

A STUDENT-CENTRED VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT THAT PROVIDES A PLAYFUL APPROACH THROUGH A SENSE OF PLACE

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ABSTRACT

In our research we have developed a model for the design and development of a student-centred virtual learning environment that provides a sense of place. Architectural design becomes an important consideration when virtual learning environments are considered places (Clark and Maher, 2001). Traditional virtual learning environments are made up of two key elements: computing technology and education. In our model we introduce a third element: design theory, and therefore the concept of Learning by Designing. Designing and playing have much in common. Both activities require creativity, imagination, and reflection, and are situated and contextual in time and space. In this paper we explore the qualities of play and how providing a sense of place may support a playful experience.

We implemented a virtual learning environment, based on the model, into a web site design course in the Faculty of Architecture, University of Sydney. Students design a web site and provide practical representations of their design in a student gallery. The student gallery allows students to view and discuss each others work in a supportive peer environment. The web site design course provides a sense of place and playfulness that supports the concept of learning by designing. Students are provided with the opportunity to take ownership of their learning and engage in a collaborative experience with other students and the teacher. The virtual learning environment allows a sense of place and a sense of presence of others in the place. Students are free to work independently with very little restriction developing their own learning conditions. This type of virtual learning environment supports the concept of a sense of play.

REFERENCE

Clark, S and Maher, M.L., (2001) *The Role of Place in Designing a Learner-Centred Virtual Learning Environment*, Computer Aided Architectural Design Futures 2001, 187-200. Kluwer Academic Publishers, Netherlands.