, framläggs för offentlig granskning.

Onsdagen den 23 maj 2018 klockan 13 i F104, Albertsalen, Högskolan Väst

Opponent: Professor Maung Sein

ABSTRACT

Title: Designing for Adaptable Learning

Keywords: Design, action design research, design science research, information systems, integration work, civic orientation, work-integrated learning, e-learning, adaptable learning

ISBN (Printed): 978-91-87531-84-2

ISBN (Electronic): 978-91-87531-83-5

The research in this thesis emphasizes the endeavor of designing for adaptable learning. Designing for adaptable learning is understood as an overall response to designing for integration work. Designing for integration work is thus classified as a special case of designing for adaptable learning. Integration work in this research is understood as a professional practice that aims to improve and support the integration process of newly arrived immigrants (referred to as newcomers) in society. As professional practitioners of integration work, integration workers face daily challenges that are wicked by nature. In order to understand and problematize these challenges, the empirical work of this research was organized and performed within a case of digitalizing the civic orientation program in Sweden. The civic orientation program is a special case of integration work in Sweden, where integration workers organize and provide civic orientation to newcomers in Sweden. Different groups of newcomers are subsequently participating in a required 60 hours of civic orientation and are provided sessions through their native language. The integration workers are responsible for organizing and performing civic orientation through a dynamic process of dialogues, exercises, and more. Integration work as a practice, however, does not incorporate a standardized knowledge base, which provides integration workers a unified way of organizing and performing civic orientation. Instead, different counties and municipalities in Sweden organize and perform civic orientation in various ways. Furthermore, due to the extreme heterogeneity among newcomers as participants in civic orientation, the integration workers are forced to adapt. In turn, the integration workers themselves are heterogeneous due to their different roles, areas of responsibilities, and more essentially, worldviews. In order to understand and problematize the aspects of designing for integration work, an explorative approach was adopted through three consecutive cycles of Action Design Research. The cycles were performed from 2013 until completion of this thesis. The thesis was subsequently governed through three research questions: (1) How to design for integration work? (2) What makes designing for integration work significant? (3) Why do design for integration work? The research questions were addressed and answered through a body of produced knowledge that captures and provides the essential contributions of the thesis. The contributions of the thesis highlight different aspects of designing for integration work, as a special case of designing for adaptable learning. Thus, the contributions are presented and discussed with an explicit bearing toward designing for adaptable learning, as the general class of problems and solutions of this research. The contributions are consequently provided through: (1) an ensemble artifact that is termed a digital platform for civic orientation; (2) an Information Systems Design Theory for adaptable e-learning; (3) a design research methodology that incorporates work-integrated learning; (4) the meta-design of an open learning platform that supports the social integration of newcomers in society; and (5) a philosophical concept that problematizes and conceptualizes the essence of presence in e-learning. Ultimately, the research contributes to the research domains of information systems and work-integrated learning, by providing findings that problematize core aspects of designing for adaptable learning. Furthermore, the thesis extensively discusses the findings of this research by emphasizing a philosophical perspective toward core aspects of the research contributions. Finally, the thesis concludes with a set of limitations of the current research and a brief discussion about potential endeavours of future research.