

Interactive comment on “HydroViz: evaluation of a web-based tool for improving hydrology education” by E. Habib et al.

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The authors are presenting an interesting tool to make Hydrology understood by students. The presented web-based tool aims at improving the way student acquire knowledge in Hydrology by introducing topics in a step by step manner. The manuscript is well written and falls into the scope of the Special issue to present advances in Hydrology education in a changing world, and manuscript presents in details the evaluation done by the students who followed this method of learning.

Special comments: However the way in which the text of the manuscript is presented, it is in my own view, a major problem for being considered for publication at this moment. I am explaining here my view and I have, however, some suggestions to the authors, on how to solve the problem: The majority of text is taken from the website presenting the

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tool, including text and figures of other papers disseminating the tool, papers that are available to the public in the same website (<http://hydroviz.cilat.org/> - last accessed 30 March 2012). Therefore I would like to ask the authors to consider a different structure of the paper, a different way of introducing the tool, in order to avoid what is so-called, by some authors, as “self-plagiarism” (Not to mention that the text of the website is copyrighted to “Copyright © University of Louisiana at Lafayette, 2010”, and not to the authors of the submitted HESSD paper). My suggestion, to the authors, is to use very short summaries of what the web-based tool contains, and send the reader to the tool itself for the lengthy descriptions (e.g. catchment, modules, etc). Even the evaluation itself it is at length, presented in the website, under the item “Evaluation”. You could consider a new structure of the paper, in which you still keep the analysis of the data and the conclusions and recommendations, but you avoid duplicating your own text.

While I understand that your wish to disseminate a good tool to different audiences leads you to consider that the previous work needs to be restated in order to lay the groundwork for a new contribution, I still do not understand why you are not even citing yourself in the present article. For example the main author has a poster presented to a conference, where all the evaluation presented in the present manuscript submitted to HESSD, is presented in exactly the same manner.

General Comments: If the above issues are addressed then my comments to the paper would be that some of the sections of the paper should be more balanced. For example I find section 2, which presents the case study, very long, given the fact that the purpose of the paper is to present the evaluation of the learning experience, no matter the case study. If this is not the case, if the case study itself has an influence on learning the general notions in hydrology, then this should be clearly presented and commented. Moreover, the case study is presented in section 2, before any presentation of the modules, which are part of Section 4. I would suggest, to do the presentation of the case study as sub-section in what is now section 4. It was not clear for me, what is a module. There are 13 modules defined in Hydroviz, but they are not explained if

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these are topics to be addressed over one semester, or if each module is considered a subject in itself, each running for a whole semester. A clear study load for each module would have been helpful. It is stated in the paper that the study load was heavy, but not what would this mean: what is the equivalent of contact hours and study load time, as compared with a face to face course. Explanations of the designed time to follow the module, by a student, should be made available to the reader. I could not sort out if students participating in the evaluation are following these modules in a face to face mode, and using in parallel Hydroviz as a resource platform, while they have the chance to pose questions to a lecturer in Hydroviz, or they were students from all over the place following Hydroviz, as if it is one of their online courses. Are the Hydroviz modules, part of the student study track of a student? I understand that these modules were assessed, but it is not clear if these modules will become part of the students marking for the courses listed in table 2, or they participated in the evaluation of the Hydroviz on a voluntary basis. Why does the tool do not have any forum or blog space included in it.

Looking at Table 4, can you draw any conclusion regarding which topics are not well presented in Hydroviz? Maybe you can also conclude which topics needs improvement.

As very small remarks, section 6 is repeated twice. The Introduction part starts with “Several national reports ...”. I would state “several US ...”, because the reader can not know just from the abstract where is this assessment made.

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