Context or Culture: What is the Difference?

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Abstract. Literature can sometimes tend to present context and culture almost as synonyms. This creates ambiguity, which can complicate the consideration of contextual and cultural variables in instructional design, learning and teaching. From an ontological point of view, some clarification of these two concepts is essential as each may influence learning and teaching in different ways. Moreover, since context and culture are interconnected to a certain degree, one may influence the other. It is crucial to make a clear distinction between these two concepts in the knowledge models used in Intelligent Tutoring Systems (ITSs) if we want to facilitate 1) their consideration in pedagogical scenarios, and 2) the accumulation of knowledge about different contexts and cultures. This article offers an interpretation of the difference between these two concepts, presenting context as a substrate of culture. Contextual issues in the learning ecology are also discussed, based on this distinction.

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