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Reports

Spinning
e-pedagogical Nets

Pedagogical development and
experiments in higher education

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Pedagogical development and experiments in higher education

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Introduction
– Future learning design

Minna Scheinin

Abstract

In the foreword of this publication, I want to focus on the question, how the tertiary education should respond to the societal changes that are taking place. We may not be able to predict what kind of work skills and competences will be needed in the future. However, we should be able to promote such competences, that the students will be able to have a good working life. We can also ruminate on the larger-than-life questions, such as what is good life. The work competences of tomorrow, that is skills, knowledge and attitudes, include – on top of the field-specific skills – such skills, which are not connected to any professional field. These generic skills are, for example, good team-working skills, networking skills and problem-solving skills and the capability of combining expertise from different fields. At Turku University of Applied Sciences (TUAS), we call these skills innovation competences and our pedagogical approach is innovation pedagogy.

Digitalisation is clearly one of the great societal changes, which has a strong impact on how education should change the forms and content of teaching. Learning takes place in multimodal learning environments. This means that we also have to pay attention to how the teacher's role changes and who takes the responsibility for learning. With the evolvement of social media, students are active in various professional and recreational communities, and learning takes place in all these. We talk about the blurring boundaries of learning and the next question evolves: how does the designing of learning take these changes into account?

In the articles of this publication, the teachers give good examples of how digitalisation has changed the learning design in higher education. The discussions are important because also the challenges must be boldly addressed.

Future work skills

The aim of the education at universities of applied sciences is to provide the learners with competences they will need in their future working life. This sentence already entails the crucial question: what are the skills that they will need in the future and are we able to define them? If so, what must change in education in order to support the evolvement of the new skills?

One practical approach to what is happening in society and how these changes act as drivers for the change in work competences and how they are reshaping the landscape of work, is given by Davies, Fidler and Corbis (2011). While globalisation, new media ecology, massive increase in the data processing power, as well as the change in the nature of careers and learning are changing, it is not enough to look at future careers, but rather to look at the skills needed in future work. The authors have identified skills that become crucial. In addition to the core skills of any professional field, the workers will need more general skills in order to cope with the tasks they are carrying out. Social intelligence, media literacy, adaptive thinking and virtual collaboration are among the ten skills that they highlight. The way we look at the complexity of future work skills helps us also to look at the changes that are needed in today's education.

Future work skills and good life – how are they connected?

Today the discussion about work skills and competences is often intertwined with the discussions about good life. How are they connected? Expertise and professionalism often entail the promotion of good life (Mutanen et al. 2016, 9). Although there is not a clear answer to the question what good life is (Konkka 2016, 33), it is valuable to ruminate on the larger-than-life questions, such as what is good life – what are the values we work with and how can our work competences support at good working life? In education, then, we know that we are working with a large amount of individuals who all study the competences for their future work, building good conditions for their future life. Good life is not to be sought in something supernatural. It is rather normal everyday routines and work (Mutanen et al. 2016, 10). Tertiary education can help the students to build the competences for future work and good life. The tools and methods are many and varied. At Turku University of Applied Sciences (TUAS) they are collected under the umbrella of a pedagogical ap-

proach Innovation pedagogy, which is the springboard to help individuals take steps forward towards a good working life.

Innovation pedagogy – the learning approach

The learning approach taken at Turku University of Applied Sciences is called *Innovation pedagogy.* It is understood as the context for all education as it is the cultural framework, or environment, in which knowledge, skills and attitudes are taught, practiced and learned (Penttilä & Kontio 2014, 3). Within innovation pedagogy we talk about the development of innovation competences, defining how knowledge is assimilated, produced and used in a manner that can create innovations. According to Mastosaari et al. (2013), the innovation competences are described as follows:
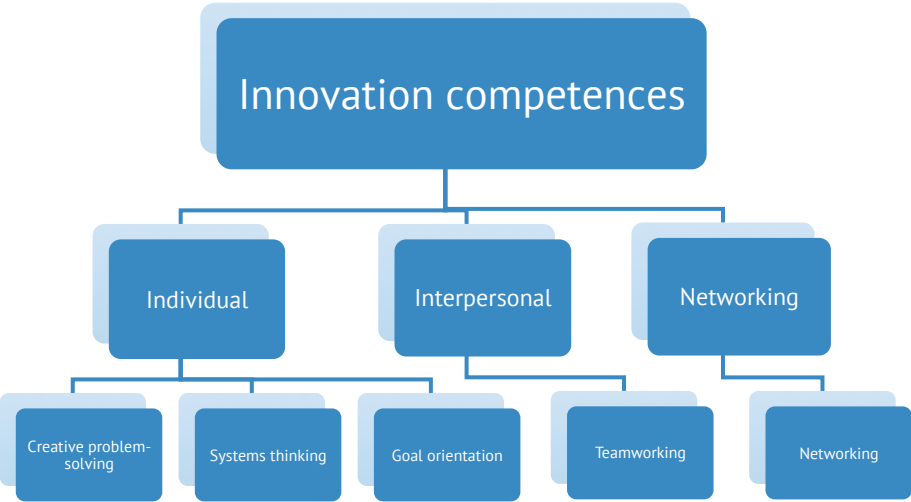

FIGURE 1.
Innovation competences according to Mastosaari et al. (2013).

In the figure above innovation competences are divided into the levels of individual, interpersonal and networking competences. All these levels can be further split into can do -statements, which help the students to carry out self-assessment on these competences and follow the progress throughout the studies.

The understanding that education is becoming more about developing skills in creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration is also expressed by Schleicher (2015, 2).

Digitalisation and learning – what changes?

The buzz word of today is digitalisation. Everyone is talking about it and we all understand that we should reform our practices in any walk of life. What, then, is ahead of us in education? Learning is inevitably being transformed by new practices emerging around the internet, online communities and participation. The trends bring changes, such as where we find information, from whom we learn and how we contribute to our learning (Haythornthwaite 2008, 598). It is therefore obvious, that the role of teachers and instructors is changing. On his video Wesch (2007) shows that the students of today are different. They have different hopes and dreams for their lives and as learners they are active participants in various learning communities and they learn in different environments. The teachers will have to adapt their teaching practices and learning designs to enable learning to take place in multimodal environments. These can be at least partly student-led and students can use communities of mutual interest as learning spaces. In addition, social media enables students to access material and carry out communication through different devices with specific limitations. As the students can also independently search for additional learning material and collaborate with other learners, teachers should be able to support the autonomous activities of the students, allowing the independent solutions to be found by the students. At the same time, as long as the learner outcomes are assessed, the ways of assessing learning need to be redesigned.

Blurred boundaries

Cara (2015, 23) emphasises that

> Participants in learning environments have the right to be able to access learning; which implies that educators need to provide education in a range of approaches and strategies to stimulate engagement and meaning for all learners. This differentiated student based inquiry requires a paradigm shift in staff and student minds, from 'spoon fed education' to the facilitation of teaching and learning whereby all participants take ownership and responsibility for their learning since all participants make valuable contribution to that learning environment.

The statement above is connected with the ownership and responsibility, and also the blurred boundaries between formal and informal environments and learning. Pettit et al. (2011), for example, discuss the potential of Web 2.0/Mobile 2.0 being able to enrich formal learning by blending of formal and informal environments and blurring the boundary between them. The important fact is that educators need to recognise the shift of power away from institutions and towards learners and the blurring of the boundaries between professional concerns and personal interest. Learners today have many ways and modes, which can support their learning, and they can independently also think of, find and choose the channels, in which they are active for learning purposes. Wenger's (2015) 'Communities of Practice', is an example of defining groups of people, who share a concern about a topic and have a mutual aim to solve it. As the technological skills of the younger generations improve and technology itself develops at an enormous pace, there is a clear possibility for learners to spread their learning activities in multiple channels and own their learning processes in terms of where, when and how they take place. There are considerable differences today as how the young generation behaves on the net, what the youngsters' skills are and what methodology they use on the net (Prensky 2001; Kennedy et al. 2008; CIBER/UCL 2008). Nevertheless, it is clear that at least in countries where digital skills studies are implemented in the curricula of the primary schools, the situation will be considerably different in some years.

To summarise the aspects above, and what it means from the teachers' perspective, it is not enough to master the content knowledge of the subject to be learnt. The teacher must also master the pedagogical knowledge as how to design learning so that all the aspects discussed above can come true. Thirdly, the teachers must also have some technological knowledge. The T-Pack Model by Mishra and Koe-

hler (2006) divides these areas into Content Knowledge, Pedagogical Knowledge and Technological Knowledge. The T-Pack Model by Mishra and Koehler (2006) divides these areas into Content Knowledge, Pedagogical Knowledge and Technological Knowledge. At Turku University of Applied Sciences, we look further into these as follows:

- the approach to the pedagogical knowledge is innovation pedagogy, which also entails online pedagogy

- the approach to technological knowledge is to consider, which online tools are used and for what purpose in each case

- the approach to the content knowledge is to ensure that the teachers have up-to-date knowledge of their professional field and have the possibility to cooperate with companies in the field.

The present article collection takes steps forward

Many of the articles in the present collection describe the authors' own experiences of online teaching and tutoring or they present research results on online communication. It becomes evident that on the practical level there are many challenges that the teachers encounter. As we know, we cannot avoid technology in teaching and learning – we can only try to find out the best solutions to harness technology to support learning. Therefore, it is important to openly discuss the feelings and experiences of the teachers and students. It is valuable that the teachers want to share their ideas and concerns. This helps the teaching communities to develop further in the methods of today and tomorrow.

The first part of the publication concentrates on the new channels of communication. Results on the research on the channels of communication in working life are discussed, as well as the new teacher roles, the blurred boundaries between formal and informal learning and personal learning environments. Many pieces of practical advice for the planning and execution of online teaching are given. The second part of the publication concentrates on joint courses. Delivering a course in cooperation with two or several institutions is always a complex setting, which demands a considerable amount of planning. However, these can benefit the students in many institutions and the international dimension can be expanded for the good of all

students. Different virtual tools and methods have been used in executing the joint courses and the authors shed light on their benefits.

The articles in Part III discuss the online interaction in e-learning, for example, what is the role of online interaction for student motivation and engagement and how video guidance can be used online. Part IV concentrates on online assignments. Finally, the last part of the publication discusses practical implementation in online environments, focussing on, for example, self-directedness, oral skills training and communication and dialogue.

The variety of approaches and focusses in this publication makes clear that the challenges for future teaching and learning are many. The articles are good examples of the steps forward to change the education in the digital era. The innovative approach to learning considers the societal drivers that lead us to think of the new learning platforms, the new teacher roles, the responsibility for learning and finally the competences of the students. Therefore, it is important that we openly discuss the possibilities to change the modes to support learning. – The authors of these articles have done so and we hope that many readers will benefit from their practical experience.

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Part I

New communication channels in professional settings

Communication skills needed in virtual work – Are we teaching the right things?

Mervi Varhelahti & Marjatta Rännäli

Abstract

Digitalisation and globalisation are changing the operational environments in working life. These changes have made work multi-locational and increased the share of virtual work independently of the field. Technology mediated communication skills and understanding different cultures have become increasingly important in virtual work. The mission of the universities of applied sciences is to provide the working life with skilful professionals who have the competences needed in the market, and therefore the need for virtual communication competence as well as language and cultural skills have to be taken into account in teaching and curricula work at the universities of applied sciences.

The aim of the present article is to discuss the skills and competences needed in virtual and multicultural communication situations when English is used as a lingua franca. The research questions were the following: what skills needed in virtual communication in English one wishes to improve and does the awareness of the cultural differences influence virtual communication. The discussion is based on the results of electronic surveys (N=58) and on five theme interviews conducted with representatives of working life. The electronic survey results were analysed by using descriptive statistical methods and cross tabulation. The method applied to the interviews was thematic content analysis.

According to the results, due to the increase in video conferencing in working life communication, the need to develop the skills needed in virtual synchronous con-

versations and negotiations was the most prominent one. In addition, the results show that the respondents are aware of cultural differences in virtual communication and adapt their own communication style according to the other party. Universities of applied sciences need primarily to define the current communication competences and secondly integrate teaching of these competences, particularly virtual negotiation skills in English and in multicultural settings, in all teaching.

Introduction

Changes in the working environment, such as globalisation and advancing information technology have had an effect on today's working life. At the same time, requirements regarding language skills and multiliteracy have also changed. As companies compete in the global market place, a workforce with good language and communication skills has become a key factor and thus new forms of working have brought new requirements with them also in the field of teaching communication skills at educational institutions.

More and more, both employers and employees tend to work outside the traditional office environment (Hyrkkänen & Vartiainen 2005) and communication technology is being utilised for mobile and virtual communication with stakeholders. Global virtual communication increases the requirements for language skills as well as the need for understanding of different cultures (Huhta 2010; Lönnblad & Vartiainen 2012). These changes should have an impact on what the students are taught; it is not enough that they learn to manage the new tools technically but they also need to learn to know how they can communicate effectively in a virtual or mobile environment with people from different parts of the world.

Thus, these changes challenge the teaching and teachers of languages and communication in higher education. Vocational and higher education need to be modernised to better match the students' skill sets with the expectations and requirements of working life. This modernisation process calls for constant dialogue and partnership between educators and working life. This issue has been acknowledged in The Higher Education Modernisation Agenda (2011) published by the European Commission, which highlights the importance of digital know-how.

In order to improve the development of language and communication skills as a part of higher education, Turku University of Applied Sciences is coordinating an international project called CoMoViWo (funded by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture

Executive Agency EACEA of the European Union; Erasmus+), which maps out the language and communication skills needed in mobile and virtual work and creates learning modules in English and Spanish for teaching these skills. The goal of the project is to, together with working life, modernise higher education to better correspond to the changing skill requirements of working life. Our long-term goal is to improve students' employment prospects, as well as offer a skilled workforce to working life and thus improve the competitiveness of enterprises in the global market.

As a part of the project, a survey regarding the views of working life on virtual communication in English was conducted in all of the participating countries i.e. in Finland, Germany, Poland, Spain and the UK. The survey views language and communication know-how as knowledge, skills and attitudes (Ferrari 2013) that arise in everyday working life situations where social interaction plays a role (Newton & Kusmiersczyk 2011). Based on the information gathered in the survey, the partners create three learning modules for learning how to communicate in a cross-cultural environment using virtual and mobile tools. The modules will be piloted in the participating organisations during the spring term 2016 and will later be published, together with a teacher's guide, as open educational resources (OER).

The survey was confined to communication in English as a lingua franca in a virtual or mobile environment. This means that we are looking at online interactions in English, between individuals whose first language is other than English. This type of communication can be influenced by different national, local and individual cultural identities. (Hülmbauer, Böhringer & Seidlhofer 2008.)

This article presents the findings of the survey conducted in Finland and discusses the challenges and possibilities in teaching communication skills in higher educational institutions. The aim is to raise awareness of the new skill requirements and, through a better understanding of the importance of these skills, enhance the integration of them into all teaching. In addition, we also want to highlight the fact that it is not sufficient to teach the technical skills for management of the new tools but, in addition, attention needs to be paid to how to use them from the communication point of view to reach the expected results.

We start by discussing the impact of the changes in the operational environments on communication and continue by describing the methods used to explore virtual communication at work. Next we will present the main results of the survey and finally discuss how these results should be taken into account in teaching and curricula at HEIs.

The importance of communication is emphasised as operational environments change

Being a part of the ubiquitous network society adds pressure to reform the way we work and thereby the way we communicate, which have both changed (Lönnblad & Vartiainen 2012). Some terms for new work forms that have become established in use are *remote work, migrant work, mobile work, knowledge work, and geographically dispersed teamwork.* These terms often refer to multi-locational and multimedia work, where information and communication technology plays a significant role. Instant messaging, video conferences and virtual offices are a part of ordinary everyday life. We have a multichannel communication network at our disposal, which has launched a communication revolution. Globalisation has created the framework for the type of internationalisation and networking that emphasise not only communication skills but cultural differences as well.

According to research, this new way of working has had its effect on skill requirements as well. (Lönnblad & Vartiainen 2012). This type of know-how is not exactly to do with the execution of the work itself, rather with personal qualities, such as attitudes, communication skills and IT skills. Communication skills and understanding differences are becoming the paramount operational skills. In this context, understanding differences also means understanding different cultures. Communication skills, in turn, entail both written and spoken communication. Employees as well as employers need very similar qualifications in order to succeed in virtual communication in a global environment. (Lönnblad & Vartiainen 2012.)

Although the importance of these new communication skills is being recognised, companies are not taking them into consideration when hiring (Lönnblad & Vartiainen 2012, 37). On account of this oversight, even more attention should be paid on communication skills during personnel training, and already when planning the curricula at HEIs.

A typical situation in a modern work environment is one where employees work simultaneously in multiple teams and report to multiple leaders, which demands different types of communication skills from the more traditional reporting expected in line management. More requirements are being set due to flexible work practices, whereby employees are able to work part-time or from home. The third factor to bring challenges to smooth communication is the fact that many times task forces are multicultural,

and the members do not necessarily share a common language or cultural background. (Ladegaard & Jenks 2015.) All of these factors are apt to complicate smooth communication in any situation, but especially when communication is virtual rather than face to face, which increases the possibility of misunderstandings. (Lockwood 2015, 131–132.)

Implementation of the survey

The first phase of the project, the electronic survey, was completed in February 2015. It mapped out and analysed how organisations today are using technology to communicate in English in mobile and virtual ways.

The findings of the first phase of the project showcase the know-how requirements of organisations of various sizes and fields, in various locations in Finland.

The survey was conducted electronically and was sent through e-mail to the working life collaboration partners of Turku University of Applied Sciences. Additionally, a link to the survey was available on the CoMoViWo website and was posted on Twitter and Facebook. The number of responses received in Finland was 58. The participation percentage cannot be determined due to the utilisation of social media.

The survey asked the following questions:

- What skills needed in virtual communication in English one wishes to improve?
- Does the awareness of the cultural differences influence virtual communication?

The majority of the respondents (37) were aged between 41 and 60. Altogether, 43 of the respondents were women and 28 respondents stated that they were working as professionals in their respective fields. The number of respondents working as supervisors or leaders was 10 and a further 10 as employees whereas 8 respondents were owners or managers of a company. Almost all spoke Finnish as their first language; the only exceptions were one whose first language was Arabic, and two Swedish speakers.

The majority of the respondents (36) represent national employers, and 21 represent international ones. When asked about the area in which the organisation they represent operates in, the majority (34) stated that they work for organisations that operate at an international level. For the most part, the respondents represent large enterprises (38); but there were also some representing medium-sized companies (4); small companies (9); and micro companies (6).

The survey consisted of multiple choice questions and two open-ended questions. It is worth noting that the participants were not required to answer every question, and therefore the number of responses varies from question to question. The responses were processed through the Webropol system, as well as through an SPSS analysis tool. In the analysis phase, the background variables of the question form were partially regrouped and their correlation with the answers was analysed.

The same survey was conducted in Spain, Germany, Poland and the UK. This article presents only the results in Finland. In addition to the survey, theme interviews were carried out in each country. In Finland, five theme interviews with representatives of SMEs were conducted to gather more detailed information on virtual communication in companies.

Findings based on the survey

The skills required in virtual communication at work were explored through asking the respondents e.g. which skills needed in virtual communication in English they wished to improve. The majority of the respondents wanted to improve their negotiation skills in virtual communication. Furthermore, many expressed their wish to improve managing virtual group interactions, conversational skills and handling requests and refusals.
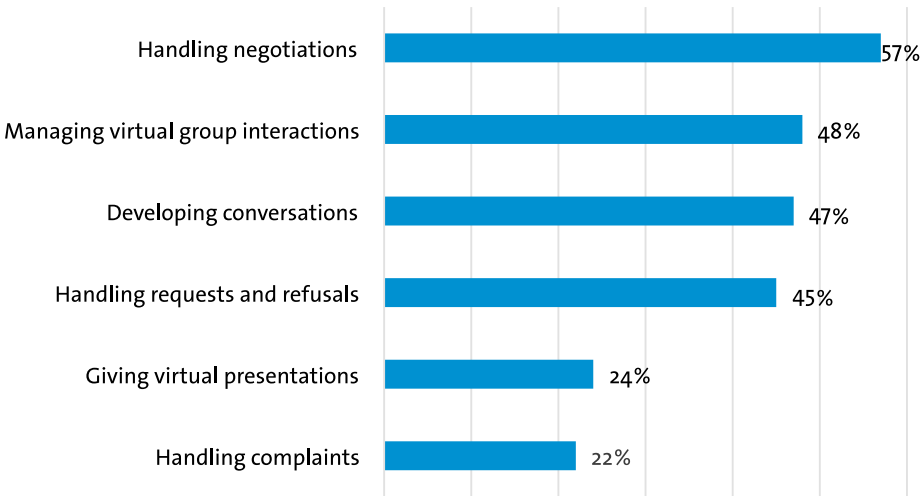
FIGURE 1.
Skills that people want to improve (N=58).

The analysis of the results using background variables showed, however, an interesting dependence between the results and the respondent's age. The table below shows that only 26.3% of the younger age group wanted to improve their conversational skills, whereas the corresponding figure for the older age group was 56.4%.

TABLE I.
Frequencies of the need to improve conversation skills by age group.

		Conversation skills		Total
		no	yes	
Age group	40 or under	73.7%	26.3%	100.0%
	over 40	43.6%	56.4%	100.0%
Total		53.4%	46.6%	100.0%

Gender seems to affect the will to improve leading or hosting virtual team work situations. More than a half of the female respondents wanted to improve their skills in this area, whereas nearly 80% of the men did not. The number of male respondents was, however, too low to make any definite statistical conclusions.

The dependence between the company size and the wish to improve conversational skills in English within virtual communication in the work place is indicative. Respondents representing large enterprises are less keen to improve their skills in this area (36.8%) than those representing smaller companies (65%).

The need to communicate in a foreign language increases

The interviews conducted with the representatives of five small or micro enterprises showed that the people working in them have realised the growing need to be able to communicate in a foreign language with people from other countries or representing different cultural backgrounds. The interviews were conducted in Finnish so the quotes are translations.

The willingness to improve one's skills and competences is one of the most important qualities of an employee. Language skills are considered necessary but the employers rely on the employees' positive attitude to develop them continuously in authentic working life communication situations.

> I do not require my employees to have excellent language skills, as the personality is more important, but, on the other hand, I simply cannot hire a person with no language skills at all. (Interview_1).

> turbulence is a part of the current business life and therefore you have to be eager to learn and have a thirst for knowledge and follow what's going on (Interview_2)

The awareness of cultural differences has an effect on communication

The research question exploring the behaviour in intercultural encounters in virtual environments was if the awareness of the cultural differences influences virtual communication.

For the most part, the respondents who communicate virtually are very aware of the values and beliefs of their interlocutors from different cultures (i.e. replied often or constantly, figure 2).

When I communicate in virtual settings with people from different cultures I am aware of the cultural values and religious beliefs they hold

Constantly	12.7%
Often	47.3%
Sometimes	23.6%
Rarely	9.1%
Never	7.3%
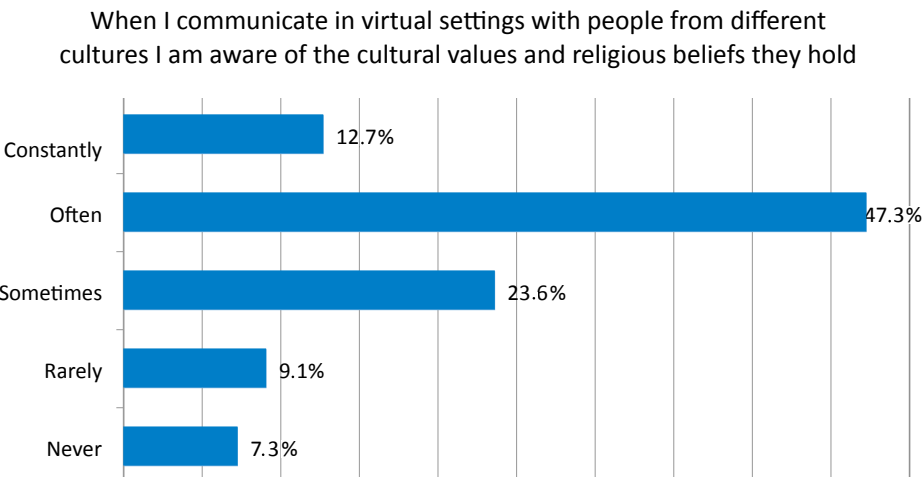
FIGURE 2.
Awareness of cultural differences in virtual communication (N=58).

In addition, as figure 3 shows, the respondents also stated that they often adapt their communication style when interacting with someone speaking another language as a native language.

I change my communication style when I communicate in virtual settings with a person of another language group

Constantly — 1.8%
Often — 20.0%
Sometimes — 41.8%
Rarely — 21.8%
Never — 14.5%
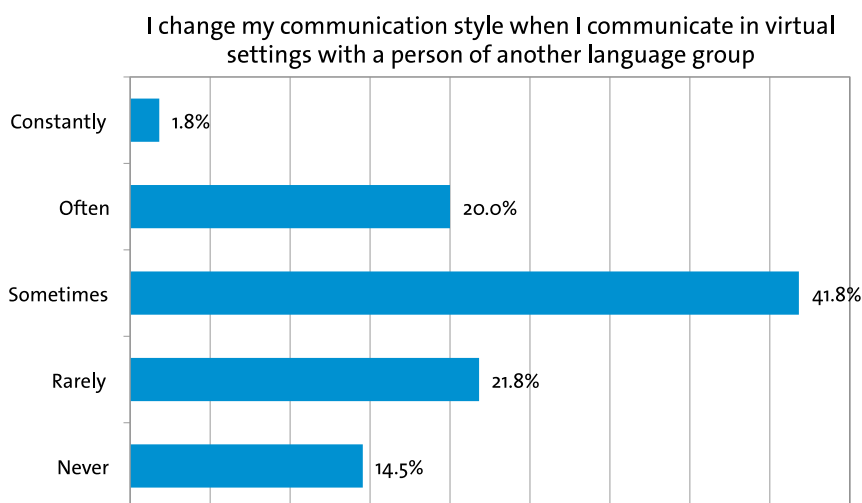
FIGURE 3.
Changing one's communication style when communicating across cultures in virtual settings (N=58).

As can be seen below (figure 4), the majority, over 70 percent, of the respondents adjust the way they communicate when interacting with people from a different cultural background.

I adjust my communication strategies (e. g. speak more slowly, use simplified language) when I interact in virtual settings with people from a culture that is unfamiliar to me

Constantly — 9.4%
Often — 39.6%
Sometimes — 34.0%
Rarely — 13.2%
Never — 3.8%
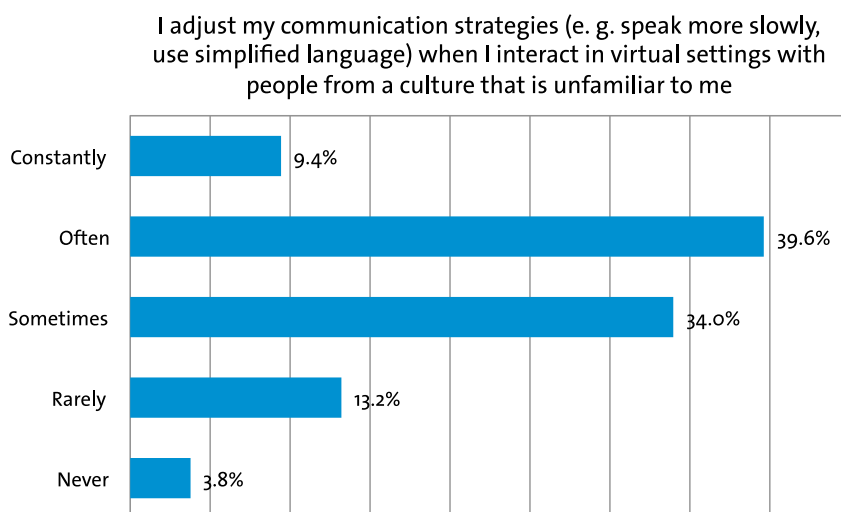
FIGURE 4.
Adjusting communication strategies in virtual communication across cultures (N=58).

A marginally significant result had to do with adapting communication style when virtually communicating in English with an outsider. It indicated that in large enterprises communication style is adapted more than in smaller companies.

The importance of understanding cultures was a prominent theme in the interviews and versatile international experiences gathered during the studies are highly valued.

> By the way, the current student exchange systems are simply fabulous, the applicants who have taken part in them are always prioritised. Half a year visit abroad, for some even longer, yes, you will get to the interview... (Interview 1)

> those who operate internationally do understand that even if the working language is English, the opening and all politeness phrases one should be able to say in the local language, if you really want to get in. (Interview 1)

The results show that interpreting and noticing different cues in communication (e.g. symbols, gestures and tone of voice) is more challenging in virtual communication situations, e.g. online negotiations or meetings, than in face to face encounters.

> Well, it's quite a little I use camera with them. Cannot maybe interpret directly. (Interview 5)

> Stiff. It's really difficult to talk with many or I cannot really perfectly, but still, it's difficult, but some, on the other hand can quite well. Many have a very speedy rhythm. This type of a slow Finn has a hard time keeping up [laughter]. Of course, it becomes clear, when you ask them to repeat. (Interview 5)

An additional challenge in virtual communication is presented by the fact that the communication can take place anywhere and there might be external disturbing factors the participants cannot control.

> Yes. That's, by the way true, in many places, look, scooters roar and then there can be a hundred people in the same, it's true, it's really a real problem. (Interview 5)

Implications from the point of view of teaching

The main purpose of the survey and the interviews was to explore the current situation in working life, to find out what skills needed in virtual communication in English one wishes to improve and, in addition, to find out if or how understand-

ing cultural differences influences the virtual communication strategies. Below, these results will be discussed from the point of view of teaching at HEIs.

According to the results, the most important skills are related to virtual synchronous interactions. The three first communication skills the respondents want to improve were negotiation skills in virtual communication, managing virtual group interactions and conversational skills. This result indicates that virtual interaction and collaboration skills in working life have become more important as the use of different video conferencing channels, such as Skype for Business or Adobe Connect, has become a part of everyday work at all levels of organisation. The results also indicate that the importance of virtual negotiations in international business communication is expected to increase also in the future. Altogether, 56.9 per cent found it important to develop the skills needed in handling negotiations.

The older age group wanted to improve their conversation skills more that the younger ones. This might partly depend on the fact that internationality and social networking are already a part of the younger generation's everyday life and, they are more confident in communicating in foreign languages than the older generation.

Women's attitude towards developing one's communication skills was clearly more positive than men's who did not see any need to improve their skills. This raises an interesting question about if it is due to the small number of male respondents or is it indicative of a general attitude difference: women are generally speaking more willing to develop their skills and appreciate communication skills and effective communication more.

Virtual communication between people representing different cultural backgrounds and interacting in a foreign language is challenging and to succeed in cross-cultural communication situations in working life people tend to change their communication style in order to be correctly understood. When the participants have different linguistic or cultural backgrounds people change the way they communicate e.g. by speaking more slowly, simplifying their language and using supporting gestures.

To be able to provide our students with the skills required in modern working life, we should, first of all, find common understanding of what we mean with com-

munication and communication competences in relation to teaching and what the most relevant skills needs in working life are at the moment and in the future.

Secondly, communication skills should be visible already at the level of the curricula. Communication skills should be defined as concrete and measurable learning outcomes, which means that they must yield credits and be explicitly described in the assessment criteria.

Thirdly, in the current globalising world, communication skills should be taught, in addition to Finnish (or Swedish) at least in English, which is used as a lingua franca in international contexts.

At the higher education level it is not enough to rely on the assumption that students already manage communicating through virtual media and foreign languages at work, because communicating virtually in their private lives or being able to communicate with friends and acquaintances in a foreign language does not equal to the skills needed in a professional context. Working life communication can take place either synchronously or asynchronously and the importance of the former one is increasing. It was obvious that the respondents and interviewees in the study had realised that developing their virtual synchronous discussion and negotiation skills is an important part of their professional competences. To be able to meet the future needs of working life HEIs have to take this into account at a practical level.

The need for good language and communication skills as well as for cultural understanding comes up in a number of surveys conducted among industry and commerce as well as in the social sector, and was also confirmed by the current study. However, in spite of the acknowledged need for these competences, teaching of them has been cut and reduced significantly in the recent years, especially at UASes. One of the strengths of the education at the universities of applied sciences is the close contacts with working life and encouraging students to build networks with it already during the studies. Building national and international networks, however, requires communication, interest and motivation: small grammatical or lexical errors can be forgiven, but if the message is interpreted in a wrong way or the behaviour is interpreted as disrespectful from the point of view of the recipient, it is hard to mend.

Conclusions

One of the strategic aims of the UASes is to support regional development in close contact with working life. To reach this aim, UASes have to anticipate the future professional competence requirements regarding the changing operational environments. Virtual communication takes place in a global setting and is not restricted to the management level employees. Therefore, integrating communication and language skills and understanding cultural differences into the teaching and curricula of professional studies is necessary. The integration should simulate authentic virtual communication situations in English and the virtual communication, language and cultural skills should form a concrete and measurable part of the curricula.

The present study focussed on the skills people wanted to improve – not on what they should improve i.e. on what are the most common reasons causing misunderstandings in virtual working life communication situations. Studying this could be an interesting subject for future research.

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Blending classroom teaching and virtual activities on learning platforms at institutions of higher education

Ellen Pflaum

Abstract

Institutions of higher education often offer online learning materials via learning platforms. In general, learning platforms complement lectures and seminars and serve as space where lecturers make lecture notes and additional materials available 24/7. Learning platforms are often not used to their full didactic and technical potential. The tools and interactive features are rarely integrated to classroom teaching methods.

Current developments show a shift from the approach of simply providing course content and information to enabling social learning activities focussing on critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, and self-determined learning (cf. Johnson et al. 2016, 14). Virtual learning activities offer good opportunities to train these meta-competencies and to prepare students for their future working environment.

As most of the lecturers at institutions of higher education are not in the position to implement a completely new learning infrastructure, it is important to find solutions that allow lecturers to use existing learning platforms in an effective way for active learning processes in higher education learning scenarios.

Effective learning management systems use their full pedagogical potential and support learning outcomes. It integrates students' needs and habits to offer student-centred learning. Learners can choose materials, contents, topics, case studies "on demand" according to their professional background, interests or needs (cf. Bitkom 2013, 5).

Furthermore, an individual cannot know everything but has to know where to get, assess, use and share information within his/her network (cf. Yang 2009, 9). In consequence, learning is not an individual activity but an activity of networking, communicating and collaborating. Learners start from existing knowledge and create new links in networks and in collaboration with others (cf. Siemens & Tittenberger 2009, 10). A learning platform should therefore be considered as the students' personal hub to the internet and provide the tools and features to collect, organise and share information, knowledge and resources. This promotes the full formal and informal development of students' skills sets and capabilities for their future work environment.

Two blended learning scenarios where learning platforms can perfectly match the learners' needs are:

- Flipped classroom model: The learning material, e.g. texts, videos, textbooks are offered and consumed online before the class takes place. The face-to-face classroom situation is then used for interaction, communication and collaboration basing on the acquired knowledge.

- Problem-based learning: In a classroom situation a problem is elaborated for the whole group. The resources that help to solve the problem are provided on a learning platform and can be complemented, shared, discussed and organised in the virtual environment by the students' groups.

Introduction

The distribution of online learning materials via learning platforms is widely spread among institutions of higher education. Often they are only used as a central storage of lecture notes. This paper aims to show – from a practitioner's point of view – how learning platforms can be used effectively for integrating them into blended learning scenarios that combine the advantages of face-to-face teaching and e-learning for collaborative, active, individual and self-determined learning processes. The

paper will not focus on what is possible from the technical point of view but on the activities that lie within the lecturer's sphere of activity. It shows how simple ways of integrating learning platforms can have a positive contribution towards students' learning success and motivation.

Methodology and research question

The topic of effective use of learning platforms can be considered from different perspectives. The chosen research approach is an applied approach focussing on design and arrangement of media-enhanced pedagogical learning scenarios. It uses models about how to create online-based learning spaces and environments that support individual, organisational and social learning objectives (cf. Kerres 2016, 57).

In order to provide useful indications for practitioners it is important to make a clear division between two perspectives:

1. The topic can be considered from a general point of view in which the technological and didactical state-of-the-art learning environment meeting the needs of lecturer and students is designed.

2. Concrete and practical advice can be given to lecturers on how they could use existing learning platforms and accompanying tools in order to provide a learning environment for active learning processes.

As most of the lecturers at institutions of higher education are not in the position to implement completely new learning infrastructure, this paper aims at answering the following question:

How can lecturers use existing learning platforms in an effective way for active learning processes in higher education learning scenarios?

In order to answer this question, the author will describe the status of integration of learning platforms into university courses and elaborate an overview on how learning platforms could contribute to active learning processes in general. Afterwards, concrete examples will prove that existing learning platforms can fulfil most of the requirements for social and individual learning. Exemplary learning scenarios are supposed to give ideas and advise practitioners to conceptualise and promote digital learning in platforms in a way that they can contribute to effective and active learning.

Background

Learning platforms

Institutions of higher education often offer online learning materials via learning platforms. In general, learning platforms complement lectures and seminars and serve as spaces where lecturers make lecture notes and additional materials available 24/7. This should definitely be considered as a positive measure to support students because they can access and download the documents time- and location-independently. However, it has to be said that this procedure promotes neither the achievement of learning outcomes nor enhances the motivation of students.

Over the past years, only a few learning management systems gained broader acceptance at institutions of higher education (e.g. Moodle and Ilias in Germany, Blackboard and Moodle in Great Britain). Many of the existing learning platforms at universities are open-source solutions that have the advantage of saving licencing royalty fees and of being supported by more or less active development communities (cf. Kerres 2012, 438). Especially the communities are very useful for practitioners because technical issues or conceptual questions can quickly be answered by the community or by using the large number of manuals, tutorials and FAQ.

Teaching and learning approaches at institutions of higher education

Current developments show a shift from the approach of simply providing course content and information to enabling social learning activities focussing on critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, and self-determined learning (cf. Johnson et al. 2016, 14).

Key words of today's teaching at university are

- Personalised learning

- Emphasis on competences and skills instead of knowledge

- Learner-centred learning

- Self-determined learning

- Active and participative learning

These approaches are closely linked to Holzkamp's basic assumptions about teaching and learning. He proves that good teaching does not necessarily mean that students learn effectively. According to his findings, learning only takes place when the learner him- or herself identifies a reason to learn. In his interpretation, teaching means to give learning opportunities to the students. These learning opportunities can be manifold but are often defined as a barrier or problem during an act of execution (cf. Grothlüschen 2004, 2). This is why problem-based learning is so successful: Students get information about a problem and recognise that they do not have the knowledge, skills and abilities to solve it. They experience a barrier and feel the need to learn and acquire the necessary knowledge in a self-directed way.

Hence, the academic performance of students does not improve according to better teaching. It is solely a matter of the subject (> the student) whether learning processes are successful or not. This leads to an approach where the lecturer prepares his/her lectures, decides upon contents, topics and methods, having the needs, questions, opportunities and barriers of the potential learner in mind at any stage of the conceptual work (cf. Grothlüschen 2004, 2).

However, where is the link to learning on learning platforms in online or blended learning scenarios? Online platforms offer many opportunities to put the learner in the centre of any activity. On a learning platform, a topic can be presented either as a video or as a text and the user decides which medium to consume. Real-life examples can be presented in case studies from different perspectives or branches and again the students can decide where to put their focus on. Students can manage their time investment self-determinedly and flexibly. They can contribute, participate and collaborate in their own learning process which would be quite time-consuming and challenging for the lecturer if he/she had to do it in face-to-face scenarios only.

Before explaining some examples of how to use learning platforms for effective teaching and learning, the next chapter aims to give an overview about the functionalities and potential use of learning platforms.

Teaching and learning using learning platforms

Most of the learning platforms offer a similar range of functionalities and services such as:

- Hosting and managing contents (media, learning objects, documents)

- Allowing users to communicate and collaborate

- Tracking learning progression

- Solving exercises and tests

- Assessing and giving feedback and (peer) reviews

- Providing meta information about the course

- Managing user types

- Providing additional tools for the user (calendar, dashboard organisation)

(cf. Jisc 2014; Kerres 2012, 438; e-teaching.org 2015).

Though the term learning management systems implies a focus on managing resources and tools, most of the existing learning management systems do also include features that allow individual, active and collaborative learning processes. This requires that the whole range of features and tools offered by a learning management system is used effectively.

According to the author's opinion effective use of learning management systems means for instance

- Usage of full pedagogical potential of the existing platforms and support of learning outcomes

- Integration of students' needs and habits i.e. "student-centred learning"

- Consideration as personal hub to the internet and central space for individual knowledge management

- Promotion of the full development of students' skills sets and capabilities to find, assess, use and share learning resources

The following figure gives an overview of features that are integrated to platforms in order to provide learning and teaching opportunities:

TABLE 1.
Learning platform features.

Learning platform features	Pedagogical potential	Participation of students
Files and folders	Presentation of contents	Read-only
E-Book	Self-determined learning	Read-only
Multimedia documents, Text pages	Self-determined learning	Read-only
Link	Joined-up thinking	Read-only
Lesson	Self-determined learning	Read-only
Glossary	Orientation knowledge	Read-only
Poll	Communication / Collaboration / Participation	Allows participation
Survey	Communication / Collaboration / Participation	Allows participation
Database	Collaboration / Sharing	Allows participation
Mind map	Joined-up thinking	Allows participation
Chat	Communication	Allows participation
Forum	Communication	Allows participation
Planer	Communication	Allows participation
Journal	Communication / Critical thinking	Allows participation
Test	Problem solving / Assessment	Allows participation
Exercise	Problem solving / Creation	Allows participation
Wiki	Collaboration / Creation / Joined-up thinking	Allows participation
Groups	Collaboration / Networking	Allows participation
Peer-review	Critical thinking / Collaboration	Allows participation

But how can all these features and learning platforms in general contribute to effective learning?

Contribution of learning platforms

Student-centred teaching and learning

For higher-education learning situations it can generally be said that – compared to traditional classroom instruction – learning scenarios that combine face-to-face teaching with online learning scenarios have a moderate but significant positive influence on the participants' academic performance. (cf. Means et al. 2009, 14.)

The technology used for learning scenarios influences the learning success neither in a positive nor in a negative way. The pedagogical approach determines whether the expected learning outcomes are fulfilled – and the pedagogical approach does not necessarily rely on the media that are used. Nevertheless, certain features of a learning platform offer a high potential for some pedagogical scenarios. This is applicable for collaborative learning scenarios like problem-based learning approaches and user-generated content models but also for self-determined learning scenarios like flipped classroom concepts. (cf. Kerres 2012, 88.)

Personalised learning

Digital learning offers the possibility to have individual learning modules and to learn time- and space-independently. Learners choose materials, contents, topics, case studies "on demand" according to their professional background, interests or needs (cf. Bitkom 2013, 5).

Taking the example of an online course in project management, the theory, methods and tools behind project management are the same for many different fields and professional backgrounds. In a face-to-face seminar, the lecturer would only be able to cover a few examples from practice. Digital accompanying material could offer additional case studies and real-world examples from many different fields which enables the students to discover the topic of project management from their chosen perspective.

Of course, it is a lot of work to arrange a variety of materials for a course. But thanks to the open educational resources movement a teacher can integrate materials that are published under a Creative Commons license for educational purposes. This again can also have a positive influence on contents and learning quality because of a higher variety of expert opinions and materials.

Hub to the web

As more and more information can be found on the web, the ability of knowing a certain fact is not a core skill anymore. Instead, it becomes more important to be connected. An individual cannot know everything but has to know where to get, assess, use and share information within his/her network (cf. Yang 2009, 9). In consequence, learning is not an individual activity but an activity of networking, communicating and collaborating. Learners start from existing knowledge and create new links in networks and in collaboration with others (cf. Siemens & Tittenberger 2009, 10). A learning platform should therefore provide the tools and features to collect, organise and share information and knowledge.

Personal learning environments

According to the HORIZON report, learning spaces become more and more flexible and they are characterised by a design that enables communication, collaboration and project-based learning (cf. Johnson et al. 2016, 13). The University of Queensland for example implemented learning centres as flexible and comfortable locations for students to share ideas, socialise and get together in study groups (cf. University of Queensland 2016). However, learning spaces are not only the physical spaces like classrooms, lecture halls and libraries on campus. Digital learning spaces on platforms can also support the student-centred approach and encourage active learning, communication and collaboration. While physical spaces can hardly be changed or require investment of time and money to become more flexible and team-oriented, online learning spaces can easily be configured according to course- or learner-specific needs. Various combinations of spaces with different purposes are possible and can be adapted at the lecturers' click. Most existing platforms created for learning management purposes do not support this networking and sharing character. The solution would be a so-called Personal Learning Environment (PLE) that connects the management of learning materials provided in a course by the lecturer to the individual learning organisation and the sharing of tools for the students.

PLE is based on the idea that learning will take place in different contexts and situations and will not be provided by a single learning provider (cf. Attwell 2007, 2). It is composed of all the tools students use for learning in everyday life (cf. Attwell 2007, 4). Those could be widgets like a calendar, social bookmarking, translating,

taking notes, sketching, organising a bibliography or whatever widget an individual uses for learning.

One possibility to provide a few features of a PLE – and it is definitely not the most comfortable one – would be to combine the learning platform Moodle to the community platform Mahara. Both are open-source platforms that can be connected via a Single Sign-on that automatically logs in to both sites and provides direct links from one to the other.

Another way is the so-called Mashup Personal Learning Environment. Every student can choose among different learning widgets and install the widgets he/she needs for organising and advancing his/her individual learning (cf. Attwell et al. 2008, 84).

Development of employability

Develop capabilities to find, assess, use and share learning resources

The process of information research and the processing on learning platforms partly reflect the way students intend to learn later in the job. Therefore, the offering of course material and additional resources from which the students can choose self-determinedly could be considered as a part of the students' future employability.

Allow real-world connection

A learning platform can provide more material and different examples or case studies than it would be possible in face-to-face lectures. This enables the students to choose material according to their needs, academic or professional experiences, previous knowledge and last but not least their personal interests.

In order to remain motivated, students need to be able to make clear connections between the curriculum and the real world and how the new knowledge and skills will influence them. Project-based learning, challenge-based learning, inquiry-based learning and similar methods are fostering more active learning experiences, both inside and outside the classroom (cf. Johnson et al. 2016, 14).

Blending formal and informal learning

The topic of blending formal and informal learning becomes more important with the transition from university to profession of generation Y. This generation has grown up using technologies and mobile devices are part of their everyday life. They use social networks not only for communication and for sharing information, but also for gathering knowledge (cf. Bitkom 2016, 12).

Therefore, the use of flexible learning scenarios and learning organisation is one important prerequisite for life-long learning of the current students' generation (cf. Kerres 2012, 106).

Application of learning platforms in exemplary scenarios

As mentioned before, the use of blended learning scenarios is not advantageous on its own. The approach is rather to focus on the fact that a learning scenario depends on the situation in which it is used and on how the different elements are combined effectively (cf. Kerres 2012, 2016).

In the following part, some concepts on how to use learning platforms in an effective way will be explained.

Problem-based learning scenario

Problem-based learning follows a model with seven steps within three stages (cf. Becker 2010, 367). The first five steps are used for group work to define the problem and the learning objectives as well as to agree on questions to be answered. Step 6 is about individual research. Step 7 is working in groups again to combine the individual research results in order to find a common solution for the problem. Especially the steps 6 and 7 can be transferred to virtual learning spaces using standard learning platforms.

TABLE 2.
Exemplary online problem-based learning scenario.

Stage of the problem-based learning process	Pedagogical potential
Steps 1–5 Clarify the terms related to the problem, define and analyse it. Define open questions to be answered.	The problem case is presented during a face-to-face seminar. Groups are built and start to analyse and define the problem. They decide upon topics to research, questions to answer and assign tasks to the group members. The method is a traditional face-to-face seminar which aims at: • gaining a common understanding of the problem • building groups • explaining the online learning space, its tools and work flow

Step 6 Research and gather information	The students start to research in online and offline material. Every group gets a closed, personal group room on the learning platform to collect, organise, share and discuss their findings.
	
	They are supposed to organise their findings and elaborate their ideas to solve the problem on the platform using the tools as follows:
	• Database: Collect together sources with title, key words, author and URL as bibliography
	  > Everyone can contribute and add resources at any time.
	  > All resources can be tagged with a key word and a text box can be used for advice hints or additional information.
	  > The database can easily be exported to share the results with others outside the group.
	• Wiki: collaborative writing to answer the questions defined in the face-to-face seminar
	  > Everyone can contribute and add resources at any time.
	  > Every wiki has a feature to discuss changes and decide whether to reactivate a former version of the wiki or to keep changes proposed by one group member.
	  > The final product is a commonly agreed paper summarising the ideas to solve the initial problem.
	• Video- and Audio Conferencing: Some issues might be too difficult to be discussed using the wiki forum. Students can plan virtual team meetings using the integrated or external conferencing tool.
	• Social bookmarking is often not included in standard learning platforms but there are many open-source tools that can easily be added to any browser and that are just at a click away from the learning platform.

Step 7 Presentation and discussion of results	For the last stage there are two possible ways to present and discuss the results. It can be done online and offline. The offline way is to simply present and discuss the results within the whole course. If it makes sense to finish the problem-based learning approach online, every group could post and discuss a summary of their findings available for everyone using the following tools: • Forum: The results are posted in the forum. > The members from other groups can give qualitative feedback by posting answers below. • Peer-Review: By using the peer-review functionalities quantitative and qualitative feedback can be given. • Database: The lecturer can join all bibliography databases and make them available to all students so that the base of research and the common knowledge are shared among all participants.

Flipped classroom

Flipped classroom is a concept that – as the name already indicates – transfers the instructional work that was usually done in class to self-determined learning at home. The lecturer provides videos, texts and/or other interactive material on a learning platform. The face-to-face time in the lecture or seminar can then be used for interaction, discussion and group work. (Cf. Tucker 2012, 82.)

The big advantage is that students can learn according to their own needs, disposability and type of learner. The classroom is also used to profit from practical experiences, insights and additional impulses from both, fellow students and the lecturer.

Example

A course on design thinking is offered at a university. The students should not only know about principles, methods and positive effects of design thinking but they should use the method to solve a problem that is introduced by the lecturer. As design thinking workshops are always quite time-consuming, the lecturer asks the student to prepare themselves at home by using the different media provided on the learning platform.

The structure of the online lecture reflects the structure of the design thinking process. The lecturer offers the former lecture notes as an e-book per chapter. This is supplemented by some additional background information about use cases and examples offered as infographics, video and/or audio podcasts and texts. Some methods are offered in different languages. That way students can adapt the learning to their specific prerequisites like mother tongue, professional background, learning type and media preferences.

Many additional materials can be added – and not everything has to be prepared in detail by the lecturer. A lot of documents, videos and case studies can be re-used from others, as long as they are published under a Creative Commons license.

The role of the lecturer

A meta-analysis by Hew, Cheung and Ng in 2010 showed the main reasons why students do not engage in online learning:

- No reason to participate

- Behaviour of others

- Personality

- Problems to follow the discussion

- Not sure what to contribute

- Not skilled to contribute (no knowledge about using tools)

- Technical reasons

The easiest way would be to make a contribution mandatory but there are better solutions that also support approaches about self-determined learning processes.

