

Key elements in the design of collaborative activities in the network

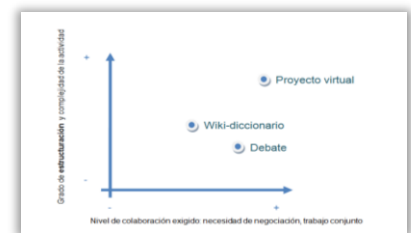
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Collaborative learning:

Collaborative online learning is based on a process of activity, interaction and reciprocity among a group of students, facilitating the joint construction of a common goal based on individual works. It is a shared, coordinated and interdependent process, in which students work using online collaborative tools in order to achieve a common goal.

1. Nature of the proposed activity

The success of the activity and the high involvement of the participants lies in whether the collaboration represents a valuable requisite for the resolution of the proposed tasks; the **added value of the collaboration** should be perceived. The nature of a collaborative activity has to encourage the creation of knowledge and the sharing of information. A collaborative activity, according to its nature, can promote different degrees of collaboration.



2. Tools and resources of the online work environment

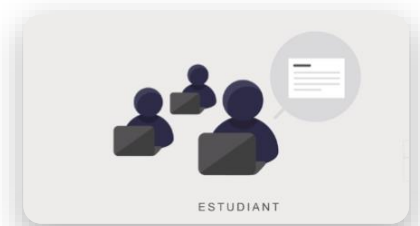
In collaborative activities in the network it is essential that there is a **space to develop the activity**, where all the members have access, and can, in this way, become a reference environment for all. **During the design of the activity**, it is necessary to analyse how this space has to be and what technological tools are basic to be able to carry out the activity in conditions.

Let's think!

- *Is it a punctual activity or do we work it during the whole subject?*
- *Is the number of students optimal for the activity?*
- *Working as a team: competence or methodology?*

3. Group attitudes

The working group, especially at the time of creation, has to generate **collective trust** and **respect** among all team members, if **transparency in the exchange of information** and in the presentation of ideas wants to be ensured. Each member of the group has to acquire a commitment and perseverance with the team so that the tasks of the activity can move forward. The group conscience will facilitate that the members **help each other** in order to achieve the common goal set.



Let's think!

- *How do we enhance the awareness of the participants?*
- *Does the activity make it easier to share the information?*
- *What added value does it provide?*
- *How do we resolve group conflicts?*

In a virtual team, attitudes of commitment, transparency, perseverance, respect and help to colleagues are key to doing the task well.

It is important to control the different levels of predisposition and participation of group members, to avoid periods of inactivity or confusion or an excess of tasks and information.

4. Communication

When we talk about group communication, we are talking about interaction and participation, which is concretized, mainly, when the work team is consolidated and the rules of the game are established. These have to be defined clearly and knowledgeably. The **rules of communication** have to establish:

- What will be the regularity of participation and communication during the activity, when will we connect to the virtual space, when will we make proposals
- What channels we will use and for what purpose: email, forum, virtual group space, digital file space ...
- Some communication guidelines: respond in the appropriate place, greet, explain briefly and clearly the ideas, make definite proposals, how to reach consensus ...

Communicating online does not transform the collaboration as a whole. Groups need to carry out real tasks, develop ideas and teamwork and share the results.

5. Organization and team planning

Distribute the tasks so that each member knows what to do and how, is an essential step to contribute to the group activity and **consolidate the team**.

The **rules of the game** include the definition of **how the group is organized and planned**: degrees of participation and distribution of roles, coordination among the participants, decision-making guidelines, organization of the spaces, how the activities are delivered ...

This point includes aspects such as negotiating skills and optimizing the time available. A **planning or work plan** can be defined to specify individual and group activities, describe the path or process to carry out the activity and detail what role each member will perform within the team.

6. Review and evaluation of collaboration

It is the key factor that brings quality to learning, where the teacher and students self-feed the collaborative process, providing reviews at individual and group level. The **feedback** allows us to collect aspects and reflections on the work that is being done and provide suggestions for improvement to achieve the joint objectives. This feedback from students is specified in:

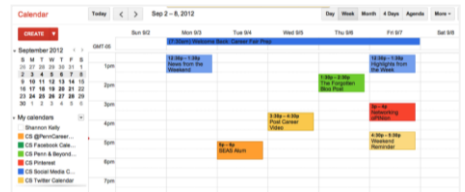
- **Redistribute tasks**: if circumstances require it, tasks can be redistributed to maintain the proper functioning and increase the consolidation of the virtual team.
- In order to detect if it is necessary to carry out a replanning, valuation dates of the work carried out up to the moment of the individual and group tasks can be marked.
- **Conflict management**: record the work done for each of the members and the group's common work can help resolve conflicts.
- The rules defined in the virtual workgroup are not fixed, they can be changed, redefined, added or removed. During the process of carrying out the collaborative activity, the group can see the need to review these rules, but the **changes have to be made in a consensual manner** with the team. Each of the members has to present ideas, changes, proposals and negotiate with the rest of the participants in order to jointly define the changes or actions to be carried out.

The group and shared evaluation will improve the individual and the whole team learning.



! Important !

Low participation (little interaction and communication) in a virtual environment can hinder the development of the collaborative process, since the key communicative element is lost.



! Important !

A virtual team only works if there is good planning, task distribution and replanning capacity.



Let's think!

- *Teacher presence even if they do not participate actively. Importance of monitoring, energizing and motivating.*

Important !

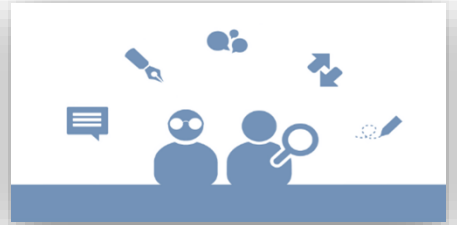
All this feedback and group assessments will help group motivation, fostering team cohesion and optimizing the collaborative process.

7. Evaluation of the process and the result

The **evaluation** of the process is important, and can be specified in a self-assessment: I have met the deadlines, the rules, I have done my tasks ... As well as doing a coevaluation, that is, an evaluation of the rest of the team members.

The **evaluation of the result** goes through the **personal** and **group** evaluation of the obtained result. The dissemination and discussion of the result of the team in front of other participants or the teacher helps the group to detect strengths and weaknesses of the collaborative activity.

The objectivity in personal and group evaluations increases the personal learning and the learning of the whole group.



*¡Important !
In a virtual team, nobody can go for free. Decisions are everyone's and to take them you need to inform, argue, agree and negotiate.*

