Focus on critical evaluation and use of information – collaborative authoring of Wikipedia articles as a learning assignment

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Background of research

• Information literacy (IL)
  – Practices of/ability to locate, evaluate and use information

• Changing media & information environment
  – Access to information; new tools for learning

• IL and learning
  – Promoting independent (life-long) learning
  – Problems of IL instruction
Wikipedia (public wikis)

• Information source vs. publishing forum
• Potential advantages
  – Gives a taste of realism in essay assignments
  – Promotes assessment of information used, processing of information
  – Gives a standard for “scientific” writing
  – Keeps the focus on the subject to be learned
  – Forces to work on focused topics
  – Group work -> collaboration
Research Questions

• General
  – How do student teams work and proceed in authoring of a Wikipedia article?
  – How do students search, select and use information?
  – What kind of learning experiences on information practices do students report?

• Specific
  – What kind of problems do students face/discuss?
  – What information related practices become observable through collaboration?
Two pilot studies

- Upper secondary school/City of Tampere
- Pilot 1: Geography (9 weeks)
  - 9 Students
  - Data collection:
    - Pre-questionnaire, pre- and post-interviews
    - Non-participatory observations
    - Instructions, Wikipedia articles, Teacher’s written feedback
- Pilot 2: Biology (9 weeks)
  - 16 Students
  - Data collection
    - Difference: observations replaced by ethnographic interviews
# Preliminary findings 1

Problems expressed/discussed by students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem category</th>
<th>Hongisto &amp; Sormunen 2010 (n=163)</th>
<th>Pilot one (n=116)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information seeking and use</td>
<td>33 %</td>
<td>30 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work process</td>
<td>21 %</td>
<td>31 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End product (article)</td>
<td>16 %</td>
<td>13 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical problems</td>
<td>15 %</td>
<td>15 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject content of the course</td>
<td>15 %</td>
<td>11 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Preliminary findings 2

• Collaboration is not always preferred
  – Some groups
    • organize collaborative assignment into individual subtasks (may be efficient in terms of output)
    • work collaboratively on the assignment (may be effective in terms of learning outcomes)
    • are not able to collaborate or lack motivation to it

• Data collection problem
  – Non-participatory observer in the classroom may reduce collaboration
Further information

• Know-Id research project
  – Collaborative construction of knowledge and identities in school and teacher education
  – Funded by the Academy of Finland 2010-2013
  – Contact
    • Eero Sormunen (eero.sormunen@uta.fi)
    • Eero Ropo (eero.ropo@uta.fi)
  – Web pages
    • https://www12.uta.fi/blogs/know-id/
    • Slides of the presentation published here