The lecturer should be present and give feedback regularly, summarise discussions or ask others to summarise. He should give organisational and technical advice as well as feedback as regards content. Considering and observing the students' work shows them that their contribution is esteemed (See: Maslow Esteem needs). This esteem again motivates the students to contribute even more.

According to the author's experience, the lecturer should encourage shy people who might be afraid of contributing. They might fear not being able to delete comments afterwards and getting negative feedback from the group. One way is to form closed groups within a course on the learning platform with 4–6 people. This could be the first learning space to discuss ideas more openly and to learn, that it is okay and easy to contribute. After experiencing a first success in the small digital learning group, learners are possibly more likely to contribute in a larger group as well.

Forming habits and giving the students reasons to come back is also a good way to increase participation and to reduce dropout rates:

- Do not publish the whole course material at once but successively.

- Open a category like "definition of the day" or "daily news".

- Play daily quizzes.

- Create occasions for learning activities.

- Open discussions that are relevant to the learner (highly controversial topics, real-life examples, insights from companies, state-of-the-art research results).

Example

A course about renewable energies is offered online for international students using the university's learning platform. How could students engage with the topic and how could they be motivated to contribute actively to the learning process?

- Exercise: Take photographs of how power is obtained from renewable energy technologies and post them online in the learning platform (or Instagram or Twitter using a defined hashtag).

This enables the students to discover real-life examples from different international settings and they may also investigate the photographs on barriers or difficult conditions for the implementation of renewable energy technologies what could be the basis for further discussions.

- Exercise: Ask them to record their energy use for one week using the journal feature and compare the results with students from other countries.

This raises the everyday awareness of the students for their personal contribution to sustainable energy use. They get an impression on how much they consume in comparison to people from other countries and they can generate the biggest energy consumers as an average of all contributions. This method engages students, shows practical relevance of the topic and motivates for communication and cooperation.

Summary

Over the last years, personal learning environments were promoted as the best way to realise self-determined and individual learning processes. Mash-up technologies rarely offer a clear structure and a perspective to students (and they are not intended

to!). For many lecturers they tend to be difficult to handle, even for those who are very willing to support communication and cooperation in learning and teaching. Learning platforms offer a reasonable compromise between state-of-the-art learning technologies, student-centred teaching and learning and digital literacy of students and lecturers. In consequence, the way towards active and collaborative blended learning scenarios leads to a real usage of all features of a learning platform in an integrated approach. In this context the highly developed usability of most platforms and their active communities are a big advantage to gain more importance and acceptance in teaching and learning. Furthermore, lecturers should experience how blended cooperation scenarios change the quality of their teaching and their role from teacher to tutor.

Lecturers should get support (legal questions and production issues) and a digital qualification for the use of learning platforms and technologies in general. The more they feel comfortable with standard software the more they probably open their minds towards other emerging technologies that could contribute to an improved approach to teaching and learning at institutions of higher education.

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Development of guidance in blended learning

– Case Master's Degree Programme in Business Administration at Satakunta University of Applied Sciences

Kimmo Kallama

Abstract

This article discusses the development of Master's degree programmes in which the models of progressive inquiry and blended learning are applied to provide as positive learner experiences as possible regarding learning guidance and to encourage as many students as possible to complete the degree programme in the target time while allowing for ways of reducing the amount of working hours spent by teachers on individual guidance. The tools to achieve this goal include social learning associated with the model of progressive inquiry, interactive reflection and flexible, blended guidance.

The degree programme in management and service business has three specialisation options: business management, law and customer-oriented service business. The graduates are awarded the degree of either Master of Business Administration (business management or law) or Master of Hospitality Management (service business). The programme is designed to be completed part-time alongside work. The core pedagogic approach in the programme is progressive inquiry. The progressive inquiry model incorporates the aspects of peer support and shared expertise. Students complete certain courses in small groups particularly during the first year, this way improving their functional skills as a team and learning to know each other and forming support networks. In thesis writing, the expertise, collaboration and support of fellow students will be similarly in a central position.

Applying progressive inquiry and blended learning in networked learning requires that the overall organisation of the course, including tools and resources are appropriate for the model, that the learning goals are defined and the practical steps towards their achievement have been carefully planned. The commitment of both the teacher and the students is crucial for the successful realisation of the course.

Applying blended guidance as part of the progressive inquiry model requires readiness from both the teacher and students to experiment with different guidance methods and tools and to critically evaluate their feasibility. It also requires skills in using modern multichannel media, interactive skills and soft skills. Most importantly, blended guidance calls for systematic planning and for all parties to deliver on commitments.

The student must play an active part in the learning process while the teacher must readjust his/her role as process manager towards being more like a coach or mentor. The teacher must be competent in the basic processes of guidance and keep the student and their needs in its centre. Without motivation and capabilities, it is very difficult to start developing anything new. Advice and guidance personnel are expected to be knowledgeable about how to deliver advice and guidance and to show professional competence, while the management of the educational organisation must be able to support and commit to promoting a new kind of learning guidance culture. The role of the teacher changes from a disseminator and regulator of information to a coach and facilitator for exchanging and developing ideas. Therefore, maintaining and improving the coaching skills of the teaching staff are one of the most important factors in securing the future of the university of applied sciences.

Introduction

This article describes the educational principles and implementation of guidance in the new Master's Degree Programme in management and service business, leading to a Master of Business Administration degree. It discusses how the delivery of Master's degree programmes applying the models of progressive inquiry and blended learning could be developed to provide as positive learner experiences as possible regarding learning guidance and to encourage as many students as possible to complete the degree programme in the target time while allowing for ways of reducing the amount of working hours spent by teachers on individual guidance.

Satakunta University of Applied Sciences (SAMK) started in 2014 the planning of a Master's degree programme in business administration as part of the strategic planning and preparation for potential results targets within the Service Business competence area. The decision of launching the degree programme was made in spring 2015 by the Satakunta University of Applied Sciences' Board and, in spring 2016, the first application round was held for the Master's Degree Programme in Management and Service Business starting in autumn 2016.

The new curriculum was based on the Master's degree programme in entrepreneurship and business administration that has been running since 2003 under various course titles. Both the educational approach and guidance practices follow the Satakunta University of Applied Sciences guidelines so they also served as the basis of the new degree programme.

The degree programme in management and service business has three specialisation options: business management, law and customer services. The targeted applicants are especially the alumni of Satakunta University of Applied Sciences with a Bachelor's degree in business administration or hospitality management. The law option is marketed particularly to those with a Bachelor's degree in business administration with specialisation in law, while the customer service option is aimed towards graduates with a degree in hospitality management. The target group is for the management option and students with a wide range of background are eligible. The graduates are awarded the degree of either Master of Business Administration (business management or law) or Master of Hospitality Management (customer-oriented service business).

The Master's Degree Programme in Management and Service Business is – as its predecessors – designed to be completed part-time alongside work. The students for the programme are recruited among those active in the working life with aspirations to progress in their careers with a suitable educational background.

The possibility to combine work and study and networked learning are the key attractions of the programme but they also pose challenges regarding students' availability, guidance and team-building. The challenge for adult education, including post-graduate degree programmes at universities of applied sciences, is the adjustment to students' professional lives. Many have also settled down socially. Therefore, the traditional degree programme with regular weekly schedules is all but impossible.

The tools to tackle these challenges include social learning associated with the model of progressive inquiry, interactive reflection and flexible, blended guidance. The Master's degree programmes in Satakunta University of Applied Sciences have as a result adopted a blended learning approach, with students convening for intensive face-to-face sessions a few times each month and otherwise completing their course work online. In the future, mobile solutions and the utilisation of social media may serve as auxiliary tools in resolving some of the problems in adult education. Widely used devices (such as smart phones) and applications (such as LinkedIn and Facebook) may make technology-based teaching more accessible.

The traditional e-Learning environments are based on student–teacher interaction that takes place mainly through the distribution and submission of materials. Well-known commercially available learning environments are Moodle and Optima (by Discendum ltd), which are often used as a tool for a specific course. Their opposite is deemed to be the face-to-face environments, which are based on human interaction. With the spreading of social media, access to information has increased and the ways it is used have changed. Information systems and network environments are incorporated into people's everyday experience. Learning takes place in a variety of environments and throughout a person's life, and the learning environments become blended. Qualities valued in the world of work, such as team skills, interactive skills, self-regulation and peer learning and peer feedback, are emphasised in blended learning. (Joutsenvirta & Vehkalahti 2006.)

What has been characteristic of the degree programme in entrepreneurship and business management is its working life orientation with exploratory and developmental approach as the key pedagogical principles. The core pedagogic approach in the programme is progressive inquiry. The programme follows the principle of life-long learning and it supports the personal development of students and their growth into managerial and entrepreneurial roles. The professional background and experience of the students is benefitted from on many levels when completing the learning tasks. The same principles will be adhered to in the new Master's Degree Programme in Management and Service Business. The guidance practice is based on Satakunta University of Applied Sciences' common principles for online teaching, tutoring and thesis supervision.

The programme is carried out in a way that allows the students to work full-time during their studies. Being involved in the working life is not, as such, an eligibility

criteria; however some working life contact is necessary for the programme to bring real benefits. The studies are completed as blended learning with group work as an essential working method.

Special attention needs to be paid to the orientation stage at the beginning of the programme, collaborative planning of the courses and the arrangements to provide guidance that supports learning and professional development. The thesis writing process is launched at the early stages of the programme and the thesis work will progress alongside other studies. The aim is to involve a working life representative in the supervision and assessment of the thesis. Students draw up their own development plan, the realisation of which will be monitored in conjunction of several courses. Students also draw up their own personal study plan and review it regularly.

The progressive inquiry model incorporates the aspects of peer support and shared expertise. Students complete certain courses in small groups particularly during the first year, this way improving their functional skills as a team and learning to know each other and forming support networks. In thesis writing, the expertise, collaboration and support of fellow students will be similarly in a central position.

During the first year, students refresh their study skills and learn to adopt the progressive inquiry and developmental approach to studying. Students will learn to understand different factors influencing management in the changing, diverse operating environments. Students assume different roles within their teams and learn and revise the principles of working as an expert group. Through completing the variety of exercises, students' ability to identify development needs in their organisation will improve as the students prepare for the thesis writing process within their own respective organisations. If a student does not have a background organisation, the thesis work may be carried out in another partner or customer organisation.

During the second and third year, the students improve their business management skills and accumulate the theoretical basis within their specialisation option. Students' expertise is strengthened and they gain the necessary management skills. At the end of the thesis writing process, the students present the findings of their research and development projects to their employer or another partner or customer organisation. As an outcome of the degree programme, students will have attained skills to initiate and manage development and change in their respective organisations.

Progressive inquiry and blended learning

The core pedagogic approach in the programme is progressive inquiry. According to Hakkarainen et al. (1999), the basic tenet in progressive inquiry is to engage students in knowledge co-construction process, where the starting points are the students' own preconceptions and research questions based on their previous knowledge. By resolving research questions, it is possible to deepen students' knowledge and reveal any gaps or misconceptions. In progressive inquiry, the process moves in stages onto a more advanced level. Attention is focussed on the relationship between students' own questions and explanations and information obtained from various sources. In this model, collaborative work is central: students must be provided appropriate tools for sharing information, reflection and producing new knowledge. (Hakkarainen et al. 1999, 23; Suvanto & Nokkonen 2014, 32–33)

The knowledge construction process in the progressive inquiry model can be divided into the following categories (see Figure 1 below; Lakkala & Lallimo 2002, 46–48): Setting up the context. An essential part of the progressive inquiry process is creating a context for learning by linking the subject matter under study with meaningful scientific questions, real problems resolved by experts or students' own sphere of experience. The idea is to invite students to consider the true nature and mechanisms of the phenomenon being discussed. Setting up the context can be done through empirical trials, orientating lecture, expert visit, online analyses, set texts or videos.

Presenting research problems. One of the key principles in progressive inquiry is for students defining for themselves the questions that puzzle them in the given phenomenon. The questions serve as triggers for further inquiry and determine the goals for the entire process and information search. The teacher defines the framework for the learning situation (theme and subject area) but it is the students' responsibility to define the problems that interest them in the topic or which they need to look into in order to understand them better. However, this problem setting needs to take place under guidance so that the students learn to formulate the questions as appropriate for gaining better insight into the subject matter (why, how).

Creating working theories. Once the research questions have been set, the next step in progressive inquiry is for the students to form their own hypotheses, theories and interpretations based on analyses and deliberation on the phenomenon being studied instead of passively absorbing given information. Presenting students' own explana-

tions and interpretations deliberately prior to learning new information is essential for achieving deeper conceptual understanding. It is also important that students' own explanations and conceptions are shared with everyone through, for example, the e-learning platform for discussion.

Critical assessment. Students evaluate themselves the progress of the research process through self-reflection and peer assessment. The assessment may involve the comparison of the theories produced by the learning community between each other or with scientific theories. The purpose of the assessment is to develop the explanations and conceptions further by identifying contradictory explanations and gaps of knowledge, and setting new goals regarding information seeking. Using a networked learning platform and social media, among others, supports critical assessment, as everyone is able to participate in the argumentation and everyone's comments will be retained for revisits.

Searching deepening knowledge. The purpose of progressive inquiry is to produce improved theories on the investigated phenomena. Therefore, it is closely linked with the seeking of relevant information, which will help students better understand the questions under inquiry. What is essential is that the information obtained from various sources is used for redefining one's own research questions and developing the explanations to these questions without accepting information as absolute truth.

Developing deepening problems. The students must be engaged with deepening their own research questions, as developing and comparing theories and discovering new information typically leads to new questions. Setting questions that gradually become more specific helps the learner to explore deeper in search of an explanation for the phenomenon, but this work requires guidance and support from the teacher, so that the student maintains sufficient interest and resilience in working with the phenomenon.

New theories. The criteria for successful progressive inquiry is that the students come up with more complex theories, are able to abandon, if necessary, their intuitive conceptions and find information that is relevant in explaining the investigated phenomena. Students must work systematically to develop their explanations and descriptions and seek information through gradually deepening cycles of inquiry. Here, the teacher's support and guidance is essential.

Distributed expertise. The progressive inquiry model emphasises collaboration between students, allowing for the sharing of set problems, theories and ideas and the

copying of best cognitive practices shared by its members (distributed expertise). In practice, students usually work is small groups preparing a joint answer to the investigated question.

Publication of findings. An essential part of progressive inquiry is the presentation of the conclusion for the process and publicising the findings. More important than the format of the presentation is to concentrate on publicising the discoveries and their explanations in order to place then under discussion.
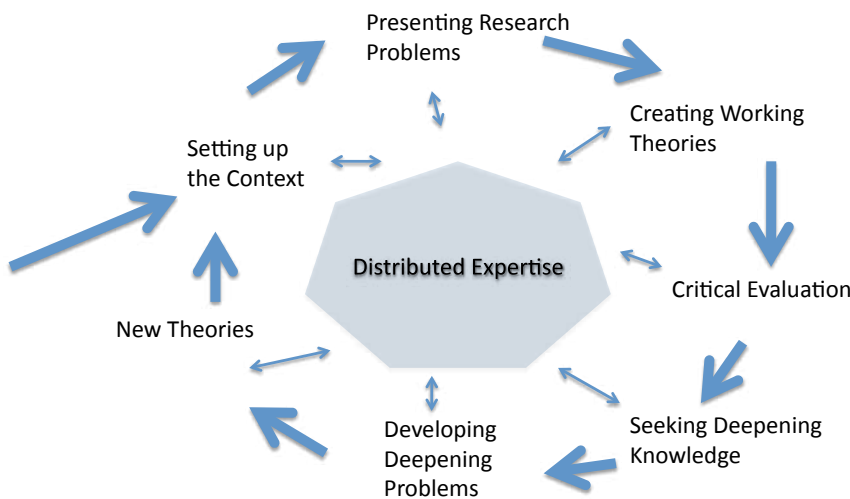
FIGURE 1.
Aspects of progressive inquiry based on Hakkarainen et al. (1999) (e.g. Suvanto & Nokkonen 2014, 33).

Pragmatic online exercises are an important part of the training. They enable those in employment study actively and they offer tools for distributed expertise, producing shared knowledge and reflection. Similar online tools are also used at the workplace, so mastering them is also among the valuable new skills that students will obtain.

Interaction is key to successful online teaching. Among the challenges are students' and the personnel's heterogeneous skills levels, different attitudes towards working in online environments and possibly non-user-friendly technology. High quality online teaching and guidance also support the acquisition of skills in using these tools alongside the actual subject matter. This requires that the personnel involved in the

process are able to give good and motivating guidance online. (Suvanto & Nokkonen 2014, 33–34.)

In the degree programme in management and service business, sharing information and valuing others' competences is at the core of the progressive inquiry process. What is essential in progressive inquiry is new co-constructed knowledge and social learning. Small groups formed at the very beginning of the course serve as forums where students can benefit from each other by sourcing information from each other, sound boarding each other's ideas, sharing different thought models and expanding their respective knowledge base and logic. (Suvanto & Nokkonen 2014, 34.)

Blended learning can be defined in many different ways. Pankin et al. (2012, 1–4) define blended learning as structured opportunities to learn using more than one learning or training method, tools and opportunities, inside or outside the classroom. In other words, the definition covers a variety of methods (lectures, workshops, guided practice, reading of texts, case studies and games), different learning platforms and environments, different scheduling, and different levels of guidance.

Blended learning makes use of the best aspects of two different modes of interaction:

- face-to-face interaction between learners and the teacher gives an opportunity for social interaction and collaborative thought processes in a synchronic setting. Communication taking place in one place is fast and promotes the understanding of complex issues.

- The assets of online interaction, however, are the asynchronicity of communication and its independence of place. When working online, students have more time to ponder on questions and to produce and share ideas through means offered by the digital environment.

According to Joutsenvirta & Vehkalahti (2006), blended learning can be divided into three types based on their objectives:

- The enabling blend focusses on reaching students, maintaining contacts and securing easy access to materials through online environments without changing the pedagogical approach.

- The enhancing blend aims to improve learning and change the pedagogical approach without altering the delivery or organisation of the instruction, or the modes of interaction.

- The transforming blend, also applied in Satakunta University of Applied Sciences Master's degree programme, is an approach where several significant changes in the pedagogical model, course organisation and interaction between students will be implemented. At Satakunta University of Applied Sciences, the transforming blend model relies heavily on the Moodle networked learning management system as the framework and tool for student interaction.

Furthermore, the sense of genuine interaction and presence can be enhanced by adopting new ways of working. Lectures, which are an essential part of traditional face-to-face instruction, can be recorded or transcribed for online reading material. The course material may consist of online materials or books and articles, which the students can discuss in small groups over the internet Students assume a more active role while the teacher's role focusses now more on planning and directing the learning process. Students may also produce learning materials themselves making use of mobile technology by sharing materials through social media and making contact with the other students and the teacher.

Graham (2006, 6–12) has identified six reasons for adopting the blended learning model:

- pedagogical richness

- access to knowledge

- social interaction

- personal agency

- cost effectiveness

- ease of revision (updates, corrections etc.).

Developing guidance in the Master's Degree Programme in Management and Service Business

Delivering guidance

Satakunta University of Applied Sciences has issued general guidelines for guidance in its quality assurance manual (tutoring model, degree and course regulations). The same guidelines will also be observed in the degree programme commencing in 2016. The key characteristics in the delivery of the programme are:

- the adoption of progressive inquiry approach, in which the course work is mainly completed in small groups

- connectivity between courses, with courses focussing on overlapping themes

- group and individual guidance, with guidance discussions, online surveys and seminars as methods

- Moodle learning management system as the common tool for courses, theses and guidance

- face-to-face instruction days on Fridays approximately every three weeks (five in the autumn and seven in the spring term)

- SoleOps and Winha student information systems as support tools for registration, assessment and guidance.

Students are divided into groups of four to six at the start, by the first face-to-face session. Before dividing students into groups, they will have received as a preliminary task a link to a personality style analysis, the results of which serve as a tool and basis for group work and many learning tasks. The aim is to make sure that each group has a diverse personality profile and representatives of each personality type. In 2015, the analysis model used was Insights Discovery, while in previous years the DISC analysis was used.

Based on our findings, in order to deliver appropriate guidance it is important to contact the students as soon as they have confirmed their attendance and to offer to provide sufficient information on the significance of the personality type analysis during their studies. This goal has been met as follows:

- Each student's personal e-mail is used as the contact channel before the face-to-face sessions begin.

- Students are given comprehensive instructions and guidelines by e-mail and via Moodle.

- Advice and guidance is also available by phone and e-mail to those who require it.

- The first face-to-face instruction day includes a session dedicated entirely to discussing the analysis tool.

Students have mainly found the analysis as rewarding and inspiring and a useful tool for self-regulation and group communications. However, some criticism has been voiced about students not taking the analysis seriously, which is when the analysis does not produce reliable results. Based on the feedback, it would appear that in addition to e-mail correspondence, students having confirmed their attendance would benefit from a separate communication where the significance and role of the analysis as a study tool is explained.

The connectivity between courses is ensured in the degree programme by including wide-ranging themes as part of the content of several courses. A case in point, and the most important single output by the students, is the thesis, the writing process of which begins immediately during the autumn term of the first year. The different courses prepare the students to examine development needs in the world of work through the methodology of progressive inquiry, to identify theoretical challenges when applied in practice and to conceptualise these challenges. The student will also learn to apply research-based methods and practices for the subject analysis on many different courses before the actual thesis writing even begins. To be successful, the connective approach requires systematic planning, careful coordination and weekly communication between the teaching and guidance personnel.

The Moodle learning management system is a key tool for courses, thesis writing and guidance. The Moodle platform contains folders for each course, follow-up folders for theses and informative material for guidance. Moodle is not a particularly interactive environment, which clearly presents a development need for the future. For example, simultaneous editing of files by several authors is not possible in Moodle, which limits its usefulness as a group work tool. Therefore we have recommended

that our students use open online tools (such as Google Docs) in their work, but providing guidance through public online services requires further consideration.

SoleOps and Winha student information systems are used as support tools for registration, assessment and guidance. Students use SoleOps for creating their Personal Study Plan (PSP), sign up for courses and prepare for guidance discussions by filling out guidance questionnaires. Near graduation, students also apply for their degree certificate via SoleOps. Winha is used mainly as a knowledge base for the person responsible for the curriculum and the student administration and it is not in active use by students. Changes in the different systems regularly pose challenges for delivering guidance as does the renewal of students' forgotten or expired user credentials.

In teaching, a central role is given to learning practical tasks carried out in small groups, which challenge the student to set research problems and thereby increase their insight. The tasks direct students to adopt a research-based approach in development work and prepare them for the thesis writing process. Students are encouraged to engage in an open dialogue and a collaborative and holistic approach towards the investigated phenomena and problem solving. Distributed expertise is facilitated in workshops and open seminars included in the thesis work as well as via online discussions. Groups are an essential element in progressive inquiry, but according to student feedback their significance is even more far-reaching than that – from the student perspective, teamwork has a positive impact on the overall progress of studies. (Suvanto & Nokkonen 2014, 34).

Group and individual guidance is provided regularly. It takes various forms, including group guidance discussions (at least twice each term), individual PSP discussions (the first one during the autumn of the first year, the second one during the second year and the third one nearing graduation), online questionnaires (three times prior to each guidance discussion) and thesis seminars (three own seminars, nine other seminars during the programme). Face to face instruction days have been organised every three weeks as a rule on Fridays (five face-to-face days in the autumn and seven in the spring). Students may also book extra guidance discussions in conjunction with face-to-face instruction and the seminars are also organised in conjunction with these days as far as possible. In the future, seminars may be held increasingly online, so that the instructor and the students need not be in the same place at the same time. The sessions can be recorded, making it possible for those students to participate even if they are unable to attend the online seminar live.

Guidance discussions have been mainly held during face-to-face instruction days in the same space, but the aim is to increase the use of web meeting tools for this purpose. The advantage of online discussions is their independence of place and that they can be recorded. The disadvantages are possible technical and communicative disruptions. These can be remedied by both parties being as well prepared as possible (testing the functionality of technical tools and acquiring the necessary skills to use them, distributing any documents beforehand and clearly outlined goals for the discussion.

Online environments and mobile devices as the new textbooks

It has been repeated in many conjunctions that attitudes are a major obstacle for the increasing use of learning technologies. According to a comparative study carried out by the EU in 2013, confidence in using ICT in education and its role as a facilitator of learning is not very strong in Finland. However, in post-graduate studies, in professional life and as a citizen, everyone is required to have an increasing set of skills in using and producing digital content. (ICT in Education, European Schoolnet 2013.) The current debate on including programming in the national core curriculum of Finnish comprehensive schools is indicative of how divided opinions are even within the teaching profession.

Pasi Silander, a researcher and developer of mobile learning applications, has introduced a categorisation of education models in mobile learning, based on the application of progressive inquiry, problem-based learning, project-based learning, case studies and other constructivist learning methods. New models are constantly being developed. According to Silander, mobile devices and applications are of particular use in the guidance of learning taking place in the practical working world and in the documentation of learning. (Silander 2012.)

Utilisation of social media and mobile technology in education deepens learners' understanding of themselves as the owner of the learning process while adding to learners' sense on participation in a degree programme and their perception of an engaging teacher. These elements are of particular importance when physical presence in a learning situation is for some reason impossible. (Salasuo 2011.)

The roles of mobile devices and social media in a learning process may include:

• information search and taking notes, e.g. photographic evidence and video clips.

• documentation and reflection of the learning process, e.g. mobile learning journals, blogs, sound clips in which learning or a learning situation is reflected on

• communication, peer tutoring and peer feedback, e.g. natural communication by phone or written communication through SMS and chat, mobile web meetings, such as Skype, AC, Twitter, Facebook Google Docs, blogs

• expertise through on-the-site mobile device and required knowledge in a real-life problem solving situation, e.g. video phone call to the workplace learning supervisor or sending instructions to a recipient's phone as MMS or link, e.g. Skype, AC, social media applications (Twitter, Facebook, Google Docs).

• shared social media platform for rapid exchange of information, material distribution and team building, e.g. Facebook group

• opinion polls and multiple choice questions, pull media in supporting, for example, workplace learning, various learning platforms such as Moodle, social media applications

• push media, sharing knowledge or learning materials, sending mobile learning objects or instructions as a group message to all learners, Moodle, social media applications

• on-demand media and guidance requests, assistance and guidance requests in problem situations in learning, e.g. Moodle, social media applications

• cognitive tool, or a tool for thinking and learning, e.g. reflection tool or "sounding board" which presents activating and reflective questions, e.g. a Google Docs document

• activation and maintaining active engagement, for example, in language learning, refreshing and use of vocabulary and idioms – commercial applications most widely available, e.g. Word Dive

• media for leaning materials, e.g. mobile learning objects, digital learning materials and other information sources

- information search, e.g. mobile googling or use of various knowledge bases

- mobile portfolio, e.g. the documentation of student outputs in a learning portfolio

- learners' own media production, e.g. video clips and learning objects, e.g. Viope, Unity

- instructional guidance and scaffolding, e.g. SMS, e-mail, learning tasks (Silander 2012).

The future vision is to develop the above in various combinations into new types of learning environments, continually upgraded and genuinely interactive "new textbooks". Making full use of online media and audiovisual production skills are essential when shaping the final visual identity and functionalities of learning environments.

Guidance of web-based progressive inquiry

Guidance refers to a situation where the instructor (teacher, coach) supports students in their efforts in constructing knowledge and to justify the relevance of that knowledge. It is not the instructor's role to "think for the student", and instead students should be offered the opportunity to process knowledge independently and to develop the skills required for this. (Lakkala & Lallimo 2002, 46–48.)

The zone of proximal development, a concept introduced by Vygotski (1978), refers to a gap between a learner's current level of development and the potential level of development that the learner may achieve with guidance and support. Guidance that takes place within the learner's zone of proximal development, can be described with the term scaffolding. The support consists of defining the goal of the assignment at hand and detailed support provided in relation to the assignment at a given time. Scaffolding covers several elements, such as, recruitment for a task, which refers to matching students' interests with suitable tasks; reducing the degree of freedom in completing a task by simplifying the task as required by a student's current level; steering activities towards the right direction and maintaining this; indicating the characteristics of the task by highlighting the central aspects or the gap between the knowledge produced by the student and the target level; reducing frustration; and modelling the task, or illustrating how the task is completed. (Lakkala & Lallimo 2002, 48–56.)

However, supplementary models are needed to provide a description of the guidance activity, as networked inquiry differs from a traditional teaching situation in many respects: 1) Problem-based progressive inquiry into the investigated data and resolving authentic open questions instead of predefined tasks that have model solutions; 2) goal-oriented collaborative effort by a group of students and knowledge construction instead of completing individual assignments; and 3) computer-aided interactive instead of and in addition to face-to-face communication in a classroom. (Lakkala & Lallimo 2002, 48–56.)

The teacher has a significant impact as the supporter of students' self-regulated thought processes, especially regarding pedagogical methods; activities are not strictly defined beforehand, as is the case with progressive inquiry or collaborative or networked learning environments. In the implementation of progressive inquiry, the more demanding thought processes, such as planning, practical execution and assessment, which traditionally belong under the teacher's remit, are gradually transferred to students. The role of the teacher changes from a disseminator and regulator of information to a coach and a facilitator for exchanging and developing ideas. (Lakkala & Lallimo 2002, 48–56.)

There are two different levels in the teacher's role, in which he/she should be participating in the learning process: 1) the management and organisation of the learning community and 2) engaging in the research into the subject matters selected by the students as part of the research team. The teacher's role in learning which relies strongly on students' independent work may sometimes be quite difficult. The teacher cannot have full control of the learning processes, nor can he/she leave the students to their own devices. The teacher cannot trust too much on progressive inquiry as such automatically producing good results. He/she must intervene with students' work if they are not making progress or if their activities are being directed outside the agreed focus. (Lakkala & Lallimo 2002, 48–56.)

The preliminary planning work by the teacher is paramount, even if the goal is to keep the students at the centre of the process. Therefore, the planning work is inevitably very different from that required in traditional teaching. In an ideal scenario, the teacher has one overall plan, from which further content and skills-related goals are derived. The additional plans are more detailed in terms of scheduling, learning and guidance methods or tools to be used. The strength of having such additional

plans is that it is possible (and useful) to have several different plans for new and unforeseen situations. (Lakkala & Lallimo 2002, 48–56.)

Graham (2006, 5–12) has named six areas of challenge when planning the use of blended methods:

- the role of face-to-face interaction

- the roles of students' own choices and proactiveness

- the models for support and guidance

- differences in the availability of ICT resources

- cultural considerations and finding a balance between existing products and new innovations.

According to Graham (2006, 11–21), students choose the solutions based on their availability and practicality. How much guidance students receive to make these decisions is vital.

Applying progressive inquiry and blended learning in networked learning requires that the overall organisation of the course and the different aspects of it, including tools and resources available to the learning community, are appropriate. The visual identity and usability of an e-learning platform should be carefully designed. This involves a number of decision to be made, such as, how are the digital tools of the online environment going to be used (discussion forums, e-mail, document archive, notice board), how will the user areas for students and groups be organised, how will the communication and archiving of submissions be arranged? It also needs to be considered, how the online environment could best support collaborative work: sharing of ideas, peer commentary and co-production and co-construction of knowledge. This requires that students be divided into groups of suitable size for the purpose of group work taking place online. One feasible solution has been to divide students into groups of less than ten members, with each group with their assigned research problems, which they will then discuss within their own user area in the e-learning platform. (Lakkala & Lallimo 2002, 48–56.)

To ensure efficient work for all of the learners, it is essential for the members of each group to agree on the decision-making processes, responsibilities and the use

of communication tools. When using process-based learning methods, it is important to give structure and explicitly specify the key stages of the process as this helps students gradually learn how to cope with challenging assignments independently. Modelling the process stages and discussing them with students is necessary in order for them to increase their understanding of the significance and purpose of each stage. It is also advisable to set interim targets for the completion of certain assignments. (Lakkala & Lallimo 2002, 48–56.)

During the process, the teacher is expected to evaluate students' progress, give feedback and to direct their activities. The teacher should define clear educational goals for each project. It is especially important, albeit challenging, to support students' metacognitive skills by gradually weaning them towards assuming responsibility for defining their own goal setting, planning, guidance and assessments (Bereiter & Scardamalia 1987, 9–10).

If students have difficulty making progress in their work, general instructions are not usually helpful (e.g. "be more precise"), and instead the feedback and advice should be based on the specific problems that the students are experiencing (in other words, the guidance should be adapted to the learners zone of proximal development). Giving targeted feedback requires that students make their current thinking visible through writing or verbal discussion and that the teacher also focusses attention on the knowledge produced by the students and evaluates what kind of feedback would be relevant to them at that stage. A shared online environment is particularly useful in this. In collaborative learning, it should be decided to what degree the teacher should target his/her guidance towards individual students and to what degree keep addressing groups or the whole learning community. (Lakkala & Lallimo 2002, 48–56.)

Another key role for the teacher in the students' research process is to serve as a role model as an expert, showing genuine engagement the students' collaborative research process. As the teacher cannot control the learning situations and share his/her knowledge, his/her role is rather to open up his/her thought processes to the students, make genuine challenging queries and present his/her hypotheses as a member of the shared forum on the investigated questions.

The amount of supportive guidance provided can be reduced as and when students become more proficient in the course of the process. The goal is to gradually transfer the control of the learning process to the students and support the development of

their metacognitive and self-regulative capabilities. This requires that the key stages of the steering and the skills necessary for self-regulation have been made explicit during the process and raised under conscious discussion. For example, the teacher may occasionally highlight the best practices in a process shared online for analysis and comparison.

When implementing networked inquiry, the assessment criteria must be clearly laid down at the beginning of the process and discussed in collaboration with the students. Views, comments and outputs saved on a collaborative networked learning platform enable new types of process assessment. Therefore it needs to be agreed what exactly is being evaluated: the increase in students' understandings, improved proficiency, the quality of outputs, individual performance in an exam situation or, for example, students' participation or constructive peer support. It must also be decided, in which situations it is necessary to evaluate individual performance and how to evaluate collaborative processes and collective outputs, where it is difficult to evaluate an individual contribution of each student. In some progressive inquiry projects, the teachers have asked students to grade themselves on the quality of their own contribution to the group's joint effort, and this grade has been taken into account in the final grade. (Lakkala & Lallimo 2002, 48–56.)

The blended counselling approach as a tool for the development of guidance

Pyrstöjärvi & Saramäki (2011, 58) define blended counselling as an approach in which guidance is designed to take place seamlessly partly online and partly face-to-face – as part of an active students study - and learning process. Various technologies are embedded into the instructional framework, often serving as a bridge between face-to-face and distance learning methods. Interaction in learning takes place either in real time (synchronic) or in non-real time (asynchronic).

Adult learners' studies are restricted by other factors, such as work, family and other interests, so successful student guidance and counselling is critical for the progress of the studies. Students may be offered different planning options and help in their decision-making, but ultimately students make their own decisions. It is therefore important to provide clear and appropriate process descriptions. This allows students to find the information they are looking for and to contact the education provider through the correct channels. In blended learning, guidance is planned to partly take place online and partly face-to-face as a seamless process. Technology is used

alongside traditional face-to-face instruction as a natural part of the learning environment and platform for guidance. (Pyrstöjärvi & Saramäki, 2011 59–62.)

Students' need for guidance, counselling and support varies at the different stages of studies. Some are able to work quite independently, while some require moderate support and others more intensive guidance. An individual student's needs are different before the studies begin, at the early stages of the programme, at the height of the studies and at the end. Students should be aware of the progress of the studies so that they know what to expect at each stage and where to seek help when necessary. (Pyrstöjärvi & Saramäki, 2011 62–64.)

It is necessary for the degree programme staff to be thoroughly clear about their own role in the process. Satakunta University of Applied Sciences Master's Degree Programme in Service Business has three designated tutors, whose role is to support the personal study plan of named students, and a programme coordinator, who oversees the guidance practices and also serves as a tutor. At the beginning of the studies, guidance plays a large role, so that students adopt appropriate ways of working and to help their studies get off to a good start. Students' study skills may need improvement at the beginning of the programme. The programme begins with the first face-to-face day, involving face-to-face tutoring and a session on study skills. At this juncture, students' user credentials and e-mail accounts are verified and the group members also familiarise themselves with Moodle and learn how to sign up for courses and sign in to different student information systems. Students can later view the written instructions provided online or speak to their tutor or help desk. It has been suggested that the orientation stage could be improved by adding step-by-step video tutorials on how to use the different systems.

Vuorinen (2006, 141–147) classifies students into three categories based on their need for guidance:

- those seeking information independently and with little need for guidance

- those who seek guidance from their peer group

- those who seek personal guidance.

Guidance services can be divided into the following groups:

- services suitable for independent use

- services that are used partly under an expert's supervision or in a peer group

- services which require expert supervision when used.

The University of Eastern Finland has developed a model for blended learning that takes into account the varying guidance needs of different students. The model applies the blended counselling approach, where technology is used as a natural part of guidance supporting distance learning and a consciously designed element alongside face-to-face guidance and teaching. The feasibility of this model requires that the implementing staff share a common view about the guidance and counselling process. (Pyrstöjärvi & Saramäki, 2011 64–65.)

In blended counselling, different forms of guidance are combined as necessary. For the student to be able to find information independently, he/she must be provided regular, targeted (e-mail) and general (website) information. Students' need for guidance varies at the different stages of studies – they need support, guidance and encouragement in order to make progress and achieve their goals. Support may be given by the teaching staff or the students' own peer group. Only some students require more intensive personal guidance. However, for an individual student, the access to such support may be crucial, and the staff must be able to provide it with professionalism and with awareness of the different levels of needs for guidance. (Pyrstöjärvi & Saramäki, 2011 65–66.)

Blended counselling is designed to be implemented equally seamless in face-to-face and online guidance. The expert must be able to communicate clearly to the student when they are available and what the student's own role is in the process and where they can find more information. Students are often able to find the necessary information independently on the website or the networked learning environment. However, face-to-face guidance remains important, particularly because of its nature as a rapid, two-directional exchange of information.

Networked environments enable personal or group guidance regardless of location. Satakunta University of Applied Sciences' HILL learning system offers a stable and reliable channel for providing guidance. Moodle is used as a supporting tool for guidance, a check list and a documentation facility. The chat and other interactive features of Moodle are felt to be cumbersome and impractical compared to the e-mail-based HILL guidance.

So far, social media has not been utilised in guidance, and instead students use its applications independently in their group work. The potential of social media as a supporting media in guidance and assessment will merit further attention in the future.

Currently, the following flexible and student-oriented methods to support students are in use:

• online discussion forum used for guidance and counselling

• group guidance for entire year classes and guidance for small group

• PSP and guidance discussions online (not with all tutors)

• personal PSP supervisors – tutors, resources for personal guidance

• student Intranet, e-mail,

• flexible phone and guidance hours

• website as an information and guidance channel.

Guidance methods that are currently under further development include:

• check-lists for the guidance providers to ensure that all key aspects at each stage of study are covered

• the use of web meeting tools in teaching and a wider use of recorded tuition

• development of chat-based support especially for technical issues

• the frequently asked questions at each stage of the learning path and collected answers

• the potential of social media and mobile devices supporting guidance

The challenges in blended learning from different perspectives

The challenges in blended learning include the fragmentation and overlaps in the guidance process, issues regarding division of labour (responsibilities, roles and time management), conflicts related to participants' online etiquette and identities. Since students' needs are widely varied and especially the seasoned users of online services are used to expect personalised service, one service model may not fit all. Further-

more, attention needs to be paid to the coverage and management of the multiple channels in use, as well as the availability and accessibility of all services. (Pyrstöjärvi & Saramäki 2011.)

The learning environments in higher education institutions are changing towards a more open learning environment, where new formats of text books are being introduced. In these environments, learning materials, the teacher's attendance or notes and writing tools may be replaced by mobile devices (worksite supervision, healthcare applications used by tablets or smart phones). They can also serve as a test platform for a research project and a simulation tool in, for example, online trading (recruitment, marketing, sales, visual communication).

The use of devices and applications may pose problems either because of their limited availability, the diversity of interfaces and applications and the differences in learners' ability to use them. The availability and compatibility of applications must be ensured through the teacher's guidance practices and, when necessary, by the educational institution through providing devices for loan. Many libraries of educational institutions have already acquired tablet and laptop computers for lending. The provision of encouragement and guidance in their use must obviously be increased in the future.

In order to be successful, blended learning requires support services both for teachers and students. Teachers require, first and foremost, pedagogical support and sharing of best practices, models and examples of courses. Students, in turn, need guidance that supports their studies. Blended learning typically requires a team of teachers, with a clear division of responsibilities and roles. This is of particular importance when technical devices are used and, in particular, when students use their own mobile devices as tools for learning. The staff must work as a team and show leadership that supports collaboration.

Applying blended guidance requires readiness from both the teacher and students to experiment with different guidance methods and tools and to critically evaluate their feasibility. It also requires skills in using modern multichannel media, interactive skills and soft skills. Most importantly, blended guidance calls for systematic planning and for all parties to deliver on commitments.

The student must play an active part in the learning process while the teacher must readjust his/her role as process manager towards being more like a coach or mentor. The teacher must be competent in the basic processes of guidance and keep the student and their needs at its centre. Without motivation and capabilities, it is very

difficult to start developing anything new. Advice and guidance personnel are expected to be knowledgeable about how to deliver guidance and counselling and to show professional competence, while the management of the educational organisation must be able to support and commit to promoting a new kind of learning guidance culture. (Pyrstöjärvi & Saramäki, 2011 67–68.)

Blended learning benefits from an approach known as the flipped class-room model, in which online materials and networked learning free up the teacher's time during face-to-face sessions to guidance and supporting the learning process. Networked learning requires independence and activeness from the students, and the role of the teacher has changed – and will change even more in the future – into one of a coach, motivator, role model and mentor. (Hammais 2015, 43.) The skills and attitudes of the users towards learning technologies may vary, which is when the teacher's role as a motivator is emphasised and he/she may need to justify the use of technology as it will provide the learners with an added, essential skill. Today's world of work, and that of the future even more so, will place new demands on higher education to provide new skills required by the changing working culture, including problem-solving skills, communication skills, knowledge sharing skills and the ability to efficiently apply collaborative tools in daily work. (Suvanto & Nokkonen 2014, 34.)

Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation can be seen as separate: intrinsic motivation arises from genuine desire, it is doing something for its own sake and it brings pleasure, while extrinsic motivation arises from external factors or obligation (Ryan & Deci 2000). The more a course is able to kindle intrinsic motivation in students, thanks to high-quality content, the fewer corrective or directive measures are required, which in turn frees up the teacher's time to concentrate more on supporting deeper learning in the students.

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Problems in online education

Leena Sääski

Abstract

This article discusses the challenges and problem areas in online education from the perspective of the online teacher. The online communication skills of the teaching staff as well as their attitude towards the students has a major impact on how positive the learning experience will be for the student in a digital learning environment.

In comparison to conventional face-to-face teaching, where the teacher can prepare material little by little throughout the course, the online teaching process is front-loaded. Before an online course even begins, the teaching materials should already be available in their entirety. When planning an online course, the teacher should reserve enough time for planning prior to the beginning of the course.

Time management during an online course may come as a surprise. The teacher will spend a lot of time correcting online exercises regardless of the technology available to assist in this assignment. Furthermore, students expect a similar active presence from the teacher online as in a classroom situation. The teacher should make him- or herself visible and accessible in online teaching alongside completing assessments and giving feedback.

The educational institution should invest in the networked learning platform and technical support for online lecturing systems. The functionality of technical tools is essential in creating a pleasant learning environment for students and in supporting their motivation to study. Library staff plays a central role in supporting online teaching. Online publications must be easily accessible for students.

Introduction

That education and learning is to an increasing degree taking place online is changing teachers' daily routines. Teachers are required to plan and create a course from different starting points than in a traditional class room or lecture setting. In online education, face-to-face contact with students is rare, as the networked learning platform and online exercises form the main learning environment.

In this article, I will discuss the aspects to which an online teacher should pay particular attention when planning and creating online courses. This will help teachers avoid the worst pitfalls in their work and is able to better support their students' learning. The article is based on my personal findings and experiences while teaching adult learners online.

I have served as an online teacher for ten years at Satakunta University of Applied Sciences. I have taught, for example, courses that take place entirely online, including entrepreneurship, finance and marketing, and which include no online lecturing, only assignments and exercises that the students complete independently. In some courses I have made use of online lectures as part of the tuition, including those on marketing communications and marketing and sales of expert services. Students have been able to attend these lectures also physically at the classroom where the online lecture was given.

I shall begin with discussing the importance of planning prior to the course beginning and the teacher's time management. I will present a number of ideas regarding the roles of technical support and library in enabling teacher's work. I will also highlight the importance of online presence and communication, when aiming to support students in networked learning. To conclude I will share some insights into student assessment and feedback.

Focus on planning

What needs to change in teaching, when it is taken out of the classroom or lecture hall into a networked learning environment? Everything – the most important point being the teacher's own attitude towards working online. The teacher must plan the course content in a new way compared to face-to-face teaching. In online education, the traditional role of the teacher as a dispenser of information changes into one of

a facilitator of learning. A teacher creates the framework and materials that support the learning content. When planning online courses, the overall content of the studies, the variety of exercise types and methods of giving feedback are also matters to be considered from quite a different angle than when providing face-to-face tuition.

At the beginning of a course, the teacher goes through the course description, in which the goals, topics to be covered, content and methodology as well as guidelines for teacher–student collaboration are defined. It is also advisable to include in the description the number of exercises the students are expected to complete, how they will be evaluated and how they affect the final grade. This way, the students gain an overall picture of the course as a whole.

Providing the materials on a networked learning platform (Moodle or Optima (by Discendum ltd), among others) presents a challenge for the teacher that is essentially different from creating lecture materials. In traditional teaching, the teacher is able to plan or at least produce and deliver the course in smaller batches. In online teaching, it is best to have the learning palette complete by the time the course begins. In practice, this cannot always be achieved, and the teacher may create and add more materials into the platforms at a later stage. In this case it is important to inform students when they first sign in to the platform what types of materials will be added later and when.

In fact, it may sometimes be practical for the teacher not to upload all materials onto the platform at the beginning of the course. The most active students and those with a busy schedule may in this case progress at their own pace deviating from the path and timetable the teacher had planned. This can be a problem if students complete exercises before thoroughly researching the relevant online material required for a successful completion of the assignment. It is also important for the teacher to inform the students how and why it is recommended that the material is studied in a certain order. With a clear course plan, students will have fewer additional questions about the course.

Of course, it would be ideal for students for have the online course fully available online as the course begins, as this would allow them to immediately familiarise themselves with the themes covered on the course, books and online sources, other materials, exercises and their completion schedule as well as how they will be evaluated. In addition to a well-designed learning platform, it is essential for students to

be able to time their studies according to their other schedule. This is a key expectation for students taking online courses.

Regarding the quality of the networked learning platform content, it should be considered which materials are best created by teachers themselves and which materials already exist online. If there is existing online material available suited to the course content, browsing and selecting appropriate materials is very time consuming. It might also be considered whether it would make sense for the educational institution to purchase licenses for materials used on a course, should such material already be available online. There is no need to prepare everything yourself from scratch.

Online teaching takes time

The main challenge for the teacher is time management. Building the infrastructure on the learning platform is surprisingly time consuming. It is important not to underestimate the time required for this stage in your work plan. The more time the teacher spends on the planning, the less laborious the actual course is for the teacher to run and for students to follow. Every time I have prepared a new course, I have without fail been surprised by the large amount of planning it takes, even if I have produced a large number of different types of online courses over the years.

The number of students may be much larger on an online course than in face-to-face teaching: while there may be 20 students attending the course in a classroom, the online course may be attended by more than 100 students. This is something to consider when planning an online course. How to plan the exercises and the learning path so as not to overwhelm and overwork oneself when correcting homework? This is where existing exercise and examination tools and other technology on the platform may prove helpful and reduce the teacher's workload.

Many students enrol on their first online course with the assumption that online learning is quick and easy. First-timers are often surprised by how demanding online learning is. It may seem laid back not having to attend classes in person and online lectures can be attended regardless of time. However, online courses involve a wealth of exercises and homework and they may be very extensive. Students will have to spend a large amount of time researching information and composing their submissions.

The educational institution should have a plan for supporting and tutoring students who are not previously familiar with online learning. This cannot be left exclusively to the course teacher, as it is a wider question regarding the institution's policy on tutoring, and the necessary arrangements should be in place well before any online courses begin.

Technical support and the library at the teacher's service

Teachers of online courses are required to have online technology skills both in terms of delivering online lectures and producing online learning materials. Successful online tuition requires accessible and timely technical support. It is important for the teacher to not have to worry whether or not the image and sound of the online lecture tool works properly. If problems occur, it should be ensured that ICT support is available to assist the teacher.

If the teacher delivers an online lecture in the evening from home or from work during the weekend, it should be made sure that the technology will not let the teacher down regardless of the time and place. Yet sometimes ICT support is not available, even if the teacher is delivering a lecture from his/her work desk. The educational institution must give sufficient priority to online education and learning to ensure that the technical support is available regardless of where and when online education activities take place.

In addition to online lecturing system skills, the teachers should receive continual training on the diverse use of the technical features of networked learning platforms. This training should be systematic with a named coordinator in charge of organising its provision. When an educational institution is rolling out its new online learning systems, the staff typically receives a wealth of training in its use. However, once this first enthusiasm wears off, it is assumed that the teachers' online tuition skills are maintained as a matter of course. This type of thinking will not foster the school's digital learning culture.

New teaching methods and tools as well as opportunities created by social media are constantly introduced to the market, so if it is the educational institution's vision to remain in the front line of the digitalisation of education, the staff competence must be diligently updated.

In addition to teachers, the students also should have access to technical support as easily and quickly as possible. This support may be provided by teachers, ICT and the

library staff, whose job descriptions and working hours should be agreed on taking into account the need for flexibility regarding the place of work and working hours.

When a teacher is creating digital materials for the course, in addition to the actual learning content, the technical quality of the outcome should also be taken into consideration. Institutions should invest resources in teachers' training to guarantee high-quality online learning materials. This could also be a way of raising the institution's profile as a networked learning community.

Alongside ICT services, the library plays a key role in networked learning. Fortunately, e-books and other digital learning materials are already widely available in academic libraries. The amount of this material is constantly being added to, which will make the online teacher's work easier. Online links and reading suggestions are good signposts on the online learner's path. The challenge for the teacher is to find appropriate academic online materials.

Students may assume that anything that is online can be used as a relevant source. Since directing students to high-quality online materials is problematic, the teachers are well-advised to engage the institution's library staff. Teachers and the librarians together ought to ingrain in their students source criticism. The library staff can direct students to high-quality databases and online sources that are of specific use on a given course.

In my personal experience, the best learning outcomes are achieved when the library staff and I have joined forces and given online information search training sessions at the beginning of a course focussing on the specific assignments that the students are expected to complete. This has ensured that the online sources used by the students have been of relevance and high academic quality.

The many ways of communication

Online teaching and learning may sound easy, as the teacher is not physically teaching in a classroom – in other words, "not working". Students are not required to attend lectures, and instead just "stay online". It is the teacher's challenge to find a way of being visible and present for students when online and best support students' networked learning.

Facilitating networked learning is all about communication. The teacher ought to make a conscious effort when creating online texts as well to communicate directly

with the students. The goal is to give simple and straightforward messages both when instructing on homework and when communicating with students during the course.

Online texts should be short, unambiguous and concrete. Teachers should pay special attention to correct use of language and punctuation. Poor language and punctuation are distracting and have a negative impact on students' motivation.

