Workshop on Distance Learning

Introduction

With increasing diversification and globalization, distance learning is gaining more importance. To provide the full benefit of distance learning, a system must be fully interactive between a teacher and a student; interactions among students must also be taken into account. Additionally, there are problems to be solved on system scalability.

Distance learning is not a topic related to education alone. To achieve collaborative work to a full extent, we must bring people closer together across domains, national boundaries, etc., and narrow the distance lying between them — not only physically but also mentally. The concept and the systems of distance learning can be easily extended to generic collaborative work support over the network. In fact, distance learning is moving toward a direction in which participants can enjoy full interactions and can produce something which one person could not create by himself or herself alone. So it is no longer just a tool for passing knowledge or experience to the younger generation or to non-experts. It is quickly becoming a tool to produce new knowledge and experience. Thus, teamwork is also called for even in distance learning.

This workshop consisted of eight presentations (six are published here). It was not intended to help us arrive at specific conclusions, but rather to provide a forum for exchanging experiences, disseminating ideas, and searching for new directions. Thanks to very active participants, we had a lot of discussions — both deep and wide. The results of the discussions are included at the end of this section.

This workshop was organized by Shuichi Fukuda (Tokyo Metropolitan Institute of Technology, Japan), Kurt Maly (Old Dominion University, USA), Axel Lehmann (Universitaet der Bundeswehr Muenchen, Germany) and Ghislain Vansteenkiste (University of Ghent, Belgium).

I would like to thank Ms. Mary Carriger of West Virginia University for all the help she provided.

Shuichi Fukuda
Workshop Co-Organizer
Tokyo Metropolitan Institute of Technology, Japan