Collective authoring of Wikipedia articles as a learning assignment in upper secondary school

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Background of research

• Independent information seeking common in schools
  – Internet, social media
• Information literacy (IL)
  – lifelong learning
• IL construction
  – students’ motivation problems
  – teachers’ problems to teach IL
Wikipedia

• Common to students
• Realism to the learning assignment
• Potential to develop students' IL skills
  – Argumentation
  – Responsibility to the readers
    • motivation
  – Neutral point of view
Research questions

1. How the courses were organized?
2. How do students collaborate in authoring of Wikipedia article?
3. What kind of experiences teachers report?
4. What kind of learning experiences do students report?
**Pilot studies**

- Upper secondary school/City of Tampere

- Pilot 1: Geography (8 weeks)
  - 10 Students
  - Data collection:
    - Pre-questionnaire, pre- and post-interviews
    - Non-participatory observations
    - Wikipedia articles, Teacher’s written feedback

- Pilot 2: Biology (8 weeks)
  - 16 Students
  - Data collection
    - Difference: observations replaced by context inquiry interviews
Course organisation

• Preparation
  – planning the topics of the assignment
• Introduction
  – introducing to the assignment and Wikipedia
• Working
  – working with articles
• Transfer
  – articles to Wikipedia
• Ending
  – exam or seminar
Collaboration

1) A shared goal and working together
   • collaborated in several phases

2) A shared goal but working separately
   • divided assignment to the sub-tasks

3) No shared goal and no collaboration
   • worked individually
Collaboration

• Collaboratively
  – Planning the task
• Separately
  – Information seeking
  – Writing the text
• Varied between groups
  – Choosing information sources
  – Finishing the article
  – Transferring it to Wikipedia
Teachers’ experiences

• Positive in project
  – Students were active
  – Most of the articles were appropriate
  – Learning outcomes were mostly achieved

• Challenging
  – Some motivation problems
  – Some problems with grouping
  – Scheduling
Students’ experiences of learning

Wikipedia

- tool, writing, assessment of information

- Own topic
  - but not of other’s

- Information and learning skills
  - evaluation of sources, copyright, information research
Students’ experiences of the assignment

• Positive feelings
  – Learning
    • Easyness, depth, beyond topic
  – Independence
    • From the teacher, own topic, decision making
  – Meaningfulness
    • Not for teacher’s eyes only
  – Nice because
  – Working in a group, different

• Negative feelings
  – Not enough subject content learned
    • Maturity exam!
  – Personal pressures
  – Balance between classroom/self-organized activities
Influence of Wikipedia

• Publishing pressure
• Carefulness
  – Use of information
    • citations
    • verify the facts
    • avoid copy-paste
  – Writing style
    • to keep language fluent
    • “Wikipedia-style”
Main study

• New courses on spring 2011
  – New subjects (finnish and history)

• More focused research questions
  – how and why students work like they work
  – connections to the group and characters of the group members

• Wikipedia and wiki
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/