The students should be given clear instructions on the use of different communication channels with the teacher during the course. Students are still relying too much on e-mail to ask questions regarding the course. In this case, the teacher has to take the extra steps of copying and pasting the (anonymous) question and answer on the learning platform so that all students receive the same information simultaneously. In my experience, the best communication channel for students would be an "Ask the teacher" forum on the learning platform.

The teacher can also create different topics for the students to discuss. If the students use these channels actively, they will incidentally be also teaching and steering each other by sharing their knowledge. This is a form of peer support, which is essential for maintaining motivation.

The teacher should give clear guidelines on which channels are in the students' own use and which channels are dedicated to official course information provided by the teacher. It is best to keep the communications structure as simple as possible so that the students do not get lost in a jungle of different channels and topic threads.

Besides the planned communication channels, the teacher should also decide whether the students may use available social media channels in their studies. If so, is it necessary for the teacher to have access to these channels as an observer? Does the teacher need to know how, when and where the students complete their exercises and how they communicate with each other about their studies? This need not be the case, as ultimately the quality of the submissions and learning outcomes are essential.

How does the teacher guide the students in independent learning without face-to-face contact? One feasible method is to have the students process the topics and themes being discussed amongst themselves, to learn from each other while completing assignments. The course may include pair and group work and the use of different discussion forums for exchanging ideas and opinions. Learners learn from each other especially through discussion and group work. Adult learners in particu-

lar already have experience from the world of work, which they could share with others.

Since nobody can be forced to learn, it is the teacher's responsibility to use a range of different methods to invite the learners to take interest in the themes discussed so that their willingness to learn and find new information even independently is aroused.

The teacher should make the online learning environment visually attractive. How to use images, sound and video successfully without overloading the platform with fragmented material that can be irritating to the students? There is the danger that the course involves too many different types of material, the effect of which is counterproductive and puts students off learning. Students will value a clear and logical progress throughout the course. It is important for them to be able to find the information they need from the learning platform without excessive effort.

Online presence

Online courses often involve contact teaching, when students attend a session virtually. These sessions can be recorded and saved on the learning platform for students to view later. Suitable themes for contact teaching sessions include the orientation session at the beginning of the course, a lecture on a key topic, student guidance and tutoring on homework, the discussion of submitted homework and giving oral feedback as well as student presentations and the following discussions.

Scheduling the online contact sessions may be problematic. Some of the students may work during the day, and are therefore unable to attend the session, but many work during the evenings as well. How flexible is the teacher prepared and able to be in terms of scheduling sessions? Managers should agree on common rules on how they could best support teachers' work taking place online outside the normal office hours. Students expect to be able to complete their work regardless of time and place, as does the teacher instructing them.

The studies may also include video recordings made beforehand, available for students to view whenever it suits them. It is better to create several short videos than few long ones. Consider when it is best to use written information and when voice and video recording for the best learning outcome.

The teacher should be actively present online even outside the online session, as this is motivating and supportive for the students. The teacher may also choose to hold online meetings, which are contact sessions with students separate from actual tuition sessions with the purpose of giving further information regarding the studies and completing course work. These sessions can also be Q&A sessions for the purpose of supporting and encouraging students in completing the course.

Overall, the teacher should show active presence online in various ways. These include participating in students' online discussions, motivating students via online communication tools, sending reminders of course work and their submission deadlines. The goal for the teacher is to make oneself consciously "visible" for students online. This way students will feel that the teacher takes genuine interest in their studies and progress.

Assessment and feedback

Prior to the beginning of the course, the teacher should decide how much feedback students need to receive. Will the teacher give personal feedback or joint feedback or provide model answers to all students? Will course work be marked pass/pass with amendments/fail or graded? Of course, it also needs to be considered what type of feedback will best support students' learning. It is a good idea to use different feedback models for different types of course work. This, too, will give the necessary variation to the course.

The larger the group of students, the more difficult it is for the teacher to give personal online guidance and feedback. When teaching a large group, the teacher will inevitably resort to technology in correcting course work. In this case, giving individual feedback to each student separately is not possible.

I have noticed that online students wish to receive and, in fact, expect more personalised feedback than students before. They wish to be seen, heard and treated as individuals, although the course would be participated in by a huge number of students.

When students study online and complete and submit their coursework without the teacher's control, the question arises, does the student really work him- or herself. How should this be controlled? There are different applications that help identify plagiarism (such as Urkund), which the teacher can use whenever he/she suspects

that a student has copied work from someone else. On the other hand, the course work should be as applied in nature as possible, which makes plagiarism more difficult. The teacher should decide beforehand how to ensure that the student has authored the coursework him- or herself.

Submitting work that has been authored by someone else or that has already been previously used has always been possible, regardless of the study method. Only a controlled exam situation can provide certainty that the student is personally authoring his/her work. Exams can also be taken in exam aquariums or online so that the student constantly keeps the web cam and screen share on, so that the teacher may control how the student is working.

So far, I have not used online exams to any large degree, and have instead evaluated the learning tasks for the course. I often use applied exercises, in which the student has to put theory into practice at the workplace or some other organisation. This ensures that the students have to think for themselves when completing the task. Even here, a student may still have someone else do the thinking.

On some courses I have kept to the traditional, supervised exams. In my view, sometimes the traditional format is still relevant. While there is such a vast amount of information available online, there are concepts in every topic that the student must understand and be able to use without going online. In this type of exam, I would welcome various controlled digital exam tools.

Human-centred online tuition

From the teacher's perspective, online teaching is a new and interesting, albeit a challenging working model. The teacher has to completely rethink the progress of the course and the learning tasks in comparison to traditional teaching. When preparing the online course, the teacher should reserve enough time for the planning of the course and finding suitable online materials. The more the teacher chooses to produce online materials in addition to learning tasks, such as slide shows, videos, recordings and guidelines, the more time needs to be reserved for this stage.

The amount of time taken up by the assessment of students' learning tasks may also come as a surprise. Online students expect from their teacher similar, if not even more detailed, feedback on their learning tasks as in traditional teaching. This is a

major challenge when managing a large number of online students. Various assessment matrices and feedback templates are some of the tools that a teacher can use to ease and speed up their work. Another resource is to use students' peer assessment as an aid in assessment.

The technical support and library staff of the institution are in a key role in ensuring the success of the teacher's performance and providing students the necessary support. This is an area the institution should invest in when introducing online courses. Technical support and library services are, in addition to the teacher and the learning platform, key cornerstones assuring students that they will receive adequate support and that the learning environment is an inviting one.

Teachers should give specific attention to their own communication skills. All written communication should be carefully worded and structured, always taking into account the student's perspective. It is essential for teachers to maintain a student-centred approach and demonstrate the ability and will to help students in their studies. It would be highly beneficial if the institution could organise specialised communication training tailored to online teachers. This will ensure good online communication skills for the teaching staff.

Because online teaching and learning takes place digitally aided by technology, it is the teacher's role to give the interaction a human dimension. As stated above, the communication style of the teacher, in addition to online presence, has a strong impact on how this goal is achieved. Every teacher has the power to influence on his/her students' networked learning experience.

Providing human-centred online tuition is a great but not an insurmountable challenge if the educational institution pays sufficient attention to its realisation. The entire staff, not just the teachers, must be trained in the appropriate, effective and student-friendly use of digital communication channels. This is the only way for an educational institution to become a leading education provider in the digital environment.

A practical guide to using a learning management system to instruct large groups in blended learning

Kalliopi Skarli

Abstract

Higher Education instruction is predominantly hosted in Learning Management Systems (LMS) nowadays. In fact, since the beginning of this century LMSs have witnessed such a rapid growth and development that their use and administration can be an overwhelming experience for 'late adapters' of this educational technology. Meanwhile, in the current times of shrinking academic resources, larger-than-average class sizes, compound and integrated courses run by a team of teachers, the importance of LMS is growing greater than ever.

This paper firstly demonstrates how a specific LMS has developed in the past ten years drawing on the author's own examples. Secondly, it provides a practical guide on the deployment of an LMS with emphasis on LMS use in blended learning for large student groups. Finally, the paper reflects on the use of LMSs and future professional development.

Introduction

In the current times, the use of Learning Management Systems has become an indispensable part of blended and online instruction in higher education (Dahlstrom et al. 2014). The reasons are obvious: the students can access course material any time, can submit assignments, interact with other students and the course instructors; the teachers can publish all their materials, monitor the student work, interact with students and keep their records including assignments and evaluation all in one place, retrievable with a few clicks at any time and from anywhere (Lonn & Teasley 2009). In addition, whole courses can be easily modified and re-activated at short notice. Although LMSs offer numerous benefits, their functionalities have developed so much in the past decade that the administration of the space can be very complex, and the presentation and outlook of the course material requires planning, can be resembled to web-page design and in some cases requires navigation instructions. This can be a daunting task for instructors that are 'late adapters' of this educational technology. In addition, *"there is a tendency for professional development to teach about teaching theory and alienate large numbers of potential online teachers who want practical guides"* (Armellini & Jones 2008; Salmon 2013 in Gregory & Salmon 2013) or practical training on the use of an LMS may be provided by trainers who master the technical aspects or are not teachers themselves. At the same time, in an era where academic resources are dwindling, class sizes are increasing and courses are integrated to provide more study credits for students, it becomes a common occurrence that an LMS plays a central role in courses where a team of teachers instructs a larger than average class, i.e., a class ranging from 40–80 students.

The aim of this paper is to provide a practical guide to using an LMS to instruct large groups in blended learning based on the author's experience. This paper is structured as follows: the first part of the paper presents how the use of a specific LMS, Optima (by Discendum ltd), developed over the past ten years; the second part offers some practical advice on the deployment the LMS. The paper concludes with some reflections on the use of LMSs and future professional development.

A personal perspective of how the use of an LMS developed over the past decade

This section demonstrates how the author has used Optima over the past decade by providing screen shots at three different time periods, in 2007, 2011 and 2015.

The earliest records of courses using an LMS date back to 2007. At that time, the usual equipment in the classroom was an overhead projector which would project transparencies with course content. Each classroom did not necessarily have a computer and a projector connected to it to display materials. Material was presented by the teacher orally, through transparencies or photocopies. At that time, Optima was used simply as a depository of material and a place where students could return assignments. Figure 1 displays a typical LMS at that time where folders contained material that the students could access if they lost the photocopies they were given in class, or if they wanted to catch up with a class they had missed. Typical functionalities involved the uploading of material which could be organised in folders and the creation of return boxes where they could return their assignments.

FIGURE 1.
Screenshot of a typical LMS in 2007.

The use of Optima in 2007 was very straightforward, simple to implement and did not take very long to set up. Probably at that time there were other functionalities but as one learns using new tools, it is easier to learn to perform the most basic actions.

Figure 2 displays a screenshot of a longer course which involved a team of teachers and was attended by a large group of students (90 students).
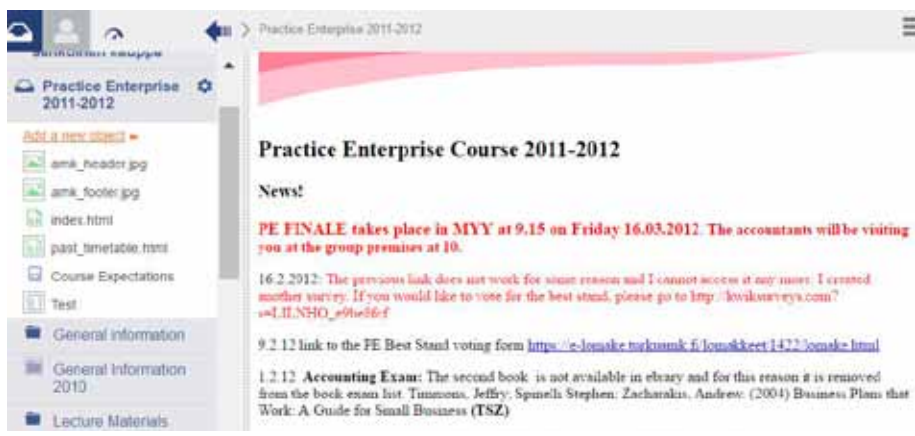
FIGURE 2.
Screenshot of a typical LMS in 2011.

We can see that course material is organised in folders as in Fig.1 but in the 2011 screenshot, there is an index page displaying infomation in reverse chronological order. The updates of the information displayed have an inconsistent format in terms of font size. On the index page, there are external links and the display of a logo. On the left side of the screenshot, there are folders visible to students but also folders not visible to students which contain course material from the previous implementation of the course that can easily be transferred to the folders of the current implementation if needed. The extra features of the LMS are the use of a survey form called "Course expectations" and a test. Figure 3 also displays a screenshot of the Optima workspace in 2015.
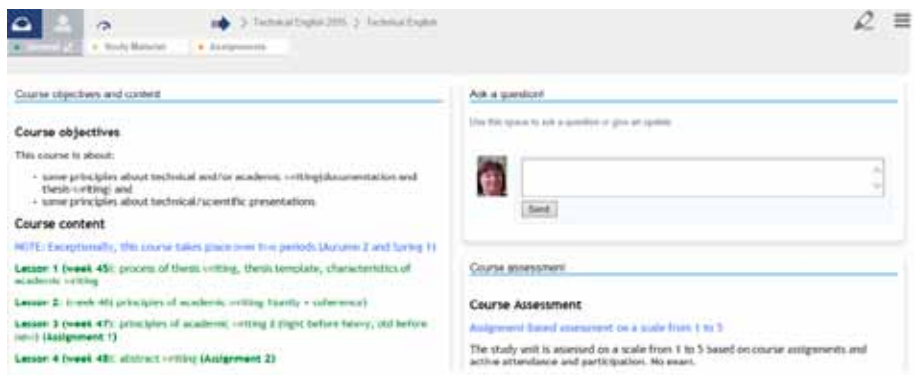

FIGURE 3.
Screenshot of a typical LMS in 2015.

Figure 3 displays a collection object which can be compared to a course dashboard; in other words, it combines together all the different folders, materials and information about the course. On the top of the collection object, there are three tabs, General, Study Material, and Assignments. The General tab displays information in blocks about the course, for example, the course contents and most importantly for students how the course is going to be assessed. There is a wall where the students can ask a question. This feature is more interactive than the index page with announcements as shown in Fig. 2. The Study Material obviously contains course material and the students can check in the Assignments tab what assignments they have to do.

The collection object resembles a web page and has an abundance of choices for customisation, ranging from the structure of the objects, the number of columns where blocks are displayed, the coloured ribbons, the fonts, the type faces and many more. If we think how the use of this particular LMS developed over the years, nowadays a course instructor does not only have to offer course material to students but also needs to consider how to design the display of the material. In addition to that, the LMS is also the space where students upload their assignments or a space where student group work can be carried out and assessed. As a result, the administration of the LMS, i.e., the organisation of the course material, the return boxes, the various folders which specific access rights for groups of students as well as individuals can consume a considerable amount of time for course instructors under normal circumstances, that is, when the instructor has reasonable familiarity with the LMS and deals with a normal-sized class. When the class size increases and the course includes more than one component, the logistics can be overwhelming. The second part of this paper offers some practical advice on using an LMS based on the author's experience.

Practical advice on the deployment of an LMS in blended learning

This section lists pieces of practical advice on using an LMS. The list is not exhaustive but it aims to offer a starting place to those would would like to make the most of an LMS. The first four of the listed pieces of advice provide some general tips on the administration of an LMS whereas the rest are tips for administrating a large-sized class.

1. *Create a start page with the information the students need to know using 'student talk'.* Information relating to the course implementation can usually be found in browser-based instructional design tools, such as SoleOPS (https://ops.turkua-mk.fi/opsnet/disp/en/welcome/nop/nop/clr?kieli=1&menuid=0). SoleOPS provides information about course implementation plans using a particular format and description. However, it is good practice to have the most important course information easily accessed by the students in the LMS so that they can quickly check this information. It is also important that the information concerning the course content and objectives are written in a simple and meaningful way for the students. The main questions the students need answers to are: what this course is about, what do I have to do to pass the course, what is the structure of the lesson and what is taught when. A start or introductory page should contain this info preferably on a single screen. The start page should also have an interface for interaction with the students if they have questions (Fig. 3) as well as an inspirational picture for the course (Fig. 4).
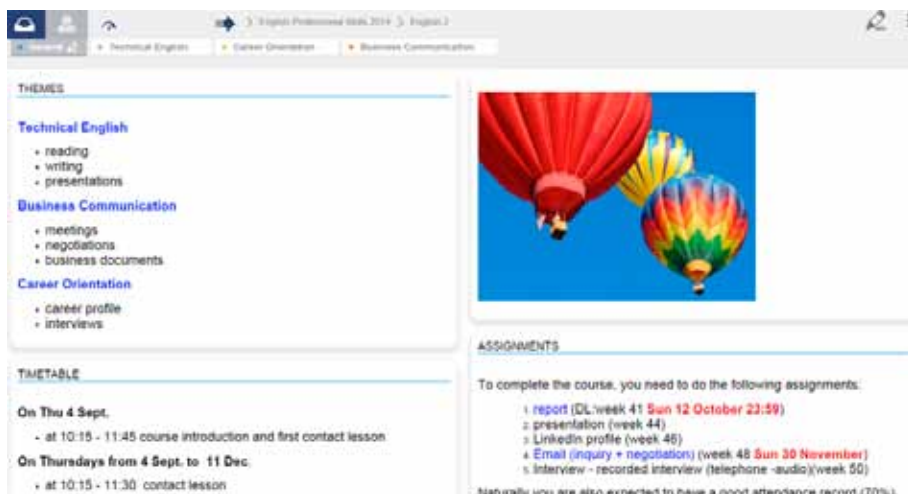

FIGURE 4.
An example of a start page.

If the course contains many components, some information about the navigation of the LMS is necessary (Fig. 5).

Welcome!

Welcome to the Product Development course!

This dashboard will help you navigate the contents of this course. The material is organised into blocks through which you can click to open folders and files.

- General Info: contains general information relating to the course, e.g. course introduction, course plan
- Weekly Tasks: contains material for each week, e.g. presentations and task instructions
- IT Skills: contains task instructions, return boxes and support material
- Group Folders: each group will have its own folder with subfolders.

The Course Dashboard also has its own wall. There you can ask questions or publish updates.
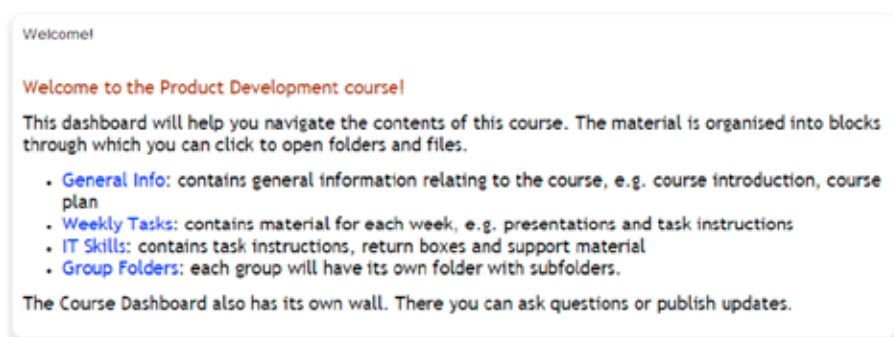
FIGURE 5.
Screenshot of information on how to navigate the workspace.

At this stage, it is worth noting that if the course is taught by many teachers, it is a good idea to include a block with the contact information of the course teachers and their areas of responsibility so that the students know who to contact for specific questions.

2. *Organise the course material as it fits the course.*
    The organisation of course materials depends on type and length of course. It can be organised according to the themes of the course as in Fig.4 or according to the type of course material, for example, study material and assignments as in Fig.3. If the course has various course components, it is a good idea to display material in blocks that contain links to folders. The content of the folders can be hidden or displayed with the click of a button (Fig.6) so that the block appears neat. Material can also be organised in weekly folders that contain course material and assignments relating to the weeks the course is run.

FIGURE 6.
Screenshot of a block displaying course material through expandable links.

3. *Organise the return of assignments in advance.*

    It is good practice to inform the students already in the start page about the assignments and the deadlines (see Fig.4) and the return boxes for the assignments can be created in advance if possible, because they serve as reminders for students of what needs to be done. Return boxes are an efficient way to keep records of assessment.

Deadlines for assignments can be set in advance. However, some students will always return assignments late. In this case, a return box entitled Late Returns (Fig.7) can be created but not before the deadlines for the regular return boxes have expired. In this way, the instructor keeps all records of assessment in the LMS, does not receive assignments through emails, and documents which students completed their assignments on time.

FIGURE 7.
Screenshoot of a folder where students can return their assignments.

Here it is worth noting that in courses where students work in small groups throughout the whole course, the assignments or tasks can be returned by uploading them in a folder dedicated for assignments and only the group members (not the whole class) and the instructor(s) have read and write rights.

4. *Always keep files of course content as a backup.*
   Collection objects can be copied from one workspace to the other but copying a collection object to a different evinronment is not always successful. Sometimes, it might be that the educational organisation may decide to use a different platform and all the courses have to be moved to the new platform. Therefore, it is a good idea to keep a file with all the course texts.

5. *Activate student enrolment to courses.*
   Users are usually added to the LMS by the admistrator of the LMS. The course instructor orders a workspace for a new course and informs which student year groups will have access to the course and the students are added as users to the space. This system works quite well if all the students from specific year groups

take the course. However, it may be that individual students from other year groups want to take the same course or that certain students from the groups that the course is targeted at do not take the course and do not want to have it listed in their workspace. In other words, students need to be added or removed from the LMS workspace. This is not usually a problem when the group size is about 40 students and 2–3 students need to be added or removed. However, this becomes a time-consuming operation when adding or removing 50 or 60 names one by one. An efficient way to address this issue is to utilise the automatic enrolment feature (Fig. 8) so that the students can register to the course themselves. In this way, the course instructor saves time and avoids making the mistake of adding the wrong student to the workspace since some students may share the same first and family name.
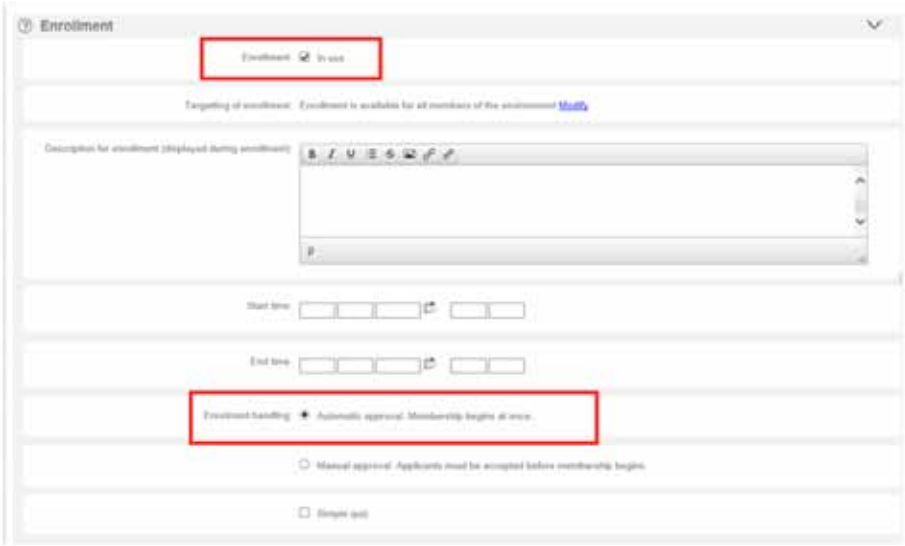
FIGURE 8.
The automatic enrolment feature in Optima.

6. *Give responsibility to students for administrating their group folders.*
   In project-based learning courses, the students are divided into groups and they are allocated folders in which the group members have read and write rights, i.e., the students cannot only read documents but they can upload documents and in general they can administrate their group folder. Typically such courses

involve a large number of students (50–180) and sometimes there are up to 18 student groups of at least 8 members. The instructor who is responsible for the administration of such a course in the LMS faces a logistics nightmare as s/he would first need to define the groups in the workspace selecting the students' names one by one and then would need to create group folders and then for each folder allocate read and write rights. The solution to this problem would be the creation of a Groups Folder where all the students have read and write rights (Fig. 9).

FIGURE 9.
Group folder adminstration instructions for students.

In effect, this means that the students take responsibility for defining their own groups and creating their own folder, and the course instructor saves valuable time. In addition, if a new student joins the group, it is primarily the group's responsibility to add the new member to the group.

7. *Give guidelines to the students for the organisation of their folders.*
   Once the students have created their folders, they need to organise them. The first task that each group has to do is to create a start page for their group. The start page should at least contain the following information: names, photos and contact information of the members as well as the responsibilities of each member. This is necessary because the students may be working with each other for the first time and the instructors would like to familiarise themselves with the students. The contact info is quite important because if the group members do not know each other very well and one of the group members is absent, they need to have an alternative way of contacting the absent group member other than email.

A second set of instructions should concern the following:

a.   How are documents named

b.   Who has access rights to the documents

c.   How the documents are organised, for example, drafts, final versions, memos, time tracking or weekly outcomes

These kinds of instructions are necessary because the folders can become disorganised very quickly and then it becomes time-consuming to find documents or know which document is the final version.

Fig.10 displays the organisation of the folders of two student groups. The first four folders were created by the course instructor and the rest by the groups themselves.
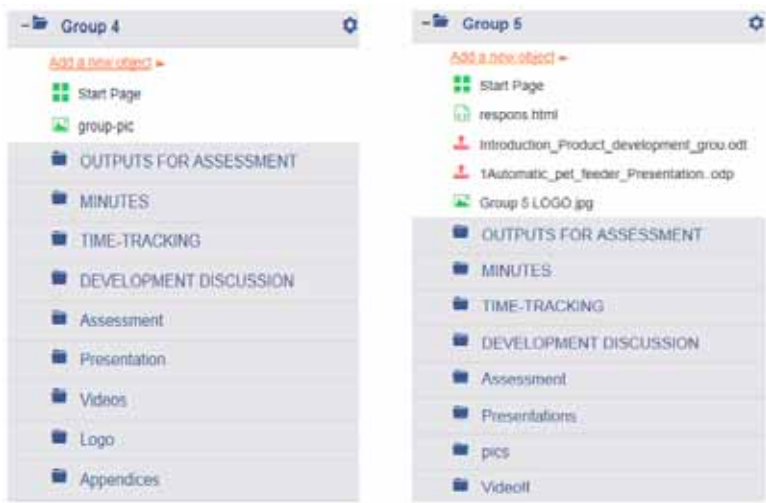
FIGURE 10.
Group folder organisation.

Each group has their start page and then the groups have organised their work in folders. The Group 4 folder seems to be more organised than Group 5 because Group 5 has some documents which could be classified into folders. For example, it is clear that the document Automatic Pet feeder presentation could have been archived in the Presentations folder and the Group 5 Logo is a picture so it could have been in

the pics folder. However, it is not clear what the content of the other two documents is and in which folder they should be placed.

8. *Create forms for course evaluations.*
    When a course ends, it is a good practice to carry out an evaluation of the course or an evaluation of the students' learning. This can be done in several ways, for example the students can write a report as a document and upload it in their personal folder or in a return box, or this can be done by creating a form in the LMS. When dealing with a large number of students, it is more efficient to create a form where the students can write their evaluation either as a text area or as answers to multiple choice questions. The benefits of forms are obvious; they take much less time to read than individual documents, they include data visualisation (Fig.11) and the evaluations are located and archived in the workspace. In addition, the forms can be copied to other workspaces and modified as necessary.

FIGURE 11.
Data visualisation of an evaluation form.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to provide a hands-on guide to using an LMS to instruct large groups in blended learning, based on the author's experience. This paper has firstly provided an overview of how the use of an LMS has developed over a decade. The paper has demonstrated through examples of LMS workspaces how the development has taken place. Through these examples, there is evidence that the future instructors will not only have to focus on the content of the instruction but also on the visualisation and the graphic look of the content. In addition to their subject knowledge, instructors will also need to develop a different set of skills that relate to visual arts and mastery of educational technology to provide learning experiences.

This paper secondly aimed to provide some practical tips on the use of an LMS in general and in particular relating to large-sized classes which tend to have become commonplace in the recent years. These practical pieces of advice and good practices are intended to be of use to late adapters of educational technology and can be applied to any LMS. The list is not exhaustive but it offers a solid starting place for those who want to efficiently use the more complex features of the LMS or those who would like to start teaching online courses.

Finally, this paper concludes with the following two reflections:

a. Instructors need not only to apply good practices themselves but also train the students to do so.

b. It will be interesting to study how instructors develop their instructional style in LMSs and also study the student preferences for particular instructional styles.

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Towards flipped online language teaching using the HILL concept

Mari Linna & Annika Valo

Abstract

This paper describes our solution of teaching languages online to adult business students at Satakunta University of Applied Sciences (SAMK) and our journey towards flipped online language teaching via the HILL concept, focussing on the pedagogical changes made in language teaching. We discuss our starting point, the reasons for the changes and our current way of teaching.

We base our teaching on the principles of blended learning and flipped learning; we have tried to pick up the most usable ideas from both methods to be used in our teaching.

The technological backbones in our teaching are an online learning environment called HILL used in Satakunta University of Applied Sciences and the Moodle learning management system. With HILL, students can take part in study sessions online, and during the sessions, they can take part in small group and pair work – this is especially suitable for practicing oral skills.

By combining the HILL and Moodle online learning environments and the ideas of blended learning and flipped learning, we have been able to create a functional solution for teaching languages online.

Introduction

Due to a growing number of adult students, different ways of teaching constantly need to be considered and taken into use. Most adult students study alongside work and many have families and other obligations beside their studies – thus they need flexibility in their studies. HILL is the solution Satakunta University of Applied Sciences (SAMK) offers to its students to facilitate the combination of studies and work; it is an online learning environment in which students can take part in study sessions (during which students may interact with fellow students and their teacher in small groups) from anywhere. It has been developed and is constantly being developed in cooperation between SAMK, IBM, Cisco and AKG.

The HILL concept has been used at Satakunta University of Applied Sciences in teaching since 2010, and in language teaching since 2012. In spring 2016 we have had 750 sessions and 4 000 users altogether.

At Satakunta University of Applied Sciences, students are required to study obligatory languages (English and Swedish) at least three or five credits. Optional language studies are also available. Before the obligatory language courses, students' language skills are tested, and they may be recommended a refresher course. The target level is B1 in Swedish and B2 in English in The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (for reference, see Eurooppalainen viitekehys. Kielten oppimisen, opettamisen ja arvioinnin yhteinen eurooppalainen viitekehys 2003). These courses concentrate on practicing grammar and general vocabulary. Most courses are taught in classrooms in a traditional way, but adult students in Huittinen study in the HILL e-learning environment. The students in Huittinen are studying towards a degree in Business Administration, and they complete their whole education via HILL.

In our teaching, we use the combination of HILL and the virtual learning environment Moodle and find that by using the two together we are able to cover different areas and aspects of language learning well: reading and vocabulary, oral skills and pronunciation, writing, listening comprehension and communication skills. In addition to Moodle providing written exercises, such as reading comprehension or essay writing exercises, but also audio and video exercises, HILL is particularly suitable for practicing oral skills (pronunciation and communication skills in pairs and in small groups). In addition, linguistic websites and grammar sites are used in teaching.

HILL is a good concept for teaching online, but teachers need to consider how it can be used in teaching. This paper aims at describing how we are using HILL in teaching languages at Satakunta University of Applied Sciences; our starting point and the challenges we have had since we started teaching languages online. We are going to explain what changes we have made and why, how this process has proceeded and where we stand at the moment. Our aim is to present our model of flipped online language teaching.

Our teaching is based on the principles of blended learning and flipped learning. In blended learning, students study at least partly online and may control the time they spend on studying, as well as where they study, how and at what pace. Usually, students sometimes meet with fellow students and their teacher, also. Flipped learning can really be considered a type of blended learning. In it, the traditional educational arrangements are reversed; students study the topics at hand in advance at home, and online lessons are used for practicing what the students have studied at home. Based on these two concepts we have created our own way of teaching languages online; we have tried to find the most usable ideas of both concepts and developed what we consider a functioning way of teaching languages online.

In Introduction, we present the essential ideas of blended learning and flipped learning. In chapter 2, we describe the HILL concept briefly. In chapter 3, we focus on our journey towards flipped online language teaching via the HILL concept. Finally, in conclusion, we gather our ideas and take a look at the accomplishments we have achieved. We also discuss further development ideas we have for the future.

Blended learning

In online learning, communication is the key. It enables a real learning and working environment, instead of just an environment for passive information sharing. Blended learning is in many ways a more personalised way to learn independently and collaboratively. It engages students in learning in more effective ways and one can use many different kinds of learning styles in blended learning. Languages can be learnt in other environments in addition to the classroom, and many people feel it is less stressful to study a language in a blended way. Flexibility all in all has increased since students are not constrained to studying in a classroom. Blended learning enables that students' different kinds of needs are taken into account in a more

individualised manner. Students also learn new kinds of learning skills. (Kalliala 2002, 3; Marsh 2012, 3–6; Donnelly & McSweeney 2009, xiv).

Online learning has changed students' and teachers' traditional roles. A more active role is given to students – students generate knowledge and form their own learning experience actively. Students are required to take more responsibility for their learning, and they need to be more self-disciplined and motivated than in traditional classroom teaching. Teachers need to pay even more careful attention to their time management. It can be said, however, that some adult learners would like to adopt the traditional passive student role to which they are used to when studying in a traditional classroom environment. In online learning, cooperation with other students as well as interaction with them is in an even more crucial role that in classroom teaching. (Conrad & Donaldson 2011, 10).

Flipped learning

The beginning of the flipped classroom model can be related to Jonathan Bergmann and Aaron Sams who started to make videos of their chemistry lectures in spring 2007 (Bergmann & Sams 2012, 3). They started to question when students really need the teacher to be physically present, and came to the conclusion that it is more essential when doing their homework assignments (traditionally done at home alone) rather than to give them content. The basic idea in a flipped classroom model is that what is traditionally done at school during the lessons will now be done at home and homework is completed at school during the lessons. (Bergmann & Sams 2012, 4–5, 13.)

According to Bergmann and Sams (2014, 35), flipped learning is not a pedagogy or an educational philosophy, instead it means a flexible technique used when wanting to maximise the face-to-face time with students. So, there is no single way to flip your classroom, the flipped classroom is not strictly a certain kind of method. Every teacher flips his/her class in his/her own way. The main idea with flipping is to focus on the learner and the learning, instead of focussing on the teacher. (Bergmann & Sams 2012, 11). The authors (2014, 3) recommend to focus on the following question: What is the best use of face-to-face time with students?

Bergmann & Sams state many reasons why you should flip your classroom. For one, flipping enables busy students to freely choose the time when to watch study videos.

Flipping also helps struggling students since teachers now have more time to explain unclear issues to them and since the videos can be paused and rewatched. This also helps students in their time management. Flipping increases student–teacher interaction and allows teachers to know their students better, since teachers no longer have to spend time on delivering the content to students. They can focus on talking and interacting with students and building a deeper connection or relationship with them. Flipping also increases student–student interaction. Students are helping each other and working together. They are learning from each other. (Bergmann & Sams 2012, 23–27). The flipped learning method makes students self-directed learners (Bergmann & Sams 2012, 10).

The role of teachers changes when flipping the class. Teachers are no longer presenters of information, they become more facilitators and supporters of learning. Teachers are no longer "performing" during lessons, instead, they are interacting and helping the students. (Bergmann & Sams 2012, 14).

The HILL concept

Since the 1990s, HILL, an e-learning environment, has been in development in the Huittinen unit of Satakunta University of Applied Sciences.

Satakunta University of Applied Sciences' adult education in business administration was centralised in Huittinen in 2010. As 97 percent of students in the Huittinen unit study while working, Satakunta University of Applied Sciences was looking for a solution that would enable a flexible method of studying for adult students and they could fit their studies, work and family life together (Story: IBM Global Technology Services Case Study 2012).

The solution, HILL, was developed by combining different technologies in cooperation between Satakunta University of Applied Sciences' Faculty of Business and Culture Huittinen, IBM and Cisco. Based on a video conferencing system, the solution gives you a realistic feeling of taking part in a lesson. (Story: IBM Global Technology Services Case Study 2012).

Teachers can either be present in a special classroom utilising the new technology or they can give lessons from their own computer regardless of location. The first HILL classroom was introduced at the Huittinen campus in August 2011 and the second

at the beginning of 2012. The classrooms are equipped with a Cisco video conferencing system including a display screen, HD cameras and microphones, as well as a SMARTBoard interactive whiteboard. The teaching situation is transmitted online by the Cisco Webex Meeting Center. Sound technology is provided by AKG. (Story: IBM Global Technology Services Case Study 2012).

Students need a multimedia computer and a working internet connection. Through their browsers, students can take part in lessons – listen to the discussions of all parties, participate in the discussions and see the material that is being distributed or written on the whiteboard. (Story: IBM Global Technology Services Case Study 2012).

In the HILL concept, the teacher can choose to teach either at Meeting Center or Training Center. Meeting Center is typically used for lectures and staff meetings and Training Center can be used when students need to be divided into small groups. This is useful for example when practicing oral skills in a language (small group discussions, etc.).

Our way of teaching languages online

Reasons for the change

HILL has been used in language teaching at Satakunta University of Applied Sciences since 2012. Until the beginning of 2015, we had three three-hour lessons each semester, in a similar way as all other subjects in general. Taking part in lessons was voluntary, and also the recording could be watched afterwards. As language teachers, we were struggling with frustration and recurring challenges since:

a) we strongly felt this was not a good way for students to learn – we only met them rarely and even then, three three-hour sessions is not the most effective way to learn languages.

b) the students had also a possibility to watch a recorded lesson later on. You cannot practice your oral/communication skills by watching or listening other students speak but you need to take part in the lesson yourself and practice those skills actively with other students.

c) students could take part in the lessons either using their own computers from home or elsewhere, or from a classroom, the teacher's attention needed to be divided into both the students sitting in the classroom as well as the students taking part in the lesson from somewhere else.

d) there were also times when only one person would be present in the classroom – in these situations practicing your oral and communication skills as in pair work would not really be possible for the student.

We really needed to make changes since we just could not continue like this. The system of teaching was technology-driven and we needed to take pedagogical issues of language learning into account; we needed to get our students more engaged in their language studies, create more active interaction between the students and the teacher, also between the students. Very importantly, we also wanted to focus on practicing oral and communication skills.

When we started teaching languages online via HILL we were both quite new teachers at Satakunta University of Applied Sciences. We both had several years of experience in teaching languages in other schools but we had no experience in online teaching. We had to adapt to the ways of the subject teachers and go along with that in our language courses – anything else was really not an option since the "three three-hour lessons each semester" system of teaching subjects online was a well-established practice in Huittinen. However, it was not a functional model in language teaching. Anyhow, we wanted to participate in blended online teaching like other teachers and wanted to give our students a possibility to study also language courses online via HILL.

After we became colleagues we noticed we share a common interest for developing online language learning, and started to work on it together. In the beginning of 2015, we started teaching differently. Instead of three three-hour sessions we would have shorter sessions and more often. We would start our courses with an introductory lesson which students could attend either from home or by coming to a classroom. After the introductory lesson, students would start studying on Moodle, the virtual learning environment used in Satakunta University of Applied Sciences, according to the instructions by the teacher. Students would need to take part in a certain number (depending on the course) of obligatory lessons in small groups (oral skills training lessons via HILL). During these oral skills training lessons, pronun-

ciation, oral skills and communication skills would be studied. In Huittinen, the whole Bachelor of Business Administration education is based on a very flexible way of studying. We wanted to respect this. For a lesson, we gave students multiple optional times to choose from. We had our lessons mainly during Fridays or Saturdays or later on in the evenings. We wanted to focus on what we think is the most essential thing to do in the contact lessons online: to practice oral and communication skills. We wanted to make the best use of the face-to-face time with our students. For this purpose, Training Center in HILL is ideal as we can divide the students in small conversation groups.

In addition, students could take part in voluntary lessons during which students could ask questions about the topic at hand, for example grammar related topics. During these voluntary lessons, the teacher is available via HILL to answer students' questions and to explain any unclear issues. During these lessons, students were working in small groups as well and studying the certain grammar topics, text or chapter in a course book, making written exercises and figuring out the answers together. The part that was common for everybody during the lessons was recorded.

However, we have now noticed that only very few students take part in the voluntary lessons, so we have decided to combine the obligatory oral skills lessons and voluntary lessons. Having two kinds of lessons also caused confusion to some students, although they now had more possibilities and flexibility that they always ask for. Lessons in English and German courses have already been combined during the spring 2016 and the change has been very positive. The same lesson has been given twice and there is a minimum participation of 75%. The same model will be taken into use in Swedish courses in autumn 2016. Students may also compensate for a certain amount of absences by making a MOODLE recording independently.

Why flipped language learning?

When planning the changes into our methods we realised that the crucial question was: How to have a minimum number of lessons but make the best use of those? Adult students cannot attend the lessons as often as young adult students; they have their jobs, families and other activities. What is the best use of the online lessons? Which are the elements that students can study independently at home alone, and which are the ones they need the teacher's or other students' help or support in? We have had to answer these questions many times before. We have had many adult stu-

dents also at other campuses, studying in a traditional classroom setting and have been forced to address this issue. Our solution is that that students do written exercises at home independently and during the online lessons we concentrate on practicing oral and communication skills.

In our refreshers' courses, we wanted to move the grammar lessons away from the contact online lessons and started to make our own grammar videos during the spring 2015. The number of contact lessons we had with our students was really low so we needed to focus on the most important issues. In our opinion, most questions raise when students are doing their homework exercises alone at home so we wanted to help students with their specific questions, instead of using the lesson time to explain grammar rules. Our students study those rules at home from the videos. This also helps weaker students as they can watch the videos as many times as needed. They needed other students' and teachers' support when doing homework exercises. So, before entering the online class our students in these refreshers' courses watch our grammar videos and make notes. During the lessons, they are divided into small groups and they do grammar exercises related to the topic at hand together with other students. In these small groups also some oral and communication exercises are done. Before entering the small groups some listening comprehension exercises can also be done together. During the lessons, the teacher constantly visits groups, helps, supports, answers any questions and encourages students. At the end of the lesson, the teacher makes a short closure of the topic, makes highlighting comments or so on. While working in the small groups the students can have the right answers as well as all the possible online dictionaries and materials they need available. The idea is to explain the right answers to each other and in that way learn to adapt the grammar rules and the use of them in the target language.

In our obligatory language courses in Huittinen we wanted to go further with this idea and approach the thought of the best use of face-to-face time with our students. We wanted to choose textbooks which include electronic material. Now our students are able to for example to do listening comprehension exercises, read texts and check the right answers by themselves. These kinds of textbooks are very suitable for blended learning as they give students the freedom to choose when and where they want to study. Students mainly do the written (and also some oral) exercises at home. They study the texts independently with the help of electronic material and videos made by the teacher. They listen to the texts and do the listening comprehension exercises by themselves. They do the written vocabulary exercises and check the right

answers independently. During the lessons, the key points in the texts or exercises are highlighted by the teacher, and for example some of the vocabulary exercises or reading comprehension exercises can be made together with other students in small groups. Because the students have mainly studied the texts and chapters already at home we can focus on the most demanding parts of the texts and the unclear issues.

As oral skills are very important skills in working life, too, lessons are spent mainly on practicing oral skills in small groups. Students can use for example online vocabularies and all possible aids in their learning. They can get help and support from each other, as well as from the teacher. Many students are of the opinion that they feel more courageous to express themselves on HILL than in a traditional classroom. Often shy students feel easier to express themselves on HILL.

Benefits from flipping our language courses

The change from traditional language teaching to flipped language teaching has been an interesting journey, although the change has not happened overnight but in small steps – it has taken many hours of planning, thinking and then again re-planning and re-thinking, as well as evaluating our methods over and over again. The beginning was the hardest; for example making our own grammar videos, in which we taught grammar much in the same way as we would have done during our lessons, took quite a lot of time. Having to face challenges in online language teaching awoke our interest in earlier studies and research. It also made us evaluate our methods, and got us interested in making our own research. During spring 2015 we wrote an article about the use of HILL online e-learning environment in language teaching (for reference, see Linna & Valo 2015). In it, we presented the use of the HILL concept and also presented the point of view of students, as well as earlier steps towards online language teaching.

The change from traditional language teaching to flipped language teaching has brought many positive aspects into teaching. First of all, our own role has changed. We are no longer the central focus of lessons, we give the stage to our students – we are more in the role of facilitators. We have been able to get to know our students better and create better relationships with them since we now have time to talk with them during lessons. Since we still have so much less contact online lessons compared to our young adult students who study traditionally in classrooms, we prefer to have some kind of learning diaries. They help us in learning to know the students.

With the help of them we can many times learn more from a student's thoughts than having him/her sitting in our contact classes passively. We also prefer different kinds of oral video exercises during our courses. They also help us to know the students better. Since we do not meet our students in actual classrooms, we can meet them online and also in the form of videos. We can support weaker learners in a better way, we can motivate and encourage them. We believe that we are spending our time during the lessons more effectively. We are focussing on the most important thing, the student.

We believe that our students have become more active during the lessons. They are nowadays more motivated as they are working in small groups. For that purpose, the Training Center in HILL is ideal. They are collaborating with each other, discussing actively, trying to find solutions together, using all the possible online material for help. Students learn essential skills, such as critical thinking and problem solving skills. They get support from each other and the teacher in small groups. While visiting the small groups the teacher can reinforce them, guide them towards the right direction, encourage them. They may notice that they are not alone with their difficulties or problems. They get to know other students better and can rely on each other. They do not want to cause problems for others in the groups so they prefer coming well prepared for the lessons. They understand that the other students are also busy, so they do not want to waste each other's time by not being properly prepared for the lessons.

We believe that making our lessons more student-centred has created deeper learning. Our students have become active learners working actively during the lessons in small groups instead of sitting passively and listening to us. They are taking responsibility of their studies and timetables. Students have told us that they nowadays attend the lessons more enthusiastically because they have something to do all the time and they can spend the lessons together with other students. They really appreciate our efforts on thinking about the best use of face-to-face time with them.

We also think ourselves that nowadays it is more comfortable to go to the lessons than before. We feel that we are now focussing on the right issues, we have time to build our lessons around working in small groups or in pairs. Students have time to use the target language actively with each other. On the other hand, we think that the lesson situations can be more challenging nowadays since students now have more time for questions. They really need their teacher although we have made educational videos, for example. They need their teacher explaining the things and encouraging them in

their learning. As teachers we have learned to be more creative, we have created new kinds of exercises and learned new techniques required in online teaching.

Conclusion

Nowadays there are many different online learning solutions for teaching languages. At Satakunta University of Applied Sciences, the combination of the HILL and Moodle online learning environments and the ideas of blended learning and flipped learning has answered adult students' needs by making their studying more flexible. We feel that the HILL concept has enabled particularly well the practice of oral and communication language skills, and we have been able to focus on the most relevant issues in language teaching. We believe we have found a good solution for the best use of face-to-face time with our students.

Our journey trying to find a functional way to teach languages online has not been easy. The first year has been quite demanding. It has taken quite a lot of time to create study material, such as grammar videos, for different courses. We believe that blended learning requires more from a teacher than traditional teaching in a class room; constant active development and re-evaluation of one's own teaching methods. We have had to re-define our role as a teacher. We need to master the technology involved. We have needed to possess the initiative and willingness to develop methods that will support students' learning in the best way possible. Flipped learning has offered solutions for us when facing challenges in online language teaching.

Our aim was to create more interaction between the teacher and the students, and also between the students. We believe that we have accomplished this. We now have more time to spend on each student individually, and as the students are working together all the time during our lessons, they have a lot of interaction with each other. One of our aims was that we would like to focus more on students, and indeed our language courses are nowadays more student-centred; teachers stay in the background more – guiding, helping, supporting. We now have more time to focus on practicing oral and communications skills which we consider to be essential skills in future working life.

Also in the future we want to constantly develop our teaching. One area of development is that we are going to make more videos of different topics also for our obligatory language courses. We are going to evaluate the content of our courses and decide

which elements would work in the form of a video. We are trying to develop our instructions for how to watch our videos and how to take notes. We are also planning to create ways to ensure that our students have watched the videos. Until now we have mostly left it to a student's responsibility but we are going to discuss this further.

We are very interested in our students' opinions. We would like to know how they have felt studying at our flipped online language courses in order to be able to develop our teaching further. We have planned to continue our research from the student's point of view. As the HILL concept is constantly being developed so should our pedagogical methods be as well. We want to meet the needs of our students and offer them the 21st century language teaching they require.

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eSimulation Handbook as a tool for advanced virtual simulation in Satakunta University of Applied Sciences

Johanna Jalonen

Abstract

There is evidence that simulation is an effective, safe, structured and supported pedagogical approach for nurse education. This article scales different levels of simulation and focusses on one form of simulation, virtual simulation.

In April 2015, a new form of virtual simulation, eSimulation Handbook (eSH), was launched for nurse education at Satakunta University of Applied Sciences (SAMK). The eSH is a virtual tool for nurse trainees to help them to refresh clinical skills before a simulation scenario or clinical placements, and to support the nurse educators to gain more time for the scenarios themselves. The eSH is available for every nurse trainee who has signed in the virtual learning platform Moodle and they are allowed to use the eSH from the beginning of their studies to the time of graduation. The eSH follows the nurse education curricula of Satakunta University of Applied Sciences to help the nurse trainee gain the skills needed for the ongoing level of the nurse education.

Introduction

'Learning by Doing'– a sentence that an American educational reformer John Dewey created almost 100 years ago – is still a useful method in professional education. 'Simulation Based Education' or 'Simulation Based Training' – do these mean the same? The pedagogical world has changed since John Dewey, and simulation based education has changed a lot even during the few past years. It is known that simulation serves as a bridge between the acquisition and application of knowledge, attributes and clinical skills of nurse trainees (Alinier & Platt 2014, 42, 48) but the question is how to ensure that each nurse trainee gets the best simulation education today and in the future under the pressure of continuing resource limitations. This article is an attempt to present one answer to the question how nurse trainees and graduated nurses maintain their clinical skills gained in simulation.

There is not only a long tradition of simulation in technical or medical education but also a growing body of evidence that clinical skills acquired in medical simulation laboratory settings transfer directly to advanced patient care practices and better patient outcomes. (McGaghie et al. 2011, 710; Guimond et al. 2011, 184). According to literature, simulation in nurse education provides strong evidence that simulation is a very useful teaching method in creating a learning environment which contributes to *knowledge, skills, confidence,* and most importantly, *patient safety* (Norman 2012, 26).

 "I haven't done this before, but…" Who is willing to be the first patient if a nurse student has never done for example wound care before? The best guess is "no one" and that is the way it should be. This article focusses on virtual simulation and simulation in Finnish nurse education. As a member of the European Union, Finland follows the directives that form a framework for the nurse education in the European Union. The directive 2005/36/EC claims that nurses responsible for general care should have clinical training at least half of the three-year nurse education. The article also claims that the trainee nurse shall learn how to work as a member of a health care team by using the acquired skills under a nurse educator's or another nurse's supervision. (Directive 2005/36/EC of the European parliament and of the council Section 3, Article 31).

The push for developing the undergraduate nurse students' clinical nursing skills has created more and more demand for simulation education in the nursing cur-

riculum. Simulation-based learning should not be dominated by technology; it should focus on helping the nurse trainees learn to be nurses. (Berragan 2011, 663.) Simulation can never replace the clinical placement experience but it offers potential for developing expertise in clinical skills safely. (Berragan 2011, 663; Cant & Cooper, 1440.)

