

The Contribution of Open Ended Group Projects in Global Student Collaborations

An ability to work in an international environment has become an essential skill for our students to possess. It is however neither clear what this ability consists of nor how it should be taught. There are no clear answers to how to best conduct international collaborations, with the issue of dealing with cultural differences being an important factor in which our students have very limited experience with.

This situation above is similar to the base for the pedagogic methodology Open Ended Group Projects as described in e.g. [Faulkner et. al. 2006]. That is, the problem addressed should be of high complexity with no clear solutions, rather being of the nature that there are many different ways to address the problem. The Open Ended Group Project methodology thus lends itself well for setting up learning environments that include global student collaborations. Different aspects of the collaboration can be brought to attention and dealt with as a natural and essential part of the setting.

Examples from past experience with the international collaboration in the IT in Society course at Uppsala University, Sweden, will be given in order to illuminate some of the ways an Open Ended Group Project approach can support development of skills relevant for working in an international environment. The Open Ended Group Project methodology is strongly connected to Communities of Practice [Wenger 98] and this aspect will be also be addressed.

[Faulkner et. al. 2006], Faulkner, X., Daniels, M., and Newman, I., "The Open Ended Group Project: A way of including diversity in the IT curriculum", in *Diversity in Information Technology Education: Issues and controversies*, ed. Trajkovski, G, Information Science Publishing, 2006, pp. 166-195

[Wenger 98], Wenger, E, *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*, Cambridge University Press, 1998