

TRAINING STUDENTS IN DISTRIBUTED COLLABORATION: EXPERIENCES FROM TWO PILOT PROJECTS

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ABSTRACT

Distributed collaboration supported by different forms of information and communication technologies (ICT) is becoming increasingly widespread. Effective realization of technology supported, distributed collaboration requires learning and careful attention to both technological and organizational aspects of the collaboration. Despite increasing focus on the use of ICT in education, for example in the form of distance learning and computer supported collaborative learning, there still are few educational programs that include an explicit focus on providing the students with practical training in distributed collaboration. This article presents the results and experiences from two student projects conducted at Agder University College in Norway, where groups of students from campuses in two different cities engaged in distributed collaboration supported by different forms of collaboration technology. The project illustrates how students perceived this form of distributed work to be interesting and stimulating, but also challenging and time consuming. Task definitions and balancing of motivational factors were found to have a great impact on the groups' efforts, sharing of workload and final outcome. Further, the projects also illustrate how "technical noise" and lack of experience with the technologies represented barriers to effective collaboration, implying a need for training the students in integrated use of different communication services. Based on the experiences from the two pilot projects, the paper presents practical implications for developing and conducting similar projects.