In the 21st century, simulation education has paid more attention to the way how the simulation as a technique has been used i.e. nurse educators should put less emphasis on the tool and focus more on the specific learning objectives. The change has required the nurse educators to participate and play roles in simulation scenarios to observe the nurse trainees in the situations nurse educators create. (Alinier & Platt 2014, 43.) Nurse educators' skills in writing, running and debriefing simulations do not cover the competencies needed in simulation pedagogy. When using a simulation-based learning method the ability of the nurse educator to include clinical realism of nursing and to demonstrate professional comportment are important factors demonstrating competency. There is a need for multiskilled nurse educators. (Topping et al. 2015, 1112.)

There are many different ways to adapt simulations and the present article attempts to explain and discuss one form of virtual simulation, the eSimulation Handbook. At the beginning, there is a review of virtual simulation literature which is followed by a description of the eSimulation Handbook (eSH). There is also a description of simulation pedagogy focussed on the modified version of Guimond's et al. (2011, 181) framework of pre-training analysis used at Satakunta University of Applied Sciences (SAMK). At the end of the article there is a summary of the use of the eSH in the Satakunta University of Applied Sciences faculty of Welfare and Health.

Electronic Simulation Handbook – one form of virtual simulation

Virtual simulation in literature

There is evidence of the effectiveness of simulation-based interventions on improved patient outcomes. (Alinier & Platt 2014, 43). Simulation methodologies, and for example computerised patient simulators or virtual environments (Second Life®), have become more and more a part of nurse education. These methodologies are called as Full-scale simulation or the highest level of simulation. (Kilmon et al.

2010, 314–315.) Also Web- based simulation was found from the literature (Cant & Cooper 2014, 1435).

Literature on virtual simulation in nurse education was reviewed by Pub Med (Medline) and Cinahl (Ebscohost). In addition, Medic (Nelliportaali) was used in order to gain an understanding of simulation in nurse education generally in Finland. A brief literature review shows that there is a growing body of evidence about virtual simulations in nurse education internationally but only little research about simulation (including virtual simulation) in Finland in spite of the fact that simulation has a growing role in the nursing curricula in Finland and also the role of technology in nurse education is becoming more and more important.

Table I shows the results of a non-systematic literature search in January 2016. In Finland there is a tradition of simulation in the context of emergency situations and surgical (medical) simulation but, nevertheless, virtual (reality) simulation is new in the field of nurse education. The majority of the 175 papers introduced an avatar or a virtual patient but none of them discussed other ways of Virtual Learning Simulation (VLE) based simulation.

TABLE 1.
Literature search: Database, search and results (with or without filters).

Database	Search	Result	Chosen
Pub med	(virtual simulation in nursing), last 5 years	92	4
Cinahl	virtual simulation in nursing	21	6
Pub med	(((simulation) AND nurse education)) AND Finland, no filters	16	-
Cinahl	(((simulation) AND nurse education)) AND Finland, no filters	3	-
Medic	simulaatio AND hoitotyö* koulutu*, no filters	17	-
Total		175	10

At universities, simulation has been used in one way or another, depending on the nurse educator's skills in simulation and the number of hours the educator is able to use for the simulation. In the future, virtual simulation could become a part of

other simulation strategies or be used independently, but the development of immersive virtual simulations is time and labour intensive (Kilmon et al. 2010, 316).

Virtual simulation is an online educational approach where the trainees may use avatars (Foronda et al. 2014, 57; Kidd et al. 2012, 31; Tilton et al. 2015, 394) or virtual patients (Guise et al. 2012, 683; Liaw et al. 2015, e5) to practice various nursing skills. In a pilot test the nurse trainees expressed less anxiety and knew better what to expect when they were using avatars to practice communicative skills (Foronda et al. 2014, 56). Although the results of avatar based online simulations have been encouraging, there is evidence that the scores of the test and control groups do not differ significantly in the virtual and face-to-face simulations (Menzel et al. 2014, 4; Quail et al. 2016, 1). Virtual simulation required more time compared to face-to-face simulation (Menzel et al. 2014, 6), moreover, it has also been seen as quite difficult technically but, on the other hand, moderately effective and a fun way of learning (Kidd et al. 2012, 35).

According to the nurse trainees' reports, the fact that in a virtual environment mistakes were not definitive (Kidd et al. 2012, 36) and a possibility to practice making difficult decisions (Hudson et al. 2015, 802) as well as to be able to train one's nursing skills at home were positive aspects of virtual simulation. New teaching strategies like virtual simulation increases nurse trainees' active involvement, responsiveness and challenges the students to come to the class prepared, and, in addition, the use of technology in the classroom meets the needs of the newest generation. (Montenery et al. 2013, 406.)

It has been suggested that virtual simulation could be integrated within online or blended and/or cross-cultural learning environments (Guise et al. 2012, 688; Liaw et al. 2015, e5). Repeatability was seen as a big benefit of virtual simulation because of the availability of the resources (Cant & Cooper 2014, 1440). Negative aspects of virtual simulation were manoeuvring the avatar and the lack of realism (Kidd et al. 2012, 35). In addition, the virtual patient was more challenging than a real one (Quail et al. 2016, 10).

It is a fact that it is not possible to practice all the special skills a nurse trainee needs at clinical placement by virtual simulation scenarios (Cant & Cooper 2014, 1441). First there is a need to practice the special skills like resuscitation or measuring blood pressure at a university setting. However, the problem is that if the nurse trainee does it only once during the three-year education, how does s/he remember the procedure

when facing the real situation in real life? A trainee should have an opportunity to refresh his/her memory. But how? This article provides an idea of a relatively new approach to virtual simulation in nurse education at Satakunta University of Applied Sciences: an electronic web based simulation handbook, eSimulation Handbook (eSH). It aims at providing learning that align with other models of simulation.

The idea of the eSimulation Handbook

To make it easier to refresh nursing skills, two nurse educators started to produce videos in March 2015 by using a smartphone. At first, they focussed on small issues like a delirium patient to prepare the nurse trainees for unexpected situations they most likely are going to face. In addition, they focussed on basic skills like measuring blood pressure and blood sugar. Soon they noticed that there is a bigger need to collect all videos in the same place to support simulation in nurse education at Satakunta University of Applied Sciences.

eSimulation Handbook was created to provide resources and strategies that best assist students in simulation training by offering a virtual, 24/7 open learning platform for nurse trainees. The importance of refreshing nursing procedures was the core idea of eSH. It is not possible to remember everything after the simulation scenarios if it is practiced only once. Some nurse trainees have to face the fact that they may not have a chance to train the skills gained at the simulation scenarios during the clinical placement at all. The clinical placements vary at lot within the Satakunta University of Applied Sciences area and it is not possible to guarantee similar placements to all nurse trainees.

eSH is a Moodle (Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment) based virtual learning platform for nurse trainees that is used in Satakunta University of Applied Sciences. The privacy settings make Moodle private; access is not allowed for outsiders. To enter eSH the nurse trainees need a password and they have to have an access to the Moodle of Satakunta University of Applied Sciences. After graduating the user rights to Moodle expire and when they have finished their studies it is not possible to use eSH anymore.

The eSimulation Handbook consists of 9 modules. A nurse trainee follows the course division of the curricula to find the right videos from eSH. There is one module of simulation basics: an introduction to simulation, videos of a simulation room for nurse trainees who have never before participated in simulation training. The

introduction videos of a computerised patient simulator familiarise students with how to nurse a computerised simulation patient and a simulation evaluation form, which the nurse trainees print out before the training session, helps them to observe the scenarios. The other modules consist of one module of basic nurse studies, seven modules of professional nurse studies and one module of multicultural nurse studies which are meant to be watched at the different stages of the studies. The module of the basic nurse studies consists of videos like how a nurse undresses and prepares a patient after death or how to measure blood sugar/blood pressure.

The professional modules follow the curricula of nurse studies 2013: medical, surgical, acute and perioperative, child and adolescents', mental health (including disabilities) and gerontological and rehabilitation nursing. From the beginning to the very end of the studies a nurse trainee is able to check from the eSH for example how to take an ECG by watching videos. By pausing the video it is possible to practice ECG monitoring, preparing the liquids, antibiotics, safe blood transfusion etc. on their own time. The multicultural module includes material about immigrants that is at the moment needed all over Europe.

There is a growing need for methodological studies as well and maybe in the future there are videos about literature search from databases or research methods. YouTube® has many possibilities but the problem is that most of the videos are in English or in other foreign languages and nurse trainees in Finland prefer Finnish to gain the best learning of the topic.

About videos in eSH

Nurse educators uploaded their videos in Moodle or on YouTube® after editing them with the Adobe ProConnector® programme or Windows Movie Maker®. Some of the videos linked in eSH are originally from YouTube® and the internet address is linked in eSH. The nurse educators participated in a two day editing course to learn how to edit the materials.

Creating a video took more time than assumed: one 8 minutes long video took approximately from 8 to 16 hours to be completed. It was challenging to write a manuscript, shoot several videos and edit them alongside working. Some videos were filmed in clinical settings with informed consent of the patient. The nurse educators made sure that it was impossible to recognise the patients from the video. The name of the nurse trainee

who appeared in the video was at the end of the video and it was possible to recognise the trainee. Nurse trainees participated in the videos only if they gave their oral permission.

In future, nurse trainees could create their own videos as bachelor theses or as a part of simulation scenarios. A few videos are now in the manuscript phase and will be linked in eSH in autumn 2016. There are also plans to create internet based games for nursing as a part of eSH in the future to support the simulation pedagogy at Satakunta University of Applied Sciences.

Simulation pedagogy at Satakunta University of Applied Sciences

In the past few years, Satakunta University of Applied Sciences has reviewed the current practices in simulation pedagogy in nurse education. The nurse educators of Satakunta University of Applied Sciences have noticed the change in clinical placements (more patients are now nursed in less hours by a smaller number of nurses), and the need for nursing skills' acquisition before the nurse trainees enter the clinical settings. To meet the demand from the clinical placements the nurse educators at Satakunta University of Applied Sciences have established a group for simulation educators. The simulation group has reformed the core of simulation education pedagogy at Satakunta University of Applied Sciences step by step, and one of the reforms is eSH simulation pedagogy.

As Alinier & Platt (2014) recommend, the simulation group of Satakunta University of Applied Sciences attempts to respond to the need to advance patient safety and cost-effectiveness at the same time. Improving simulation education in Satakunta University of Applied Sciences does not mean investing more money in educational resources or the newest technology. It means better use of both of them by adopting sound educational principles. That means the implementation of the newest interventions and the best educational practices of simulation pedagogy. It means also collaboration with other universities of applied sciences nationally in Finland and internationally in Europe, and of course ensuring a quality control process. These measures ensure that the patient care and clinical outcomes are improving not only today but also in the future.

A modified version of the framework of the pre-training analysis

The measures described above have not been enough at Satakunta University of Applied Sciences to ensure that the simulation pedagogy follows the best practices, an adaptation of the framework of pre-training analysis modified from Guimond

et al (2011, 181) was made. Simulation has replaced clinical laboratory practice at Satakunta University of Applied Sciences, but it was often implemented without defining the objectives the nurse trainees should achieve. Consequently, there were differences between the objectives and the simulation scenarios. Since 2016 the framework of pre-training analysis has been implemented and the nurse educator sets the objectives for the scenario to make sure that the trainees reach them during the simulation in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Guimond et al. (2011) have presented a framework of pre-training analysis. In the core of the framework there are the desired steps which are followed in order: knowledge, skills and attitudes-> learning objectives-> instructional strategy-> evaluation of learning-> transfer of knowledge. The core is surrounded by four analyses that are necessary prior to training: the learner analysis, the team analysis, the task and cognitive analysis and the organisational analysis. Each of these four types of analyses feeds the core of the framework and provides data for the planning and design of simulation based training. The eSimulation Handbook provides one possibility to fill the gap within the organisation; the competence of simulation education does not depend on an individual nurse educator's skills and knowledge. Figure 1 presents the adaptation of the pre-training analysis framework included the eSimulation Handbook. (Guimond, et al. 2011, 181–182.) Before the simulation training it is important to conduct the following four types of analyses.
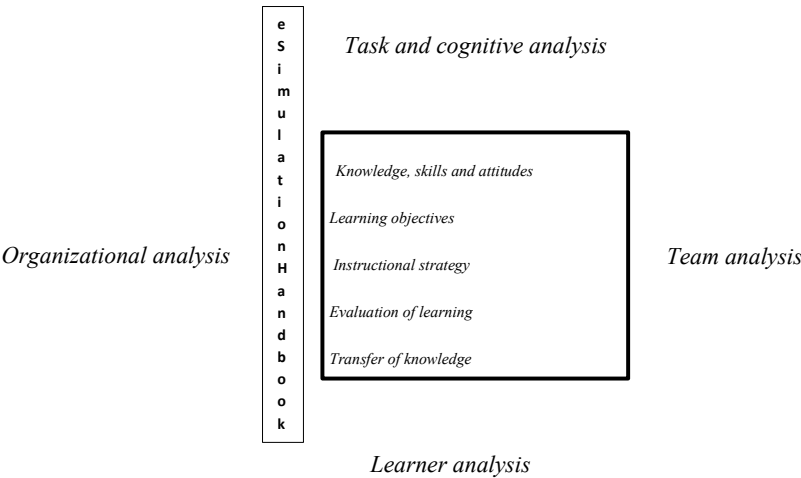

FIGURE 1.
The adaptation of the pre-training analysis framework according to Guimond et al. (2011, 181).

The learner analysis underlines that understanding the learner is the key to successful simulation training. The nurse educator must know the baseline level of the nurse trainees: what they already know and are familiar with, to offer training focussing on a skill the trainees need to practice but not on a too difficult one. (Guimond et al. 2011, 181.) If a nurse trainee participates in a scenario once it does not make the trainee a professional; the experience has to be repeated (like resuscitation) and eSH is the tool that can be used for repetition and refreshing the skills.

The task and cognitive analysis is what a nurse trainee should do to complete the simulation scenario. The analysis consists of the steps that the trainee must take. (Guimond et al. 2011, 182.) The simulation emphasises the importance of debriefing, and the nurse trainees reflect their actions with the nurse educator after the scenario and the trainees observing the scenario give their evaluation as well. The transfer of knowledge may happen during or after the simulation scenario. The nurse educators at Satakunta University of Applied Sciences have interviewed the experts from clinical placements to create a scenario that is possible in the real clinical world to make the transfer of knowledge easier for the trainees.

The team analysis consists of the evaluation of roles of the nurse trainees for the scenario (Guimond et al. 2011, 181). While solving the scenario the trainees in Satakunta University of Applied Sciences are separated into two groups: usually 2–5 nurse trainees are playing the roles and the other trainees are observing their actions. Working as a team and decision making based on the best knowledge of nursing are important parts of the scenario and becoming a nurse. During the ongoing scenario the trainees have access to the internet and eSH so they can check how to use the infusion pump or how to take an ECG. Before that they have to divide the roles between the team members and decide the division of labour like in real clinical setting.

The organisational analysis consists of the resources available for simulation settings (Guimond et al. 2011, 181). In Satakunta University of Applied Sciences the resources vary depending on the nature of scenario. Usually the nurse educator is alone with the nurse trainees but in the scenario with a computerised simulation patient there is a need for two nurse educators: one is in charge of the patient and the other educator is in charge of the scenario. The nurse educator reserves the necessary classrooms, checks the schedules not only for the nurse trainees but also the other nurse educators, organises the pre-tasks and the available tools before the simulation scenario.

eSH copes with the learner analysis (pre tasks before simulation: videos to refresh memory or to gain new skills, what the trainees already know), task and cognitive analysis (the steps that a trainee should take: videos for nurses' actions, step by step), and organisational analysis (simulation classroom, how to use the computerised simulation patient). After the simulation there is a possibility to watch videos again to transfer the knowledge.

Statistics of the use of eSH

The access to the pilot version of the eSH was granted for the second year nurse trainees in April 2015 and in August 2015 it was revised. In total, 179 nurse trainees and 20 nurse educators have signed in eSH by the end of February 2016. Some of the trainees who signed in April 2015 have graduated during the period and thus it was not possible to collect statistics of the use of eSH. An internet-based questionnaire will be launched in September 2016 to evaluate the usefulness of eSH and to collect proposals for the use of eSH. It is challenging to measure the use of eSH because nurse trainees have an opportunity to graduate during the year and new nurse trainees enter Satakunta University of Applied Sciences two times a year. eSH is still being developed further and it is changing all the time as new videos are produced. The English versions of the videos are being planned so there will be changes for many years. Table II below shows the number of students who signed on the eSH platform between April 2015 and February 2016.

TABLE 2.
The participants of eSH, nurse trainees (N=179).
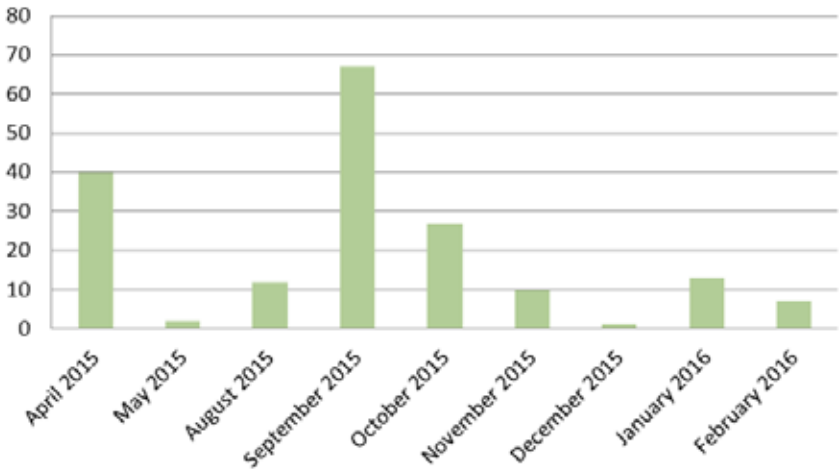
Conclusions

To get the best benefit of eSH it is important that all the nurse educators in Satakunta University of Applied Sciences are involved in eSH and they have access to the platform. It takes time to learn to implement eSH as a part of teaching and simulation scenarios but eSH has already been used quite a lot among nurse educators and nurse trainees. There is no evidence that simulation could be organised only virtually – there is still a need for face-to-face simulation. Adaption of the pre-training analysis framework is continuing and the scenarios are evaluated against it.

The main objective for the next two years is to develop eSH further to serve the simulation in nurse education at Satakunta University of Applied Sciences in the best possible way. It takes time and resources if only a few nurse educators are working with the content of eSH. The simulation group is searching for the best practices in order to implement eSH with physiotherapy and Bachelor of Social Sciences trainees as well. Some joint simulations were piloted with nurse and physiotherapy trainees in March 2016. There is a dream of conducting multiprofessional simulation scenarios in the future with eSH as a part of it.

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Part II

Joint Courses

Water network renovation on the net – a virtual course

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Abstract

Examining the condition of subterranean water supply and waste water networks is essential for water utilities companies. The need for the renovation of pipe networks has grown substantially in the past few years and there is a shortage of qualified water renovators of water supply networks. And yet, despite there being clear demand for it, there is relatively little training available in the field. This working life oriented networked learning package in the field of water supply management and engineering was designed as a collaborative project by three universities of applied sciences (Turku University of Applied Sciences, Satakunta University of Applied Sciences and Häme University of Applied Sciences) and the Aalto University. The goal was to develop a nationwide, working life oriented learning package for all universities of applied sciences and universities providing education in water engineering, which in the future could additionally be offered to the staff of water utilities companies and consultancies as a vocational specialisation programme.

The key aspects of the course are problem-based inquiry, practical applicability and the logical progress of a renovation project. The topics covered by the course included exploring the current state of water supply, definition of goals, repair and renovation, renovation planning, execution and impact. The course content was strongly linked with practice, and the learning tasks were built around the problem-based learning methodology. The course was implemented as networked learning, with no face-to-face learning.

The pilot online course was launched in the three universities of applied sciences in spring 2016. According to the student feedback, the students felt they had learned during the course, although the course was very intensive and demanding. The reported number of study hours corresponded with the credit allocation. Student feedback and teacher experiences were used as a basis for further development of the course. An English-language edition of the online learning package could also have educational export potential.

Introduction

The development of networked learning is a highly topical theme in the Finnish educational field at the moment. The implementation of networked learning is typically associated with the provision of education regardless of time and location as well as expectations for improved quality of tuition and cost-savings. Networked learning also promotes education as a form of business both domestically and in global markets.

We set out to plan a joint networked learning programme with three universities of applied sciences (Turku University of Applied Sciences, Satakunta University of Applied Sciences and Häme University of Applied Sciences) and the Aalto University with the objective of creating a working life oriented learning package that could be marketed in the future to, for example, water utility companies and consultancies as vocational specialisation training.

Our aim is to use the experiences gained from the pilot scheme to design an extensive online learning package for the field of water management and water engineering. The package may be used as a resource by all universities of applied sciences and universities nationwide, who offer studies in water engineering, and segments of it could also be delivered in an English-language edition, which would enable the global export of Finnish educational know-how in water engineering. To support the work carried out in the project, a steering group with representatives of a wide range of expertise was established, which helped ensure that the experiences gained from the pilot would be communicated in a timely manner to all parties involved.

Water suppliers have a key role in maintaining all subterranean water and waste water systems in good working order. Renewing and repairing the systems is extremely expensive and requires specialist skills. From this point of departure, we drew up a plan for a training package, the implementation of which was partially funded by

the higher education institutions involved as well as Maa- ja vesitekniikan tuki research fund and the Water Utilities Development Fund. The condition for the support was to make the package available to the staff of all member organisations of the Finnish Water Utilities Association. We offered the staff of a number of water utilities companies the opportunity to complete the training package, but owing to the intensive nature of the package, none of the professional staff eventually completed the programme.

The key aspects of the course are problem-based inquiry, practical applicability and the logical progress of a renovation project. The topics covered by the course included mapping the current situation (including condition surveys and leakage tests), definition of goals, repair and renovation, renovation planning, execution (the contracting process) and impact. The goal is that having completed the course, students are familiar with each stage of a renovation project. If water network renovation contracts are subjected to qualification criteria in the future, this package will may also be used as a training package providing such qualification.

The objectives of the course are based on real working-life needs

The objectives for the course were strongly anchored on real needs of the working life. There is a range of different methods available for water network renovation, which do not necessitate the unearthing of old sections. With this in mind, the course content was designed from a pragmatic and problem-based perspective. From an educational point of view, the design of the course content can be divided into four stages, as based on Biggs: 1. Defining the intended learning outcomes; 2. Choosing the subject matter and content; 3. Choosing the methods of learning assessment; 4. Choosing the teaching methods (Lindblom-Ylänne & Nevgi 2009, 140–141).

The intended learning outcomes for the course were defined as: "On completion of the course, the students will have gained knowledge of the different stages of a renovation project." The objective was kept simple, as the background of students enrolling on the course varied widely. The pilot scheme was offered to both first degree students from different groups and post-graduate students at the universities of applied sciences, who already have some experience even if from a variety of sectors. The first degree students from different universities of applied sciences also had var-

ied backgrounds. One of the goals of the pilot course was to establish the suitability of the course for students of different stages.

The topics covered by the course included exploring the current state of water supply (including condition surveys and leakage tests), definition of goals, repair and renovation, renovation planning, execution (the contracting process) and impact. While the course content was felt to be extensive, this was also seen as a merit, owing to the widely varied backgrounds of the students. The course content was felt to be relevant also to those already in employment. The national alignment of the content for the network renovation qualification are currently being discussed, and the content of this course was designed so that it might serve as a programme leading to the qualification. The selection of learning assessment methods and the teaching methods have been described in more detail in Chapter 3.

The selection of teaching and assessment methods

The selection of teaching methods is a process of didactic planning and its goal is to support the achievement of the intended learning outcomes and learning assessment. Since the goal of the course was to give skills to apply knowledge in practice, the most suitable methods were various group and project assignments, practical exercises and problem-based learning methods. These methods require students to make an active contribution and report on their work (Lindblom-Ylänne & Nevgi 2009, 151–154).

The course was implemented as networked learning, with no face-to-face learning. Networked learning refers to a learning environment where all instruction and information dissemination takes place over information networks. The goal is to create a learning environment which is independent of time and place and therefore more suitable for students outside the educational institution context than face-to-face teaching. The course was designed to offer learning content and formats for those in working life in a way that would enable them to complete their studies alongside full-time work. The online learning management chosen for the course was Moodle, as Moodle was already in use in two of the participating universities of applied sciences, so it was already available and familiar to some of the users.

The adopted teaching practice aimed for interaction

With the lack of face-to-face teaching, the communications channels and methods were carefully considered. At the beginning of the course, the discussion forum News was launched for general information. A Questions&Answers forum was also opened, where students could post their questions regarding the course. Unfortunately this forum proved unpopular, with only a few questions posted during the course, showing it was not felt useful. The course teachers also held virtual office hours twice a week through two channels, Skype and Webex (Satakunta University of Applied Sciences' Hill system). The role of these office hours was to offer support to students while they were working on their assignments and completing their course. However, there was no demand among the students for these office hours.

A separate submission folder was created for each assignment. The access to these folders was timed, and the students were informed about the schedule of submissions both in the information meeting and the initial welcoming message to the course. The schedule was given in a separate document at the top of all course material, in which the date of publication for the assignment was given, as well as the submission and feedback dates. In addition, the closing time for each submission folder was shown on each submission folder. The choice of different tools (learning materials, discussion forums, bulletin board, assignments) was based on the type of learning environment that would strongly support independent learning.

While the course did not include any face-to-face teaching, one initial virtual real-time meeting was held at the beginning of the course. During the meeting, the goals, content and methods of the course were introduced as well as the Moodle platform, particularly for those who had not used Moodle before. The nature of the course as a pilot project and the importance of feedback were emphasised. The meeting was recorded and it could be viewed later in Moodle. The introductory meeting was attended by a large number of students, with some of them joining the meeting as a group from their respective educational institutions, while some joined the meeting from their own computers.

Progressive inquiry as the basis for learning assignments

One of the concepts applied in progressive inquiry is problem-based learning (PBL). In this practice, an initial research question or problem is set, to which students then set out to find an answer. The materials are made available and the tutor offers support in finding a solution to the problem. The idea is to make students ponder on the problem and ask questions and, with the help of the tutor, to look for solutions to them (Nurmela & Suominen 2008, 17–26). The idea of progressive inquiry was not, however, fully realised as the students were not able to define their own research questions. The role of the teacher in networked teaching was to remain in the background, and the students focussed mostly on individual work rather than group work, at least from the teacher perspective.

The course included nine assignments related to the subject matter and a compulsory video presentation and the completion of a compulsory feedback form at the end of the course. The course assignments were individual tasks, which enabled students to complete their work in their own schedule. The course material included a wealth of reading material, various research reports and presentations (PowerPoint slides) on the topic. To bring variety to the materials, a few on-site videos illustrating the working methods were included.

A clear structure is the key to usability

The usability of the learning environment was prioritised and the assignments were paired with the relevant background material. The background reading linked to each assignment was, as a rule, available even prior to the assignment. The same style of visual placement on the course website was followed throughout the course. The course progress followed a transparent logic, in which the learning content was thematically divided into five modules. The modules could be accessed according to the given schedule, with the students completing the assignments under each module. The modules opened with an introductory text, where the key learning objectives and assignments were listed and explained. The background materials were introduced before giving the assignments. The general feedback form was published after all assignments had been submitted. The checkboxes on the right help students keep track of their progress (Figure 3). In the pilot, the students' progress was not restricted by any other factor except the schedule and the students were free to complete the assignments in any order.

According to Kearney et al. (2012, 9), authenticity and realism is understood to enhance learning by reinforcing the student's sense that what they are studying has real world relevance. This requirement was taken into account in the design of the course and the assignments were built to be as realistic as possible by using materials that were based on actual commissions.

In terms of the course structure, the selected approach was one with regulated assignments. The topics covered by the course were given to the students at the beginning of the course but the actual assignments were released in a regulated manner. The purpose of this approach is to reduce the cognitive load of the course so as not to overwhelm the students and to help them to break it down into smaller and more easily manageable parts. (Löfgren & al. 2010, 31.)

Assessment principles and student feedback

The assessment method selected for the course was portfolio assessment, where the submitted assignments were assessed and evaluated, and the grade was given based on an average calculated from the grades of all assignments. The course was divided into five modules, and at the beginning of each module key goals and learning outcomes were introduced.

The course and the assignments were initially presented in the introductory meeting. There were all in all 11 compulsory assignments, including a video presentation and feedback survey. Feedback survey was compulsory in order to get plenty of valuable feedback from the students. This feedback served as a basis for further development of the course.

The assignments were evaluated by using a variety of different feedback methods. With some of the assignments, a model answer was provided after the deadline, and with others, personal feedback was given. Most of the assignments were graded on a scale from 0 to 100. The course grade on a scale from 1 to 5 was based on the average grade of the assignments, with grade 50 corresponding to course grade 1 and 90 to course grade 5.

Some students felt that model answers were not a sufficient form of feedback and personal feedback was deemed highly necessary.

Student feedback

Students were also requested to give feedback. Each module was finished by a short feedback survey of six questions. In addition, students completed a more extensive feedback survey at the end of the course. The students were asked to report the time they had spent completing the assignment, but some students failed to do so despite repeated requests. Students were invited to give feedback during virtual office hours and the Questions & Answers forum, but they did not make use of these facilities. In practice, students asked for very little help for completing their assignments. Towards the end of the course, they would contact the teachers by e-mail or in person during other courses (not the virtual ones) and gave oral feedback on the course. Mainly the feedback had to do with a course grade or the heavy workload of the course and requests for extensions for assignment submissions. Most of the feedback was obtained through the feedback survey, and the responses will be discussed later in this chapter.

The subject matter of the course was new to most of the participants and it had not been discussed in any of their previous courses. Furthermore, the course required a talent for independent work and good skills in seeking, analysing and evaluating information. This combination made the course and course assignments challenging especially for those students who were still at the early stages of their studies. Clearly more support and guidance was needed to complete the assignments and in seeking information.

The course feedback clearly showed how different the students were in terms of their experience and background. For half of the course participants this was the first time they attended an online course (n=10), while the rest had completed 1–14 credits through networked learning (n=9). Similarly, one half of the students were first or second year students (n=10, with fewer than 120 credits completed), while the number of more advanced students was 8, and one student was participating in the course through the Open University. Networked learning is based on independent study, so that all assignments were completed independently and no face-to-face meetings were offered. For some, this type of study was highly suitable, while others felt that they had been left alone to deal with the topic at hand, as no interaction or face-to-face tuition had been arranged. Another reason for added need for support was lack of routine in taking online courses.

The challenges that the lack of face-to-face tuition might pose were acknowledged when the course was being planned, but arranging face-to-face teaching was not practically possible and for these reasons the stage of team building never occurred. For future reference, it would be advisable to arrange, for example, teacher-led on-line sessions for small groups. Team building could also be encouraged by organising study circles and similar types of activities online. The students also mentioned in their feedback spontaneous team building, referring to some of the students regularly meeting up to complete their course work. This is a clear indication of the need for team-building and peer support, which the course at this time could not provide.

The feedback also touched upon the assignments and learning materials. Some felt the assignments had been too complicated, and special needs, such as dyslexia, had not been taken into account in the original planning of the assignments. This shortcoming was, however, addressed before the release of the second study module, and the assignments were more clearly explained. Assignments with multiple parts were added to a summary to make it easier to grasp the task. Posting videos with instructions on assignments could have further clarified the objectives of the assignments, and recording such videos for the next course is worth considering. While more attention could have been paid to the structure and wording of the assignments, the assignments were felt to be motivating (Figure 4) and working life oriented (Figure 5), which meets the objectives set for the course. The motivation showed signs of waning towards the end of the course, which may be partly due to the heavy workload of the course and, in particular, the extensive scope of the assignments in the last module.

The level of motivation related to different assigments
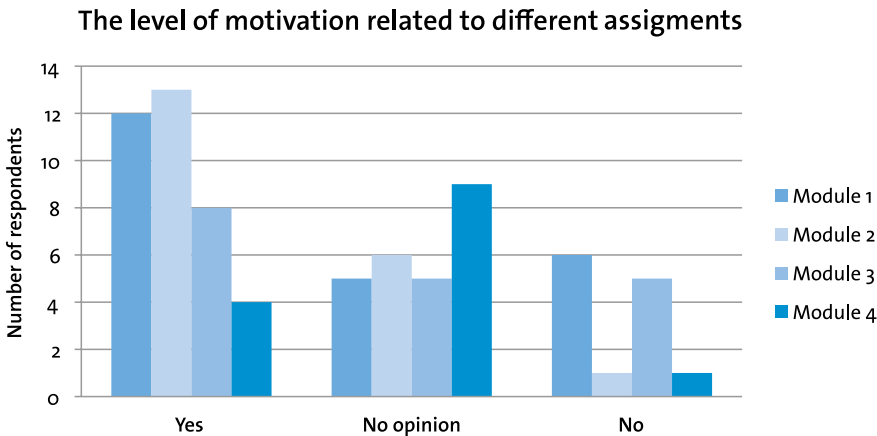
FIGURE 1.
The assignments were mainly considered motivating.

The assignments were practical and working life orientated
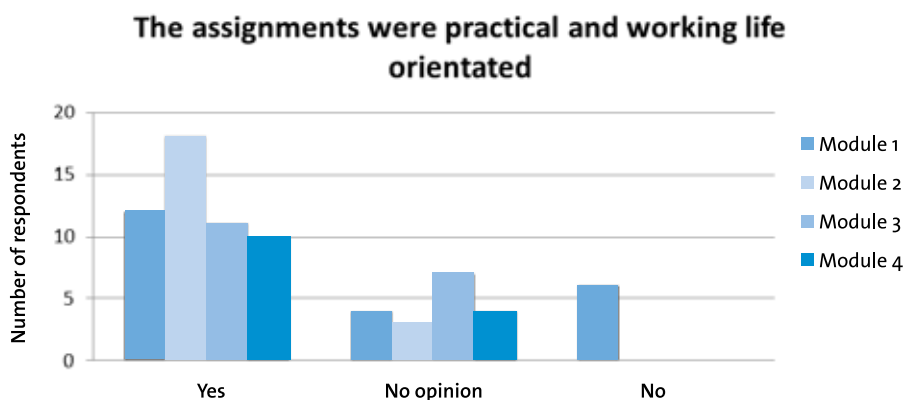
FIGURE 2.
The assignments were considered relevant to the world of work in all five modules.

In the feedback, online lectures were also called for to support learning.

> I think the topics could have been discussed together more, for example, over the Internet.

Some of the teaching material was uploaded to the learning management system as they were, and the material did not always fully match students' information needs. Online lectures could have been a way of giving helpful information to students when completing the assignments. Furthermore, the teaching material, which had originally been prepared for the needs of traditional lecturing, included overlaps and repetition, so synchronising and updating the learning materials is necessary in the future.

The workload on the course was felt to be heavy, although the number of hours the students reported spending on assignments was not very high in comparison to the number of credits earned. This feedback was repeatedly mentioned in both the feedback survey and other feedback. The three credits awarded for the course equals approximately 81 hours of work for the student. Only few students reported spending more than 25 hours on a module (Figure 6). It would be interesting to further investigate what causes such a marked discrepancy between the experienced workload and the actual number of hours spent on assignments. Perhaps the online course was selected as an extra course on top of other conventional courses, and the expectation was that it would not essentially add to the weekly workload. When completing the course then proved more labour-intensive than expected, this workload was felt to be excessive. Per-

haps independent online learning also feels harder, as it is based on active absorption rather than passive reception of information. Clearer setting of assignments and limiting the material could suffice to bring balance between the time students have reserved for the course, the actual number of study hours and the experienced workload.

The number of reported hours spent by the student per each module
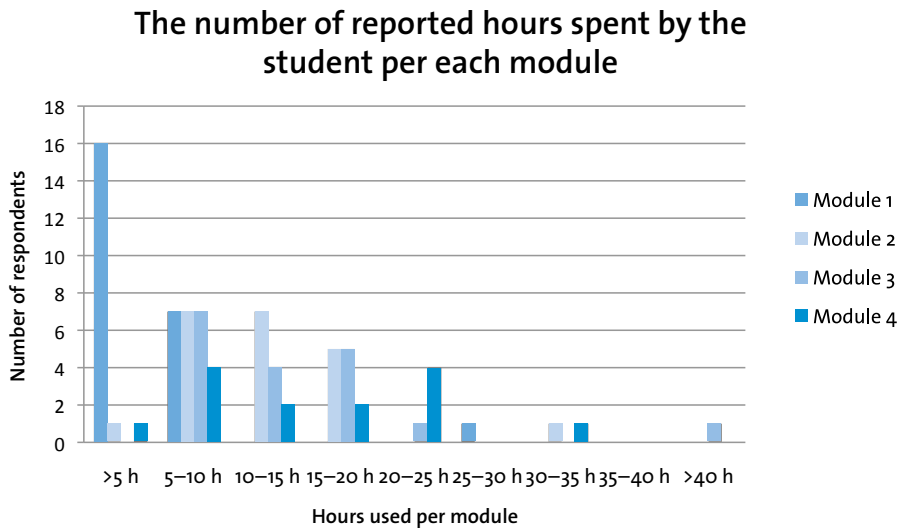
FIGURE 3.
The number of hours spent on the 3 credit course as reported by students themselves by module.

Based on the feedback, the target group of the course should be reconsidered. The pilot course was taken by students of different stages of studies, for whom the subject matter of the course was unfamiliar. Since the topic of the course is quite specific, it requires from the students motivation to study the topic, so the course would be best targeted towards students at the final stages of their studies with genuine interest in the theme, Master's degree students who are used to working independently and as a form of extension study for professionals in the field. Including students working full-time creates new challenges, regarding, for example, time management (group work, close deadlines, online sessions dependent on teachers' official working hours). A diverse target group may also have great differences in their ability to use virtual tools and computers, which may prove another challenge.

What becomes apparent from the feedback survey and other feedback is that the learning objectives were met:

> An educational course!

Online courses elicit many types of expectations, both positive and negative:

> I learnt surprisingly much, although I was initially sceptical about how much I could learn on an online course.

> Online courses are in my opinion good and highly practical.

Support and flexibility through collaboration

The piloted online course provided an opportunity to offer education to students of three higher education institutions as a joint effort in a topic in which instruction at this level and to this extent is not available. As the provision of traditional face-to-face teaching is continually reduced under cost pressures, one promising solution is to offer this education to a larger target group, even nationwide. Joint online courses are also way of increasing, expanding and strengthening collaboration between universities of applied sciences and improving the standard of tuition offered to students.

However, it should be remembered that online courses do not by any means reduce the resources required by teachers even if no face-to-face teaching is arranged. Small groups, virtual office hours (appointments with the teachers held over the internet and possible online lectures require the physical presence of the teacher. Giving feedback is also more time consuming, as it cannot be given collectively to the entire group.

The teaching resources in water engineering are very small in the universities of applied sciences. According to a needs assessment for higher education in water engineering, the universities of applied sciences offering education in the field employ 1–4 teachers for this subject (Salminen et al. 2015, 28). With shared teaching materials and joint online courses the teaching staff would also receive peer support. Jointly organised courses increase collaboration between teachers in different universities of applied sciences and create opportunities for teachers to improve their own professional competencies. Teachers are unlikely to have colleagues in the same field, so there is little peer support around in this specific topic. Shared teaching

work would bring colleagues together and bring added value by helping teachers improve their own skills but by also providing an opportunity for benchmarking.

The first step towards a more extensive education provision has now been taken in the form of this online learning package. The water management and engineering field has already expressed its interest in the material. Professional studies independent of time and place are currently of great interest. However, even if learning is not tied to a certain location, it does require time.

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Experiences on joint language teaching on the net

Hilkka Bergman & Kristiina Tedremaa-Levorato

Abstract

In 2011 we launched a cooperation project between Turku University of Applied Sciences and Tallinn University under which students who study Swedish at two universities across the Baltic Sea have a chance to complete a part of relevant courses in their study programmes together in an online course. The primary goals of joint studying are to encourage students from different nationalities to actively communicate with one another using Swedish as the lingua franca, to motivate students to use a range of sources in Swedish to get information, and to give the participants a chance to gain new knowledge.

The joint study unit was carried out during six weeks in a virtual learning environment by using discussion forums and a learning diary. The partner teachers drew up a detailed calendar on a week-by-week basis for each joint task. The common difficulties in carrying out joint studies at two different universities, e.g. timetabling and technical problems, were overcome by focussing on asynchronous dialogue and by choosing a technically workable platform with good technical support from the other one of the partner universities.

The authors consider the cooperation a very positive experience, easy and inexpensive to implement, and highly recommend it to their colleagues. Our experience confirms what previous studies (Guth, Helm & O'Dowd 2012) have already outlined: despite the belief that foreign languages should be learned face-to-face and preferably with native speakers, students seem to appreciate using ICT for connect-

ing with other people using the target language as their lingua franca. We also feel that these exchanges are particularly suitable for the teaching of less commonly taught languages and offer a great alternative in language teaching with change and satisfaction for all parties.

Introduction

The internet and virtual learning environments offer great potential for learning in general and for language learning in particular. Comparing language learning today with language learning 20 years ago, it is evident that changes are significant. The difference is particularly noteworthy in the use of online technologies and not only in language teaching methodology. Also the amount of time that young people spend on the internet has increased and is still rapidly increasing. We are facing new arenas with great potential for language learning and should make use of it. Paper textbooks and exercise books have been replaced by electronic ones, and a fast internet connection gives the language learner an easy access to global resources. Online projects also bring language learners all over the world into contact with one another and create opportunities for authentic communication.

According to earlier research there is unused potential in internet-mediated intercultural learning between university classes of foreign language learners in geographically distant locations (Guth, Helm & O'Dowd 2012). Research has shown that this kind of authentic online communication can contribute to e.g. the development of learner autonomy, linguistic accuracy, intercultural awareness and skills.

The authors, who work as Swedish language lecturers at Turku University of Applied Sciences (TUAS) and Tallinn University (TLÜ), wished to give their students a possibility to complete a part of their Swedish language course in virtual collaboration with the partner university. The first step towards collaboration was an e-mail suggestion of cooperation from the Finnish partner in spring 2010. After discussions and face-to-face meetings the first joint study unit was launched in February 2011. Hereby, we present an overview of the cooperation that has been ongoing for five years by now.

In this article we present the joint tasks given to the students, the students' feedback on them and discuss the role of the instructor on an online language course.

Our aim is to answer the question: how to organise a joint study unit based on virtual interaction between participants from two different countries and make them communicate in an authentic way by using the target language as their lingua franca.

Methods and background

Students at approximately the same language level

The prerequisite for successful cooperation in language learning is a more or less equal level in language proficiency; differences in language proficiency can be a challenge to successful collaboration (Guth, Helm & O'Dowd 2012). The Finnish business students who participated in the project had studied Swedish both in the comprehensive school and upper secondary school, and were on B1+/B2 language level. The students studying Swedish at Tallinn University start from zero and by the time of the joint study unit also reach the same language level (B1+/B2). Similar prerequisite skills make the formulation of tasks and communication between the students considerably easier. The number of students participating in the project during the five years is presented in table 1 below. The number of students is relevant if teachers also aim to give individual feedback during the course and, therefore, it should not be too high.

TABLE 1.
The number of students participating

Number of students	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
TUAS	12	20	18	17	20
TLÜ	9	7	10	9	7

Duration – joint tasks during six weeks

Because of the misalignment of academic calendars at Finnish and Estonian universities it was rather difficult to create a joint study unit which would cover the whole academic semester. To give our students a chance to a continuous on-line study session without any longer breaks we ended up with a shorter, six-week joint study period that later turned out to be quite optimal. By integrating this joint study unit in already existing courses we could avoid difficulties and expenses which probably would arise from modifying the curricula.

Optima as a web platform

As Finnish and Estonian higher education institutions use different study environments, the decision on the best platform had to be made first. As Turku University of Applied Sciences has been offering different online courses for students for a long time, and as the used platform Optima has also a Swedish language version, it seemed to be the best choice for the implementation of the joint study unit. Choosing a technically workable platform with good technical support from one of the partner universities also contributed to the decision. The students of Tallinn University received a temporary user name and password in Optima.

Tasks

The primary goal of the joint online course was to encourage students to use Swedish as a *lingua franca,* when communicating with the students of the partner university. Therefore, group work formed a large part of the joint study unit. The first task consisted of presentations of the students' personal and academic backgrounds followed by a peer discussion on the virtual forum. The photos/illustrations students attached to their presentations were a perfect way to "break the ice" and create a cohesive group of students willing to learn more about their fellow students on the other side of the Baltic Sea. Students were divided into Estonian–Finnish pairs and could comment each other's presentations on the forum and ask questions.

The next task was a listening comprehension by following television and radio programmes in Swedish and commenting them in a diary. The students wrote down a brief summary of the programme and complemented it with a small glossary of new vocabulary that was used in the programme. In addition, the students evaluated

their listening skills with reference to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

The main purpose of the first two tasks was to help students to get familiar with each other and the web platform. They were followed by the third, a more difficult one.

The third task was to discuss in groups current social topics they had raised in their individual essays. Argumentation was carried out on the virtual discussion forum the following week. Some exemplary themes were given for the students, for instance:

- Should Turkey become/not become a member of the EU?

- Advertising of alcohol must be/should not be forbidden.

- Higher education should be/should not be free of charge.

- Military service for both men and women?

- Facebook – effective communication and a time thief.

Some examples of the topics proposed by students:

- Marriage or living together?

- Dangers of genetically engineered foods.

- Children have a right to home care.

The task of writing an argumentative essay on a current social topic was chosen by us teachers to offer our students a chance to produce a different type of text from the ones they are used to writing at school. Ulrika Tornberg (2009, 164) who has studied the writing of students at school has come to the conclusion that most of the texts students have to write during their studies are about themselves and argumentative texts are practically missing.

Thereafter, the students were divided into Finnish–Estonian groups of 4–5 members and the communication continued on the virtual forum. All students had to read through their group members' essays and give arguments for or against the opinions presented there.

Instructing an online course

An online course requires a lot of preparatory work. When working out the tasks the teacher should think about the learning process, create optimal learning conditions, decide on the way of giving instructions during the course, finalise the schedule and of course gather and organise the learning material into a logical whole. (Koli 2008, 75–82) Content production is a vital part of an online teacher's professionalism (Suominen & Nurmela 2011, 67).

As our wish was to offer an online course with active feedback, the students received feedback from the fellow students and from the teachers. In case of the first task we also exchanged roles between ourselves, so that students would receive feedback not only from their own teacher but also from the so-called guest teacher. Creating a good atmosphere of learning is of great importance also in virtual teaching; we believe that it is even more important in a virtual classroom than in the traditional one. Continuous contact with the participants, communication between the participants themselves, keeping the agreed deadlines and showing mutual interest towards one another are crucial in creating a good atmosphere.

When working out the tasks, both lecturers took part again, thanks to which the joint course consisted of varied types of tasks. In case of such joint study, in which group work comprises a large part of the study, it is of special importance that all the participants follow the given deadlines. When the deadline of a particular task was coming closer, we therefore sent a reminder by email. In the authors' opinion, the students were very committed to completing the tasks, and there were only a few cases when a student forgot about the deadline. We believe that students tend to consider their studies of value if they are credit-bearing and part of the study programme (O'Dowd 2013, 47–53).

In joint teaching, it is also important that the partner teachers have common visions, approaches and practices in their teaching (O'Dowd 2013, 47–53). We believe that a reliable teacher-partnership is vital for a long-term collaboration and successful co-teaching. An online course can definitely be prepared online as well, but we presupposed that physical meeting makes planning considerably easier – and this was also confirmed by our own experience.

Feedback from students

After the period of joint study all students were asked to fill in a feedback questionnaire, in which they answered the following questions:

1. How would you evaluate your language development during the course? Which sub-skills (reading, writing, online communication, listening, cultural competence) developed the most/least during the course?

2. What did you like the most about the joint study? What kind of tasks suit an online course best?

3. Did you encounter any difficulties in using Optima? Was the timetable suitable for the course? Did you read the feedback provided by the teacher?

4. How would you evaluate the cooperation with the partner university on a scale from 10 (very good) to 1 (very bad)? Please justify your answer.

5. Would you be interested in similar joint studies also with other higher education institutions and not only in the framework of language training? Why?

6. Do you have any remarks or suggestions for modification?

All of the respondents noted that their language skills developed during the course. As the answer to the most developed sub-skill they mentioned listening, writing, and online communication. It was interesting to see that the students evaluated the development of cultural competence very differently. In the opinion of approximately half of the students, this developed the most of the sub-skills, and in the opinion of approximately the other half, the least.

When answering question no 2, it was mentioned that the tasks were varied and interesting and the reading and commenting of fellow students' texts exciting.

None of the students experienced problems with understanding the use of Optima or the instructions. The timetable was considered suitable and the majority also looked at the feedback provided by the teacher. Many Finnish students commented positively on the amount of feedback they got during the course.

The feedback indicated clearly that the students liked to study "internationally". The evaluation of the participants in 2013/2014/2015 was on the average 7.6 in Estonia

and 8.2 in Finland. Among other issues, it was mentioned that the joint study unit was

- "a new way to study language"

- "a good way to learn to know Finnish/Estonian students"

- "thanks to online communication, language use seemed natural"

- "I learned a lot, also from other participants in the course"

- "exciting, good variation in study routine".

None of the students had anything negative to say about the joint study unit. It is evident that in the students' opinion the internationality gave the course extra value and the form of study was motivating. Let us use the formulation of one of the students' feedback: "More similar sort of studies". Or as G. Gillberg (2004) expresses it: "You can work seriously but still have fun."

Recommendations for those interested in joint studies on the web

Online studies suit several different types of tasks well: reading comprehension, writing (analysis, report, summary), listening comprehension, gathering information, translating, vocabulary and grammar exercises and different assignments for group and pair work on a communication forum. In our opinion, the best solution is to integrate a joint online course into an already existing course. In the present case, the Estonian students "visited" the course Svenska på nätet (Swedish on the Net) during six weeks, after which both groups continued their respective Swedish language courses in Finland and Estonia. This, of course, demands flexibility in curricula and can be a problem for teachers who are less independent than we in their respective universities.

In comparison to "ordinary studies", online studies require more detailed planning and precise instructions (Koli 2008, 15–26), but this one-time amount of time spent is in the authors' opinion rewarding. The implementation gives added value through co-teaching and getting to know the other teacher's working methods and students. Relying on our experience, we can say that the course is easily manageable if the task for each coming week opens only after having completed the previous one. The

teachers, on their side, have to strive for a good learning atmosphere and make the game rules clear for the students.

In a European-wide survey regarding experiences on language teaching in virtual collaboration (Helm, Guth & O'Dowd 2012, 124–128) teachers in higher education reported that they found this kind of virtual collaboration time-consuming (83%) and difficult to organise (54%) and that the collaboration with the partner teacher was often challenging (55%), but still the vast majority (93%) agreed that the implementation had been a positive experience.

In high quality online education the teacher should embrace the attitude of being merely a co-instructor for the student who is supposed to take responsibility for his/ her own learning. The teacher should encourage the students to independent study. The importance of giving precise instructions is, however, emphasised in online teaching where the teacher's role is to ensure that every student understands what he/she is supposed to do and that the given timetable is followed.

It is also very important as a teacher to give individual feedback in such a way that the teacher's personal work load does not get too heavy in big groups. Online teaching does not reduce the work load, on the contrary, frequent communication with the students and individual feedback usually increases it. Individual feedback tends to improve the quality of feedback but it demands more time and effort from the teacher. (Suominen & Nurmela 2011, 235.)

