Chapter 23
Face-to-Face and Web-Forum Interventions Promoting SRL Skills at University

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ABSTRACT

Based on recent findings about Self-Regulated Learning (SRL), we outline three educational interventions aimed at fostering students’ learning competence. Our particular focus is on the interaction between collaborative learning in Technology Enhanced Learning contexts and the development of SRL competencies. Two interventions carried out by our research team involved collaborative activities conducted both face-to-face and in web-based learning environments, aimed at promoting the SRL skills of first year university students. Based on the outcomes of these two projects, a further project for different departments was undertaken. This last intervention was designed to facilitate collaborative reflection on the components and processes of SRL through e-tivities and discussion forums. Our research suggests that collaboration in analyzing and working on the different competencies involved in self-regulated learning is an optimal means of enhancing the self-regulation competencies of university students.

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter starts from two assumptions. First, that collaborative learning promotes self-regulated learning (Nevgi, Virtanen & Niemi, 2006; Kravmarsi & Gutman, 2006; Fischer & Baird, 2005). Second, the specific features of web-enhanced learning environments can contribute to the development of self-regulated learning processes at different levels: cognitive, metacognitive, motivational and behavioural (Salovaara, 2005; Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2005; Barnard, Paton & Lan, 2008).

In the first part of the chapter we outline the Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) model which underpinned our interventions aimed at fostering students’ learning competencies. This section also provides a brief review of the current literature on the interaction between collaborative learning in web-enhanced learning environments and the development of self-regulation skills.

The second part of the chapter provides an overview of two different interventions carried out by our research team to develop the SRL skills of first year university students. The first was conducted face-to-face and involved theoretical and practical sessions on a range of SRL processes.

The second analyzed the impact on the development of SRL skills of collaboration on specific academic topics via an ICT platform. Based on the outcomes of these two projects, a third intervention for students of different departments was designed with the aim of facilitating collaborative reflection on the specific components and processes of SRL through e-tivities and discussion forums within an ICT platform. This last project and its outcome are described in detail in the final part of the chapter.

Our goal is to suggest good practices that may be implemented with students at university in order to enhance their SRL skills. The outcome of our interventions leads us to recommend the third form of intervention in particular as an effective means of promoting SRL among students at university.

SELF-REGULATED LEARNING: THE PROCESSES INVOLVED AND HOW THEY MAY BE ENHANCED

According to the leading theoretical models, Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) is made up of several components (Pintrich, 2000; Zimmerman, 2008). Although a single empirically validated model of Self-Regulated Learning that describes all the components and the interactions between them has not yet been identified, theorists agree that cognitive, metacognitive, motivational, affective and behavioural/environmental components all play a role in the development of a self-regulated learner (Boekaerts & Corno, 2005). At a cognitive level, a student needs to be familiar with, and implement, a range of strategies: both general study strategies, such as rehearsal, elaboration, integration and organization (Salovaara, 2005; Pintrich, 1999; Cornoldi, De Beni & Gruppo MT, 2001) and domain-specific or problem solving strategies, i.e. individual tactics that students use to perform well in a task (Schraw, Crippen & Hartley, 2006). Implementation of a given strategy is not necessarily automatic, often requiring the learners to metacognitively reflect on what they are doing. Learners can do this by planning, monitoring and evaluating their activity, so as to choose the most suitable strategies in accordance with the task features (Veenman, Van Hout-Wolters & Aflkerbach, 2006; Albanese, 2003; Albanese, Doudin & Martin, 2003; De Beni, Moë & Cornoldi, 2003).

Intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy and appropriate achievement goals help the student to persevere in the implementation of proper study methods, even when they are perceived as demanding (Bandura, 1989; Elliott & McGregor, 2001; Dweck, 1999). Students’ degree of perseverance is also influenced by the ability to self-regulate negative emotions and to optimize the advantages provided by positive emotions (Pekrun, Goetz, Titz & Perry, 2002). Finally, SRL involves adequate time and effort management, the choice of a suit-