Abstract

This chapter introduces peer reviewing as a form of collaborative online learning, which can be used in higher education. Peer reviewing encourages students to engage in reflective critical evaluation of each other’s work through participation in online discussion with their peers, who may be located anywhere in the world. The advantages of such an activity for students are described, using the experiences from two cases. The chapter highlights the impact that student and tutor motivation has on the successful participation of students in online peer reviewing activities, as well as perceived benefits for students, including acquiring various skills, and development of intercultural
Introduction

One of the main tasks of the modern education system is to prepare learners for participation in an information society where knowledge is the most critical resource for social and economic development, and where networking for knowledge sharing is an emerging skill. Effective communication skills, an ability to negotiate existing and create new knowledge, to critically evaluate information resources or a product, are among the transferable skills higher education aims to develop in students. Communication technologies based on the Internet give learners the opportunity to “talk” to their peers from different countries, and develop such skills. In this chapter, we investigate the pedagogical benefits afforded by a form of online collaborative learning, called peer reviewing, and we show, from our experience, some of the benefits students in higher education derive from such an activity. We also look at student and tutor motivation, and the challenge posed by overcoming difficulties of involving students in an international collaborative activity.

An important part of learning is reflecting on one’s learning of a concept, skill, or a topic, by discussion with one another. Learning together is a model used in higher education to encourage reflection on learning, whether by carrying out joint projects or by helping each other to understand learning material. Stahl (2002) notes that questioning each other, engaging in discussion, and synthesis of findings encourages learners in further questioning, development of hypotheses, and insights into the topic, which results in deeper learning. Dialogue between learners can elicit multiple perspectives and provoke cognitive conflict, encouraging development of critical skills and the ability for professional discussion, objectivity, and discursive reflection (Falchikov, 2001). Collaborative learning is working together in a joint intellectual effort in order to achieve learning outcomes, which may be enhanced when the learning partners bring different perspectives to a problem or topic (Alavi, 1994).
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