Different cultural backgrounds in teaching (teaching methods, ideologies and personalities) can cause misunderstandings between the teachers. The significance of these cultural factors decreases if the students are given wider opportunities to influence the contents and implementation of the online course. In online teaching it is easy to make the students more active participants in learning by giving them free hands to search information on the internet, choose their own topics for argumentation, participate in interactive tasks in groups and pairs etc. There are lots of possibilities to adapt the contents of the learning material to new situations and new learners and through this adaptation reach out to various types of learners – motivate and stimulate them. The most important role of the teacher is to be a supervisor.

The students' attitudes towards online studies can vary and also the students should understand the challenges of this working method. Cooperation and the student's genuine attempt to learn something should be emphasised in all relations between

the teacher and the student (Suominen & Nurmela 2011, 53). The right attitude from the student's side reduces the temptation to underachieve and take the path of least resistance.

Conclusions

The project has turned out to be viable, key factors being students at approximately the same language level, partner teachers with similar aims and practices, good adaptation to existing study programmes and a workable platform. In all five years, students have evaluated the joint study project as successful and they have noted that it has been exciting and motivating.

It has been successful also in the opinion of the authors. As we had counted with the fact that we do not meet our students face to face, we were ready to interrupt at any moment if anybody would have problems with the platform or the instructions. The students, however, managed everything. Virtual communication is that natural and usual to present-day youth, that it should be used by teachers in creating virtual classrooms. According to O'Dowd et al, many teachers who would be willing to start such cooperation are encountered with the fact that it is difficult to find reliable partners who would have the needed flexibility in their curricula and enough courage to start with a new kind of studies.

Successful online teaching presupposes very thorough planning and preliminary work. In the authors' opinion online cooperation is also great variation for the teacher, creating besides the physical classroom a virtual one, which is different from the former but certainly not inferior. Considering the more and more complex economic situation at higher education institutions, we believe that such joint studies also have good future prospects.

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Experiences in joint master level course for project management with virtual learning

Matti Kuikka & Kati Antola

Abstract

In this article, we outline the experiences we had when an international project management course was arranged jointly between two institutes of higher education. The course was taught at Satakunta University of Applied Sciences in Rauma and Turku University of Applied Sciences in Turku for Master's degree students in spring 2015. The instructors from the schools taught in the course with the help of a real-time collaborative video and virtual learning environment. The ViLLE tool, developed at the University of Turku, was used as the virtual learning environment instead of the major learning environments (Moodle, Optima by Discendum ltd) in the Universities of Applied Sciences in Rauma and Turku. The course was shared using a real-time video between the locations and to the students joining in the course remotely from home with the HILL web-conference environment.

Eight students from Rauma and twenty-six students from Turku participated in the course, where all the materials, assignments and exams were available in the virtual learning environment. Feedback from the students was collected and compared with the feedback of the previous course arranged in 2014 in Turku. There were no major differences in the feedback of 2015 compared to the earlier instance. However, one finding was that the cognitive load by the new learning environment caused challenges both for the students and teachers. Joint courses can be arranged in the

future, too, but more effort shall be put into the introduction of the used learning environments, the course planning and the communication between the teachers as proposed by recent researches about collaborative teaching for online and blended learning.

Introduction

This article describes how the Master-level project management course was arranged jointly with Turku University of Applied Sciences (TUAS) and Satakunta University of Applied Sciences (SAMK). Most of the learning sessions were arranged with the help of real-time video. The students participated in the classrooms sessions in Rauma and Turku, but also remotely from home. One in-class learning session was arranged in Turku where all the students worked in the same physical location.

TUAS and SAMK use different learning environments: Optima is used at TUAS and Moodle is used at SAMK. However, another educational tool, ViLLE was selected as the learning environment in the joint set-up. ViLLE was a new learning environment for all the students and for the SAMK teacher. The TUAS teacher has used ViLLE since 2013. Similarly, the mainly used video conferences systems in the universities are different. SAMK's video conference environment HILL was used during the course.

This article analyses the experiences students and teachers had with the joint set-up. The article also describes how similar approaches should be arranged in the future, and indicates what should be considered when implementing joint courses with virtual learning tools. The teachers of the course are the authors of this paper.

The article is structured as follows: First we present the related terms, technologies and researches which are then followed by the case description. The case is presented starting from the course and the learning environments used at SAMK and TUAS. Then we present how the course was arranged jointly in spring 2015. The methods used are presented, followed by the results focussing on the course feedback received. In the discussion and conclusions section we outline the teachers' experiences, and propose how the joint blended courses should be arranged in the future.

Context

The learning method where teaching is provided digitally, typically via the internet, is called *Online Learning*. It is not necessary to implement online learning remotely like *Distance Learning,* which is the general term when the teaching and/or materials are provided remotely. A course applying distance learning may use other materials than the ones provided via the internet such as books, radio programs or DVD videos. Allen and Seaman (2014, 6) define *Online Course* as a course where at least 80% of the teacher-led in-class sessions are replaced with online learning. (Picciano 2015, 6–7.)

The term *Blended Learning* refers to the method where the mixture of online learning and in-class teaching are applied. For instance, two hours in-class and one our online in a week. The activities can be run as their own and, therefore, the in-class and online activities do not need to be dependent on each other. Video conferencing, YouTube videos and blogs are examples of tools for collaborative work with blended learning. Note, that Allen and Seaman (2014, 6) define that the learning method having 30–79% implementation online is called blended learning. (Picciano 2015, 6–7.)

A Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) is a system or a set of tools in an educational institute that provides learning space for courses. Various learning methods from distance learning to traditional in-class teaching can be supported by VLEs. VLEs typically contain means for students and teachers to maintain materials, collaboration space, assignments and exams for courses. (JISC 2016.)

ViLLE (villeteam.fi) is an example of a VLE. Compared to most other VLEs it is an exercises-focussed learning environment. It was created in 2004 for research purposes in order to create new ways for enhanced learning by the support of technology innovations. An important target group for ViLLE is the teachers. New features are created based on teachers' needs and teachers are able to share their teaching resources around the globe with ViLLE. For instance, teachers in Australia can create exercises in ViLLE that are available for teachers in Finland, and vice versa. A number of research papers have been written about the learning results with ViLLE (ViLLE Team research publications). ViLLE has improved learning results for programming in higher education (Kaila et al. 2014; Kaila et al. 2015), for mathematics in primary school (Kurvinen et al. 2014), and for business mathemat-

ics in higher education (Kuikka et al. 2016), as examples. However, new tools, such as ViLLE, may provide challenges as well. Therefore, it is important that new tools are properly introduced to students and teachers before they are taken in the wider use in order to decrease problems such as the cognitive load caused by the new tools (Laakso et al. 2008).

Another important concept in virtual learning is the *Personal Learning Environment,* PLE. PLE is the student's own solution for learning environment, whereas pedagogical learning environment is what the school or teacher supports (Ihanainen & Leppisaari 2009, 18–19).

Collaborative teaching is a way to instruct a course jointly. *Collaborative Online Teaching* is applied when several teachers are offering a joint course to students mainly via internet. Fulton et al. made a research about the collaborative online teaching for the social work course. Undergraduate students participated in the course from several locations remotely in Alberta, Canada. They had both real-time and non-real time elements in the implementation. For the real-time activities they used synchronous meetings and small group presentations. The preparations and presentations of the group work in the course were provided via web-conferencing. In case of asynchronous tasks they used discussion boards. The teachers took part also in the discussions which is important to the students' motivation. The teachers mainly used Skype for the communication and planning between themselves, but e-mails were also used. This enabled the teachers to practise the usage of the real-time communication tools they use with the students. (Fulton et al. 2015.)

Fulton et al. recommended that there shall be time reserved for planning and preparation of a collaborative online course and for the preparation of group assignments. For the group assignments it is essential to design the assignments in such a way that the workload is distributed evenly between the students. Similarly to the students, the teachers should also meet regularly in order to align course targets, grading criteria, pedagogy and materials. Additionally, they emphasised the importance to identify the technical skills needed for the collaborative online teaching. The critical technical skills need to be identified before them are applied. (Fulton et al. 2015.)

Vickers, Field and Melakoski wrote a report about collaborative teaching with blended learning used in the project "Media Culture 2020". Forty students and ten

teachers from five universities (Tampere University of Applied Sciences (Finland), University of Lincoln (United Kingdom), the University of Vic (Spain), Liepaja University (Latvia) and HKU Hilversum (Netherlands)) took part in the implementation of this EU funded Erasmus Intensive Programme project. They used pre-workshop activities, in-class workshops, and documentation assignments for learning with blogs and wikis. In addition, they used various social media platforms and cloud services: for collaborative working Google docs to share documents, Google Hangouts for real-time videos that were saved in YouTube for further use, Facebook mainly for informal discussions and Blogger for publishing the results. The implementation contained two in-class workshops, one in Tampere (Finland) and the other in Liepaja (Latvia). The pre- and post-workshops were arranged online using social media and cloud services. This enabled wide virtual participation without costs for travelling. This international project was successful and they recommended this kind of blended learning approach with both synchronous (real-time) and asynchronous (non-real time) elements. Social media and cloud technologies provide an innovative learning environment for both teachers and students. The expansive international collaboration using cloud services provide experiences to students that create excellent atmosphere for learning, as stated by the students in the paper: "it was the best experience ever as students". (Vickers et al. 2015.)

The case study

The project management course

Project management skills are becoming more and more important in today's business world. There are several reasons for that. Pinto (2016, 29–30) identifies for example the following reasons: 1. shortened product life cycles, 2. narrow product launch windows, 3. increasingly complex and technical products and 4. global markets. Project management can thus be seen as a powerful tool in order to gain competitive advantage in the global marketplace. However, effective project management is challenging, because projects operate outside normal organisational processes and structures. On the other hand, for more and more organisations, project work is becoming the standard and projects are becoming the principal means by which the organisations accomplish their goals. (Pinto 2016, 47, 154.)

We think that this trend towards *"projectised organisations"* is emerging in Finland, too. That is why attention should not only be paid to the sufficient amount of higher-level project management education, but also to the continuous development of that kind of education.

This case study is an example of joining the forces between the two universities of applied sciences in Western Finland, TUAS and SAMK, and developing higher-level project management education. The extent of this project management course was five credits, which means 133 hours of student work. The course focussed on management concepts, methods, tools and practices for international projects. Key contents of the course were project management and planning in an international environment, strategies for project management, role of project management certificates and effective teamwork, team building and communication in multicultural project teams. Different project organisations and roles were introduced, as well as different project management frameworks (e.g. PMI (pmi.org), IPMA (ipma.ch), SCRUM (scrumalliance.org)) and tools. The PMI project management process (planning, control, execution and closure) was also introduced in detail.

Learning outcomes (average level) for the students are described below. After completing the course the student is able to:

- Compare and analyse different project management frameworks, standardised processes and tools for project management in an international context in his/her field of industry

- Identify and cope with the challenges of managing wide and international projects

- Apply the roles of a project sponsor and steering group member

- Apply effective communication methods of project development to the internal and external stakeholders

The project management course was a mandatory first year course for the TUAS students, but an optional course for the SAMK students. The project management course has been taught by both teachers twice before the 2015 course instance, but with different contents. The original TUAS course name was "International Project Management". Optima was used as the VLE for the first course in 2013, but for the 2014 course ViLLE was introduced as the main VLE instead of Optima.

However, Optima was used for the storage of the presentation materials in the 2014 course. All the assignments and group work were arranged with the help of ViLLE in 2014. The SAMK courses were implemented in 2010 and 2011. In 2011, the international project management course was one of the courses developed as a part of the teacher's pedagogical studies. The aim was then to increase the use of social media tools in this course and take different collaborative tools into use. It succeeded partially, but still there remained room for improvement. However, the SAMK curriculum changed after 2011, and the course was not included in the new curriculum anymore. In 2015, SAMK's education committee accepted this course back to the curriculum.

Learning environments

Environments at Satakunta University of Applied Sciences

Satakunta University of Applied Sciences uses Moodle as the main VLE. Moodle is an open source e-learning platform that was introduced in 2002. Moodle is used to store course materials and discussions. Moodle also contains a large number of exercise types that may be used by teachers in order to create assignments. Many of the exercise types are automatically marked. Moodle is maintained by Satakunta University of Applied Sciences personnel in application servers in the SAMK premises. In case of the real-time collaboration with video, Satakunta University of Applied Sciences uses the tailor-made web-conference system called "HILL". HILL uses Cisco's online environment Webex (www.webex.com). HILL enables teachers to share materials, video and audio with the students participating in teaching sessions remotely. Satakunta University of Applied Sciences is using the system for most of the Master-level courses and Bachelor-level adult education. Teaching with the help of HILL increases not only flexibility, but also real-time collaboration and interaction internally in the study group and externally with different partners (like international guest lecturers or company representatives). With the help of HILL it is possible to teach in different environments, outside the school environment, too. In specific HILL classrooms at campuses it is possible to combine class activities with online teaching, and the HILL sessions can be recorded. HILL enables also personal guidance and supervision, as well as meetings and bigger events online. It is also possible for the students to use HILL independently in their group works without the teacher's presence.

Environments at Turku University of Applied Sciences

Teachers at Turku University of Applied Sciences (TUAS) are using Adobe Connect Pro and Skype for Business applications for real-time communication during courses. At the moment, the Skype for Business has taken place as the main environment for the real-time collaboration. Both teachers and students are able to use real-time video and share their screens and tools during the synchronous learning sessions with the Skype for Business. However, these collaboration tools had not been used for the project management course before.

The main VLE in TUAS is Optima that was introduced in the year 2000. Optima is used to store course materials and assignments. Optima is a cloud service from the TUAS point of view, and it is maintained remotely by the company called Discendum. The assignments are typically stored in Optima in text format, but additionally Optima has support for automatically graded questions for some exercise types. In order to increase the variety of learning, teachers have started to use also other tools and environments at TUAS. ViLLE is one example of such a tool. ViLLE contains thousands of exercises that can be shared between teachers. This enables teachers to benefit from the creativity of other teachers and frees time for teachers to further develop their courses to improve students' learning opportunities.

The joint set-up

ViLLE was selected as the VLE for the 2015 course. This decision enabled the course to benefit from the exercises created in ViLLE for the 2014 course. This made the situation for both Satakunta University of Applied Sciences and Turku University of Applied Sciences students similar regarding the VLE: the students use a VLE that they have not worked with. The selection of ViLLE as the VLE was made as the usage of two separate VLEs, Optima for TUAS and Moodle for SAMK, would have made the management of the course too complex.

The 2015 course environment in ViLLE included "rounds" that contained the materials and assignments. There was also a "TEST ViLLE" round that was used by students to learn to use the tool. ViLLE was also used for the discussions, for the learning diary and for the exam. The exam was arranged online and the students completed the three-hour exam remotely from home. The learning diary in ViLLE

was combined with the normal assignment rounds. Each round had an assignment called *"Journal Entry Page"* where students were required to write in the journal things they learned, *things that remain unclear, and what learning activities they have taken during this period.* The students received two points for each entry, which motivated them to write in the learning diary regularly.

The course started on 7th April and had totally 18 rounds in ViLLE. The teaching with real-time video took place during three days: 7th April (Introduction, Methods and Tools), 21st April (Project Planning, Communication, Leadership and Team Building), 19th May (Project Closure, International Projects and Lessons Learned). The students participated in the in-class workshops on 5th May when project working with traditional waterfall methods and with SCRUM were they exercised with practical problems. A couple of additional rounds were introduced in ViLLE for the re-take exams.

In case of the real-time collaboration, the HILL environment from Satakunta University of Applied Sciences was selected as the environment because it is used for all Master-level courses at SAMK. From the teachers' point of view, the teaching sessions started around 15 minutes before the lecture. The SAMK teacher started the HILL environment in Rauma, and the TUAS teacher in Turku joined remotely with the computer in the classroom. The presentation was then shared with the data projector to the students in the classrooms. The students participating remotely from home also joined in the HILL session maintained by the SAMK teacher. The actual teaching was then done *"traditionally"* with shared slides. One teacher from Rauma or Turku started the teaching and then the other teacher covered the rest of the session. Note that both teachers were available in their locations to support the students in their schools during the real-time sessions. The real-time chat in HILL was also used during the sessions.

CoastAL pilot course

This course was one of the pilot courses implemented within CoastAL, the consortium of SAMK and TUAS. Implementing joint courses is one target for CoastAL. That is, the joint course makes it possible to arrange more learning opportunities for the universities for example in the situation when the number of students in a course arranged in one school is too low in order to efficiently use the teaching resources.

According to the website of CoastAL, the consortium of SAMK and TUAS is a contractual conglomerate which aims at strategic cooperation. The consortium consists of two independent member universities of applied sciences, which both have their own profile and concession. The purpose of the consortium is to carry out active higher education and innovation policy which combines the activities of the partner universities with regard to their visions and steers the partner universities in strategically important issues. In the Finnish higher education and innovation system the specific task of the consortium is to improve the international competitiveness of south-west Finland and Satakunta. (CoastAL Website.)

According to the CoastAL strategy, one of the joint structures since the beginning of 2016 is CoastAL Masters, which aims at increasing study offerings and options for the student, variety in education, joint planning of education, and developing joint courses and education with increased integration in research, development and innovation, RDI. (CoastAL Website.)

The aim of CoastAL is thus to join forces in order to be able to deliver higher level of quality and a wider range of services in its geographical area. This is the case in Master-level education, too. For example, BME, Business Management and Entrepreneurship, which is the Master's degree programme in business management, has an intake every second year and the number of study places in each intake is around 20. The language of tuition in this education is English. It is thus quite evident that the programme needs co-operation with other institutions in order to offer enough study possibilities especially in optional studies every year.

Method

Eight students from SAMK and twenty-six students from TUAS took part in the course. Most of the students were Finns, but ten international students also participated in the course. The research in this study use both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative methods are used mainly when the students' feedback is analysed, and the qualitative methods are used to outline the teachers' experiences. First we analyse the students' feedback and compare it with the feedback of the 2014 course at TUAS. Additionally, we discuss the teachers' experiences when teaching a joint online course.

Results

Students' feedback

The feedback survey was arranged in ViLLE containing both closed and open questions. The questions addressed both the course and the ViLLE environment. Seventeen students responded to the survey (6 from SAMK and 11 from TUAS).

Course feedback

The mean overall rating for the course was 3.8 in the scale from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent) with the distribution shown in Figure 1. The figure reveals that the students with most positive feedback come from TUAS. However, only one SAMK student provided a rating less than 4.
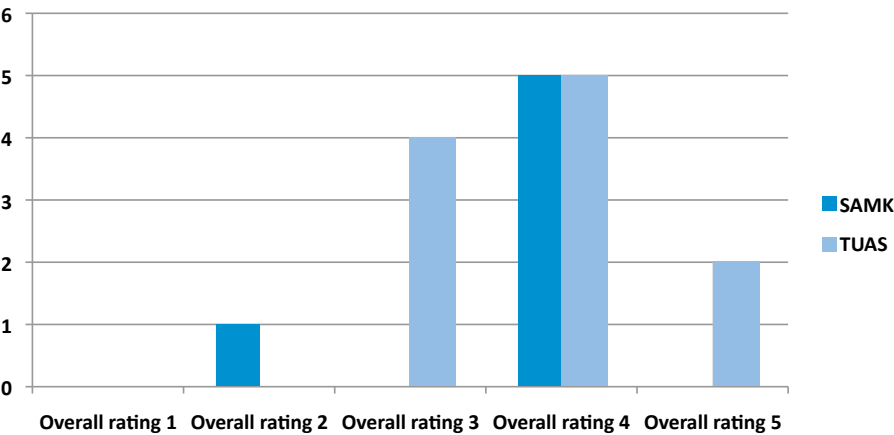
FIGURE 1.
Overall rating of the course implementation.

The 2014 course, where only TUAS students participated, had the same mean feedback rating (3.8) based on feedback of 10 students. That is, the overall course feedback was not changed due to the joint set-up. However, for the TUAS students the overall rating was higher (3.9) than for the SAMK students (3.7).

There were four open questions about the 2015 course:

• What was best in the course (that we should continue to do)?

- What was worst in the course (that we should stop to do)?

- What was missing in the course (that we should start to do)?

- Any other comments for the study unit?

Table I outlines the items mentioned by several students. The items mentioned at least three times are underlined in the table.

TABLE 1.
Open course feedback.

Best in the course	Worst in the course	Missing in the course	Other comments
Discussions about issues related to internationalisation in projects. Group work. Course material. Usage of both online and in-class sessions. Presenting various project management methods.	There was nothing bad in the course. Having several teachers. Assignments were overlapping. Unclear or changing deadlines for assignments. Too many (small) assignments. Online learning.	More group work. Case examples. Practical group work. Time to learn to use tools (e.g. MS Project).	Difficult to follow teaching online (related to quality/ technical issues). Course material not available all the time. Less online sessions (and more in-class). More this kind of shared courses between schools.

Feedback on ViLLE

The following categorised questions or statements were asked about ViLLE:

- How well does ViLLE suit this study unit? (1= Not at all, 5= Very Well)

- Do you prefer to do exams on paper instead of ViLLE? (1= Paper, 2=ViLLE)

- Was it easy to use ViLLE? (1= Strongly disagree, 5= Strongly agree)

- I would have needed more training/guidance for ViLLE? (1= Strongly disagree, 5= Strongly agree)

- Do the ViLLE exercises support your learning? (1=No, 5= Very much)

- How do you evaluate using ViLLE for learning compared to Optima or Moodle? (1= I strongly prefer ViLLE, 5= I strongly prefer Optima or Moodle)

- Which grade would you give ViLLE as the learning management system? (1=Poor, 5= Excellent)

Similar questions were also used in the 2014 course feedback at TUAS. Table 2 contains the 2015 course and the 2014 TUAS course feedback for ViLLE. The table reveals that the feedback for the ViLLE usage was quite similar in the 2015 course compared to the 2014 course. Note that for the 2nd question (*) in Table II the scale was different in the year 2014 compared to 2015: The 2014 scale contained values 1–5 where the value 1 indicated strong preference of paper exams and 5 indicated strong preferences of ViLLE exams. Additionally, the cells where both the mean and mode values are higher than in the other course instance are highlighted.

TABLE 2.
Comparison of students' feedback to ViLLE.

Question	2015 feedback (N=17)			2014 feedback (N=10)		
	Mean	St. Dev.	Mode	Mean	St.Dev.	Mode
1.ViLLE suits for the study unit	3.7	1.2	4	4.3	0.7	5
2.Exam with paper or ViLLE (*)	1.9	0.3	2	4.7	0.5	5
3.Easy to use ViLLE	3.8	1.3	4	4.2	0.8	4
4.More guidance to ViLLE	2.4	1.2	3	2.5	1.3	2
5.ViLLE supports learning	3.6	1.1	4	4	1.1	5
6.ViLLE vs. Optima/Moodle	3.2	1.3	3	2.4	1.1	3
7.Grade given for ViLLE	3.6	1.1	4	3.7	0.8	4

For the questions about ViLLE's suitability and the support for learning, the 2014 TUAS course students gave better rating. One reason might be the fact that ViLLE was used only for exercises and exams automatically evaluated exercises were used to a greater extent and all course materials were stored in Optima in the 2014 course. Optima seems to fit better for the storage of materials and for the discussions than ViLLE.

There was one open question about the ViLLE tool concerning the improvement proposals and other comments. All the students had not used the tool before, which caused some problems for the students. Additionally, several students found the structure in ViLLE unclear. One student proposed that the introduction videos should be available about the usage of ViLLE before the exercises are done. Some students proposed a group work feature for assignments level in ViLLE. The current grouping feature in ViLLE enables to define groups in the course level only.

Discussion and conclusions

The aim of this article was to analyse the experiences of the project management course taught jointly by the teachers from Turku University of Applied Sciences (TUAS) and Satakunta University of Applied Sciences (SAMK) to their Master-level students with the help of virtual learning tools.

The feedback survey results revealed that there are no significant differences between the students' feedback in the joint 2015 course compared to TUAS only course in 2015. It seems that a jointly arranged course is as satisfactory as the school-specific implementation. However, the students enjoyed the group work used in one session during the course, and they also would like to have more practical group work. This seems to be a key improvement point for the course implementation. Additionally, if considering the efficiency from both SAMK's and TUAS' point of view, the joint set-up is valuable as it saves teachers' overall efforts and, at the same time, makes it possible for the students to have an opportunity to take part in the course even though there are not enough students in a single organisation to arrange a course of its own.

Teaching in this kind of joint course has its challenges. If there is not enough time to learn to use the tools this may introduce difficulties also to teachers. In this course both teachers faced this challenge: the SAMK teacher had challenges with

ViLLE and the TUAS teacher had problems when dealing with the HILL environment. More time should have been used to learn how to use the systems. Note that the students in the 2014 course provided slightly better feedback about the usage of ViLLE, probable due to better on-site guidance about the usage that was easy to arrange, because the students were in the same location as the teacher.

In collaborative online teaching it is important that the joint courses are planned and developed using the same tools that are used for the actual course implementations. It is also important to have frequent collaboration between teachers during the implementation. This provides the teachers a possibility to adapt the new learning sessions based on their experiences and also based on the feedback.

It is also important that the VLE is easy to use and that there are active people and resources available in order to develop the VLE continuously. It can be expected that in the future more and more teachers will be involved in online teaching, not only those teachers who have advanced skills and capabilities to adapt the newest technology. That is why special attention should be paid to taking into account user experiences and feedback both from the students and the teachers in the development of the VLE. Maybe the biggest challenge in virtual learning in the future is to link the student's own PLE successfully with official pedagogical learning environments. Social media communities and tools may help in this process.

The learning method innovations with a wider amount of group work outside in-class sessions used in the Media Culture 2020 project (Vickers, Field & Melakoski 2015) should be tested when arranging collaborative teaching between universities (like SAMK and TUAS) and between different sites within universities (like Salo and Turku at TUAS). This enriches the students' learning experiences with the possibilities offered by the new technologies. It is also recommended that this kind of joint courses will be implemented at both SAMK and TUAS also in the future, not only for the Master-level courses but also for the Bachelor degree, especially using the latest technologies such as cloud services. This allows for more innovative and collaborative ways for learning, and also increases our possibilities to share and expand our expertise.

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Part III

E-learning and interaction

Live online meetings bringing interaction and engagement into online teaching

Marjo Joshi

Abstract

Online teaching is often considered to be less motivating than traditional classroom teaching, and it is criticised especially for the lack of interaction. Teachers need new skills and ways of engaging and motivating students to study online. They also need to find ways of adding interaction into their online courses.

This article presents live online meetings as an integral part of an online course, and further discusses the use of live online meetings as a means of engaging and motivating students through added interaction between course participants and the teacher. In addition, this study presents students' opinions on the use of live online meetings through the results of an online questionnaire that they were asked to complete at the end of the course.

The case presented in this study is an online course 'Presenting in English Using Online Tools' delivered in summers 2015 and 2016, which is based on a balanced blend of Optima Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and Skype for Business Online Meeting system. The purpose of the Optima VLE is to serve as a base for materials – work in progress, background materials, and finished coursework, whereas most of the interaction will be conducted in various types of live online meeting. The purpose of the online meetings is to add cohesion between group members, increase student engagement and motivation on the course, and create a platform for live interaction.

In addition, it also gives the students an authentic environment where to learn communication skills using modern technology that are applicable in working life.

The results of the survey seem to indicate that the students have a positive attitude towards the use of live online meetings as part of an online course. The students felt that the use of live online meetings added interaction between course participants as well as between teacher and student. In addition, they felt they were more engaged in the course because of the live online meetings. Many of the students agreed that live online meetings could be integrated into other online courses.

Introduction

Blended learning methods are fast becoming the norm of teaching in most higher education institutions (HEIs). Combining online elements into traditional classroom teaching can enable participation of those students who are working, studying abroad or otherwise interested in distance study options. In addition, blended learning methods give teachers new possibilities supported by technology in giving assignments, facilitating discussions, collaborating and assessing in virtual learning environments (VLEs). In addition, most HEIs offer full online courses in addition to blended learning. Indeed, full online courses offer students and teachers alike a chance to learn without restrictions of time or place.

It is therefore unfortunate that online learning is still often mistaken for a lonesome task of sitting in front of a computer, reading texts posted by the teacher and writing messages to someone who may or may not read them. However, this should be considered as a one-sided view of online teaching, as asynchronous communication is only one part of a well-planned, implemented and executed online learning process. Students want to be challenged, motivated, engaged into learning, and they recognise the need for that in virtual environments as well. They get confused by poorly designed and supported online courses, and instead appreciate well-balanced design and content with support from the teacher to lead them further into the depths of the subject at hand. Harasim (2012) has written about the transformation into a new learning theory where collaboration is the key element to all activities that enable learning. Salmon's (2011) models for online design offer an approach for incorporating all elements into one package. Teachers need to be supported in the transformation into the new course design, collaboration and the use of new technologies in order to support the students in their learning in return. This is all combined in

three elements of knowledge critical to success in online teaching: pedagogical, technological and content knowledge (Mishra & Koehler 2006), which all support each other and cannot fully function without one another.

Online teaching is still seen by many teachers as a difficult task that requires much more resources and effort than traditional face-to-face teaching. One common complaint one hears of online teaching is the claim that online teaching lacks the kind of possibilities for interaction that only a face-to-face situation in the classroom can bring. According to Kullaslahti (2012), teachers in universities of applied sciences consider online teaching challenging in many ways: when assessing their skills in online teaching, they evaluated their skills in using voice and video in collaboration especially low. Therefore, teacher training for online teaching is particularly important in making teachers see the possibilities that VLEs and technology can bring, when combined with pedagogical solutions that have been selected for online learning specifically. Unfortunately it is still the case that some teachers simply transfer their materials and methods into the VLE, without realising that the VLE, with its own restrictions and possibilities, requires its own pedagogical approach that supports learning in a different context from a traditional classroom.

In order to engage students and facilitate real-time interaction to simulate the benefits of face-to-face classroom teaching sessions, live online meetings should be integrated into online courses. Synchronous face-to-face communication on an online course can bring the benefits that some teachers feel are lacking when the teaching does not take place in a traditional classroom environment. Live online meetings can be utilised in as many ways as face-to-face situations in the classroom: teachers can give instructions for an assignment, they can give feedback and guide students, they can meet to discuss progress in group work, they can assess the student's work in one-to-one meetings. Also, equally important is to acknowledge that they can encourage students to meet each other in live online meetings without the teacher, and thus create cohesion amongst the study groups themselves (eTUBE Online 2015). In the current study, live online meetings are used to refer to a synchronous online meeting that utilises video and voice connection as well as a shared screen, and takes place in a technology-supported environment (Skype for Business, previously known as Lync; and Adobe Connect).

The purpose of this article is to illustrate the importance of the live online meetings in creating engagement and interaction on an online course. Experiences and exam-

ples are drawn from a full online course 'Presenting in English Using Online Tools' offered as an elective summer semester course at Turku University of Applied Sciences (TUAS). More specifically, the objective of this study is to find out if students felt that during their online course the use of live online meetings added interaction and engagement to the course, and in return also enhanced their motivation, added to their learning experience or contributed to the achievement of their learning objectives.

The author of this article will first present the methods of data collection, as well as the technologies and methods used in the live online meetings. After that the results are presented, followed by a discussion on engagement and interaction on an online course. The conclusions present the most important points that can be drawn from the study and make suggestions for further research.

Methods

The case used to investigate the role of live online meetings adding engagement and interaction on an online course, 'Presenting in English Using Online Tools', was a full online course that was offered to all TUAS students as an elective summer semester course in May–June 2015 and again in May-June 2016. The course description stated that there were no classroom meetings on the course, and that the students would be required to have synchronous online meetings using different technologies. Another specific feature was that the course focussed fully on oral communication, thus written assignments were kept to a minimum, and all assignments were framed around the oral, face-to-face communication in the live online meetings. Naturally the main objectives of the course, which were presentation skills, English communication skills and the use of online tools, provided a great platform for the current study (SoleOPS 2015). The course objectives were the same for both years 2015 and 2016, in order to maintain the same starting point for the course and the present study.

The study is a quantitative methods study using an online questionnaire. Students participating in the course were asked to answer an online questionnaire, with questions ranging from practicing language and communication skills in the live online meetings to working in small groups. The questionnaire was completed using a Webropol form, and the answers were anonymous. The answers show student experiences and preferences in using live online meetings as a part of an online course.

The live online meetings were implemented in three different formats: as All Group Meetings, where all course participants were present and the meeting was led by the teacher; as Small Group Meetings, where students worked on their assignments in groups of 3–5, with the teacher participating as well; and Individual meetings, where the teacher gave feedback and discussed the progress of the student. See Figure 1 for a description of the meetings as it was presented to the students.
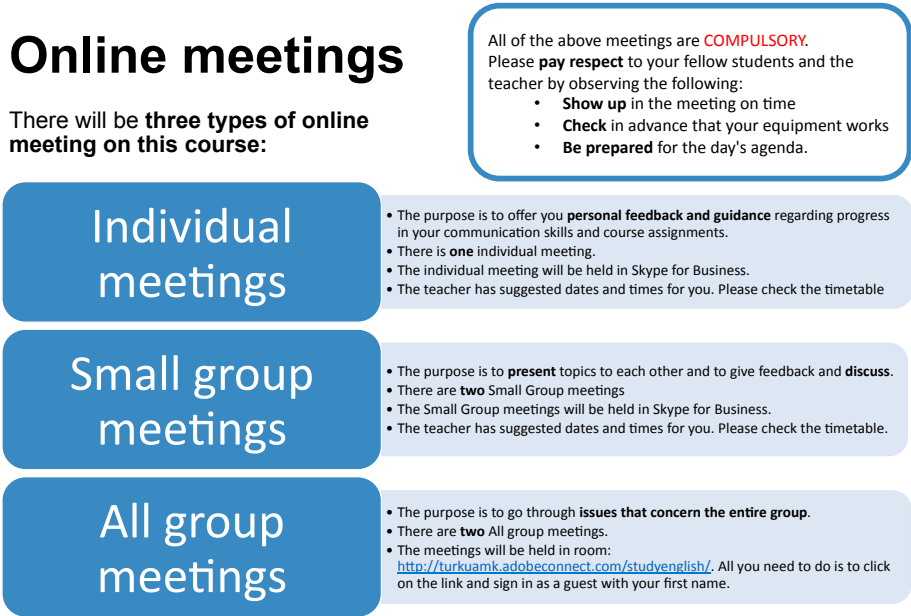
Online meetings

There will be **three types of online meeting on this course:**

All of the above meetings are COMPULSORY.
Please **pay respect** to your fellow students and the teacher by observing the following:
- **Show up** in the meeting on time
- **Check** in advance that your equipment works
- **Be prepared** for the day's agenda.

Individual meetings
- The purpose is to offer you **personal feedback and guidance** regarding progress in your communication skills and course assignments.
- There is **one** individual meeting.
- The individual meeting will be held in Skype for Business.
- The teacher has suggested dates and times for you. Please check the timetable

Small group meetings
- The purpose is to **present** topics to each other and to give feedback and **discuss**.
- There are **two** Small Group meetings
- The Small Group meetings will be held in Skype for Business.
- The teacher has suggested dates and times for you. Please check the timetable.

All group meetings
- The purpose is to go through **issues that concern the entire group**.
- There are **two** All group meetings.
- The meetings will be held in room: http://turkuamk.adobeconnect.com/studyenglish/. All you need to do is to click on the link and sign in as a guest with your first name.

FIGURE 1.
Online Meeting Implementation Model as presented to the participating students on the course platform.

The students were informed of the expectations and methods in the SoleOPS course description when they first enrolled on the course. In addition, they were informed of the rules of the course and tools to be used in the first live online meeting as well as in the Optima course platform.

The next section presents some key results regarding live online meetings adding engagement and interaction on an online course. Only questions relating to this objective are presented, as other questions are outside of the scope of the current study but may be taken into consideration in the future implementations of the named course.

Results

The data were collected in 2015 and 2016, through an online questionnaire conducted after the course 'Presenting in English Using Online Tools'. Altogether 32 students participated in the course in the two consecutive years. The following paragraphs describe the demographics of the two cohorts, after which the results of the questionnaires are presented.

In 2015, there were 14 students participating in the course, and out of them 12 answered the questionnaire. There were 8 male and 4 female respondents, and their age ranged between 21 and 50+. Half of them were first year students, the rest were from different year groups. One third (n=4) reported that they had never studied online before, another third said they had studied on a blended course and the remaining third stated they had studied on a full online course.

In 2016, 18 students participated in the course, out of which 14 answered the questionnaire. There were 4 female and 10 male students, and their age range was 18–30, so the cohort was slightly younger than in 2015. More than half of them were 1st year students (n=9), and the rest were divided between 2nd, 3rd and 4th year students. There were as many students (n=6) who stated they had never studied online before as there were those who had studied on a full online course. Only two had taken a blended course before.

As the implementation method of using live online meetings was new to all students, they made comments about the online meetings throughout the course. Their overall comments were very positive, and they were excited by the new way of interacting and learning. They felt that the online participation enabled them to get immediate feedback, to see each other face-to-face despite the physical and regional distance, and, more importantly, their fear of presenting information in front of others was reduced due to being able to participate in the comfort of their own home. Some commented on the positive effect of the closer interaction between the student and teacher – another on-going online course without live online meetings had left the teacher of that course very distant to the students. Some of them seemed somewhat nervous about the technical side of things, but the technical issues were relatively minor and were solved at the beginning of the course. One student commented that there should have been more technical support during the course.

The objective of this study is to find out if students felt that during their online course the use of live online meetings added interaction and engagement to the course. The following figures present findings to five questions that can be seen as relating to adding engagement and interaction to the course. The questions relating to the content aspect of the course (such as presentation skills, English language skills, or technical aspects) are not presented in this study.

Based on the results of the questionnaire, the students seemed more engaged in the course due to the use of live online meetings (Figure 2 below): when asked if the use of live online meetings made them feel more engaged in the course, in 2016, all respondents either strongly agreed (50%) or agreed (50%). In 2015, the response was also positive, as most students agreed, and only 1 student disagreed to some extent, and 1 did not agree or disagree. In both cohorts, no-one strongly disagreed.
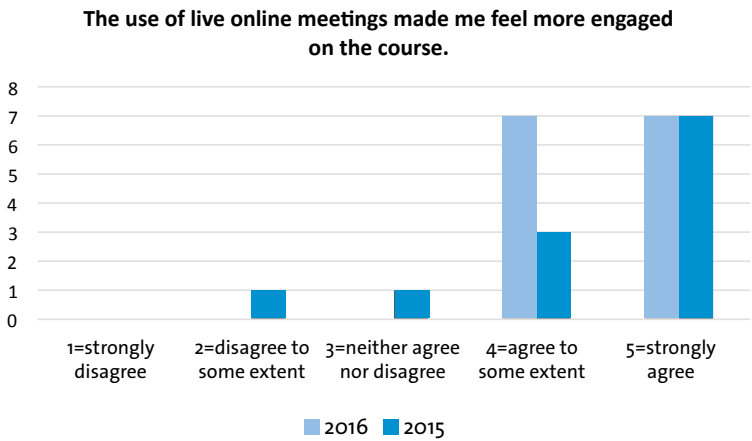

The use of live online meetings made me feel more engaged on the course.

FIGURE 2.
Live online meetings adding engagement to the course

The live online meetings seemed to have had a positive effect on the communication elements of the course. When asked if the live online meetings facilitated the communication between the student and the teacher (Figure 3), almost all students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. In each cohort, only one student disagreed (2015 cohort) and one did not agree or disagree (2016 cohort).
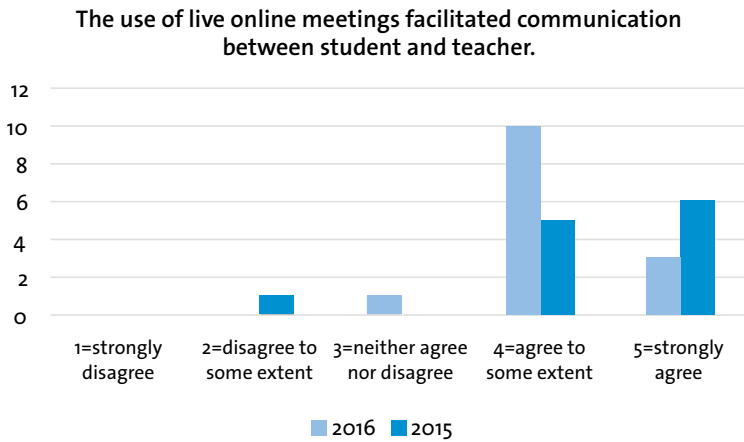
The use of live online meetings facilitated communication between student and teacher.

FIGURE 3.
Facilitation of communication between student and teacher.

In addition to facilitating communication between the student and the teacher, the use of live online meetings seemed to have a positive impact on the small group element of the course. The use of live online meetings seemed to have made the students more engaged with their own small group (Figure 4). In 2015 cohort, half of the respondents strongly agreed that they felt more part of their small group due to the use of the live online meetings. In addition, a third agreed with the statement, with only 1 student respectively not agreeing or disagreeing, and disagreeing to some extent. The trend was similar for the 2016 cohort, where just over half of the respondents agreed to some extent and nearly one third strongly agreed.
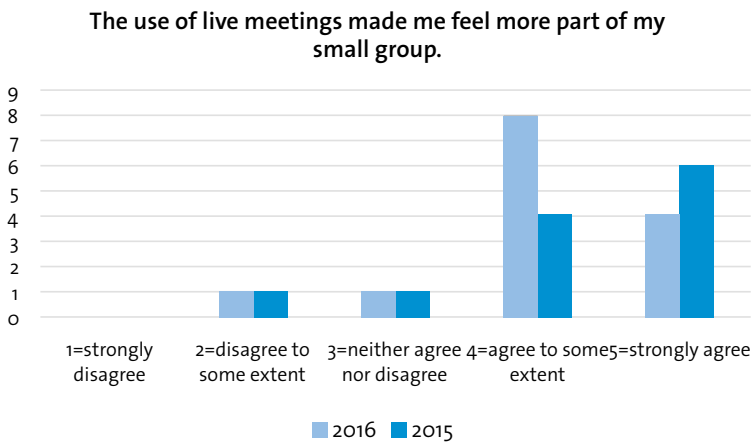
The use of live meetings made me feel more part of my small group.

FIGURE 4.
Live online meetings creating cohesion in small group work.

The overall opinion towards the use of live online meetings seemed positive based on the answers, and when asked if they would have preferred to have live online meetings more often, instead of the biweekly meetings that were in the implementation, their answers revealed that in 2015, nearly half would have wanted more meetings (Figure 5). One quarter did not agree or disagree, and just under a fifth disagreed, with no-one strongly disagreeing. In 2016, the results showed that half of the respondents did not agree or disagree, but just under a third strongly agreed.
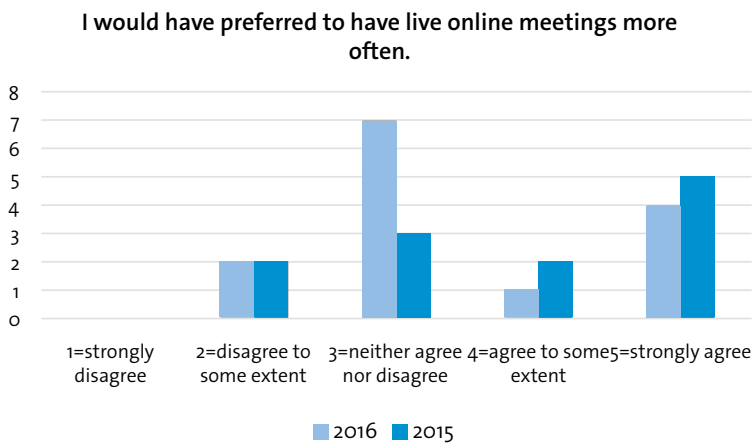
I would have preferred to have live online meetings more often.

FIGURE 5.
The engagement to live online meeting attendance.

The above results seem to be supported by the idea of having similar live online meetings in future online or blended courses. The last question asked the students if they would want to have live online meetings as part of their future courses, and in both cohorts, more than half strongly agreed or agreed with the statement (see Figure 6). In 2016, one student did not agree, whereas in 2015, there were no students who disagreed. This would indicate a positive attitude towards the use of live online meetings in future online or blended courses.
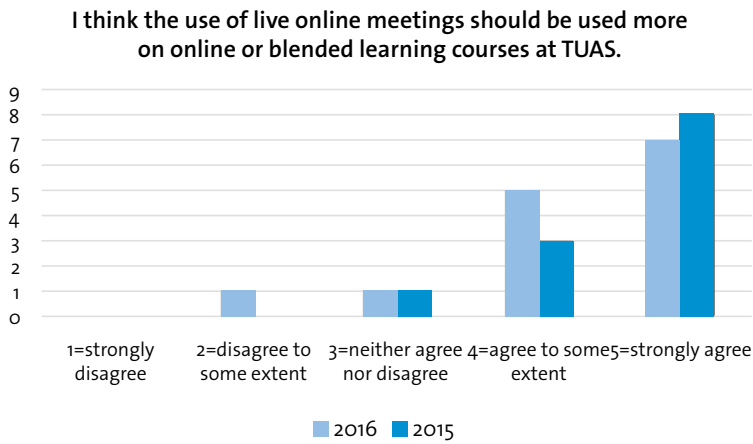
I think the use of live online meetings should be used more on online or blended learning courses at TUAS.

■ 2016 ■ 2015

FIGURE 6.
The use of live online meetings in future online or blended courses.

The overall results above suggest that the live online meetings were experienced positively by the participants and contributing to the feeling of engagement and interaction on an online course. The next section discusses the relevance of these findings.

Discussion

As a teacher, the results from the survey are encouraging in proving that the use of live online meetings can enhance the learning experience for students in a positive way. Creating a good rapport with students on an online course is an important factor in fostering a supportive atmosphere for studying, as well as having a well-functioning communication method for giving feedback and guiding the students in achieving the desired outcomes. From a teacher's point of view, the relationship and the communication with the students on this course was made entirely possible because of the use of live online meetings, and the same results would not have been possible with only written or asynchronous methods. In comparison to a course without any live meetings, the teacher also felt that the relationship with the students was closer, the guidance was more personalised, and the progress of activities on the course was easier to follow with regular meetings. This feeling was shared by the students, as indicated in their feedback.

The students stated that they felt more engaged because of the live online meetings, which gives reason for teachers to consider the use of those meetings in all their online or blended courses. The model used in this course worked very well, as all meetings had a clear purpose and it was also communicated to the students from the beginning of the course. The students were aware of the importance of the meetings, which may have also supported the idea of increased engagement.

Another important realisation is the facilitation of small group work in online learning environments. As the learning online becomes more and more collaborative, there is a need to meet face-to-face, to share information and exchange opinions in real-time situations. Live online meetings can facilitate this need as well. More importantly, if students can feel more engaged with their group through the use of the live online meetings, they can in turn feel more engaged with the entire course, which is likely to have a positive impact on the learning outcomes. This is something to consider for blended courses as well, since quite often there are not enough resources to meet face-to-face. In addition, the use of authentic communication tools, such as Skype for Business, gives the students an opportunity to become familiar with the use of the technical tools already during their studies. The fact that they can feel confident in the use of those tools in their future work environment was something the students felt was a very valuable result of the course.

These results imply that it is important to consider how teachers are supported in the course design as well as in the use of online meeting tools as a part of their online teaching skills. At TUAS, one way to offer support teachers has been *eTUBE Online,* a Professional Development Programme offered to TUAS staff since 2015. The objectives of the course are for each participant to develop their own online or blended course and whilst doing that, develop their own online teaching skills in online pedagogical approaches and the use of technologies to support that aim (eTUBE Online 2015), whilst utilising methods and principles of Innovation Pedagogy (Kairisto-Mertanen 2011). There are regular live online meetings held as a part of the course, and the feedback from the participating teachers so far has been that they find the experience of attending the live online meetings as very useful in terms of utilising the same approaches and tools on their own online courses.

Conclusions and further research

The study aimed to find out how students felt about the use of live online meetings in bringing engagement and interaction on an online course. As a conclusion, it can be said that the overall results seem to suggest that the use of live online meetings can make students feel more engaged with the course as a whole, and therefore the use of live online meetings should be encouraged. Teachers who are already teaching online but are not using live online meetings as an element of interaction should consider the benefits they seem to have on the facilitation of student and teacher communication. Also, students should be encouraged to use live online meetings when working on their course assignments, as the live online meetings seem to have a positive effect on the cohesion in small group work. Finally, teachers should consider a well-balanced course design with a sufficient number of online meetings, guidance and assignments in the VLE, as well as suitable technical tools to facilitate the combination of the elements.

Suggestions for further research include selecting a wider sample of students, a follow-up survey to students who are already more experienced in using live online meetings on online courses, and developing training packages for teachers to incorporate live online meetings on their online courses.

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Video guidance supporting learning and assessment

Tiina Hirard

Abstract

The article presents a number of practical examples of how video guidance may be used in order to add interaction and to support assessment and feedback in online and blended learning. All examples are from Turku University of Applied Sciences and its basic course in Spanish from spring 2015, but similar video guidance is equally helpful in any course regardless of the discipline.

The examples illustrate how video guidance can make it easier for students to familiarise themselves with the learning environment and become socialised as part of the group, and how it can be beneficial for team building and communication even at a later stage through the teacher's regular video inserts. Videos can also be used for steering the actual learning through technical tips or by giving instructions related to the content of the learning assignments.

The most efficient form of online guidance and interaction took place during web meetings held between the teacher and the students. Matters that came up during web meetings were easily memorised by students and, at the same time, the teacher was able to form a clear picture of the student's competence level even if based on a short discussion.

When learning, its assessment and guidance are integrated into one larger process, separate assessment becomes somewhat redundant. Teacher saves time by giving feedback on video, when instead of writing things down, he/she is able to show and

explain any points that need attention. Indeed, one of the key messages of this article is to attest that video guidance need not be a labour-intensive addition to the teacher's workload and, on the contrary, the short time spent on video guidance may be highly beneficial for the student and learning.

Video guidance – the answer to many questions

Online teachers are often concerned about the quality of guidance they are able to provide when teaching online, and how to enable student–teacher interaction, which is beneficial to learning. How could the teacher make him- or herself visible and play an active role when online and facilitate and support the interaction also between students? Typically, the teacher is present through various reading materials, and when communicating about course assignments and evaluating students' learning outcomes. Many teachers post a picture of themselves, which is also a step towards a closer relationship and socialisation with the students. By bringing in video, the teacher's online persona will be even more vivid, as this brings his/her voice and gestures into the equation – not only during the first introductions but throughout the learning process until the very end of the course.

Assessment also often invites discussion, whether in face-to-face, blended or online learning. How to conduct learning assessment as a process so that instead of focussing on the final outcomes or final assessment, attention would be paid to the learning process itself, allowing for the teacher to support and guide the student as soon as problems arise? The time spent by the teacher on assessment is always a matter of contest and, especially in online teaching, another challenge is how to make the different facets of learning transparent for the purpose of assessment. Just like in facilitating interaction, video can be also used in assessment and giving feedback. Ideally, video guidance brings together all three: interaction, learning and assessment.

