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# The Teacher's Role as Facilitator of Collaborative Learning in Information Literacy Assignments

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# Motivation

- Group work source-based writing assignments popular in the school's information literacy instruction
- Teachers seldom apply dedicated teaching frameworks such as Guided Inquiry (Kuhlthau et al. 2010)
- Present school practices do not well enhance learning of information literacies (Limberg et al. 2008)
- However, some school teachers demonstrate their in-practice theories to improve IL instruction
- Do these novel approaches make a difference and if so, how?

# Research questions

1. How do students' learning experiences differ in collaborative source-based writing assignments in two parallel courses?
2. How are the differences in learning experiences associated with the differences
  - a) in the design of the assignment and
  - b) in teachers' and students' interaction activity?

# Courses and students studied

Aspect	History class	Literature class
Students	Upper secondary school, 16-17 years old	
Course	Compulsory, 8 weeks in total	
Assignment	Source-based writing assignment - group work	
Writing style	Wikipedia conventions	
Publishing forum	School's own wiki	Wikipedia (Finnish)
Topics	Related to Finnish history 1918-1939	Selected Finnish classical novels
Project groups	7 groups of 3-5 students (total 28)	10 groups of 3 students (total 30)

## Primary datasets

- Questionnaire: learning experiences
- Students' group interviews during and after the course
- Teachers' and students' interactions in the virtual learning environment

## Complementary datasets

- Written instructions
- Teachers' interviews before and after the course
- Researchers' observations in the classroom

# Findings: Learning experiences

Q_No	Aspect of learning	History n=28	Literature n=24
L1	Subject area	3.08	2.93
L2	Information seeking in the school library	1.54	1.64
L3	Information seeking in the (Metso) public library	3.04	2.61
<b>L4</b>	<b>Information seeking on the Internet**</b>	<b>2.88</b>	<b>2.25</b>
L5	Use of new kinds of sources	2.58	2.86
L6	Critical evaluation and comparison of sources	2.92	2.96
L7	Recognizing different viewpoints in sources	2.71	2.75
<b>L8</b>	<b>Difference between Wikipedia and other sources*</b>	<b>2.71</b>	<b>3.32</b>
L9	Source-based writing	2.96	3.04
<b>L10</b>	<b>Referring to sources**</b>	<b>2.71</b>	<b>3.25</b>
<b>L11</b>	<b>Wikipedia/wiki**</b>	<b>2.63</b>	<b>3.32</b>

Scale: 1 = I did not learn anything about this ... 5 = I learnt very much about this

Legend: \*\* =  $p < 0.05$ ; \* =  $p < 0.10$



# Findings: Design differences

Task aspect	History class	Literature class	Earlier research
Publishing forum	The school's own wiki	Wikipedia (Finnish version)	Forte & Bruckman 2009
Topical broadness	Broad historical topic	Narrow topic (a classic novel & its author)	Kuhlthau 2004, Limberg et al. 2008
Preliminary activities	From topics selection directly to searching	Personal literary essay about the novel before the search phase	Kuhlthau et al. 2007, Limberg et al. 2008
Modeling the end-product	The teacher gave subthemes for the topic	Homework on Wikipedia practices; the structure and content of similar articles	Hongisto & Sormunen 2010
Time allocated for students' work	2 weeks	5 weeks (incl. time for reading the novel)	Limberg et al. 2008

# Findings: Teacher interventions

No of interactions	Face-to-face		Virtual		Written instructions	
	History	Literature	History	Literature	History	Literature
Teacher initiated	3	<b>17</b>	1	<b>11</b>	0	0
Student initiated	9	<b>14</b>	0	1	<b>11</b>	6
All together	12	<b>31</b>	1	12	11	6

- Focus of interventions in the Literature class
  - ✓ How to write in the Wikipedia genre
  - ✓ How to cite sources
  - ✓ Sources distributed actively

# Discussion

- Learning experiences quite weak in most areas of IL
- Strongest learning experiences in areas
  - which were in the focus of planned activities
  - where the teacher was actively making interventions
  - on which students worked hard
- Limitations of the study
  - Two case classes studied qualitatively; the findings should not be generalized
- Future research
  - More rigorous evaluative studies on teaching methods needed





# Thank you for your attention!

- Further information on the Know-Id project
  - <https://www12.uta.fi/blogs/know-id/>