In this article, I will discuss a number of situations and uses, where the teacher could make use of video as a learning tool. I will introduce real-life examples from my own course, which ran online in spring 2015. This was an elementary course in Spanish (5 cr) at Turku University of Applied Sciences (TUAS), participated in by 19 students. I will first discuss some examples in which the purpose of the video guidance was to orient students into the new learning environment and help them become socialised with the environment as well as their fellow students. Videos may also be used at the beginning of a course for technical tutorials explaining the different fea-

tures of the platform. The following examples illustrate how interaction and communication was maintained as the course progressed and the advantages of video guidance in different types of learning tasks. To conclude I will discuss the role of video guidance and especially web meetings in assessment and feedback, which by no means need to be concentrated at the end of the course, but which would in fact better support learning when provided regularly throughout the course.

Adjusting to the learning environment

At the beginning of a learning process, students naturally start exploring the learning environment. Even if the students were already familiar with the learning platform, each new course is a new environment to which the students need to adjust. The teacher could be present to guide the students around the environment and wish them welcome on the course by uploading a short introductory video. This is an easy way for students to learn about the basic navigation in the environment and the course. They can be guided from the very start towards elements that are relevant and different features in the environment can be explained in more detail. Similarly, elements that do not require attention to begin with can be indicated.

An integral part of a learning environment is the people operating in it. Students may be in contact with others exclusively via the internet so it is important to stress the importance of interaction and the collaborative aspect of learning from the very beginning. Students are motivated by the knowledge that they are not studying alone with the computer. If the teacher introduces him- or herself right on the opening view of the learning environment, every student will get a sense of communication that is close to human interaction from the start. Even the shortest of video greetings says more than a picture or a thousand words – especially if this is the first time the student ever meets the teacher. On the video, the teacher introduces him- or herself and, for example, talks about how he/she intends to be present in the students' learning process.

During the orientation, the purpose is not yet to teach anything, as the goal is simply to motivate the student to operate in the new environment and for the student to feel welcome (Salmon 2014). Although the students' socialisation into the environment begins later, the introductory videos play a crucial role in the future socialisation. In the above examples, the opening view of the course platform and the entire

learning environment would look very different without the videos introducing the teacher and the environment.

Technical tutorials

Even though the students were already familiar with the learning platform and environment, some technical features may be new to at least some of them. For this reason, the assignments have links to video tutorials on different features such as the voice recorder, learning diary and video chat.

Instructions on technical features are especially important in online learning, as students have no other opportunity to ask for help in person if they run into problems. Yet the instructions are equally necessary in blended learning, as many of the students operate online quite independently regardless of face-to-face contact.

Video guidance is often more illustrative and concrete than verbal instructions, and with video long-winded verbal assignment instructions that are difficult to understand can be altogether avoided. Instead of using existing online tutorials, I create my tutorial videos from scratch, as this allows me to add more detailed instructions that are relevant to the specific assignment.

Maintaining interaction

After the initial stage, during the first learning assignments, the students' socialisation into the learning environment and community of learners begins. The teacher's guidance plays a key role in maintaining communication and interaction throughout the course, and the teacher should plan to give guidance continually at all stages of the course. Gilly Salmon (2014) refers to this continuity in guidance with the term scaffold reminder.

I made it my practice on my course to make an appearance to my students on a weekly basis when giving new assignments but also through my weekly video greetings. In other words, each of the weekly views began with my video greeting, in which I gave general feedback on the progress made in the past week and led my students to new content. Video greetings are an easy way to take up topical issues and to encourage students as necessary. I often use this also as an opportunity to comment on web meetings with individual students or small groups, which I will dis-

cuss in more detail towards the end of this article in conjunction with video-based assessment.

In my view, the most important aspect of the weekly video greeting is that it enhances the teacher's presence and serves as a tool by which the teacher can lead the learning process forward to the next topic. Guidance is of great significance to students, and yet making videos is not difficult or time consuming for the teacher. The videos last 2–3 minutes, and their intention is not to be high-definition instruction videos, but rather topical guidance videos, which the students are likely to view only once when starting on a new topic.

In the final video greeting of the course, the teacher can give general feedback to the whole group about their overall performance throughout the course and direct them forward by informing them about further study options. The teacher may also use this greeting to remind students of practicalities, for example, in relation to assessment and study register. When an online course comes to an end, a video greeting is a good way to bring closure to a shared journey rather than each student completing the final assignments in their own time and waiting for the teacher's reaction.

Guidance of learning assignments

Online teachers can use videos not only in general guidance but also when giving instruction on specific assignments. As with technical tutorials, this allows the teacher to avoid long and heavy written instructions, if the assignment is given or explained on video. In addition to setting assignments, the actual learning content may also be discussed on a video lecture or a shorter clip. I used the video in my course when teaching pronunciation, as being able to hear and see examples being uttered brings great advantages when learning, for example, intonation.

There is a wealth of instruction videos available and sometimes free-to-use videos can be of high quality and bring much needed variety into teaching and materials. On the other hand, recording a video a few minutes long is usually less time consuming that looking for a suitable video on the internet. I also find that the teacher has a major role in steering and supporting the learning process specifically through his/her own personality.

The teacher can motivate and encourage students by completing a similar task as the students are about to do and serve as an example. A typical task on a beginners' language course is to introduce yourself and your family, which is something the teacher can do on a video in conjunction with setting the assignment. Writing an assignment or speaking on a video is likely to feel less daunting if the student can first see how the teacher goes about the task, and introduces him- or herself and his or her family. The student can also take notes on the sentence structures that the teacher is using, among other things. Watching the video gives ideas and practical help in completing the course work, in other words, the video also helps learning the actual content.

When the teacher makes the model video from scratch instead of linking a ready-made instruction video to the learning environment, it shows the student that the teacher is willing to share the learning process and engage in the interaction that leads to learning. The teacher is more than an invisible mediator and assessor of assignments, giving active support to students in their learning.

Assessment, guidance and feedback

Each of the examples discussed above have illustrated one-directional video guidance, for which the teacher prepares the video material beforehand and uploads it to the learning environment for students to view. Students may also be instructed to produce learning outcomes in the form of video or sound files, but neither is this an example of immediate interaction between the student and the teacher or amongst the students unless they produce the video together. Therefore it is important to also make use of various web meeting facilities, in which the interaction and thereby learning can be taken to another level.

During the course I am using as an example, I met each student regularly every two weeks, for a total of five times, using the Optima video chat tool. Initially, the meetings were held one-to-one, and later I would occasionally meet students in pairs or groups of three. The meetings would last from ten to twenty minutes, depending on the topic, and the purpose of these meetings was to facilitate assessment and give guidance. To ensure that students would take these meetings seriously and join them well prepared, I labelled them as interim exams, and I told students that they would have a major impact on the overall assessment of the course.

During each video chat, we would discuss learning content orally via video and sometimes simultaneously in writing on chat. Based on even a short assessment and guidance session, the teacher could easily form an opinion of how well the student mastered the content, and students were then given 0, 1 or 2 points for each meeting as a task-specific assessment, which would be added to the total points for the course. This way I did not need to spend too much time on assessment during the module, as the assessment was taking place during the meetings based on previously agreed criteria. At the same time I could coach the student to revise those specific areas where he/she was not yet meeting the goals. The teacher has the opportunity to clarify the points that he/she thinks the student does not quite grasp, and similarly, the student can ask questions from the teacher.

In addition to the learning content, video chat meetings were used for discussing the progress of learning in general and factors affecting it. This type of personal contact and guidance is seldom possible in face-to-face teaching or these opportunities are not always used, so in this respect communication and interaction in online teaching may sometimes be even more efficient than in the traditional setting.

Although video chat meetings serve the purpose of assessment and guidance, they are most of all important occasions for learning. Often discussion and communication helps not only in understanding the learning points but also enhances memorisation and thereby boosts learning. Thanks to video chat meetings, learning and its assessment and guidance are integrated into one larger process that continues throughout the course. This makes separate final assessment redundant.

Alongside video chat meetings, students receive personal feedback on their learning in conjunction with certain predetermined assignments. I used video files in giving feedback by recording the student's performance on screen at the same time as I was adding oral commentary to it. This way referring to and commenting on certain expressions and parts of the text and moving between them was much easier. As a teacher I did not need to stop to consider how to phrase my feedback in writing so that the student would understand it correctly and the tone of my feedback would come across as positive and encouraging. In speech, the right tone of voice and message are conveyed more easily and naturally. One of the advantages of video feedback for some students was also the fact that hearing and seeing the feedback is easier for them to memorise than written feedback. My aim is to make listening and viewing feedback as easy as possible for the student – instead of posting onto the

learning environment a large video file that takes a long time to download, I added a link to my video feedback at the end of each student's assignment.

Both web meetings and video feedback enable assessment and guidance but also increase the amount of interaction taking place between the students and the teacher. When students attend video chat meetings in pairs or small groups, this also helps increase communication amongst students themselves. Both the teacher and fellow students thus become a visible part of the learning experience and course.

Video guidance is efficient

Video guidance in its different forms naturally takes up a portion of the teacher's time, just like guidance delivered by any other means would. Video guidance is, however, a very efficient way of using resources, as guidance and assessment take place concurrently with learning and teaching, and does not form a separate element creating additional work load at the beginning or end of a course. What might be guidance and assessment for the teacher, might be an efficient learning opportunity for the student.

In all the above examples, the video tool used was either the video recording function in Optima or the Dream Broker software. I have since switched to using almost exclusively the Skype for Business application, which of the three options mentioned is perhaps the most versatile and easy to use. Regardless of the chosen tool, the goals of video guidance are strongly pedagogy-driven and the quality of the video recordings has deliberately been given little attention and deemed secondary. Most of the videos I used in my course I made by my desk in a matter of minutes without editing the videos in any way. Only the video discussing intonation had subtitles added afterwards to help differentiate between a statement and a question.

Conclusion

Video guidance can be harnessed to support learning and assessment in many ways throughout a course. Videos can be used to help students navigate in the learning environment, increase the amount of interaction between a student and the teacher and amongst students, steer learning through assignment setting and feedback and evaluate students' learning with efficient use of resources during the learning situations throughout the course. Video guidance is a natural way to open and conclude

an online course, and during the course, the guidance may focus on the learning process as a whole or specific assignments.

Many teachers instruct their students to create videos as learning tasks and use available video materials in their teaching. Videos are also a useful tool in learning guidance, as they add interaction between those involved in the learning process and the teacher's presence in it. An instruction video may, of course, be made by the teacher from scratch, but it is probably more appropriate and efficient to use material already available. In contrast, it is important for the teacher to fulfil his or her role steering and supporting the learning process specifically through his or her own personality. Although many teachers may feel reluctant or even quite unpleasant performing on a video, even the shortened video clip from the teacher is important for the student. And the teacher need not – and must not – always be the focus of the video: often it is more appropriate to show the learning environment, a completed assignment etc. It is also possible to show the teacher and the topic on the screen at the same time, so that while the main focus is on the topic, the interaction is still natural.

The examples discussed in this article were selected from an elementary language course, but similar video guidance is guaranteed to support learning and assessment on nearly any course regardless of the discipline. Often this type of video guidance is also relevant as part of blended learning, although a major portion of the guidance will naturally take place during face-to-face sessions. Study guidance must be provided mainly where the students operate. If the goal is to learn and work collectively and actively, partially or exclusively online, also the guidance and assessment are most efficient when conducted online.

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Part IV

Assignments in e-learning

Assignments in networked learning

Satu Korhonen & Heidi Varpelaide

Abstract

In this article we will discuss the networked learning assignments used in the blended programme in business administration at Satakunta University of Applied Sciences (SAMK). The purpose of this article is to give teachers, who are new to networked learning, an idea of an optimal workload allocated to each assignment, what types of assignments exist, how assignments may be evaluated and which learning environments can be used on an online course.

The article is based on a survey conducted among online teachers at the Kuninkainen campus of SAMK and the authors' own experiences of online teaching (see Appendix 1). Based on the survey, a typical online course in law or marketing includes 4–5 assignments. In accounting, the number of assignments may be higher in order to allow students more opportunities to drill their calculation skills. The teachers at Kuninkainen campus used a wide range of different assignment types, including discussion assignments, portfolios and essays. Typically, a course included 1–2 assignments which were graded on a scale 1–5, and 2–3 assignments which were graded pass or fail.

In blended and networked learning, the content, structure and method of learning assignments play a more decisive role in comparison to traditional classroom teaching. Moodle serves as the depository of learning materials and submissions and also offers a wealth of different tools relevant to the teaching. In some course assignments, social media was also utilised as well as other online learning environments.

The assessment of assignments supports students' learning while providing them with feedback on their performance. Students should receive feedback on their learning

throughout the online course. Assessment is a key motivating tool, and its appropriate use improves the learning outcomes.

Introduction

Learning is increasingly taking place in networks and virtually. Networked learning requires new types of teaching and learning skills as well as diverse learning environments. In networked learning, assignments are an essential part of course work. Assignments facilitate learning and assessment. In blended and networked learning, the content, structure and method of learning assignments play a more decisive role in comparison to traditional classroom teaching. The type and scope of online assignments may vary widely; the main thing is that they are appropriate for completion over the internet. The planning of online assignments requires from the teacher the ability to reconcile technological skills with academic and educational competences.

In this article, we will discuss the networked learning assignments used in the blended programme in business administration at Satakunta University of Applied Sciences (SAMK). We have investigated using an online questionnaire aimed at online teachers, what kinds of assignments are used on different courses and in different disciplines (see Appendix 1). We have also discussed how the online assignments are integrated into the course, what we find to be a suitable number of assignments per course, and in which applications and learning environments they are used.

Experiences of networked learning assignments at Kuninkainen campus

Blended learning in business administration

Satakunta University of Applied Sciences' Kuninkainen campus in Huittinen offers the possibility of completing a Bachelor's degree in business administration through blended learning, alongside full-time work. As the studies mainly take place online, learning assignments play a key role in the progress of studies. The assignments must be appropriate for the students, relevant in content and, where possible, linked with their previously acquired skills and current work experience. The teaching team at Kuninkainen have over a number of years planned and implemented a diverse set of

learning assignments, including both individual and group assignments and applying different methods and involving different learning environments.

In the blended learning programme in business administration, the approach adopted in networked learning is progressive inquiry. According to the progressive inquiry model, students set out to resolve a problem that has real-life relevance to them with the help of various information sources. The purpose is to introduce students to collaborative knowledge production. An individual's efforts to produce new knowledge are interlinked with collaborative efforts and vice versa (Finnish Virtual University 2016.) In progressive inquiry, learning is seen as a process, with the students' own contribution in the construction of knowledge and competence at its core.

The stages of an online course

The teacher begins planning the course by defining the intended learning outcomes and competences. In universities of applied sciences, the degree programmes are based on the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). The goal of the qualification is to prepare students for working independently in expert roles and as entrepreneurs in the field of their choice and to give them skills to develop their working communities. (Ministry of Education 2009, 26.)

In addition to EQF, the planning work should also be based on the general competencies jointly agreed for the higher educational institution as well as degree-programme specific competence requirements, which are laid down in the curriculum. The courses are expected to give students of business administration extensive business management skills and advanced competencies in this area of expertise (SAMK curriculum for business administration).

The objectives of the course are documented in a course description, where the topics and target competences are defined, the students' workload is determined and the method of completion is explained. In the course description, the teacher also lists the course literature. Studies at a university of applied sciences should be integrally linked with the world of work. Teachers are welcome to invite a working life representative to contribute to the planning and this way enable students to complete assignments on a commission by a company. If the course is geared towards international students, it should also be considered, in which language the materials and assignments are issued.

After comprehensive planning, the teacher prepares the course, during which process he/she writes the assignments and creates any online material in the learning environment. The material is provided through Moodle, which is where the instruction on the networked learning course mainly takes place.

When the assignments and materials are ready, the teacher sends students an invitation by e-mail to join the course. The students sign in to the Moodle template and start completing the course. During the course, students will work on assignments, familiarise themselves with the online materials, read set books and discuss the course topics to support their learning.

The teacher's role includes giving lectures, giving guidance to students online, encouraging, giving feedback and evaluating submitted assignments. At the end of the course, the teacher confirms through the learning platform that the student has passed the course. The teacher will also inform the student on how to proceed if he/she fails the course.

At the end of the course, the teacher is able to see whether a student's workload was evenly distributed throughout the course. To begin with, this task is quite challenging for the teacher. At the same time, the teacher should review his/her own workload, as there are typically several courses running simultaneously. The course should also be paced so that students receive feedback on their learning regularly throughout the course.

Summary of the different stages of an online course:

1. Planning
2. Preparation
   • Production of material
   • Writing assignments
3. Launching the course
4. Face-to-face teaching and class preparation
5. Networked guidance
6. Marking and assessment of assignment
7. Concluding the course.

Assignments as part of teaching

Assignments are a major element in a blended learning programme. One credit equals 26.7 hours of student work (SAMK Degree and Course Regulations, Section 8, paragraph 1). The assignments of a course should have variety to keep students inspired and interested and the students' workload should not exceed 27 hours per credit.

As Kirsti Jasu-Kuusisto and Heli Mattila maintain in their publication on assignments in networked learning, the purpose, goals, the materials to be used, assessment criteria and any practicalities related to the submission of the assignment ought to be clearly laid down when setting the assignment. (Jasu-Kuusisto, Mattila 2007, 8–12.)

The purpose of assignments is to help students attain the learning content defined in the study plan, so the scope of the assignment should be carefully defined so that the student is aware of what he/she is expected to learn from the assignment. The set goals tell the student what he/she can expect to master having completed the assignment and, after the assessment, he/she will also know how well this goal was achieved.

Networked inquiry is based on students' own information seeking, and so the assignments are typically formulated in a way that encourages students to select for themselves the sources they consider relevant. In practice, however, it is advisable to give students a few sources to get started with. It is important that students understand the importance of using sources and that of source criticism.

The structure of the instructions to online assignments should be kept uniform, so that students can easily identify the essential points. When describing the assignment, the type of assignment naturally determines the type of description.

The types of assignments and their frequency

The assignment types used in networked learning include information seeking, case studies, reflection assignments, calculations and exams. In information seeking assignments, students familiarise themselves with the topic and look for information on it from different sources. It is important in this assignment to define the appropriate scope for the topic under investigation and to identify reliable source materials.

Information gathered through an information seeking assignment can be shared by the following methods:

- introductory presentation

- notes and summaries

- oral presentations

- online exam

- discussions

- information seeking and organisation

- list of links

- study circle.

In a reflection assignment, the student applies previously learnt content in a new way. A reflection assignment may be used as a summarising exercise for the course, or it can be a way of linking content learnt on other courses to the topic currently being investigated. Reflection assignments are useful in many disciplines.

In reflection assignments, knowledge can be presented in many ways:

- in a learning journal

- by conducting a survey

- through an oral presentation

- collating a portfolio

- writing essays based on given material

- discussions

- information seeking and organisation

- in a web meeting.

In case studies, students discuss the theory under investigation through a single case and draw conclusions based on it. Case studies are suitable in, for example, legal studies. In case studies, the teacher can easily draw comparisons between the outputs of different students, which helps reduce the teacher's workload.

Case studies can be presented in a number of ways, including:

- by conducting a survey

- as an oral presentation

- by writing an essay using the case material

- discussions

- through interviews.

Calculations are used in mathematics and accounting and finance as a tool for teaching skills. Students complete calculation exercises related to the theoretical content being studied, usually available in course literature. It is important for the teacher to base the calculation exercises on the students' existing knowledge level, so that the learning goes deeper than mere copying of model calculations.

It is recommended to record a short video of the model answers to support learning, so that students will fully understand how the correct result was arrived at. In addition, calculations should be drilled during face-to-face sessions.

Below are some examples of calculation exercises:

- test exercises

- online exam

- simulations.

An exam is a quick way to evaluate students' level of skills. Exams must usually be completed within certain time limits and, after the exam, the student immediately sees the score. An exam is a method for the teacher to determine students' skills levels at the beginning and the end of the course.

Exams can be organised in the following ways:

- automated assessments

- test exercises

- online exams

- summarising assignments.

Group assignments have been excluded from the present discussion.

During the years 2011–2014, the entire teaching staff on the Kuninkainen campus participated in a project with the aim of harmonising networked learning assignment practices. As a result of the project, new assignment guidelines were drawn up, still leaving teachers a fair degree of freedom to plan the course from his/her own starting points.

It was agreed that the assignments for each course would be drawn up following these guidelines:

a) The number of assignments on a course on average can be:

- 4–5 assignments, 1–3 of which are group assignments

- no more than two extensive essays

- the assignments may include an exam and/or a group exam.

b) The length of individual assignments can be:

- 2–6 pages in case studies

- 5–15 pages in essays

- 10–30 for an extensive "final assignment" (e.g. statistical analysis)

- 15–60 pages of content in written group essays, depending on the size of the group and the scope of the assignment.

TABLE 1.
Summary of the number and types of assignments on courses offered at Satakunta University of Applied Sciences Kuninkainen campus in autumn 2015.

Teacher	Subject area and credits	Number of assignments	Other comments
a	Marketing 5 cr	5	semi-automatically assessed task, essay, PowerPoint presentation, development project on one's own role, oral presentation
b	Law 5 cr	4	online discussion, group report, individual essay, semi-automatically assessed task
c	Law 5 cr	5	2 semi-automatically assessed task, 2 online discussions, group report
d	Entrepreneurship 5 cr	4	3 written assignments, portfolio
e	Accounting 5 cr	7	5 calculation exercises, simulations, applied assignment
f	Law 5 cr	4	initial assignment, learning journal, 2 case studies
Total		29	

Table I shows that the number of assignments in different subjects is nearly always 4–5, as agreed in the development project. The accounting assignments are broken down into smaller blocks, so that students are not given too much new content to learn at once and are better able to apply theory into practice.

It was also agreed in the development project that no more than two large written assignments per course would be given. The table shows that for the sample period, this has been the case. This is important particularly from the student perspective, as they are required to complete 55 cr during one academic year. This means approximately 14 credits per period, when divided over 4 periods per year. In practice, this equals to three courses, or 15 assignments, per period. It is also important from the teacher's perspective to consider how many extensive written assignments are given per course. One course may easily be attended by 70 students, so one ten-page essay means 700 pages for the teacher to read and mark.

As shown in the table, different assignment types have been used evenly on courses. This adds to students' motivation to complete assignments on time. If the teacher also varies the level of difficulty from one assignment to the next, the students are more likely to commit to the online course until the end and complete it on schedule.

Evaluating and returning assignments

Students receive feedback on their assignments either individually or as a group. Group feedback can take the form of a message sent by the teacher via Moodle News forum, in which he/she has listed issues that the students had struggled with the most. Another method of giving feedback to a group is to upload a model answer on Moodle after the closing date for submissions allowing students to compare their own answer to the model one themselves. Feedback can also be given orally during a face-to-face session or by recording a video commenting on the assignment.

Personal feedback is typically given to each student with the returned assignment in the comment field either in writing or as a recording. For a large written essay assignment, separate feedback should be given on the substance, structure and use of sources.

The purpose of assessment is to support students' learning while providing them with feedback on their performance. The assignments can be graded on a scale 0–5, with or without fractions of a grade. The scale can also be a simple pass–fail, in which case the teacher's workload is much lighter than when using the scale 0–5. A student who fails the assignment will be instructed to supplement the assignment or, if it is possible during the course, to resubmit the assignment. The resubmission is not given as

an option; this will encourage students to complete the assignment at an acceptable level in the first place.

Writing assignments may be essays, case studies, learning journals, group assignments, portfolios, summarising assignments or a development project on the student's own role at the workplace. Students write reports either in groups or individually. Usually written assignments are graded on a scale 0–5.

At Satakunta University of Applied Sciences Kuninkainen campus, assessment is based on, for example, a four-point scale, with the evaluated elements being:

* structure and linguistic style

* quality of content

* use of source material

* application of theory into practice

Each element is evaluated separately, giving the student an average score. The teacher may use weighted grading, which allows prioritising the quality of content over the use of sources, for example.

TABLE 2.
Summary of the assessment of assignments on courses offered at Satakunta University of Applied Sciences Kuninkainen campus in autumn 2015.

Teacher	Subject area and credits	Assignment type / assessment
a	Marketing 5 cr	semi-automatically assessed assignment 1–5, essay 1–5 PPT presentation 1–5, development project 1–5, oral presentation pass–fail
b	Law 5 cr	online discussion pass–fail, group report 0–5, individual essay pass–fail, semi-automatically assessed assignment 0–5
c	Law 5 cr	2 semi-automatically assessed assignments pass–fail, 2 online discussions pass–fail, group report 0–5
d	Entrepreneurship 5 cr	3 written assignments pass–fail, portfolio 0–5
e	Accounting 5 cr	5 calculation assignments pass–fail, simulations pass–fail, applied assignment 0–5, online exam 0–5
f	Law 5 cr	initial assignment pass–fail, learning journal 0–5, case study 0–5, case study pass–fail

The table shows that commonly the courses include only two assignments that are graded on a scale of 0–5. The pass–fail scale is used most commonly in the first and final assignments of a course. A more detailed analysis would require further inquiry into the types of feedback given in each assignment type and how the grades were weighted. The length and the topic of assignments and whether weighted grades were used would provide more information on how assessment is used in different assignments types.

Learning environments and applications used in networked learning

Learning environments

The term learning environment refers to different locations, spaces, communities, technical solutions, tools and ways of working that support learning (Ministry of Education 2010, 12, 24). Assignments can be completed in physical spaces, a "closed" network environment at an educational institution or the open environments of social media (Figure 1).

Physical environment
classroom, conference room, library, one's own workplace, work placement premises, student office, canteen, cafeteria

Digital networks
learning environments, home page, intranet, online lectures, e-exams, returning assignments, e-mail, online negotiations and meetings, online tutoring, library databases, e-books etc.

Social media
social media communities (e.g. Facebook & LinkedIn), content production (e.g. Google tools, Youtube, Twitter & blogs) and other social media applications

FIGURE 3. Learning environments in networked learning (Varpelaide 2013, 36–39).

The physical spaces used during studies include working spaces and the rest of the work environment. In addition to classrooms, students can avail themselves of the library services to help with their course work. For an adult student, the workplace is also a learning environment.

Networked learning expands the concept of workspace to include online learning environments in addition to physical ones. Completing assignments online is made possible by internet connections, devices and applications, such as e-mail, online

learning environments, web meetings and library databases. In web meetings, the assignments can be commented orally while the students can participate in the session regardless of geographic distance.

In addition to the closed network learning environment, learning also takes place using social media environments. As such, social media offers an authentic environment. Learning on social media takes place engaging with real phenomena in real time as part of the real world. Social media applications combined with other networked learning environments form a diverse virtual classroom. Social media services are useful for creating content, discussions, assessment, creating shared experiences and collaborative work in interaction with others. The ability to use many applications simultaneously, collaboration and the culture of sharing are useful skills that are necessary, for example, in group work. Interaction is made possible through web meetings, where image and sound can be used and where screens can be shared and one document can be modified by many authors during the same online session. (Varpelaide 2013, 36.)

Submitting assignments in the networked learning environment

At Kuninkainen campus, Moodle is used as the main networked learning environment for submitting assignments. Students can join courses having first received a "key" and use the environment for submitting their work. Written reports are uploaded as files onto Moodle, where the teacher also uploads the feedback on the assignment. Assignments can also be submitted as web text or a link.

Moodle serves as the depository of learning materials and submissions and also offers a wealth of different tools relevant to the teaching. The exam tool in Moodle allows the teacher to create multiple choice and/or true/false exercises which can be automatically scored by Moodle. The exercise may be created, for example, with the lesson tool, with a "lesson" including multiple choice and true/false exercises and essays to be written as web text. The discussion forum in Moodle can be used for submitting assignments that take the form of a discussion. Students can use the recording feature in Moodle for producing and submitting oral assignments.

Essays and slide shows

Essay-type assignments are typically submitted as word files. At Satakunta University of Applied Sciences, students are provided with templates for the required formatting for assignments. With longer essays that include a table of contents and multi-level headlining the dissertation formatting is used, and with shorter assignments, Kuninkainen blended learning students can use templates that follow the standard formatting. Paying attention to the formatting of written assignments teaches students to create documents that are visually well-structured and to use identifiers. The use of sources and correct referencing are emphasised in all written assignments.

Assignments may also be submitted in PowerPoint format, in which case attention will also be paid to the structure and visual appearance of the slideshow and creating, for example, structured slides will be practised. This helps students learn how to create structurally, contentually and visually professional-looking slideshows.

Submitting assignments on social media

Social media offers one way of bringing in the real world and real-time interaction to the course alongside closed learning environments. The teacher can "embed" social media applications as part of the closed learning environment and in this way link the two in a manner that is appropriate for the purpose. Linking social media to assignments has been used on the Kuninkainen campus especially in courses on marketing and communications.

The content production assignments on these courses have been completed, for example, by students creating micro blogs. The teacher sets up a Twitter account for the course or different themes discussed on a course and creates group user credentials. The task for the students is to take turns to maintain the Twitter account as a group for a week. Students look for news, articles and publications relevant to the course content and retweet them. They also search and identify experts, companies and organisations and add them to the list of followed accounts. The course can create its own hashtag so that retweets related to the course can be easily found.

The teacher can also start a blog for the course, for which the students jointly create the content. Students take turns maintaining the group blog on a weekly basis, and new content is created throughout the duration of the course. Blogs and microblogs

may, in fact, continue over several courses and even years, even if the bloggers, that is, students change.

If the exercise is a course assignment, the teacher must take into account when planning the assignment that all students must have access to the necessary applications without the student having to create several new accounts for the purpose. Although students may already have accounts for the necessary applications, students may not be willing to use their personal accounts for study purposes. The solution is to create a group account.

Collaboration and time management

Different voice clips and status updates, appointments and calendars are useful tools in managing group work, and at the Kuninkainen campus they are widely used. Google Drive and other cloud services can be used for writing and editing documents simultaneously as a group, and avoiding sending different versions back and forth. Each group member can contribute to composing a document in real time or in their own time, and produce joint slideshows, each working from their own computer.

Students often create a closed Facebook page for the purpose of the group work. Students also use messaging applications, such as WhatsApp, for quick mobile communication and Doodle to book times for group sessions. Students tend to use these types of communications independently in order to work more efficiently without prompting or guidance from the teacher. The group can communicate using different tools by text and voice messages, convene in web meetings and book group sessions in shared calendars.

Conclusions

Assignments form the largest element in a course in learning that takes place independent of time and place. Assignments must cover the topics included in the curriculum while fulfilling all other requirements set for studies at a university of applied sciences. These requirements include working life cooperation, adaptation to changing customer behaviour, teaching provided in languages other than Finnish and digital learning environments. Teaching is also guided by the aim of helping students complete their degrees in the target time.

According to an organisation-level policy, for each five-credit course, 4–5 assignments are given and teachers should make sure that no more than two essay-type as-

signments are given on each course. The follow-up survey shows that the policy has been largely observed throughout the campus.

Learning assignments should be drawn up so that they give students a relevant and inspiring learning experience but also so that the workload for the student and the teacher are appropriate. Teachers are well-advised to utilise social media as well as other online learning environments in course assignments. The traditional essay can be delivered in the form of a blog or as a commentary on a topic on Twitter.

A theme for further investigation would be to find out what type of feedback is given in each assignment type and how the grades were weighted or which learning environments teachers use on their courses. In the future, complex digital skills will be needed to an increasing extent, as e-services, web meetings and other online communication within organisations gain popularity.

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APPENDIX 1.

Hi!

Would it be possible to have ten minutes of your time? Please submit your answers by 31 January 2016. I am in the process of writing an article for a publication by SAMK and TUAS. My topic is learning assignments. I am now gathering information on what type of assignments teachers have used during their courses in autumn 2015.

I would ask you to share with me the following information about the assignments you used on one course in autumn 2015:

The name of the course, the number of assignments. In addition, the type of each assignment, individual/group assignment, grading (e.g. scale 1–5, pass/fail)

To make your work easier, I have listed below examples of different assignment types:

– Introductory presentation

– Learning journal

– Group work of various types

– Information seeking and organisation

– Notes, summaries

– Surveys

– Case studies

– Oral presentation

– Discussion and feedback

– Automatically assessed assignments

– Test exercises

– Portfolio work

– Simulations

– Assignments created by students themselves

– Learning journal

– Online exam

– List of links

– Study circle

– Peer assessment

– Essays using the e-materials

– Discussions

– Interviews

– Web meetings

Other: please specify

The information you give will not as such be published in the article and will only be used for general analysis. It would be greatly appreciated if you could send your response by 31 January 2016.

Many thanks for your help,

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Group work in networked learning

Pekka Kuisma & Minna Kuohukoski

Abstract

This article describes and discusses the process of writing a fairly extensive report as a group work, completed, evaluated and graded fully online, as implemented at the Satakunta University of Applied Sciences Kuninkainen campus. The students participating in the assignment are studying towards a Bachelor's degree in business administration through a blended learning programme. The article first describes the different stages of the group work from assignment through team building, planning, writing to compilation and conclusions, and finally the sharing of the findings with other students. The article then discusses the ways self-assessment and peer assessment are used in the assessment, and describes the online assessment tool designed for teachers.

In order for group work that takes places exclusively in a network environment to be successful, a clear setting of the assignment description is essential. Based on the assignment description, the student must be able to decide what type of competences the assignment is intended to develop. The requirements and assessment criteria set for the assignment must be made clear in the instructions. However, the assignment description must not be too specific, so that it leaves enough possibilities for the students to explore, based on their own interests and needs. Requesting a plan of action helps students to plan their division of labour and to schedule their work.

Group work begins with team building, which is facilitated by an online learning template. This is followed by the planning stage, which is a central part of the assignment both for the successful outcome of the group work and for the commitment of each individual group member. As the work progresses, the students must be di-

rected to engage in collaborative reflection, so that the final outcome would be more than a mere compilation of individual outputs. The collaborative effort is aided by the web meeting software that the participants can use. It is also advisable to remind students to reserve a sufficient amount of time for the final compilation stage and writing the collective conclusions. Finally, the group work is typically presented to or shared with other students for review and commentary.

At the Kuninkainen campus, the teachers have an assessment matrix in use to help in the grading of reports. As the number of students has increased, group work assessment is also partially based of students' peer and self-assessments, for which purpose an online tool has been developed. Thanks to this tool, the assessment of group work has become easier for teachers, the rules for group work have become clearer, and students have started to understand their responsibility as a member of the group. Working online with an expert community, seeking solutions for the joint research problems and the reconciliation of the different views and methods that come into play in a group are excellent training for any expert position in the students' later professional lives. Considering the added benefits of this method, which include the mutual peer support between students and the learning experiences gained together, networked group work has established its role as a key element in the blended learning programme leading to a Bachelor's degree in business administration at Kuninkainen.

Writing a report as group work in networked learning

SAMK Kuninkainen campus offers a Bachelor's degree programme in business administration as blended learning. The programme is aimed at students who are working and it has been designed so that its completion alongside full-time employment is possible. The business administration studies at SAMK follow the progressive inquiry approach, and this is also the case in the blended learning programme available on the Kuninkainen campus. Completing course work as a group and sharing expertise play a key role in the programme. A key question is, how to complete group assignments while enabling joint research efforts and shared expertise that are an integral part of the progressive inquiry process, even if the students may never meet in person during their studies, and taking into account that the students are combining work and study? We will attempt to answer this question by describing how we have resolved this problem in case of an extensive report that is written

by students as collaborative group work in a network environment and is assessed and graded. Our observations are based on our experiences over the past six months, when Kuninkainen campus has focussed on networked learning. We have relied heavily in our planning work on Kirsti Jasu-Kuusisto and Heli Mattila's publication *Oppimistehtävä verkko-opetuksessa* [Learning assignment in networked learning](Pori: Satakunta University of Applied Sciences, 2007).

Clearly set assignments as basis for success

In order for group work that takes places exclusively in a network environment to be successful, a clear setting of the assignment description is essential. The assignment description must clearly communicate the purpose of the assignment. The students must know what kind of competences they are aiming at with the assignment, in other words, what kind of working life skills they will achieve by completing the assignment. The more detailed assignment description should specify what type of output students are expected to produce, which theories are relevant to the assignment and what type of empirical discussion they are expected to deliver. Although the assignment description will leave the final decision on the scope of the assignment for the student and leaves room for further questions to arise and deeper inquiry into the topic during the writing process, it must be sufficiently specific about the purpose of the assignment and the intended learning outcomes so that the students can focus their efforts on the actual assignment and not on trying to decipher what the assignment is truly about.

When setting an assignment, the teacher must also inform the students if the assignment needs to be delivered in a certain format, for example, according to the dissertation guidelines. Students also often wish to know the required length of the assignment, which helps them decide on the scope of the work. If the group is required to provide a project plan, this is also communicated in the assignment description. It is also a good practice to remind students of the quality of sources and source criticism and give tips on potential sources. The students must also be informed about the assessment criteria: what is expected of the assignment content, structure, the use of sources and application of theory or reflection for the best possible grade. A useful tool for this is to present an assessment matrix. If peer assessment and self-assessment is required, this should also be mentioned and instructions to conduct these assessments given. The assignment description also gives the exact

closing date and time for submissions and instructions for a possible oral presentation are provided. To conclude, the teacher explains the method of feedback and assesses the group work.

Writing an assignment description requires thorough consideration, as it must not be too specific, so that it leaves enough possibilities for the students to explore, based on their own interests and needs. In addition to specific and clear assignment setting, it should also be inspiring and inviting for the students to engage in research, and help them understand the significance of the topic for their professional skills.

It is also our policy to discuss the assignments through during the first face-to-face session. As we set the assignments quite specifically, students seldom have many questions, but it is important especially for new students to be aware that they will have an opportunity to ask questions and, when discussing the assignments in person, the teacher can further illustrate any issues with examples and emphasise the main goals of an assignment.

Group work begins with team building

Group work begins with team building, which is facilitated by an online learning template. As a rule, students introduce themselves on the learning platform for the course, in other words, tell about the background and of any previous skills or experience they have in the topic of the course. Based on these introductions, students can form groups where similar interests meet. Sometimes assignments are divided into themes so that groups cannot choose the same topic and instead each write a report on their designated subject. The groups can again be formed by matching the topic and the students' own interests.

If a large number, several dozens, of students is participating in group work, the technical aspects of team building should be kept simple: the student only needs to "click" on a certain group to sign up, and once the group is full, the work can begin. If the number of students on the course is smaller, no more than 20–30, team building can also take place through more free-form discussion online. This allows students to tentatively discuss in which direction they would like to take the group work and what their goals are, and this way find the most suitable group for themselves. This kind of team building takes longer and requires more vigilance from students so that they can keep track which discussions they wish to participate in and when a group is about

to fill up. This method also requires closer attention from the teacher so that he/she can make sure that all students are included in the process and find a suitable group.

Planning the group work

After team building, the planning begins. This is a central part of the assignment both for the successful outcome of the group work and for the commitment of each individual group member. Students may find this stage unnecessary and would rather agree on the topic for everyone and launch into the writing process. If a group adopts this approach, it fails to fulfil the purpose of progressive inquiry and shared expertise. Therefore, it is the teacher's responsibility to guide the group to reflect together on the common theme and the scope of the assignment. This is also a point when the risk of members dropping out is high. If a student is not actively involved in the planning, there is the danger that he/she does not fully understand his/her share of the work, or leaves writing too late and falls behind from the rest of the group. To avoid these problems, it can be made a requirement in the assignment description for the groups to provide a project plan for their work.

If a project plan is required, it must be allocated an adequate amount of time so that students have time to learn enough about the theoretical background for the topic to be able to decide on the goals and scope of the assignment, understand what is required of the theoretical section of the report and are then able to agree on the division of labour amongst themselves. In addition to the division of tasks, the project plan also requires that the group selects a leader, that the assignment is scheduled to meet the given deadlines and that the group agrees on its own rules. The purpose of having a leader for the group is to have a named person to ensure the progress, organise group meetings and address any problem situations.

Writing as a group

For the final outcome to be more than a mere compilation of individual outputs, students must be directed to engage in collaborative reflection. It is recommended that students would agree at the project planning stage on the "checkpoints", or the dates when they will either report on their progress and reflections on the topic via the learning platform or when the group will meet in a web meeting to discuss the progress of their work. Using web meetings for student meetings is still a novelty

at Kuninkainen campus, but students have eagerly started using this tool as part of their work. Using the web meeting rooms does not need the assistance of a teacher, as each student has the right to book a web meeting room for their group to meet. Based on student feedback, the web meeting tool has been welcomed as a good additional facility for group work. Discussing issues in person is quicker than writing comments via the learning platform, and giving encouragement and peer support comes more easily and more naturally when spoken.

When the checkpoints have been agreed, the group members will be able to notice if a group member is running behind the agreed schedule or is about to completely drop out. This gives the others the chance to re-distribute the work, if need be, so that the missing contribution does not compromise the quality of the final outcome.

At this stage, the teacher's role is to find the right balance between participating in students' reflection and leaving the students to resolve possible problem situations by themselves. Excessive interference may unnecessarily cut students' own enthusiasm and, at worst, rob them of the joy of research and discovery. In any eventuality, the students need to be assured that the teacher is always available for comment and help, if the students cannot resolve a problem amongst themselves as a group.

Compiling individual contributions

It is also advisable to remind students to reserve a sufficient amount of time for the final compilation stage and writing the collective conclusions. Otherwise there is the danger that each student simply completes their own section and the group cuts and pastes the individual contributions into one document. It would seem that the most favourable environment for reflection and collaboration is in those groups which have agreed at the planning stage on checkpoint dates, when they meet online to discuss the progress of the work. This allows the group to react in time if a member is unable to provide a sufficient contribution. If this comes to the attention of the group at the final stages, remedying the situation easily falls on the other members, which understandably causes frustration and resentment about unfair distribution of labour. If the joint reflection is allocated a sufficient amount of time during the writing process and its final stage, the group members will benefit from mutual commentary, questions and advice, which will help everyone further improve their respective sections. In addition, the group will be able to formulate its joint conclusions and give potential development suggestions.

Presentation and sharing of outcomes

Finally, the group work is typically presented to or shared with other students for review and commentary. If the work is presented to others, the preparation and the delivery of the presentation event must also be worked into the project plan. Presenting the outcomes gives students the opportunity to share their knowledge and experiences with all the students on the course. Ideally, the presentation is followed by comments and questions, which again leads the students deeper into their subject. The teacher may, in fact, make it a requirement that each group or student must comment on others' work by, for example, presenting a certain number of questions or comments. This is an option even if the works are not orally presented and are instead uploaded on the learning platform for others to read and comment on.

Sometimes none of the group members are able to present their work owing to other pressing engagements. In this situation, the teacher could suggest that the group record their presentation and upload the recording onto the learning platform for others to view and comment on.

Sometimes it might be more fitting for the process to have no oral presentations at all and to make all reports available as texts on the learning platform, where the students can read them and comment on them. In this case, too, it is recommended that all students are required to comment on the work of other groups, so that everyone can learn from the other topics and experiences.

Assessing group work

The teacher explains the assessment criteria in the assignment description. At Kuninkainen campus, the reports the teachers fill in include an assessment matrix used for all courses, possibly with small changes, depending on the subject. The matrix is used in the assessment of the quality of the content, the use of source material, the application of theory into practice, and the structural and linguistic quality of an assignment. Each element is graded on a scale of 0–5, which gives the final score, depending on the weighting of different elements. As a rule, the members of a group all receive the same grade, but if justified by peer assessment, the grades may also differ.

Peer assessment and self-assessment

A notable increase in the number of students in networked learning programmes in the past few years is a fact. This increase is a result of cost-savings and the reduced amount of resources available. For teachers, this means added assessment workload, should assessment be carried out as before. If teachers mark essays in the same manner as before, their workload increases in the same proportion as the number of students. To resolve this issue, we have introduced peer and self-assessment in group assignments.

When a group of students is required to assess the outcomes of another group, they become aware of the importance of assessment and this helps improve their performance based on the feedback from the peer assessment. Self-assessment, in turn, helps students understand their role in a group through the eyes of the other group members. Peer and self-assessments are tools that support learning. Therefore they play an important role in helping students improve their skills and competencies, and particularly in a group work context, take responsibility for the performance on behalf of the entire group.

We have built an online tool for students' peer and self-assessment. In stage 1, the idea for the tool was to enable peer assessment between student groups so that a group could assess the performance within itself and produce a self-assessment of the group work. In stage 2, a peer assessment facility for groups completing peer assessments of other groups will be added to the tool.

This tool also helps teachers form groups so that every student belongs to a group. The teacher makes a record of the groups and their members. When the group work is completed, the students can assess the performance of the members of their own group.

Students can assess the performance of other group members by filling in a form, making the task quick and easy. The form has checkboxes and space for free comments. A similar form is used for students' self-assessment. The teacher receives peer assessment reports on each group, which include the mutual assessments of each group member. The summary report shows the average score for each group and group member and the assessments and comments given by other group members. The summary will reveal if any of the students has underperformed. A similar report is created on self-assessments, allowing the teacher to compare students' self-assessments against the peer assessments.

Thanks to this tool, the assessment of group work has become easier for teachers, the rules for group work have become clearer, and students have started to understand their responsibility as members of the group. This tool is still at the pilot stage, but the provisional results have been positive according to both student and teacher feedback.

Conclusions

In this article, we described our development work aiming at creating a group work concept that would be as rewarding, inspiring, flexible, clear and fair as possible for the students. How well have we succeeded? Based on group work outcomes and students' self-assessment, in the best cases, the group work method has inspired students, and the competences of each of the members in a group has grown deeper, and the group has produced a result that brings practical benefits to the world of work. Furthermore, the peer support that students have received from each other has encouraged them and helped them manage the challenging combination of work and study.

In the worst case, students failed to grasp the significance of carrying out research as a team, producing as a result a work that was a compilation of individual contributions put together by a group that was unsatisfied with its performance. Group work as a concept was also criticised in situations where one of the group members decided to drop out or even failed to produce his/her contribution without notifying the others. This understandably causes frustration and resentment, and invites general criticism against group work as a method. Strategies that would ensure every student's commitment to the common cause include a compulsory project plan, which helps involve the individual student in the project from the very beginning and makes them aware of their responsibility for the shared results. Self-assessment and peer assessment are also effective methods in emphasising the significance of everyone's personal contribution. However, there still remains room for improvement and work to be done in our group work concept, before every student is convinced about the benefits of joint research and development and remains committed to the group project until the end.

In addition to conducting research as a team and sharing expertise, another major dimension of group work is peer support. In networked learning, the student does not necessarily visit the campus in person, and so is unlikely to ever meet fellow stu-

dents or teachers in person. Even the face-to-face sessions can be attended over the internet. Students may live far away from each other geographically. The group sizes may be large, so teachers are unable to provide highly individualised guidance. Reconciling work, family life and other interests with studies is not an easy task, and discontinuing studies may be an inviting option at times. Peer support and contact with fellow students can at that point be invaluable. While the primary purpose of group work is to facilitate doing research and learning together, its significance in supporting students' ability to cope through to peer support is also great.

The objective of studies at a university of applied sciences is to prepare students for expert roles in the world of work. Working online with an expert community, seeking solutions for the joint research problems and the reconciliation of the different views and methods that come into play in a group are excellent training for any expert position in the students' later professional lives. Considering the added benefits of this method, which include the mutual peer support between students and the learning experiences gained together, networked group work has established its role as a key element in the blended learning programme at Satakunta University of Applied Sciences Kuninkainen campus.

Part V

Advantageous case studies

Self-directed learning online – case study Culture Portfolios

Sanna Simola & Katriina Vesanen

Abstract

Digitalisation has radically changed the learning and teaching in higher education over the past decade, leading to an increasing number of online courses offering more flexibility and options for individual learning paths.

The aim of the present article is to discuss the insights and experiences gained through the implementation of online courses providing cultural knowledge to the students in higher education. The discussion is based on the practical aspects of self-directed online learning as well as the requirements and skills needed in studying independently in an online environment.

This article is written as a case study describing the practicalities of the Culture Portfolio courses implemented for the degree students of Turku University of Applied Sciences. The concept of the Culture Portfolio courses dates back to 2007 and was originally designed as part of a project offering corporate training. The courses have undergone changes and modifications over the years based on the feedback from the course participants and instructors.

According to the feedback from the Culture portfolio courses, it is clear that a successful implementation of an online course involving self-directed learning is a result of many factors. A clearly designed and visually appealing layout, interesting content with varied assignments and precise instructions create the basis for a well implemented online course. In addition, certain skills are required from the course

participants to successfully complete the course. In general, e-learning competences include motivation, good time management skills and adequate IT skills, and the skills needed particularly in Culture Portfolios are language skills, academic writing skills, reflection and critical thinking skills.

Introduction

The digitalisation of education has radically changed the learning and teaching in higher education, offering more possibilities and practical solutions to studying and leading to an increasing number of online courses offering more flexibility and options for self-directed learning. This article discusses insights and experiences from online Culture Portfolio courses at Turku University of Applied Sciences, covering the whole life span of the concept.

The Culture Portfolios have their origin in a project, which was executed in 2007. The project was funded by ESF (European Social Fund) and its aim was to build courses which have an emphasis on culture and are focussed on the needs of working life. The Language Centre at Turku University of Applied Sciences had already earlier carried out projects where online material for language learning and teaching was designed and produced. However, there was a need to deepen the understanding of the cultural aspects of the country in which the already learned language is spoken.

The chosen countries for the Culture Portfolios were Germany, Sweden, China, India, the UK and later also Russia. The courses were designed by the language teachers for online environment. The aim was to make the cultures as vivid as possible by using pictures, videos and recorded interviews.

The Culture Portfolios were designed as part of corporate training provided by Turku University of Applied Sciences. The first target groups consisted of company personnel who already had language training and additionally needed to learn about the culture in order to support cooperation possibilities with international partners. After the project, the contents of the Culture Portfolios were also accessible to the language teachers at Turku University of Applied Sciences, so that they could use some parts of them in their own teaching, thus supporting and enriching the language courses.

Since 2013, the Culture portfolio courses have been offered as elective studies to all the students at Turku University of Applied Sciences. The courses are offered for the

students as self-study material in order to get more knowledge about the countries where they may later work in or work with during their careers. All the courses have been popular, so clearly there is a need and interest among the students to learn more about different cultures.

The focus of the present article is to discuss different aspects of self-directed online learning excluding the subject matter itself. The concept has evolved over the years to meet the growing demand of independent studies online. The article begins with the clarification of the concept of Culture Portfolios discussing the background including the starting point, creation, structure and implementation of the courses during the whole life span of the concept. In addition, the requirements and skills needed in studying independently in an online environment are discussed. Next, the article focusses on the feedback and experiences derived from the students and course instructors including the challenges encountered during the courses. Finally, some ideas and insights for further improvement and development of the Culture Portfolios are discussed.

Structure and implementation

The online platform for the Culture Portfolio courses is Optima by Discendum Oy. This has been a natural choice since all Turku University of Applied Sciences' personnel and students are entitled to use Optima (by Discendum ltd) which offers a practical solution for blended learning as well as teaching and studying in an online environment. The Culture Portfolio courses have been implemented and developed considering the possibilities and tools offered by Optima.

The Culture Portfolio courses are offered in four different languages depending on the target culture of the course. There are altogether six different cultures presented in the Culture Portfolio courses. *The Culture Portfolios: China, England and India* are implemented in English. *Zielland Deutschland* (Culture Portfolio: Germany) is implemented in German. *Kulturportfölj Sverige* (Culture Portfolio: Sweden) offers cultural knowledge of Sweden and is executed in Swedish whereas V*enäjän kulttuuria* (Culture Portfolio: Russia) including information on Russian culture is implemented in Finnish. The variety of different languages offers possibilities for students with different mother tongues and language abilities to study knowledge of different countries' cultures as well as to develop their language skills at the same time.

The overall structure of all Culture Portfolio courses is similar irrespective of the culture or language in question. The courses are divided into four study modules: *Cultural Awareness and Stereotypes, Cultural Comparisons, Business Culture* and *Overview* of the target culture. In addition to the study modules, there is a welcome section offering the course rules and assessment criteria, a tracking tool enabling the students to track their progress with course tasks and self-assessment as the final course assignment. Each module provides information on the target culture in various forms such as articles, web pages, informative graphs and interviews. The assignments are returned as written essays, recorded presentations and interviews, and by posting messages in the discussion forum allowing students to engage in some interactivity with other course participants during otherwise independent studies. The following table (Table I) presents the topics and types of activities of the Culture Portfolio courses.

TABLE 1.
Description of Module structure and activities.

	Intro-duction	Module 1	Module 2	Module 3	Module 4	Final assignment
Topic	Course rules and contents, intro-duction	Cultural aware-ness and stereo-types	Cultural compari-sons	Business culture	Overview of the tar-get culture	Self-reflection and feedback
Written activity		Analysing one's own cultural identity. Answe-ring opi-nionated questions about stereo-types.	Compa-ring one's own and target culture.	Summa-rising a culture re-lated news piece. Answering questions about dif-ferences in business communi-cation between one's own and target culture.	Preparing a Powerpoint presentati-on of one's favourite part of the target culture.	Reflecting one's own learning process by answering self-assessment questions. Giving course feedback
Recorded activity	Making a video presen-tation of oneself.		Recording an inter-view with another person about culture shock.		Recording a PowerPoint presentation of one's favourite part of the target culture.	
Online activity		Creating a mind map of a chosen culture.		Searching for a news piece related to the target culture.	Sear-ching for informati-on about different cultural aspects.	
Discussion forum			Posting a message about culture shock. Commen-ting other participants' messages.			

All assignments, excluding the discussion forum tasks, are collected as a course portfolio and returned in a return box in Optima. The assignments are checked and approved according to a given criteria by the course instructor. Below are some main points of the criteria:

- Course assignments are completed according to the given instructions and schedule.

- Assignments are written in a neutral style following the rules of academic writing.

- Assignments comprise theoretical knowledge obtained from the reference material as well as the writer's own reflections and viewpoints of the matter.

During the life span of the Culture Portfolio courses there have been some modifications to the activities although the contents and the overall structure has remained the same. Feedback gained from the course instructors and course participants has been the main influencer of the alterations made to the courses. The feedback, alterations and further amendments will be discussed in more detail in the last part of this paper.

Student enrolment and the role of the course instructor

The Culture portfolio courses (each course is three study credits, approximately 81 hours of student work is required) are offered as elective studies to all the students at Turku University of Applied Sciences, also exchange students can participate because most of the courses are in English. They are offered three times a year: spring, summer and autumn semester. The students enrol in SoleOPS, which is a browser based administration tool offering e.g. the course implementation plans and enrolment tools for students. The actual courses are in the Optima platform where the course participants find more detailed instructions on how to complete the course.

Annually, about 600–700 students enrol in the courses of whom over 60% complete the course. This is a rather high rate compared to the completion rate of MOOCs, Massive open online courses, with the equivalent median average being less than 7% (e.g. Jordan 2014). MOOCs may not be comparable as such but are similarly based on self-directed learning as the Culture Portfolio courses. Reasons for the rather high completion rate of Culture Portfolio courses may be that the course participants are registered degree students of TUAS earning credits for the elective studies

as a compulsory part of their degree. An international aspect of the studies has also strengthened, resulting into better understanding of the importance and benefits of cultural competence.

The Culture Portfolio courses are completed independently without a teacher. The course instructor manages the courses by approving the student enrolments and setting up the work space in Optima for the course participants using the ready-made contents. After the course ends, the course instructor goes through all the assignments returned by the students, grading the student work on a scale pass or fail and marking the credits in the study register.

Requirements and skills needed in self-directed online learning

In order to successfully complete self-directed online courses, certain skills and requirements are needed. These kind of self-regulatory attributes, selected by Richard Lynch and Myron Dembo (Lynch & Dembo 2004), are listed and discussed below:

*   *Motivation*

    The students who are genuinely interested in the cultural matters do perform better than those who only need some extra credits and see the course as an easy way to achieve that.

*   *Experience with internet technology*

    Basic IT skills are needed, the students mainly do not have problems with the technology.

*   *Time management skills*

    The students can and must plan their own schedule and act/study accordingly.

*   *Study environment management skills*

    The Culture Portfolio courses are designed user friendly, but naturally different students navigate differently in a VLE.

*   *Learning assistance management skills (help seeking)*

    In the course there is a shared discussion wall used for communication. This way the students can give peer support and guidance e.g. in technical and content questions to each other. Also the course instructor can inform all the par-

ticipants of the course at the same time. Emailing is not a preferred channel of communication.

In addition, based on the experience gained from the Culture Portfolio courses, there are other skills needed. Since most of the course work is based on the written tasks, academic writing skills are needed. The online tasks also require a certain amount of reflection and critical thinking skills. As at the end of the Culture Portfolio courses, the students are required to evaluate their overall course work as part of self-reflection, the ability to reflect the own learning process is essential.

The courses are implemented in English/German/Swedish so a certain level of language skills is required of the participants to be able to take part in the courses.
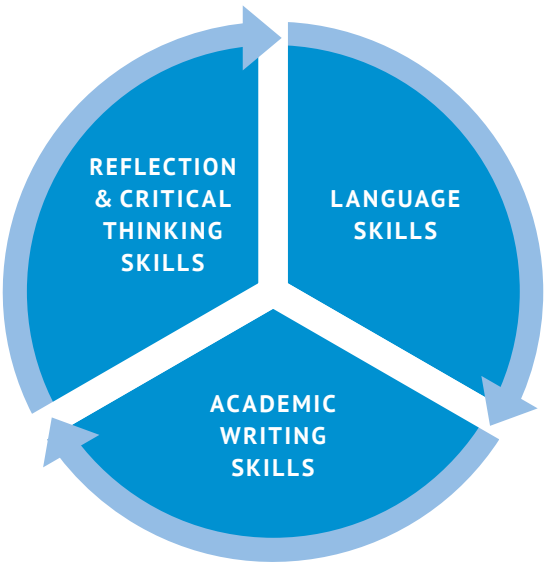
FIGURE 1.
Skills needed in self-directed learning.

The importance of clear instructions is an essential feature in an online course where the students study on their own. The aims of the assignments and how to accomplish them have to be clear and precisely phrased, so that the instructions answer the questions why, how, where and during which time. An example of instructions given in the Culture Portfolio courses can be found below.

- Make a plan for your use of time.

- Completing the course is equivalent to approximately 81 hours of work.

- You can complete the course at your own pace, however within the time period from ... to...

- The course will be assessed after...

- There is no teacher in the course – you are yourself responsible for your learning! Read all instructions carefully.

- Feedback will not be provided on the assignments.

- During the final assessment the course instructor checks that the returned assignments fulfil the given criteria.

The students' abilities to successfully complete Culture Portfolio courses vary a lot. As discussed in previous parts of this paper, there is a great variety of skills and abilities needed in studying independently in an online course environment. A lack of some of these aforementioned skills are also manifested in the course feedback given by the students.

Feedback and ideas for further development

Originally the portfolios were designed in 2007, so it is rather obvious that they have undergone some changes during the years.

Based on the feedback from the students and course instructors, some alterations and clarifications were done to the course contents.

Examples of the changes done:

- Instructions and criteria – clarified and specified

- Layout – using different colours, numbers etc. to give the courses more user friendly appearance and usability

- Bringing the assignments up-to-date – changing the implementation of some assignments, e.g. making a video recording instead of writing

- Requiring a video introduction of the student

The question whether the students manage without guidance can be answered by yes and no. There are students who are able to study on their own, but there are students who need a lot of support in their learning process and might therefore even be incapable of passing courses consisting of entirely independent studying.

Below there are comments taken from the feedback received from the students after completing a Culture Portfolio course. The comments were chosen based on their relevance to self-directed learning skills and abilities needed in studying in independent online courses. The following chapter comprises of the students' comments, which have been italicised, and the course instructors' view on the matter.

> *This was an interesting course, not only for the subject but as a learning process of my studying behaviour. I learned the best tactics for me to learn...*

Study skills play an important part in independent online courses as already discussed earlier. It is worth noticing that students themselves also pay attention to their learning process and abilities while studying and therefore have an opportunity to develop their own study skills. Some of the students have also noticed that they are lacking skills to study independently or study online. This has been experienced especially by the students who have been novice online learners lacking the required IT skills and/or time management skills in particular. On the other hand, there are also students who have realised that independent studying online suits them even better than traditional classroom teaching. These students experience being able to study independently free from any particular time or place as a motivating and convenient way to study. Particularly students who study and work at the same time enjoy the freedom offered by self-directed studies.

> *The given instructions and assessment criteria were easy to find... The "track your progress" tab was very good.*

All students in the Culture Portfolio courses need to follow their own learning by using a tracking tool. The tracking tool is used to follow progress of the assignments. The students complete the form consisting of all course assignments. After the student has marked all assignments as completed, the course instructor can start assessing the course portfolio returned by the student. The tracking tool is experienced as a useful tool for the students to manage their use of time and also to follow their progress with the course assignments.

As previously discussed, the clarity of instructions cannot be emphasised enough. Since there is no teacher in the course, the assignments need to be instructed clearly so that there is no chance for misunderstanding. The assessment criteria, which was specified during the development of the Culture Portfolio courses, has proven to be very useful. After some further clarifications included in the instructions, students have been able to better complete the assignments without requiring additional guidance from the course instructor. In addition, a discussion wall was later added to the starting page of all course environments to enable peer support among the course participants.

> I did like using Optima, but I had serious problems returning my video files…

> I really liked the video presentations and audio interviews which were part of this course…

> I don't really see how recording something is any better than a written assignment.

Assignments requiring either recorded speech or videos have divided opinions among the students. Firstly, some students feel that recording is more time consuming and requires too much effort. Secondly, some students do not have the required technical skills or devices to complete the recordings. Due to these reasons, a recording tool in Optima as well as an online recording tool have been offered and instructed for students to use, so that they do not need to rely on any additional devices such as a mobile phone. Thirdly, some students find writing in a foreign language more comfortable as they can be insecure of their own speaking skills in a foreign language.

However, some students feel that recording instead of writing offers variation and some find it even easier and a quicker way to complete the assignments. The recording assignments were chosen to serve multiple purposes. It is certain that when offering a course to a large group of heterogeneous students, there are many different learner types present. Therefore, the given assignments as well as the study material should also offer variation and support different types of learning. Another important factor is that since the course instructor does not meet the students at all, there need to be ways to identify the student. Especially, the video introduction of each student serves as a well-functioning and more personal way to introduce oneself. Showing one's face instead of merely writing or recording one's voice also involves and engages the participants more. The assignment could also be developed further so that each course member would make a video introduction of themselves and

post it to a discussion forum so that everybody would have at least a chance to see the other course members' faces hence also increasing interactivity among the course participants.

Another recording assignment involves making an interview with somebody outside the course. The assignment is to interview a person about a culture shock experienced when visiting one of the target cultures. The recorded interview is then returned in the discussion forum where the course participants can post messages about culture shock and listen to the interviews shared by the other course participants. To increase interactivity, the students are also encouraged to comment each other's messages. The assignment allows students to share their cultural experiences and acquire personal knowledge about different cultures.

> The whole course environment is visually clear enough for me to navigate and use easily.

A clear and visually appealing layout of the online workspace is very important. It facilitates navigation in the online learning environment and makes studying there easier. Using numbered assignments, listing the main things with bullet points, adding theme-related pictures and colours result into more organised and engaging study environment.

> It would be nice to get some feedback on the assignments.

As previously mentioned, the Culture Portfolio courses are assessed pass or fail. The course instructor does not provide any feedback on the assignments. This was originally decided due to the volume of the participants as well as the limited resources allocated to the instructor. The challenge of providing individual grading and feedback is acknowledged as the popularity of self-directed learning in VLEs is growing (e.g. Glance et al. 2011). Peer feedback is found to be one practical solution with effective outcomes. However, peer assessment has also proven to be a controversial issue raising concerns over reliability and validity of the assessment (e.g. Aoun 2008). To ensure good quality peer feedback, proper criteria and guidelines of assessing are significant since the students do not possess pedagogical skills needed in assessment. Although the students start the course at the same time, the pace of studying differs, so that the students can complete the course assignments at their own pace during the semester. That weakens the possibility of well-functioning interactivity that would enhance the whole learning process. In addition, peer feedback is difficult to

organise due to the students' individual schedule of completing the assignments. Currently, interactivity and peer feedback cannot be implemented in the extent that would best support learning in an ideal way. The courses are designed to enable flexible studying. Therefore, the course assignments would need to be timed, so that the students could interact and complete the assignments concurrently.

It is often the case that the course participants do not possess first-hand knowledge or experience on the cultures they choose to study. Therefore, one of the development aims has been to make the contents of the courses more lively and authentic and in that way approachable also for them who do not have experience of their own. Some of the courses already include audio material in the form of interviews with representatives of the cultures, and a new addition to the courses could be using movies as a source of cultural knowledge. This is not a novel idea as such and there are research findings to support the educational perspective. One example, offered by a study exploring how to use popular movies in teaching cross-cultural management (Pandey 2012), investigated movies as a learning tool in the management classroom and more specifically in the context of cross-cultural management. The findings of the study suggest that movies can be effective in learning cross-cultural issues and developing cultural competence. The movies could also shed light on the historical background which has created the basis for the current culture. Using movies would also offer variation and would be easily implemented as part of an online course.

Since the courses offer an introduction to different cultures, they could also offer valuable information to the students participating in the student exchange programmes. By taking the course before leaving for an exchange, the student would gain knowledge about the culture beforehand therefore diminishing possibly negative effects of the culture shock. The selection of cultures chosen for the Culture Portfolio courses could be updated and possibly widened to meet the current needs of the students. The need and usefulness of including even a course on Finnish culture could be worth exploring bearing in mind the students from different cultures coming to study in Finland.

Conclusion

The origin of Culture Portfolios dates back to the year 2007. Over the past decade, the whole concept has evolved to meet the growing demands and pedagogical needs of digitalisation. As stated in the article, there is still room for further development

and improvement. The future of online courses is full of possibilities and potential as the technical solutions develop all the time.

According to the feedback from the Culture Portfolio courses, it is clear that a successful implementation of an online course involving self-directed learning is a result of many factors. A clearly designed and visually appealing layout, interesting content with varied assignments and precise instructions create the basis for a well implemented online course. In addition, certain skills are required from the course participants. In general, e-learning competences include motivation, good time management and adequate IT skills, and skills needed particularly in Culture Portfolios are language skills, academic writing skills, reflection and critical thinking skills. Meeting all these requirements leads to a positive learning experience.

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Research communication – soundboarding ideas in networked learning

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Abstract

This article discusses experiences of the communication instructors for the online course on research communication (5 cr) from the courses organised in collaboration with the library and information services in summers 2014 and 2015. The purpose of the course was to instruct students on the use of sources and the application of borrowed content in their own text production and to practice investigative academic reporting. The aim of this article is to establish the factors that affect the success of an online course and how interaction can be managed in networked learning.

In the first year, the students participated in asynchronic networked learning, while in the second year, some weekly discussions were scheduled. The course included supervised writing assignments and set reading in addition to online assignments. The students did not use Optima speech recording feature in the online work. Based on the students' feedback, students' with the highest motivation felt they benefitted from the course the most.

In a successful online discussion, the participants presented their personal goals, which supported the achievement of the shared goal. The observations and assignments made by others were beneficial to students' own learning, which encouraged them to continue with the reflection. This helped participants overcome their frustrations and make progress in their work. The salient characteristics of the online discussion are strict concentration on the topic at hand, a more thorough-going treatment of the topic as a result of reflection and observations, encouragement and politeness.

Introduction

In networked learning, planning is the basis for everything and, in fact, teachers spend half of their working hours on planning. Planning should involve the following factors: intended learning outcomes, the target group, the learning process and teaching methods, resources, the structure of the learning environment, the materials used and overall coordination. In the implementation of the course, it is important to pay attention to interaction and common guidelines in addition to giving guidance to students. The third stage is learning assessment, which in the best case is also planned before the online course begins. (Pönkä 2012.)

Networked learning requires good literacy skills, self-determination, diligence and good writing skills from students. It has been noticeable that many students are not used to completing weekly online assignments by the agreed deadline. Many students assume that they have more time to spare in the summer and hence sign up for several different courses. However, networked learning is just as time consuming, if not more so, than traditional studying, even if the course work can be completed whenever it best suits the student.

As any education provided by a university of applied sciences, networked learning should be anchored on real working life situations. The students should actively seek connections between investigated themes and the "real world".

In this article, we first describe the structure of the online course on research communication in summers 2014 and 2015. This is followed by a discussion on networked interaction and what makes an online assignment feasible as well as on the aspects of assessment. To conclude, we will look into student feedback and, based on this, give suggestions how a functional, interactive summer online course could be constructed.

The structure of the online course in Research Communication

The planning for the Research Communication summer online course started in spring 2014. The University of Applied Sciences started offering summer courses in previous years in a more concentrated manner and it was discovered that research communications and a related information seeking course could help students complete their degrees in a shorter time. In addition to a communications teacher, the

planning was participated in by the director of the library and three information officers who give instruction in information seeking at the library. The planning team convened three times during the spring to agree on the overall structure of the course and the division of labour between the communications teachers and the library staff. The course was reserved its own Optima workspace, the construction of which was carried out in collaboration.

The structure of the online course in Research Communication eventually came to comprise five units:

1. thesis writing as a process

2. information search

3. referencing

4. research writing

5. publishing the thesis.

The second and fifth units were supervised by the library staff and the remaining units by the communications teacher.

In summer 2014, 79 students signed up for the Research Communication course via SoleOPS. Of these, 60 signed up to the Optima workspace, and the course was completed by 27 students. The students attended a compulsory initial information session, where the structure of the course was explained and the Optima workspace introduced. The information meeting was attended by 40 students.

It had already been decided at the planning stage that students would study independently without a teacher in the summer. The submission date for all assignments would be only after the summer holidays, on 15 August. The students had the possibility to e-mail the teachers if necessary and, in addition, a designated discussion space was launched in Optima for peer support, with the following instructions:

> The idea of this peer support space is for the students to get to know each other and the teachers, to ask questions and to write comments and receive help in problem situations.
>
> Start by briefly introducing yourself. Tell us where you study and what your subject is, and what the topic or theme of your thesis is going to be.

> Tell us also what else you are going to do this summer, besides taking this course!
>
> Encourage each other and spur each other on if you get stuck!

However, the peer support space did not prove very popular and was used only a little. Some twenty students introduced themselves and a few questions were posted over the summer. Otherwise, there was very little interaction between the students, at least that is how it appeared to the teachers.

In summer 2015, 48 students signed up for the Research Communication course and the compulsory introductory meeting was attended by 30 students, and the course was passed by 21 students. Four students joined the meeting as a group through Adobe ConnectPro conferencing software. Having an IT expert at the information meeting was a valuable addition, as this allowed for the supervisor to concentrate on the actual course content and team building. The use of conferencing software was problematic; the connection cut off three times during the two and a half hours. In the introductory meeting, team building was conducted face-to-face and the same groups continued working together online.

The scheduled web meetings required punctuality and weekly commitment on 2–3 occasions. There were three scheduled networked periods: during the first week, following the introductory meeting, focussing on analysing thesis work, and two two-week periods focussing on reporting and on research writing. Some time was reserved between the two two-week periods to allow for the completion of information retrieval assignments.

In both courses, the learning platform used was Discendum Optima. A majority of the students in summer 2015 worked via a mobile connection, which set its own limitations to the visibility of objects and tools. On the 2015 course, a major portion of time was spent on orientation to online work.

The student group must stay motivated until the end of the course and the learners must have a clear idea of how the goals of the course can be achieved. An online course must be designed from the teacher's perspective in such a way that the intended workload remains manageable, the course is in line with the teacher's own education principles and methods, and that there is enough motivation to work in a networked environment according to plan.

All the educational and technical solutions used on an online course must be relevant in the light of the learning objectives. In addition, the online course must comply with the curriculum and designated student working hours. In practice, the students are offered a framework, which they can modify based on their own personal goals.

In networked learning, the responsibility for the progress of studies lies with the student. In interactive situations, it became evident that the more active the student's own approach was, the more enjoyable the learning experience. In the following, we will examine how functional interaction is built.

Interaction means dialogue and acknowledgement

When the online course in Research communication was first organised in summer 2014, little attention was given to interaction and priority was given to completing assignments in the traditional sense. The idea had been, however, to make students feel they were part of a group, for which purpose a peer support discussion space was launched in the learning platform. In practice, students were left to their own devices in terms of creating interaction with each other. The assignments were formulated as clearly as possible and the submission dates were the same for all assignments. The students were free to schedule their work as they wished. The teachers' summer vacation dates were posted on the front page of the workspace, and they were respected.

It should also be noted that, in 2014, Optima had significantly fewer features facilitating interaction than the 2015 version. For example, the wall, which today is a popular communication channel, did not exist in 2014.

The assignment on referencing was built into an interactive one using the discussion space:

> 1. Choose from the school library or Theseus database a thesis in your own field, completed after 2010. Familiarise yourself with the thesis writing guidelines in Messi and especially the section on referencing.
>
> The guidelines are available in: Messi > Studies > Thesis and reporting > Writing guidelines > References and bibliography.
>
> 2. Read the thesis of your choice and compare the referencing method used with the one introduced in Messi.

3. Discuss your thoughts on the referencing in the thesis of your choice using the discussion space. Also give your view on the age and reliability on the sources used. What makes a bibliography seem reliable and when should you be more sceptical of the sources?

4. Comment on the responses of other students (2–5) in the discussion space.

The assignment description included the request to comment on the ideas of other students, which was met for the most part. The discussion was active and a number of important points were made:

> The bibliography seem to be in order and, except for one, all sources were less than 5 years old and, in general, seemed reliable, being published by well-known journals, publishers or institutions. The list was correctly formatted and easy to read. However, I managed to find one obsolete Internet link among the references.

> All in all, the referencing was in line with the instructions in Messi and clearly laid out, and there was a suitable amount of sources considering the length of the thesis.

> My fellow course members have made really good comments on referencing and I will make use of them in my own thesis.

The assessment received relevant comments:

1. I agree with you in that a good piece of work cannot be based on just a few sources. I find the number of sources a bit much, and a better justified but a smaller number of sources might have sufficed. I agree with J in that the bibliography as such is a little unclear and confusing.

2. I chose this thesis because it touches upon the current Russian sanction policy. This work offers a viewpoint on trading relations with Russia in terms of export. The background has been extremely well discussed in this work. The extensive discussion helped me understand what the issue is all about. The background information supported the thesis magnificently. The scope of the work was well thought out and the author kept to the topic. The sources were well referenced in the text.

3. You are right; there is very little to criticise in the references of this thesis.

There are minor issues, though, such as the reference in the text, where the author could have been abbreviated (into Alho et al. 2010).

> I slightly disagree about the readability of the bibliography. True, it is correctly formatted, but I find it confusing that the web address and reference have an extra line break in between. It took me a while to figure out which address belongs to which reference.

It was interesting to notice how detailed and specific points the students made. The students used a very high register in their posting in the discussion space and give each other excellent guidance. Interaction takes place despite teachers being on their summer holidays.

In the analysis of the discussion threads of the summer 2015 course, attention was paid to the dialogue, interaction and positive atmosphere in the online discussion of one particular group. The group discussed the weekly topics in a very systematic manner. Two writers already had a topic for their theses and one writer had a hypothetical topic, although the topic was eventually narrowed down during the following term.

The online discussion is divided into three periods: the first week-long period and the two two-week periods. A week-long break was held between the last two discussion periods, during which the students focussed on source literature. The group had six students, one of whom dropped out of the course owing to time constraints. The two other members initially followed the discussion sporadically and did not produce content to the discussion. This left three active members in the group. Although the second most active member was extremely busy, she was able to organise time for the assignment. The most active participant started working on reporting from the perspective of her own thesis, which also offered practical tips to other participants. All postings were written, and the Optima recording feature was not used.

The interaction within the group had started during the introductory face-to-face meeting, where the participants had met. Immediately the next day, the group members had posted their photos on Optima. The participants wrote all their postings and did not use the Optima video recording tool. The introductions of each group member (a little over half a page long) were carefully prepared. Following this, the length of the postings was reduced to a half or one third of the first one, and at their shortest, the postings were one or two sentences long, adorned with emoticons. Many writers used smiling emoticons to express happiness, which appears frequently in each discussion thread of the group. On the word level, emotions were expressed

with phrases, such as "I feel a little lost", when talking about what it was like to start new things, or syntactically, using the third person: "One does not really know."

To begin with, the postings started with a greeting (*Hi! Hello!*) to open the thread. On the first session, schedules and ways of working were agreed on. The distribution of postings was the following: the most active participant made 80 (21 + 46 + 13) postings, the second most active 70 (22 + 38 + 10) and the third most active 67 (17 + 36 + 14). The person who posted the least contributions posted opinions that were beneficial to learning. They dealt with central issues, such as the maturity test, reporting skills, source criticism and Messi (Turku University of Applied Sciences' intranet) instructions. The participant's comments were well thought out, initially previously written in a separate document, but as the conversation became more real time, she started writing her comments directly into the discussion space. This students had previous experience of online studies, and said that people had participated in the discussions on the previous courses if and when it had suited them. The group ended up adopting real time discussion within five days of starting the course.

With a transitionary sentence "But hey, moving on to another subject", the discussion was led to another previously mentioned topic. The roles varied among the group in terms of who initiated or concluded discussions. The metapragmatic question "Should we start a new thread?" was a way of starting a new subject and steering the progress of interaction by adjusting the procedure (see Tanskanen 2014). In each discussion, the start and end was explicated: they could wish each other a "nice evening" or say that it was time to "wrap things up". The end of the online discussion process was anticipated with a phrase: *I guess this is the last job we will be doing together. :)*

The group seemed to overcome uncertainty by tolerating it for a short while, resolving it in a goal-oriented manner by seeking information and help and by supporting the other members with an encouraging response. In such a situation, the activities of the group could easily hit an unresolved existential problem. (Isaacs 2001, 81–82.) While the supervisor was invisible in the background, she was available to comment when necessary. The fact that one group member refers to a question the supervisor had previously made proved during that discussion that the learner had made connections in her mind.

It is noteworthy that the topic initially appeared to the group as unclear but became less confusing as the course progressed, thanks to peer support and the reinforce-

ment of one's ideas. Active participation in the discussion improved the group members' ability to tolerate uncertainty. The ignorance of one member was met with empathy as the other group member belittled her own ignorance in a clarifying follow-up question. The group shared joys and congratulated each other. Encouragement was expressed directly using the first name: *Well done X!* The discussion also showed appreciation of how a well-written study could give food for thought. Stating facts made thoughts tangible, and it was said the discussion helped open one's mind and advanced understanding.

Two of the participants were interested in secondary sources and stopped to discuss the issue. A third participant who had been only an observer thanked the other two using their first names, and thanked for the advice. In general, each participant asked questions and answered them immediately without exception. If the line of discussion was interrupted by another posting, the answer was nonetheless acknowledged by thanking the responder using her first name. The participant who was working on his/her thesis received attention for his/her line of thinking from the other two participants, who would use his/her first name and comment on his/her discussion.

All three students said that the online discussion took up a lot of time. This was because they prepared carefully for the sessions. They scheduled their discussions at a certain time so that all could attend the session at the same time. The group had agreed on two 90-minute real time discussion sessions. The participants kept closely to the topic, although in the early stages, they pondered how long they should continue the conversation. All participants made some observations about their current life situation during the discussions. It was also mentioned regarding the discussions and their outcomes how well the arrangements worked and how good the communication was. One of the participants mentioned this feedback and also thanked the others for the discussion. Working on issues together brought a sense of relief.

The group seemed to maintain until the very end the enthusiasm to find answers to their problems and questions. One factor that underlies this success was the naming of issues: if certain things were unclear, this thought was put into words and recorded in the discussion. Each of the participants presented a topic of their own, in the processing of which the others provided support. The supervisor was separately consulted when necessary, unless she was already participating in the commenting of the discussion at that time.

The participants were quick to take action on issues discussed. They were active and showed initiative. The group did not yet have the innovation pedagogic self-assessment form in use, but they managed, however, to openly share their thoughts and knowledge and skills for the benefit of the others. Each participant steered the thinking of the group towards the goals of the assignment. The group worked together in a constructive manner and the discussions focussed strictly on the assignment topics. (See Räsänen 2014.) The discussion included written notes, which added to the quality and quantity of the shared information. These notes included brief comments on the participant's life situation, schedule and encouragement received. Developing one's own writing skills was a theme that carried through the discussions alongside the actual topics discussed. The presentation style of the group gave useful support to the progress of everyone's personal writing process.

Team building, supporting interaction and creating common practices are at the core of the supervisor's remit. The assignments are easier to complete if the group is genuinely enthusiastic about the topic. Some are motivated by a freedom of choice as well as working on their own actual writing task; having simultaneously a thesis or report to write, while completing this course, inspired the writer to make progress with the writing task. However, most of the participants did not have a writing assignment underway at the time of taking the course. In guidance, this prompted the teachers to suggest that it might be useful to write on any topic that the student is working on for the sake of practice – the idea for a full thesis may surprisingly arise from an initially small task.

Good online assignment and its assessment

The supervisor's role is to give feedback to students on the progress of their learning. Listing the assignments using tracking objects makes the supervisor's work easier, while allowing the student to keep track of his/her own progress. This helps them to keep to the agreed schedule and it is easier for students to ensure that all assignments are completed.

Overlapping assignments and the accumulation of competence makes learning easier for students as they progress. Assignments used in traditional classroom teaching cannot be transferred online as such, without any modification. The assignments should be thoroughly considered, because networked learning is not any less time consuming than normal teaching and guidance. It takes up at least the same amount

of time, if not even more, as in face-to-face instruction. The assignments should be clear, unambiguous and carefully worded, because a poorly set assignment will only bring poor results, as the student may easily misunderstand the assignment.

Seeking clarification for ambiguous wording when working online takes even more time than working face-to-face with the teacher or asking questions on the phone. The use of e-mail can be eliminated by using the common discussion space in the online environment, so that everyone can benefit from the questions and answers. If the supervisor is not available to answer questions online, at least the other members of the group might be able to help. It is a typical planning mistake to reserve too little time for guidance.

Fortunately, the current version of Optima offers several features that facilitate interaction. The wall feature, familiar from Facebook, works well as an information board and as a question and answer column. The group journal is a good example of how to work on reading material as a group, as it makes it easy for students to comment on the ideas and thoughts expressed by the other group members. A personal journal is a suitable tool for student–teacher communications.

Optima also has tools for collaborative content production and editing. In this course, this method would have been better supported by a wiki tool instead of using a group journal in group work. Differentiating different student contributions from a flow of discussion is labour-intensive and the markings cannot be automatically marked as a completed assignment. Since 2015, in the new version of the software there is a feature that shows the number of postings and comments made by a user, but to review the quality of these contributions still requires several clicks.

The intended learning outcomes steer the students' learning process, and clear submission folders make everyone's work easier. The optimal size of a group is 4–6, as this encourages further development of ideas in addition to the mere sharing of them. In a group, students support each other and this gives better control to students over their achievements. Selecting a real writing assignment to work on was seen as a motivating factor. Agreeing on common rules help guarantee successful results for a group. (Nurminen & Laitinen-Väänänen 2015, 22–24.)

The assignments on the 2015 online course in Research communication were divided into five sections, which were to be completed in a certain order. A good online assignment is interactive and clearly explained: the students know what is expected of them, and with whom they should work and when the outcomes must be submit-

ted. The assignments on this course were built so as to allow the student to make progress step by step without the supervisor's constant presence. Learning about the nature of writing assignments would happen gradually, so that one's own writing task would not seem too overwhelming to begin with. In practice, some students would have needed to take even shorter steps in absorbing this type of information.

The online assignments were the following:

- introductory exercise

- weekly reports on discussions held

- project plan on one's own writing assignment

- online language skills assignment

- information search assignment.

The scores in the language skills assignments were briefly reported on. The weekly reports and project plans were uploaded into the submission folder in the agreed schedule. All outputs were free for all to read.

It is essential especially in networked learning to carefully define the assessment criteria for the course beforehand. It is important for the students to know how the different assignments are graded and how they will receive feedback on them. Any time spent on planning the assessment will save time at the time of actual assessment, helps alleviate students' possible disappointments and reduces negative e-mail exchanges following the assessment.

For this course, the following assessment criteria were adopted:

- The course consists of five modules that are completed in a set order.

- The grade for the course is the average score for each assignment. The assessment scale is 1–5.

- Late submissions will result in a deduction in the score (this was agreed in summer 2014).

- The last day for submissions was 15 August 2014/31 July 2015.

- The student must pass all assignments to complete the course.

The assessment criteria were shown on the front page of the learning platform and they were also introduced at the introductory face-to-face meeting. All students felt the criteria were acceptable.

Student feedback

The student feedback on the 2014 course was surprisingly positive. All of the 19 students who responded to the feedback survey completely agreed or partly agreed that the course had been successful. Furthermore, 14 students completely agreed that the course would prove useful for their future studies. However, the views on the content of the course were not as unanimous, as one respondent disagreed that it had been successful and two respondents could not say.

Only four respondents completed the SoleOPS feedback form, but this feedback was highly positive:

> No development suggestions. The course was versatile.

> The assignments corresponded well with the course plan. There was also help available if necessary.

> It was nice to read the comments posted by other students and receive comments on your own postings.

> The assignments were versatile and they were clearly carefully planned. The assignments were also interesting and they supported thesis writing and its planning. The course also helped clarify the thesis writing process as a whole.

> The course opened my eyes to what writing the thesis is like. Writing the thesis is not as simple as I thought. The course supported thesis writing well and the nature of assignments forced me to think about the thesis from different angles. This was great!

> The workload on the course was quite formidable, lots of investigation and reading to be done. This came to me as a surprise but, in hindsight, this was a positive surprise.

> You could only start completing assignments once you had properly familiarised yourself with the topic.

> I learnt a lot on this course, thank you for that.

> Thank you for an interesting and rewarding course!

Based on the feedback on the summer 2014 course, the assignments on the course were relevant and suitably demanding. The schedule did not present problems as there was only one submission date for all assignments at the end of the summer. The feedback stating that "it was nice to read the comments posted by other students and receive comments on your own postings", was interesting. Interaction had not been non-existent, although from the teachers' perspective there had been very little communication.

The summer 2015 course seemed to be the most useful to those who had their own thesis writing project underway. The launch stage of the course is an important one, especially since the course ends during the height of the summer holiday season. This means that the students met for the last time in June, and yet the reporting plan was not written until July.

Writing itself takes time and the process, especially during the summer when students may be out of routine, takes some time to get started. Goals that are set too high and a large workload may seem overwhelming. Breaking a writing task into smaller parts was a revelation, as one student reported, describing how this freed her from her fear of writing. The feedback reflected a whole spectrum of emotions, which the course aroused in students, as shown in one respondent's feedback, in which she enthusiastically told about the development of her own thesis soon to be completed.

Some students had felt that they had little influence on the content of the course. Yet another respondent in the same batch of feedback had felt that they had ample opportunities to influence the content of the course. Overall, the course was felt to be useful and necessary. One student mentioned having overcome her fear of writing, while another respondent said the assignments had been easy. What needs to be considered in the future is how to give students more personal feedback that they call for, and determine what feedback is understood to mean.

Despite the networked learning method offering flexibility, networking opportunities and geographic independence, some student feedback mentioned the usefulness of face-to-face interaction. An extroverted student will favour spoken communication, while an introverted person comes into his/her own creating written content. Therefore, it would be important to be able to make use of Optima's voice recording feature to add a new, spoken dimension to the communication. This would allow

students to choose the mode of communication they are comfortable with. Competence development using tools that feel natural are essential to learning.

Based on the feedback received, it would appear that those who completed the course had a high motivation to do so from the beginning. Individual feedback is an often repeated wish. In addition, one student had felt the topic to be quite difficult to approach without teacher guidance. Another student again mentioned that the assignments had been easy. Learning about RefWorks reference management tool was felt to be especially helpful.

In summer 2016, two students at the final stages of their studies commented about having worked as part of the same group on the course as follows:

1) Happily our group turned out to be great, we shared the same spirit and it was easy to get on with each other, and so the online discussion worked extremely well.

    The best reward of the online discussion was receiving practical tips from each other for our thesis writing, as we were all at very different stages in our thesis work. At least for me personally, who had not even started on my thesis yet, the discussion taught me a great deal. Also the fact that everyone took turns to write a report on the discussion proved a useful exercise in summarising the digressing conversation and pinpointing the essential... this is a skill that will be of use when writing your thesis.

2) The last summer's course was quite useful. I completed the course at the same time as I was writing my thesis, so I was able to make use of the assignments and literature almost directly in my thesis work. The interaction worked well in our discussions, as shown by the high quality of reflection. The best part of the course was the online discussions. They really taught me a lot and were rewarding on many levels. Online courses are much more palatable and easier to commit to, if you can work as a group. It should be mentioned here that online discussions also had their downsides. The discussion platform in Optima was not the best possible, and the discussion did not flow fluently on it. This may be a matter of getting used to.

In a successful discussion, the participants were quick to take action on issues discussed. They were active and showed initiative. The course is yet to take the inno-

vation pedagogic self-assessment form into use, but students managed, however, to openly share their thoughts and knowledge and skills for the benefit of the others. The group worked together in a constructive manner and the discussions focussed strictly on the assignment topics. (See Räsänen 2014.) These notes included brief comments on the participants' life situation, schedule and encouragement received. Developing one's own writing skills was a theme that carried through the discussions alongside the actual topics discussed. Each participant steered the thinking of the group towards the goals of the assignment.

The future of the course

The aim of this article was to establish the factors that affect the success of an online course and how interaction can be managed in networked learning. For this article, the experiences of two teachers of the same course were collated, the first course having been held in summer 2014 and the second one in summer 2015. Compared to the summer 2014 course, the 2015 one was organised differently in many respects. The Optima learning platform has also improved significantly over the years, with new features having been introduced enabling better communication between students.

When the planning for a course on Research communication was first launched in spring 2014, the concept of innovation pedagogy had not yet been adopted at Turku University of Applied Sciences. Innovation pedagogy had been discussed within the organisation and elsewhere, but it was yet to be integrated into Turku University of Applied Sciences' strategy, which happened in spring 2015; following this change, the teachers have actively participated in the Innopeda training.

However, in both editions of the course on Research communication, innovation pedagogical solutions were already adopted. In innovation pedagogy, knowledge is not the starting point from which one moved on to application, and instead the application of new information begins immediately upon acquisition, even before this information has been fully internalised (Penttilä et al. 2014, 164). This approach was adopted in research communication, for example, when learning referencing practices, referencing skills and developing one's own research topic.

Speech is naturally the primary form of communication, which the students were not able to resort to on this course apart from the introductory meeting. Relying on written expression only may be challenging for some students, so short video clips could

bring welcome change to the communication. An expressive speaker or a slow writer would benefit from being able to create videos or voice recordings at the different stages of the writing process. An extroverted student will favour spoken communication, while an introverted person comes into his/her own creating written content. Therefore, it would be important to be able to make use of Optima's voice recording feature to add a new, spoken dimension to the communication. This would allow students to choose the mode of communication they are comfortable with. Competence development using tools that feel natural are essential to learning.

The conclusion can be made that the methods of working now in use give an advantage to those who already are strong writers. The course helped strengthen students' text production skills and they were encouraged to produce reportive text. In the future, more attention should be paid to those writers who feel stressed about writing or have a fear of writing. Based on the feedback received, it would appear that those who completed the course had a high motivation to do so from the beginning. As not all students can work in a goal-oriented manner, it is important in the future to discuss issues related to motivation or changes in assignments. Another point to consider is the actual work load on the course: how realistic is the estimated 27 hours of work? In reality, students who fared well on the course worked hard and spent the designed number of hours on completing the assignments.

The relevance of the content to each individual student varies. When discussing topics as a team, they will become clearer in moments of uncertainty and things will fall into place. In a skilfully set assignment and in well delivered guidance, the questions focus on the matter at hand. When the group members have the necessary skills to seek help in problem situations, networked learning can be highly rewarding. This requires that observations, views and emotions are named and expressed verbally, so that they can be placed under discussion. Despite the networked learning method offering flexibility, networking opportunities and geographic independence, some student feedback has mentioned the usefulness of face-to-face interaction. Networked learning is not any easier on the student than traditional learning, and therefore, an online course has to be well-designed to support high-quality learning.

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Learning oral Swedish skills on an online course

Pirjo Kavander

Abstract

In this article, I will first discuss the online course on oral Swedish skills for the journalism students of Turku University of Applied Sciences' Arts Academy, and secondly the summer course in Swedish offered to all Turku University of Applied Sciences' students specifically from the perspective of learning oral skills and passing the oral skills test. I am focussing particularly on the questions of whether an oral working proficiency can be studied through a networked learning solution and if language skills can be reliably assessed in this framework. In the final part of the article, I will discuss as separate questions the more general issues of quality assurance and challenges in course provision, the experiences of teachers and students, and what can be learnt from them.

I will first describe the practical organisation of the course on oral Swedish skills for 21 journalism students, who are currently completing their practical training in different parts of Finland and abroad, and how the course was completed and the final oral examination arranged. The second topic of investigation is the Swedish oral skills summer course taken by 72 students from many different disciplines, and its assignment formats, progress and final oral exam.

At the final part of the article I will provide answers to such questions as how the quality assurance of course work can be ascertained, what kind of challenges were met during the courses, what kind of experience the teachers and students had of working online on a course to achieve working oral proficiency in Swedish, and what could be learnt from all of this. My findings turned out to be quite encouraging. The key is to keep abreast with pedagogical and technological development, to experi-

ment with and explore new solutions, and a positive working atmosphere and good experiences will inspire students to high-level achievements that can be verified.

According to the Turku University of Applied Sciences' strategy, virtual environments are among the chosen learning environments for our students, and the shift is away from traditional lecture-based classroom teaching. One of the reasons for such choices is cuts in the funding of education, which emphasises the importance of students' readiness to study independently and to take responsibility for their own learning process.

In other words, it is time to see learning as something that can take place in different environments, different points in time, using a variety of tools. Learning must no longer be seen as a process anchored to a certain method. However, it should be remembered that in the pedagogical approach at universities of applied sciences, language and communication studies are strongly working life oriented and field-specific, and the learning process is closely linked with authentic working life environments and tasks.

I have held these principles in mind when testing and developing the learning and practising of Swedish oral skills, as well as the oral exam as part of my own courses organised in the Optima learning environment.

Svenska i arbetslivet – journalist students learning oral working proficiency in Swedish through networked learning

The course on professional Swedish, entitled Svenska i arbetslivet, includes units for oral skills (1 cr) and written skills (2 cr). Having passed the oral and written skills exam, the student is given a grade in both units and an official certificate for Swedish language proficiency, as provided in the Government decree.

Students' background

The students of course in journalism at Turku University of Applied Sciences Arts Academy passed their Swedish exams in spring 2015. Since the students were about to embark on their practical training period, the degree programme had requested an online course. The course was joined by 21 students, some of whom studied from locations around Finland and some even from as far as South America. Against this

background, the teacher was faced with an interesting challenge not only in terms of teaching written skills but, most of all, oral skills in Swedish and staging the oral skills exam. The challenge was an inspiring and a very exciting one.

Course content

The training of oral skills began with a series of discussion materials uploaded into the Optima online learning environment. The materials included pair exercises, with themes ranging from personal introductions, talking about studies and work and a job interview to hosting a company guest and small talk. The materials contained the dialogues in Finnish and Swedish, so those working in pairs could easily check each other's lines. As the course was taking place online, the students were instructed to practice the exercises outside the course with a friend, who could also benefit from a drill in spoken Swedish or could serve as an assistant giving guidance and correcting the expressions. This instruction seemed to be practical, and students did not report coming across any problems with this format of exercise.

Course progress

Quite soon after the course started, the students were asked to make a short voice recording, in which they tell in Swedish about their duties during the practical training, about the place they are working in and how the practical training is going. The students were asked to listen to each other's recordings and then write a short reply in Swedish to the creator of the recording.

The second oral target of practice and course assignment was a phone conversation. The learning platform in Optima was uploaded with suitable material for practising, including useful phrases and pair exercises, which the students were instructed to make use of, in addition to general conversational material for the course, to be used with a friend outside the course. The materials included a wealth of Swedish-language control material for the purpose. Following the required basic practising, students were asked to pair up with another student in the group, regardless of geographic location, with whom to start having phone calls, for example, through Skype. The students were free to choose their topics for the conversations, but the topic of the actual course assignment was to agree on a job interview.

The completion of the assignment was verified by means of a written report, which the study pair was required to submit to the group's shared area in the learning environment in addition to reading the reports of other study pairs. Extra points were given if the short report was written in Swedish. In the report, the study pair was asked to describe what was challenging in the phone conversation, how well the pair had progressed and how the conversation had felt, and what they had learnt by the end of the assignment.

Muntlig nyhetsrapport, an oral description of a news item, served as the actual professional oral language skills test. The student was instructed to talk in Swedish about an interesting news item, as he/she would when presenting news at work. If the student so wished, the topic could also be about journalism in general. This assignment was completed by creating a video recording to be uploaded into the submission folder shared by the whole group. Each course participant was required to view a number of recordings and comment in writing on the language skills as demonstrated in the recording from the perspective of comprehension.

The instructions for each of the three oral skills assignments emphasised the importance of the practising process. However, the learning process would culminate in the assignment being submitted onto the learning platform in Optima and shared with the rest of the group. The feedback comments were expected to be positive and encouraging and focus on the articulation, fluency, comprehension and clear pronunciation.

The oral final exam

At the end of the course, the students took an oral exam in the networked learning environment. For this purpose, the teacher timed the form functionality on the platform, as this seemed the most reliable technical exam environment. In this environment, the students were able to open their personal form only once during a certain period, and the exam assignment had to be completed and saved at one go. The time bracket allowed for the exam was 20 minutes. A few days prior to the exam, instructions for the exam were released on the learning platform to help students prepare for the exam. The students were instructed to check that the video camera recording in Optima was functioning properly and it was explained that the exam form could be accessed only once, after which the student should read and follow the instructions on screen to complete the exam without leaving the page and while keeping an

eye on the timer to leave enough time to make the recording. The students were also informed at this stage that the length of the oral presentation was to be 5–10 minutes. Students were allowed to use a short list of key words as support, but reading out a written presentation would cause a deduction in the grade.

This time, the topic was an address to visitors at a newspaper's editorial office, and instructions for the assignment read as follows: "In this exam, your role is to talk briefly about the editorial work of journalist students at the editorial office of newspaper TUTKA, what your duties involve, how many students there are working at the office, what your days consist of, how much time you spend editing a newspaper during your studies, what kind of things you are learning and what kind of publication TUTKA is. Your role is also to greet the visitors, serve coffee and tell them about the tour you are about to take at the editorial office."

Svenska i arbetslivet – online summer course in Swedish

Following the spring course, Turku University of Applied Sciences launched a summer course in 2015 in working life Swedish, *Svenska i arbetslive*t – an online course (3 cr) open to students of all degree programmes. The oral skills section, *Muntlig kommunikation* (1 cr) was joined by 72 students.

Students' background

This course was joined by students from a wide range of fields, including mechanical engineering, construction, social and health care, logistics, performing arts, business, design and animation. This was a different, but an equally inspiring and interesting challenge for the teacher. A large group with widely varied backgrounds looking for oral skills relevant to their respective fields and anchored on their future roles in the world of work – how to resolve this conundrum?

Course content

The first step was to describe the content of the oral skills section in the Optima learning environment (as was done with the written section): "In the oral skills section, you will learn from the very beginning to practice your oral language skills. You will learn how to introduce yourself, how to talk about your work and business

life, to discuss your employer or working community, what its basic operations are and about customer service. You will practice communicating and using your skills in a customer-oriented manner in typical spoken communication situations at the workplace, including presenting products and services, agreeing on customer meetings and conversing with your customers. And as the final assignment, you will of course want to succeed in a job interview, using your oral Swedish skills!" For this purpose, specific instructions for each four assignments were provided in the learning platform: oral exercises *(Muntliga övningar)*, get to know your fellow students *(Lära känna varandara),* oral presentations *(Muntliga presentationer)* and job interview *(Ansökningsintervju).*

Course progress

Since the course participants represented a wide range of different disciplines and did not necessarily know any of the other participants, the students were first instructed to improve their oral skills *(Muntliga övningar)* as follows:

- On the left-hand side of the Optima screen you will find oral exercises for you to complete either with a friend or on your own. These materials contain many types of everyday scenarios, you will practice talking about your studies, your job, to manage a job interview, to guide visitors at work, to talk on the phone, to participate in a company visit, to introduce your company, to hold your own presentation at a trade fare and at a meeting.

- Be sure to also read aloud Swedish-language texts (on topics that interest you or are relevant to your field), as this is a highly beneficial form of practice.

- By listening to Swedish being spoken, you will learn how to speak Swedish. When listening to others, repeat the sentences after them. The television and radio (news presenters usually speak clearly) are a good tool, as well as MP3 files provided on the "Abi-treenit" website for revising for the school-leaving exams and via the *8sidor lättläst media* link.

- You may know someone who speaks Swedish quite well or needs practice just like you. Make it your goal this summer to engage in everyday practice whenever possible. Completely ordinary, light-hearted conversations will help your fluency and can be fun for your friends, too.

The actual learning platforms for oral skills practice for the course were the discussion forum, the oral presentations and the job interview. At the end of the course, an oral exam was carried out in Optima.

It was emphasised to the students in the assignment instructions that the practising process was the most important element of the course. The oral assignments were therefore to be seen only as awards witnessing the student's progress. The first assignment was to upload a personal introduction as a voice recording onto the first learning platform. The students could tell their name, age, field of study, talk about their hobbies and interests, and share the future plans. For the rest of the course, the students were expected to share small recordings, including videos, with other course participants. In this way students would first get to know each other and then share their learning experiences and general feelings during the summer. Some would perhaps find themselves a pair for the practical exercises. The teacher's idea was that starting with a voice recording and moving only then to video recordings would gently ease the students into working in this method and completing the assignments.

The oral presentation assignment was backed up by material for independent study, made available through the learning platform. The students were instructed to practice and then complete two assignments:

1. First choose a company or an organisation where you have worked or would like to work as the target audience for your oral presentation. There should be no Swedish-language material available on the company or organisation. If you cannot find a suitable company, you can also describe a likely or typical employer in your field, its business sector and your likely role in it with your educational background, and its interesting, positive and negative aspects.

Be prepared to talk briefly about the following: company name, when it was established, where it is located, its company form, its business sector, the products/services it offers, who the target customers are, how many employees it has. However, concentrate mainly on your role and duties, and describe the pros and cons of your job and what your days consist of.

2. In the previous recording, you were talking about your role and duties in the company or organisation you work for or would like to work for. Follow the same instructions when completing this second assignment, and upload it to the same oral presentations learning platform under "Product/service presentation".

In this recording, you are expected to introduce a product or service (which can be imaginary) at a client meeting or trade fair, and you can agree to visit your client at a later date to carry out, for example, a needs assessment on site. Make sure you appear on the video at least briefly so that I can be sure that you are giving the presentation yourself, and also show a short, written support material in one way or another (as if you were giving a PowerPoint presentation or using a flipboard as part of your talk).

Once students had submitted these two assignments, they were required to view the presentations of at least two other students and write encouraging comments to them in Swedish.

For the last oral assignment, the students had relevant practice material available in the learning platform to prepare for a job interview. The materials in the oral exercises section also included practical examples of how to talk about oneself. Students were instructed to prepare for the job interview assignment imagining a situation at a job interview where they were asked to tell about themselves in Swedish. What would you say and how well would you manage? This was the only assignment that was not shared with the other course members. The students were asked to record a few minutes long video clip which in the future would help them succeed in a face-to-face interview held in Swedish and that they could also enclose with future job applications. It was again emphasised that good preparation and practising was essential. The submitted assignment would be the best one of the many, and one that the student him- or herself would be happy to enclose with a job application. Naturally, one of the purposes of a video assignment seen only by the student and the teacher was to give the teacher further information to support the upcoming assessment of the student's oral skills.

The oral final exam

Based on the experiences gained during the online course for the journalist students, the final exam was carried out and instructed in a similar manner: the format was a timed form functionality, with the form accessible only once during a certain period, and the assignment was to be completed at one go within a time limit of 20 minutes. The students were similarly given instructions in the learning platform about the exam and on how to prepare for it. The topic would be directly linked with those practiced during the course. The students were instructed to check that the video camera recording in Optima was functioning properly and it was explained that the exam form could be accessed only once, after which the student should read and follow the in-

structions on screen to complete the exam without leaving the page and while keeping an eye on the timer to leave enough time to make the recording. The talk would be 5–10 minutes long and students were allowed to use only a very short list of keywords.

Quality assurance of the course exams

The assessment of oral skills in a networked learning environment sets specific requirements for ensuring appropriate assessment. Three different methods were applied to meet these requirements.

In all graded oral assignments as well as in the oral exam, the students were instructed to video themselves during the performance. In course assignments, showing their faces was sufficient to begin with, and later students could appear on the video partially or seen from the side. In the oral exam, the student's face was required to be in full view throughout the performance.

The oral exam was conducted using the form functionality in Optima so that the students were assigned a certain time slot when the area would be accessible to them. They were instructed to use a separate or integrated web cam and a headset, and the oral performance was given a maximum duration, e.g. 3–5 minutes.

The front page view in the Optima learning platform as well as the preliminary written instructions given to students prior to the exam clearly stated that "If the teacher notices anything suspicious during the oral assignments or oral exam, the teacher may call the student for an additional personal meeting."

In addition to the normal oral assignments, the final oral exam obtained a sample of the students' skills in a situation that they could not practice beforehand or retake numerous times. The short time slot in the form functionality did not allow for long preparation. As was instructed in the preliminary instructions, the students were allowed only a short list of key words and using complete scripts was not allowed.

Challenges

Regarding the oral Swedish online course for the journalist students, no major technical challenges were anticipated. Students in this field were known to be confident users of the required technology. It was interesting, however, to see how logical and

fluent the oral assignment would be in terms of their skills level. Another interesting point from the assessment perspective was to see how compatible the level of the oral exam would prove compared to the skills shown in the oral course assignments.

In contrast, when planning the online summer course, the heterogeneous backgrounds of the students raised some concerns. Behind the whole planning process was the question of bringing students of all possible backgrounds to study working life Swedish from a relevant perspective to each one of them, as a group, a question that really stretched the teacher's pedagogical and developmental skills.

Another concern was the large number of students. How could the teacher guarantee fair assessment for everyone in such a large group? Some of the summer course students represented disciplines where communication technology skills are not as central, so one concern was whether these students would be able to complete their assignments during the weeks when the teacher was not available.

Teacher's experiences

Networked learning and bringing learning into new environments are among the leading trends in education at the moment. If the teacher wishes to make better than average use of the Optima learning environment and bring new elements into it, it requires fairly advanced online teaching skills as well as robust technical skills from the teacher. Online teaching and networked learning can be brought, for example, to a blog environment. However, regardless of the environment used, one rule for the teacher remains: constantly develop your technical skills.

It is immensely satisfying to succeed in creating a pedagogically inspiring and technically viable exercise and exam environment specifically for oral language skills and to notice that students' skills genuinely benefit from it. While some students may never achieve a very advanced level in their oral skills, it does not diminish the teacher's joy of noticing that even these students still gain more confidence when practising and using their oral language skills. When this happens, all the time spent, all the hard work, problems and trials and errors when building the environment, are soon forgotten.

Students with poor language skills can benefit from the possibility offered by the online course to prepare in peace and quiet and to practice in their own time with the help of resource materials while learning and receiving help and encouragement

from the fellow students by viewing their performances uploaded into the learning environment. This is a key point that should be emphasised in instructions: learn from the group, practice, record, listen to yourself and improve your work, then submit your best outcome. This method fuels students' skills and motivation to succeed and their willingness to take responsibility for their own learning.

Emphasising correct usage and drilling grammatical points is, of course, an important part of language learning. However, on these two courses, at least from the teacher's perspective, grammar remains secondary and the main focus was on building confidence to express oneself in a foreign language. Based on the teacher's experience, students were more easily encouraged to use their oral skills when there was no pressure to produce grammatically correct language.

Students' experiences

There was one person among the participants of the Svenska i arbetslivet summer course who contacted the teacher before the course about a speech disorder. The student was worried that stuttering would impair the performance in the oral skills section. At the end of the summer, when the oral assignments and the oral exams were submitted, this student did not stand out in any way from the rest of the group. Another student caught the attention of the teacher during the first assignment of the summer course. The student had recorded the personal introduction on video and it was clear that the student had some difficulty in speech production and articulation. The introduction was, however, given with a happy smiling face, presumably thanks to practice and drilling, and this may well speak volumes about how the student personally experienced the situation. The student had taken the time to practice the talk, perhaps made several retakes, and there was no need to be nervous about the performance in a similar way as might be the case in a classroom situation.

One student feedback revealed: "I have never completed a whole course online. I had my reservations to begin with. However, the method was really inspiring, I learnt a lot and the technology presented no problems".

The only somewhat negative feedback concerned the process of uploading recordings to Optima. Those who had recorded their assignments on smartphones or as large files had great difficulties uploading their assignments. When taking the oral exam, some students may have been nervous and therefore found the uploading dif-

ficult or even forgotten to do so. These are eventualities that do not exist in face-to-face teaching. When problems such as these occurred, the students could not get assistance until the teacher had returned from her holiday. These problems did not occur with journalist students, who are well-versed in different technologies, and even if they had, they would have been able to contact the teacher immediately, unlike the summer course students. Similarly, there were a few cases on the summer course where the teacher had to chase the student for the oral exam recording, as this had not been uploaded into the submission folder. Although such technical glitches may be alarming or frustrating for the students, the situations were resolved and the students did not let this negative experience show in their feedback.

No downright negative comments or criticism were presented in the feedback on either Svenska i arbetslivet oral skills courses.

Lessons learnt

To conclude, it is useful to reflect on the lessons learnt from the perspective of the teacher's professional development. From the teacher's perspective, the lessons to take away from these experiences could be summarised as follows:

- Keep abreast with the latest networked learning technology and keep learning.

- The student's learning experience is one that is shared by the student and the teacher, and valuable to both.

- There are many ways besides the traditional ones to achieve good learning outcomes.

- If a student feels positive about the overall learning experience, resolving any technical issues is usually easy.

This is why the teacher has to possess the will to develop and find feasible and easily accessible methods for uploading their voice and video recording onto the learning platform. Many students need clear guidance and instructions to use these technologies. The Wall functionality, a shared messaging area, in a learning platform is likely to be useful and popular with future users. This is an excellent communication channel where students can quickly ask each other for advice and find a partner for a pair exercise. It can also be used by the teacher for quick, general instructions and any messaging between a student and teacher will be visible and benefit all course members.

Tiivistelmät

Minna Scheinin

Tulevaisuuden oppimisen muotoilu – kuinka innovaatiopedagogiikka lisää digitalisaatiota

Tämän julkaisun esipuhe suuntaa lukijoiden ajatukset miettimään, miten korkeakoulutuksen tulee vastata muuttuvan yhteiskunnan haasteisiin. Tulevaisuuden työelämätaidot eivät ehkä ole ennustettavissa, mutta silti koulutuksen pitäisi tähdätä siihen, että opiskelijoilla olisi valmistuessaan sellaisia tietoja ja taitoja, että he menestyisivät työelämässään ja pystyisivät tavoittelemaan jopa kokonaisvaltaisemmin hyvää elämää. Huomisen työelämäkompetenssit, eli tiedot, taidot ja asenteet, sisältävät ammatillisen ydinosaamisen lisäksi sellaisia taitoja, joita ei ole sidottu varsinaisesti mihinkään ammattialaan. Tällaisia geneerisiä taitoja ovat mm. hyvät tiimi- ja verkostointitaidot, ongelmanratkaisutaidot sekä eri asioiden ja asiantuntijuuksien yhdistämisen osaaminen. Turun ammattikorkeakoulussa kutsumme näitä taitoja innovaatiokompetensseiksi, ja oppimisen lähestymistapana meillä on innovaatiopedagogiikka.

Digitalisaatio on ehdottomasti yksi suuri yhteiskunnallinen muutos, joka vaikuttaa koulutuksen muotoihin ja sisältöihin. Oppimista tapahtuu jo nyt monimuotoisissa oppimisympäristöissä. Sen myötä pitää kiinnittää huomiota myös siihen, miten opettajan työ muuttuu ja mitkä ovat opiskelijan ja opettajan roolit ja vastuut oppimisessa. Sosiaalisen median myötä oppijat ovat aktiivisia erilaisissa ammatillisissa ja muissa yhteisöissä, joissa myös tapahtuu oppimista koko ajan. Näin ollen formaalien ja informaalien ympäristöjen ja yhteisöjen rajat muuttuvat, ja voidaankin kysyä, miten oppimisen suunnittelussa otetaan huomioon tällaiset muutokset.

Opettajuus on suuressa muutoksessa. Tämän julkaisun artikkeleissa esitellään hyviä esimerkkejä siitä, miten digitalisaation muutokseen on reagoitu korkeakouluissa. Opettajat ovat rohkeasti lähteneet muuttamaan opetuksen käytänteitä, ja haasteita käsitellään avoimesti ja rakentavasti.

I
New Communication Channels in Professional Settings
Monimuotoinen viestintä työelämässä ja opetuksessa

Mervi Varhelahti & Marjatta Rännäli

Viestintäosaaminen virtuaalisessa työssä – opetammeko oikeita asioita?

Digitalisaatio ja globalisaatio muuttavat toimintaympäristöjämme. Nämä muutokset ovat mahdollistaneet työn tekemisen paikasta riippumatta, ja virtuaalisen työn osuus kasvaa toimialasta riippumatta. Virtuaalisessa työssä korostuu viestintäosaaminen teknologian välityksellä ja sekä kulttuurien ymmärtämisen osaaminen. Nämä osaamistarpeet tulee huomioida ammattikorkeakoulujen opetuksessa ja opetussuunnitelmatyössä, sillä ammattikorkeakoulujen tehtävänä on tuottaa osaavaa työvoimaa markkinoille.

Tässä artikkelissa tarkastellaan osaamista työelämän virtuaalisissa ja monikulttuurisissa viestintätilanteissa erityisesti silloin, kun viestitään englanniksi. Mitä viestintäosaamista halutaan työelämässä kehittää? Vaikuttaako ymmärrys kulttuurieroista viestintään? Tarkastelu pohjautuu sähköisten kyselyjen vastauksiin (N=58) sekä viiteen työelämäedustajan teemahaastatteluun. Sähköiset kyselyt analysoitiin käyttäen kuvailevia tilastollisia menetelmiä sekä ristiintaulukointia. Haastatteluissa käytettiin temaattista sisällönanalyysiä.

Tuloksien mukaan eniten oli tarvetta kehittää virtuaalisiin samanaikaisiin keskusteluihin ja neuvotteluihin liittyvää osaamista. Tämä viittaa videoneuvottelujen lisääntymiseen työelämäviestinnässä. Tuloksissa ilmeni myös, että vastaajat ymmärtävät hyvin kulttuurien erilaisuuden virtuaalisessa viestinnässä ja sopeuttavat omaa viestintäänsä vastapuolen mukaan.

Ammattikorkeakouluissa tulee ensinnäkin määritellä, mitä viestintäosaaminen nykyään on. Toiseksi tämä osaaminen tulee integroida opetukseen. Erityisesti videoneuvotteluosaamiselle englanniksi ja monikulttuurisissa ryhmissä on kysyntää.

Ellen Pflaum

Luokkaopetuksen ja verkkotehtävien sulauttaminen oppimisalustoilla korkeakouluopetuksessa

Korkeakoulut tarjoavat opiskelijoilleen usein verkko-oppimismateriaaleja oppimisalustoillaan. Oppimisalustoja käytetään kuitenkin yleisesti vain täydentämään luentojen ja seminaarien antia sekä paikkana, jossa luento- ja lisämateriaaleja voidaan jakaa opiskelijoiden käyttöön 24/7. Oppimisalustojen tarjoamia didaktisia tai teknisiä mahdollisuuksia käytetään vain harvoin tehokkaasti hyväksi ja erilaiset työkalut ja interaktiiviset ominaisuudet integroituvat vain harvoin luokkaopetukseen.

Tämänhetkinen kehitys viittaa siihen, että olemme vähitellen siirtymässä pelkän sisällön ja kurssi-informaation tarjoamisesta sosiaalisten oppimistilanteiden, kuten kriittisen ajattelun, ongelmanratkaisun, yhteistyön ja opiskelijalähtöisen oppimisen hyödyntämiseen (Johnson ym. 2016, 14). Verkko-oppimistehtävät tarjoavat hyvät mahdollisuudet harjoitella näitä metataitoja sekä valmistaa opiskelijoita tulevaisuuden työtehtäviin.

Koska useimmat korkeakouluopettajat eivät voi ottaa käyttöön kokonaan uusia oppimisympäristöjä, on tärkeää löytää ratkaisuja siihen, miten opettajat voivat hyödyntää jo olemassa olevia ympäristöjä tehokkaasti ja siten tukea aktiivisia oppimisprosesseja korkeakoulutuksessa.

Tehokkaat ja toimivat oppimisen oppimisenhallintajärjestelmät tarjoavat paljon pedagogisia mahdollisuuksia tukea oppimistulosten saavuttamista. Niiden avulla voidaan yhdistää opiskelijoiden tarpeet ja tottumukset opiskelijalähtöiseksi kokonaisuudeksi. Opiskelijat voivat itse valita käyttämänsä materiaalit, opiskelemansa sisällöt, aihealueet sekä käytetyt esimerkkitapaukset oman ammatillisen taustansa, kiinnostuksen kohteidensa ja tarpeidensa mukaan (Bitkom 2013, 5).

Yksilötasolla emme voi osata kaikkea, mutta meidän pitää tietää mistä hakea tietoa, osata arvioida sitä sekä käyttää ja jakaa tietoa verkostoissamme (Yang 2009, 9). Tämän vuoksi oppimista ei voida pitää yksilösuorituksena, vaan siinä on kysymys verkostoitumisesta, viestinnästä ja yhteistyöstä. Opiskelijat lähtevät liikkeelle olemassa olevasta tiedosta sekä luovat uusia yhteyksiä verkostojensa ja yhteistyön avulla (Siemens & Tittenberger 2009, 10). Oppimisalustaa tulisikin niin ollen tarkastella opiskelijan henkilökohtaisena verkkokeskuksena, ja sen tulisi tarjota työkaluja ja

ominaisuuksia, joiden avulla opiskelija voi kerätä, järjestää ja jakaa tietoa, taitoja ja erilaisia materiaaleja. Näin tuetaan sitä sekä formaalia että informaalia taitojen ja osaamisen rakentumista, jota opiskelijat tulevaisuuden työelämässä tarvitsevat.

Artikkelissa käytetään esimerkkeinä kahta sulautuvan oppimisen lähestymistapaa, joissa oppimisalusta voi mukautua täysin opiskelijoiden tarpeisiin:

• Käänteinen luokkahuone: Opiskelijat perehtyvät verkossa oleviin opiskelumateriaaleihin, esim. teksteihin, videoihin, oppikirjoihin etukäteen ennen kontaktituntia. Kontaktitapaamisen aikana keskitytään vuorovaikutukseen, viestintään ja yhteistyöhön, joka perustuu etukäteen hankittuun tietoon.

• Ongelmaperustainen oppiminen: Kontaktitapaamisen aikana ongelmaa käsitellään yksityiskohtaisesti koko ryhmän kesken. Oppimisalustalla on materiaaleja, jotka auttavat ongelman ratkaisussa. Opiskelijaryhmä voi täydentää, jakaa ja ryhmitellä niitä sekä keskustella niistä verkkoympäristössä.

Kimmo Kallama

Ohjauksen kehittäminen monimuotopedagogisessa YAMK-koulutuksessa. Case Satakunnan ammattikorkeakoulun liiketalouden YAMK-tutkinto

Tämä artikkeli vastaa kysymykseen, miten voidaan kehittää tutkivan ja sulautuvan oppimisen pedagogiikkoja soveltavaa YAMK-koulutusta niin, että opiskelijan ohjauskokemus on mahdollisimman hyvä, mahdollisimman moni opiskelija etenee valmistumiseen normiajassa ja opiskelijakohtaiseen ohjaukseen käytettyä työaikaa voidaan vähentää. Tutkivan oppimisen pedagogiikkaan liittyvä sosiaalinen oppiminen, vuorovaikutteinen reflektointi, vertaisoppiminen ja joustava sulautuva ohjaus tarjoavat tähän työkaluja.

Johtaminen ja palveluliiketoiminta koulutusohjelmassa on kolme suuntautumista: johtamisen suuntautuminen, oikeudellinen suuntautuminen sekä asiakasosaamisen suuntautuminen. Valmistuvat opiskelijat suorittavat joko tradenomi (YAMK) (johtaminen ja oikeudellinen) tai restonomi (YAMK) (asiakasosaaminen) tutkinnon. Koulutus on tarkoitettu suoritettavaksi osa-aikaisesti työn ohella. Pedagogiikan ydinperiaatteena on tutkiva oppiminen. Tutkivan oppimisen mallissa toteutuvat vertaistuki ja jaettu asiantuntijuus. Opiskelijat suorittavat yksittäisiä opintojaksoja pienryhmissä erityisesti ensimmäisenä opiskeluvuonna kehittäen yhdessä toimimisen taitojaan, tutustuen toisiinsa ja muodostaen tukiverkostoja. Myös opinnäytetyöskentelyssä opiskelijakollegoiden asiantuntemus, yhteistyö ja tuki ovat keskeisiä.

Tutkivan, sulautuvan verkko-oppimisen toteutus edellyttää, että työskentelyn organisointi kokonaisuudessaan sekä työvälineet ja resurssit ovat tarkoituksenmukaisia, oppimisen tavoitteet ovat tiedossa ja niiden saavuttamiseksi käytetyt käytännön toimet on suunniteltu huolella. Sekä opettajan että opiskelijan sitoutuminen prosessiin on onnistumisen kannalta oleellista.

Sulautuva ohjaus osana tutkivan oppimisen mallia edellyttää sekä opiskelijalta että ohjaajalta valmiutta kokeilla erilaisia ohjausmenetelmiä ja -työkaluja sekä arvioida niiden toimivuutta kriittisesti. Se edellyttää myös nykyaikaisten monikanavaisten medioitten käyttötaitoja, vuorovaikutusosaamista sekä yhteisöllisyyden taitoja. En-

nen kaikkea sulautuva ohjaus edellyttää suunnitelmallisuutta sekä toimijoitten sitoutumista sovittuun.

Opiskelijan tulee olla aktiivinen oppimisprosessin toimija, ja ohjaajan tulee puolestaan muuttaa oma roolinsa prosessin johtajasta valmentajan ja mentorin suuntaan. Ohjaajan tulee hallita ohjauksen perusprosessit ja pitää opiskelija ja hänen tarpeena ohjauksen keskiössä. Ilman motivaatiota ja kykyä on vaikea lähteä kehittämään uutta. Neuvonta- ja ohjaushenkilökunnalta edellytetään neuvonta- ja ohjaustaitoja ja ammatillista osaamista sekä organisaation johdolta tukea ja sitoutumista uudenlaisen oppimis- ja ohjauskulttuurin edistämiseksi. Opettajan rooli muuttuu tiedonjakajasta ja säätelijästä valmentajaksi sekä ajatusten jakamisen ja kehittämisen mahdollistajaksi. Opetushenkilöstön valmennuksellisen osaamisen ylläpito ja parantaminen onkin ammattikorkeakoulun tärkeimpiä tulevaisuuden menestystekijöitä.

Leena Sääski

Verkko-opetuksen ongelmakohtia

Artikkelissa tarkastellaan verkko-opetuksen haasteita ja ongelmakohtia verkko-opettajan näkökulmasta. Opetushenkilökunnan verkkoviestintätaidoilla ja asenteella opiskelijoita kohtaan on suuri merkitys siinä, miten myönteisen kokemuksen opiskelija saa digitaalisesta oppimisympäristöstä.

Verkko-opetuksessa opettajan työ on etupainotteista verrattuna perinteiseen opetukseen, jossa opettaja voi tuottaa opetusmateriaalia vähän kerrallaan opetusjakson aikana. Verkossa opintojakson tulisi olla valmiina kokonaisuudessaan ennen opintojakson alkamista. Kun opettaja suunnittelee verkko-opintojaksoa, hänen kannattaa varata riittävästi aikaa suunnitteluun ennen kuin opintojakso alkaa.

Ajankäyttö verkossa voi yllättää. Opettajalta kuluu paljon aikaa verkkotehtävien tarkistamiseen, vaikka teknisiä apuvälineitä tähän olisikin käytettävissä. Lisäksi opiskelijat odottavat, että opettaja on läsnä verkossa samalla tavalla aktiivisesti kuin luokkahuonetilanteessa. Opettajan tulisi tehdä itsensä näkyväksi ja läsnä olevaksi verkko-opetuksessa tehtävien arvioinnin ja palautteen annon lisäksi.

 Oppilaitoksen tulisi panostaa verkko-oppimisalustan ja verkkoluentojärjestelmien tekniseen tukeen. Teknisten välineiden toimivuus luo hyvän ja miellyttävän oppimisympäristön opiskelijoille sekä vahvistaa opiskelumotivaatiota. Kirjaston henkilökunnalla on keskeinen rooli opetuksen tukemisessa. Verkkojulkaisujen on oltava helposti opiskelijoiden saatavilla.

Kalliopi Skarli

Oppimisen hallintajärjestelmän hyödyntäminen suurten ryhmien monimuoto-opetuksessa

Korkeakouluissa käytetään opetuksen ja ohjauksen tukena erilaisia oppimisenhallintajärjestelmiä (LMS). Oppimisenhallintajärjestelmät ovat kehittyneet ja vallanneet alaa jopa siinä määrin, että niiden käyttö ja hallinta voi muodostua ylitsepääsemättömäksi niille, jotka eivät ole alusta alkaen olleet mukana hyödyntämässä opetusteknologiaa. Korkeakoulutuksen suppenevat resurssit, entistä suuremmat ryhmäkoot ja integroidut opettajatiimien vetämät kurssit ovat omalta osaltaan lisänneet oppimisenhallintajärjestelmien merkitystä.

Artikkelissa käsitellään kirjoittajan omien kokemusten pohjalta yhden oppimisenhallintajärjestelmän kehitystä kymmenen viime vuoden kuluessa. Lisäksi artikkeli käsittelee käytännön esimerkkien avulla oppimisenhallintajärjestelmän käyttöönottoa ja hyödyntämistä etenkin monimuoto-opetuksessa suurilla ryhmillä. Lopuksi artikkelissa pohditaan oppimisenhallintajärjestelmien käyttöä sekä opettajien ammatillisen kehittymisen tulevaisuudennäkymiä.

Mari Linna & Annika Valo

Kohti kielten käänteistä verkko-opetusta HILL-konseptia käyttäen

Kerromme tässä artikkelissa Satakunnan ammattikorkeakoulun (SAMK) liiketalouden aikuisopiskelijoiden kieltenopetuksesta. Keskitymme kuvaamaan pedagogista muutosta käänteiseen verkko-opetukseen HILL-konseptia hyödyntäen kieltenopettajan näkökulmasta. Esittelemme lähtökohtamme, syyt jotka johtivat muutokseen sekä tämänhetkiset opetuskäytäntömme.

Opetuksemme perustuu monimuoto-opetuksen ja käänteisen opetuksen malleihin. Olemme pyrkineet ottamaan molemmista malleista parhaiten sopivimmat periaatteet opetukseemme.

Käytämme verkko-opetuksessa SAMK:lle luotua verkkoluentojärjestelmää, HILL-konseptia, sekä Moodle-oppimisympäristöä. Opiskelijat voivat osallistua tunneille verkon kautta HILLin avulla. Opettaja voi jakaa verkossa olevat opiskelijat pienryhmiin, joissa he voivat harjoitella suullista kielitaitoa sekä vuorovaikutustaitoja. Yhdistämällä HILLin ja Moodlen käytön sekä monimuoto-opetuksen ja käänteisen opetuksen keskeisimmät periaatteet olemme luoneet toimivan tavan opettaa kieliä verkossa.

Johanna Jalonen

eSimulaatiokäsikirja välineenä hoitotyön koulutuksessa Satakunnan ammattikorkeakoulussa

Simulaatio on vaikuttava, turvallinen, strukturoitu ja opiskelijan oppimista tukeva pedagoginen opetusmenetelmä hoitotyön koulutuksessa. Tässä artikkelissa tarkastellaan simulaation eri muotoja keskittyen sen yhteen muotoon, virtuaalisimulaatioon. Satakunnan ammattikorkeakoulussa (SAMK) kehitettiin huhtikuussa 2015 eSimulaatiokäsikirja (eSK) vastaamaan hoitotyön koulutusohjelman tarpeisiin.

eSK auttaa sairaanhoitajaopiskelijoita palauttamaan mieleensä hoitotyön toimintoja ennen simulaatiotilanteita tai käytännön kliinistä harjoittelua sekä mahdollistaa siten hoitotyön opettajia keskittymään simulaatiotilanteeseen enemmän kuin kliinisten taitojen kertaamiseen. eSK on avoin kaikille Moodleen kirjautuneille hoitotyön opiskelijoille kaikissa opintojen vaiheissa. eSK noudattaa SAMK:n sairaanhoitajien opintosuunnitelmaa, jotta hoitotyön opiskelijan on helpompi löytää tarvitsemansa kulloisessakin opintojen vaiheessa.

II
Joint Courses
Yhteiset opintojaksot eri oppilaitosten opiskelijoille

Aino Pelto-Huikko, Katariina Kiviluoto & Juha Kääriä

Verkostosaneerausta verkossa – virtuaalisesti toteutettu opintojakso

Maanalaisten vesi- ja viemäriputkien hyvän kunnon varmistaminen on vesihuolto-laitosten toiminnan kannalta tärkeää. Vesiverkostojen saneeraustarve on kasvanut viime vuosina rajusti, ja koulutetuista verkostosaneeraajista on pulaa. Alan opetus-ta ei ole kuitenkaan laajasti tarjolla, vaikka koulutukselle olisi selkeästi kysyntää. Tähän työelämälähtöiseen tarpeeseen kehitetty vesihuoltoalaan ja vesitekniikkaan liittyvä verkko-opetuspaketti suunniteltiin kolmen ammattikorkeakoulun (Turun ammattikorkeakoulun, Satakunnan ammattikorkeakoulun ja Hämeen ammatti-korkeakoulun) ja Aalto-yliopiston yhteistyönä. Ajatuksena oli kehittää valtakunnal-linen, työelämälähtöinen opetuspaketti kaikille vesitekniikkaa tarjoaville ammat-tikorkeakouluille ja yliopistoille, jota voisi jatkossa tarjota perusopetuksen lisäksi myös esimerkiksi vesihuoltolaitosten ja konsulttitoimistojen henkilöstölle ammatil-lisena erikoiskoulutuksena.

Avainsanoina kurssin sisällössä olivat ongelmaperusteisuus, käytännönläheisyys ja saneerausprosessin looginen seuraaminen. Kurssin teemoina olivat verkoston nyky-tilan kartoitus, tavoitetilan määrittely, korjaus ja saneeraus, saneerauksen suunnitte-lu, toteuttaminen sekä vaikuttavuus. Kurssin sisältö oli vahvasti sidottu käytäntöön, ja tehtävät rakennettiin ongelmaperusteisen oppimismenetelmän mukaisiksi. Ope-tuksen toteutustavaksi valittiin verkko-opetus, johon ei sisälly ollenkaan lähiope-tusta.

Verkkokurssi pilotoitiin kolmessa ammattikorkeakoulussa keväällä 2016. Palautteen mukaan opiskelijat kokivat kurssilla oppineensa, vaikka kurssi koettiin työläänä ja raskaana. Ilmoitetut tuntimäärät olivat opintopistemitoituksen mukaisia. Kurssin jatkokehitys perustui opiskelijapalautteeseen ja opettajien kokemuksiin, joiden pe-rusteella kurssia jalostetaan entistä toimivampaan muotoon. Verkko-opetuspaketilla englanninkielisenä toteutuksena voisi olla myös koulutusvientipotentiaalia.

Hilkka Bergman & Kristiina Tedremaa-Levorato

Kokemukset oppilaitosten yhteisestä kieltenopetuksesta verkossa

Vuonna 2011 aloitimme Turun ammattikorkeakoulun ja Tallinnan yliopiston välillä yhteistyön, jossa molemmin puolin Suomenlahtea opiskeltiin osa ruotsin opintojaksosta yhteisillä verkkotehtävillä. Yhteisten opintojen päätavoitteina on ollut rohkaista opiskelijoita viestimään keskenään ruotsiksi, tekemään tiedonhakua käyttämällä ruotsinkielisiä lähteitä, jakamaan tietoa ruotsiksi ja sitä kautta tutustumaan naapurimaiden opiskelijaelämään ja kulttuuriin.

Yhteisessä osiossa opiskellaan viikkotehtävin kuuden viikon aikana, jolloin opiskelijat viestivät käyttäen Optiman keskustelualuetta ja päiväkirjaa. Eriaikaisesti tapahtuva dialogi auttaa eliminoimaan aikataulutukseen liittyvät ongelmat, jotka ovat tavallisia tämän tyyppisillä yhteisillä kursseilla. Sillä, että yhteinen osuus oli rajattu kuuteen viikkoon, onnistuimme välttämään Suomen ja Viron lukukausien erilaisiin ajoituksiin liittyvät ongelmat.

Kirjoittajien mielestä yhteistyö on ollut erittäin onnistunutta, teknisesti helppoa toteuttaa, resursseja säästävää ja molemmille osapuolille antoisaa. Opiskelijat tuntuvat arvostavan kielenoppimista sähköisten viestimien välityksellä yhteistyössä toisen maan opiskelijoiden kanssa siten, että käytetään molemmille vierasta kieltä, ruotsia, lingua francana. Usein oletetaan, että kielenopetus on tehokkainta kasvokkain tapahtuvassa viestinnässä ja mieluiten vuorovaikutuksessa syntyperäisen opettajan kanssa, mutta tämä kokemus osoittaa, verkkoviestintä tarjoaa muitakin yhtä hyviä vaihtoehtoja.

Matti Kuikka & Kati Antola

Kokemukset kahden oppilaitoksen yhteisestä projektijohtamisen opintojaksosta virtuaalisia neuvottelu- ja opetusohjelmaa käyttäen

Tässä artikkelissa kuvaamme kokemuksiamme yhteisestä projektijohtamisen opintojaksosta, joka toteutettiin kahden ammattikorkeakoulun kesken. Opintojaksoa opetettiin Master-tason opiskelijoille sekä Satakunnan ammattikorkeakoulussa Raumalla että Turun ammattikorkeakoulussa keväällä 2015. Opettajat molemmista ammattikorkeakouluista käyttivät apunaan reaaliaikaista verkkoneuvottelu- ja opetusohjelmaa. Opintojaksolla käytettiin oppimisympäristönä Turun yliopiston kehittämää ViLLE-verkko-oppimisympäristöä ammattikorkeakoulujen ylläpitämien verkko-oppimisympäristöjen (Moodle, Optima) asemasta. Opintojaksolla jaettiin reaaliaikaista opetusvideota eri korkeakoulujen kesken. Opiskelijat pystyivät myös osallistumaan opintojakson opetukseen etänä HILL-verkko-opetusohjelman avulla.

Kahdeksan opiskelijaa Raumalta ja 26 opiskelijaa Turusta osallistuivat opintojaksolle, jossa materiaalit, tehtävät ja tentit olivat kaikki saatavilla verkko-oppimisympäristössä. Opiskelijoilta kerättiin palautetta, jota verrattiin edellisen opintojakson toteutukseen vuonna 2014 Turun ammattikorkeakoulussa. Vuoden 2014 toteutukseen verrattuna mitään merkittäviä eroja opiskelijapalautteessa vuonna 2015 ei havaittu. Kuitenkin voitiin havaita, että sekä oppimisen että opettamisen kuormitus uutta oppimisjärjestelmää käytettäessä aiheutti sekä opiskelijoille että opettajille haasteita. Yhteisiä toteutuksia voidaan tulevaisuudessakin jatkaa, mutta yhä enemmän huomiota tulee kiinnittää käytettävien oppimisympäristöjen esittelyyn, opintojakson suunnitteluun ja tiedonkulkuun opettajien välillä, kuten viimeisimmissä yhteisöllistä verkko- ja monimuoto-oppimista koskevissa tutkimuksissa ehdotetaankin.

III
E-learning and Interaction
Verkko-oppiminen ja vuorovaikutus

Marjo Joshi

Verkkotapaamiset vuorovaikutuksen ja sitouttamisen välineinä verkko-opetuksessa

Verkko-opetus koetaan usein vähemmän motivoivaksi kuin perinteinen luokkaopetus, ja sitä kritisoidaan erityisesti vuorovaikutuksen puutteesta. Opettajat tarvitsevat uusia keinoja ja taitoja vuorovaikutuksen ja motivaation lisäämiseen sekä opiskelijoiden sitouttamiseen verkossa.

Tässä artikkelissa esitetään, miten verkkotapaamisia voidaan käyttää osana verkko-opintojaksoa ja miten niiden avulla on mahdollista sitouttaa opiskelijoita ja lisätä vuorovaikutusta verkko-opintoihin. Lisäksi kuvataan opiskelijoiden mielipiteitä aiheesta heille teetetyn kyselyn perusteella. Case-aiheena on verkossa vuosina 2015 ja 2016 toteutettu opintojakso Presenting in English Using Online Tools, joka perustuu Optima-verkko-oppimisalustan ja Skype for Business -verkkotapaamisten yhdistelmään. Verkko-oppimisalustan tarkoitus on palvella lähinnä asynkronisena materiaalien palautus- ja -työstöalustana, kun taas suurin osa vuorovaikutuksesta tapahtuu synkronisesti verkkotapaamisissa. Verkkotapaamisten tavoitteena on lisätä opiskelijoiden yhteenkuuluvuutta, sitoutuneisuutta, motivaatiota ja vuorovaikutusta. Niiden avulla luodaan myös työelämäläheinen toimintatapa opintojaksolle, jolla tavoitteena on oppia työelämässä tarvittavia uusia viestintätaitoja moderneissa teknisissä viestintäympäristöissä.

Tulosten mukaan opiskelijoiden kokemukset verkkotapaamisten käytöstä osana verkkokurssia olivat erittäin positiivisia. He kokivat, että verkkotapaamisten käyttö lisäsi vuorovaikutusta niin pienryhmissä kuin opettajan ja opiskelijan välillä. Lisäksi he kokivat sitoutuneensa kurssiin paremmin verkkotapaamisten ansiosta. Useat opiskelijat olisivatkin halukkaita ottamaan verkkotapaamiset osaksi muitakin verkkokursseja.

Tiina Hirard

Video-ohjaus tukemassa oppimista ja arviointia

Artikkelissa esitetään konkreettisten esimerkkien avulla, miten video-ohjaus voi lisätä vuorovaikutusta sekä tukea arviointia ja palautteenantoa verkko- tai monimuoto-opintojaksolla. Kaikki esimerkit ovat Turun ammattikorkeakoulussa keväällä 2015 toteutetulta espanjan kielen alkeiskurssilta, mutta samanlainen video-ohjaus voi tukea oppimista millä tahansa muullakin opintojaksolla alasta riippumatta.

Esimerkeissä havainnollisestaan, miten video-ohjauksella voidaan helpottaa opiskelijan tutustumista oppimisympäristöön ja sosiaalistumista ryhmään sekä pitää yllä yhteisöllisyyttä ja vuorovaikutusta myöhemminkin säännöllisten opettajan videotervehdysten avulla. Videoiden avulla voidaan ohjata myös itse opiskelua joko teknisin ohjein tai antamalla sisällöllisiä oppimistehtäviin liittyviä ohjeita.

Tehokkaimmillaan verkossa tapahtuva ohjaus ja vuorovaikutus on kuitenkin videoneuvotteluissa eli opettajan ja opiskelijoiden välisissä verkkotapaamisissa. Videoneuvottelussa esiin tulleet asiat jäävät helposti opiskelijan mieleen, ja samalla opettajalle muodostuu lyhyenkin keskustelun aikana varsin selkeä kuva opiskelijan osaamisesta.

Kun oppiminen, sen arviointi ja ohjaus kytkeytyvät samaksi prosessiksi, ei tarvita enää esimerkiksi erillistä arviointia. Usein opettaja säästää aikaa myös antaessaan palautetta videon avulla, kun asiat voikin kirjoittamisen sijaan puhua ja näyttää. Yhtenä artikkelin tärkeänä viestinä onkin, että video-ohjauksen ei tarvitse olla opettajalle työlästä, vaan hyvinkin pienellä ohjaukseen käytetyllä ajalla on suuri merkitys opiskelijalle ja oppimiselle.

IV
Assignments in e-learning
Verkkotehtävät

Satu Korhonen & Heidi Varpelaide

Tehtävät verkko-opetuksessa

Artikkelissa kerromme verkko-opetuksessa käytettävistä tehtävistä Satakunnan ammattikorkeakoulun liiketalouden monimuotokoulutuksessa. Artikkelista aloitteleva verkko-opettaja voi saada käsityksen siitä, miten opintojakson tehtävät on hyvä mitoittaa, minkälaisia tehtävätyyppejä on käytössä, miten tehtäviä voidaan arvioida ja mitä oppimisympäristöjä voidaan käyttää verkko-opintojaksolla.

Artikkeli pohjautuu verkko-opettajille tehtyyn kyselyyn Satakunnan ammattikorkeakoulun Kuninkaisten kampuksella ja kirjoittajien omaan kokemukseen verkko-opetuksesta (ks. liite 1). Kyselyn perusteella verkko-opintojaksolla on yleensä 4–5 tehtävää, kun opetettava aihe on juridiikka tai markkinointi. Laskentatoimen opetuksessa tehtäviä voi olla enemmän, jotta saadaan opiskelijoille enemmän harjoitusta laskemiseen. Kuninkaisten kampuksella käytetään hyvin monipuolisesti eri tehtävätyyppejä. Opiskelijat oppivat verkko-opintojaksolla tekemällä mm. keskustelu-, portfolio- ja esseetehtäviä. Yleensä opintojaksolla on 1–2 tehtävää, jotka arvioidaan asteikolla 0–5 sekä 2–3 tehtävää, jotka arvioidaan asteikolla hyväksytty–hylättyasteikolla.

Monimuoto- ja verkko-opetuksessa oppimistehtävien sisältö, rakenne ja toteuttamistapa korostuvat verrattuna perinteiseen luokkahuoneopetukseen. Moodle toimii opintojakson oppimateriaalit ja tehtävät kokoavana sivustona ja tarjoaa erilaisia opetukseen soveltuvia työkaluja. Opintojaksojen tehtävissä hyödynnetään myös sosiaalista mediaa ja muita verkko-oppimisympäristöjä.

Tehtävien arvioinnilla tuetaan opiskelijan oppimista ja annetaan hänelle tietoa oman oppimisensa tasosta. Opiskelijan tulee saada palautetta oppimisestaan koko verkko-opintojakson ajan. Arvioinnilla voidaan motivoida ja siten parantaa oppimistuloksia.

Pekka Kuisma & Minna Kuohukoski

Ryhmätyö verkko-opinnoissa

Tässä artikkelissa kerrotaan, miten Satakunnan ammattikorkeakoulun Kuninkaisten kampuksella toteutetaan ryhmätyönä pelkästään verkon välityksellä arvosanalla arvioitava laajahko kirjallinen raportti. Opiskelijat ovat suorittamassa tradenomin tutkintoa monimuotototeutuksena. Artikkelissa käydään läpi ryhmätyön vaiheet alkaen tehtävänannosta ja jatkuen ryhmäytymisen, suunnitteluvaiheen ja työstämisvaiheen kautta ryhmätyön kokoamisvaiheeseen ja johtopäätösten tekemiseen sekä tulosten jakamiseen muiden opiskelijoiden kanssa. Lopuksi tuodaan esiin, kuinka ryhmätöiden arvioinnissa hyödynnetään itsearviointia ja vertaisarviointia ja millainen sähköinen työkalu opettajien tekemälle arvioinnille on kehitetty.

Selkeä tehtävänanto on lähtökohta sille, että ryhmätyö pelkästään verkossa toteutettuna voi onnistua. Tehtävänannon perusteella opiskelijoiden on tiedettävä, millaista osaamista he tehtävän avulla tavoittelevat. Työlle asetetut vaatimukset sekä arviointikriteerit on käytävä ilmi tehtävänannosta. Tehtävänanto ei toisaalta saa olla liian tarkka, jotta se jättää riittävästi mahdollisuuksia tutkia aihetta opiskelijoiden oman mielenkiinnon ja tarpeiden mukaan. Toimintasuunnitelman edellyttäminen auttaa opiskelijoita suunnittelemaan työnjaon ja työn etenemisen aikatauluineen.

Ryhmätyö alkaa ryhmäytymisvaiheesta, joka tehdään verkko-oppimispohjassa. Ryhmäytymisen jälkeen alkaa suunnitteluvaihe, joka on oleellinen vaihe sekä ryhmätyön tuloksen onnistumisen, että kaikkien ryhmäläisten sitoutumisen suhteen. Työn edetessä opiskelijoita on pyrittävä ohjaamaan yhteiseen pohdintaan, jotta työn tulos ei olisi vain yhteen liitettyjen osioiden kokoamista. Yhteistä pohdintaa edesauttaa opiskelijoiden käytössä oleva verkkoneuvotteluohjelma. Opiskelijoita on syytä ohjata siihen, että myös työn kokoamisvaiheelle ja siihen liittyvälle yhteiselle pohdinnalle sekä johtopäätösten tekemiselle jää riittävästi aikaa. Lopuksi ryhmätyöhön kuuluu pääsääntöisesti joko työn esittäminen tai työn jakaminen opintojakson muiden opiskelijoiden luettavaksi tai kommentoitavaksi.

Opettajien tekemää arviointia varten Kuninkaisissa on opintojaksoilla raporteissa käytössä yhteinen arviointimatriisi. Opiskelijamäärän kasvettua ryhmätöiden arvioinneissa on otettu käyttöön myös opiskelijoiden vertais- ja itsearviointi, joiden

toteuttamiselle on rakennettu verkkopohjainen työkalu. Työkalun avulla ryhmä-työn arviointi on helpottunut, ryhmätyön pelisäännöt ovat selkiintyneet, ja opis-kelijat ovat alkaneet ymmärtää oman vastuunsa ryhmän jäseninä. Työskentely ver-kon välityksellä toimivassa asiantuntijayhteisössä, ratkaisujen hakeminen yhteisiin tutkimusongelmiin ja ryhmässä syntyvien erilaisten näkemysten ja toimintatapo-jen yhteen sovittaminen ovat hyvää valmennusta työelämän asiantuntijatehtävissä toimimiseen. Kun vielä huomioidaan opiskelijoiden toisiltaan saama vertaistuki ja yhdessä saavutetut oppimiskokemukset, ryhmätyöt verkossa ovat Kuninkaisissa jat-kossakin keskeisessä osassa tradenomitutkinnon monimuotototeutuksessa.

V
Advantageous Case Studies
Kehittäviä kokemuksia verkko-opetuksesta

Sanna Simola & Katriina Vesanen

Itseohjautuvaa verkko-opiskelua – tapaus kulttuurisalkku

Artikkeli käsittelee Turun ammattikorkeakoulussa kokonaan verkossa itsenäisesti opiskeltavia vapaasti valittavia 3 opintopisteen laajuisia eri kohdemaiden laajaan kulttuuritietouteen pohjautuvia kulttuurisalkku-opintojaksoja. Opintojaksot ovat syntyneet projektin tuotoksena vuonna 2007, jonka jälkeen niiden pedagogisia ratkaisuja on kehitetty opiskelija- ja tutoropettajien antaman palautteen pohjalta. Artikkelissa keskitytään opintojaksojen verkkopedagogiseen näkökulmaan, ei itse sisältöön. Artikkelin keskiössä ovat opiskelijoilta vaadittava itseohjautuva oppimisote, siihen vaadittavat osaamisalueet sekä toimivan verkko-opintojakson tunnuspiirteet.

Artikkelissa käsitellään opintojaksojen syntyhistoriaa, niiden rakennetta, toteutusta sekä opintojaksoista saatua palautetta. Artikkelin lopussa esitetään opintojaksojen tulevaisuuden kehitysmahdollisuudet- ja tavoitteet. Artikkeli tuo esiin kulttuurisalkku-opintojaksojen tapausesimerkin avulla, miten korkeakouluopetukselta vaadittavaa digitalisoitumista, opiskelijoiden valinnan vapautta ja opintojen joustavuutta voidaan lisätä verkkopedagogiikan avulla.

Itsenäisesti opiskeltavan opintojakson kulmakivet ovat opiskelijan itseohjautuvuus ja opiskelutaidot sekä pedagogisesti toimivat tehtävät ja verkko-oppimisympäristön kokonaisvaltainen toimivuus. Näiden asioiden toteutuessa voidaan puhua laadukkaasta verkossa tapahtuvasta ohjauksesta ja oppimisesta.

Paula Aali & Jaana Kivivuori

Tutkimuksellinen viestintä verkossa – ajatusten verryttelyä verkko-ohjauksessa

Artikkelissa tarkastellaan tutkimuksellisen viestinnän verkko-opintojakson (5 op.) viestinnän ohjaajien kokemuksia yhdessä kirjasto- ja tietopalvelun kanssa tuotetulta opintojaksolta kesällä 2014 ja 2015. Opintojaksolla tavoitteena on ollut perehtyä lähteiden käyttöön, soveltaa opittua omissa teksteissä ja harjoitella tutkivaa raportointia. Artikkelin tavoitteena on selvittää, mitä tekijöitä verkko-opintojakso vaatii onnistuakseen ja miten vuorovaikutus voi onnistua verkkototeutuksessa.

Ensimmäisenä vuonna verkkotyöskentely oli eriaikaista ja toisena vuonna osittain ajastettua viikkokeskustelua. Opintojaksoon liittyi verkkotehtävien ohella ohjeistettua kirjoittamista ja lukemista. Opiskelijat eivät käyttäneet verkkotyöskentelyssään Optiman toimintoa puheen nauhoittamiseen. Motivoituneet opiskelijat saivat opintojakson palautteen perusteella parhaimman hyödyn.

Onnistuneessa verkkokeskustelussa osallistujilla oli oma tavoite, joka tuki yhteisen tavoitteen saavuttamista. Toisten havainnoista ja tehtävistä opittiin omaa tavoitetta varten, mikä kannusti omien pohdintojen jakamiseen. Näin osallistujat sivuuttivat turhautumisen ja pääsivät etenemään omassa työskentelyssään. Verkkokeskustelun olennaisia piirteitä olivat aiheessa pitäytyminen, käsittelyn syventäminen omien pohdintojen ja havaintojen avulla, kannustaminen sekä kohteliaisuus.

Pirjo Kavander

Ruotsin suullisen kielitaidon opiskelu verkkokurssilla

Artikkelissa tarkastellaan ensin Taideakatemian journalismin opiskelijoitten ruotsin suullisen kielitaidon verkkokurssiosuutta ja sen jälkeen kaikille Turun ammattikorkeakoulun opiskelijoille tarjottua ruotsin kielen kesäkurssia juuri suullisen kielitaidon opiskelun ja suorittamisen osalta. Artikkelissa keskitytään erityisesti kysymyksiin, voiko ammatillista suullista kielitaitoa opiskella ja oppia etänä verkon kautta ja voiko kielitaitoa näin myös luotettavasti arvioida. Artikkelin loppuosassa pohdin erillisinä osioinaan aiheeseen liittyviä yleisiä kysymyksiä: kurssisuoritusten laadunvarmistusta ja haasteita, opettajan ja opiskelijoitten kokemuksia ja saatua oppia.

Artikkeli kuvaa ensin eri puolella Suomea ja ulkomailla työharjoittelussa olevien 21 journalismin opiskelijan ruotsin suullisen kielitaidon kurssitehtävien toteutusta, suoritusta ja suullista päättökoetta. Toisena tarkastelun kohteena on monialainen 72 opiskelijan kesäopintojen ruotsin suullinen kurssi, sen tehtävämuodot, suoritusten eteneminen ja päättövaiheen suullinen koe.

Artikkelin loppuosassa vastataan kysymyksiin, miten suullisten kurssisuoritusten laadunvarmistus onnistuu, millaisia haasteita kurssitoteutusten aikana nousi ratkaistavaksi, millaisia kokemuksia opettajalla ja opiskelijoilla oli verkossa etänä toteutusta ruotsin ammatillisen kielen suullisesta kurssista ja mitä kaikesta saattoi jatkoa varten oppia. Vastaukset näihin kysymyksiin osoittautuvat kannustaviksi. Kulje pedagogisen ja teknologisen kehityksen mukana, kokeile ja tutki uusia ratkaisuja, myönteinen opiskeluilmapiiri ja opiskelukokemus sekä uudenlaiset oppimisen tavat kannustavat opiskelijoita laadukkaisiin ja luotettaviin suorituksiin.

Turun ammattikorkeakoulun strategian mukaisesti opiskelijoittemme yhtenä oppimisympäristönä toimivat virtuaaliympäristöt, ja perinteisestä luentopohjaisesta luokkaopetuksesta pyritään luopumaan. Taustalla on osaltaan koulutuksen rahoitusperusteiden tiukkeneminen, jonka myötä sekä opiskelijoiden valmius itsenäiseen opiskeluun että oma motivaatio ja vastuunotto omasta oppimisprosessistaan korostuvat.

On siis aika nähdä oppiminen uusissa ympäristöissä, eri ajankohtina ja uusilla välineillä tapahtuvaksi. Oppimista ei enää pidä nähdä vain tiettyyn menettelyyn sidot-

tuna prosessina. Tulee kuitenkin pitää mielessä, että ammattikorkeakoulupedago-
giikassa kieli- ja viestintäopinnot ovat edelleen vahvasti työelämälähtöisiä ja alakoh-
taisia sekä oppimisprosessi sidotaan aitoihin työelämäympäristöihin ja työtehtäviin.

Nämä ajatukset ovat olleet taustalla, kun olen kokeillut ja kehittänyt ruotsin suul-
lisen kielitaidon harjoittelua ja opiskelua sekä suullisen kokeen suorittamista omien
kurssieni Optima-verkkoympäristössä.