

A Case Study of Blended Learning in a Nordic Insurance Company: Three Issues for E-learning

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Overview

- Background
- About the company
- Blended learning
- Theoretical perspective
- Case study
- Findings
- Discussion





Background

- 21st century learning and support
- Computer supported collaborative learning (CSCL)





21st century learning

- From learners as passive recipients of information towards learners as active participants of own learning: *construction*
- From learning within well-defined fields towards learners who interact across disciplinary boundaries: *collaboration*
- Stimulated by new trends in technology brought by Internet, most notably Web 2.0
- Blended learning is a step towards this, extending from conventional e-learning



CSCL

- We see also a trend from individual oriented (self paced) E-learning to include aspects of collaborative learning
- Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning (CSCL) is the field concerned with how Information and Communication Technology (ICT) might support learning in groups (co-located and distributed)



Case

- Company is a Nordic multinational Insurance Company
- Offices in Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Latvia, Lithuania, and Russia
- Leaders represent different Business Areas and levels in a multinational management structure
- E-learning has focused on leadership training and training in basic skills for insurance sales



Case cont'd

- Company wishes to better integrate their e-learning courses and minimize duplication across sites
- They have developed more than 300 courses, organized in house and in collaboration with external providers, many of them are blended learning courses
- A typical blended learning course requires about 5 hours of e-learning (preparatory and in-between) work and 2-3 seminar days
- We were asked to provide advice on their use of e-learning and how to better organize blended learning

Portal of courses for employees



Katalog **Hjemmeside** Kalender Profil

Oversikt | Selvstudium | Planlagt | Kursmoduler | Samtaler | Fora

Søk i katalog

 Start

Alle opplæringsmetoder ▾

Nøyaktig uttrykk

[Avansert søk...](#)

[Bla gjennom katalog](#)

Min opplæring

iftest iftest

Filtrer Vis også fullførte kurs **Start**

⊖ Forrige 1 - 4 av 4 Neste ⊕

Spill av	Tilbud	Startdato	Påmeldt	Status
	IF - Essential Project Management, Oslo 10.March	10.03.09	12.02.09	Ikke forsøkt
	IF - Applied Project Planning and Control, Oslo May 5th	05.05.09	12.02.09	Ikke forsøkt
	IF - Essential Project Management, e-learning	11.12.08	12.02.09	2 av 26 fullført
	IF - Applied Project Planning and Control, e-learning	11.12.08	12.02.09	Ikke forsøkt

Kunngjøringer

- [Contact information](#)
- [Practical information](#)

[Hjemmeside](#) | [Katalog](#) | [Kalender](#) | [Profil](#) | [Hjelp](#) | [Avlogging](#)



Blended learning

- Blended learning means to combine online learning (e-learning) and face to face learning (seminars), but there are many ways to realize the combination



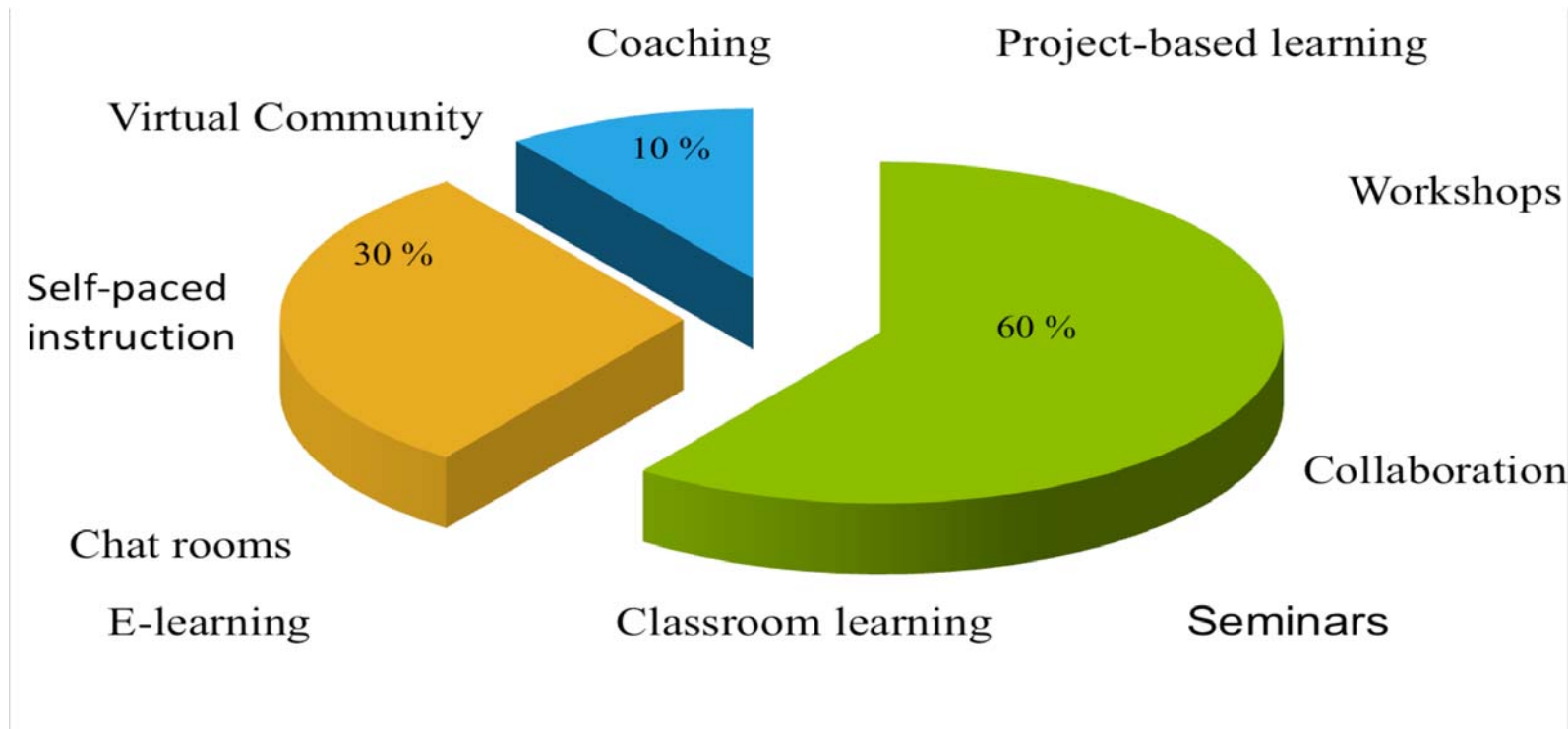


Blended learning cont'd

- We conducted a literature survey on blended learning
- We have found more than ten different definitions for blended learning (BL) in the papers we surveyed (see our paper)



What is Blended learning?





Theoretical perspective

- How can theory help us decide which one of the possible combinations of blended learning is the right one for Company
- We have used Vygotsky's principles of the “duality of learning” and Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)
- This provides an informed guess among the alternatives with a focus on combining social interaction and individual learning



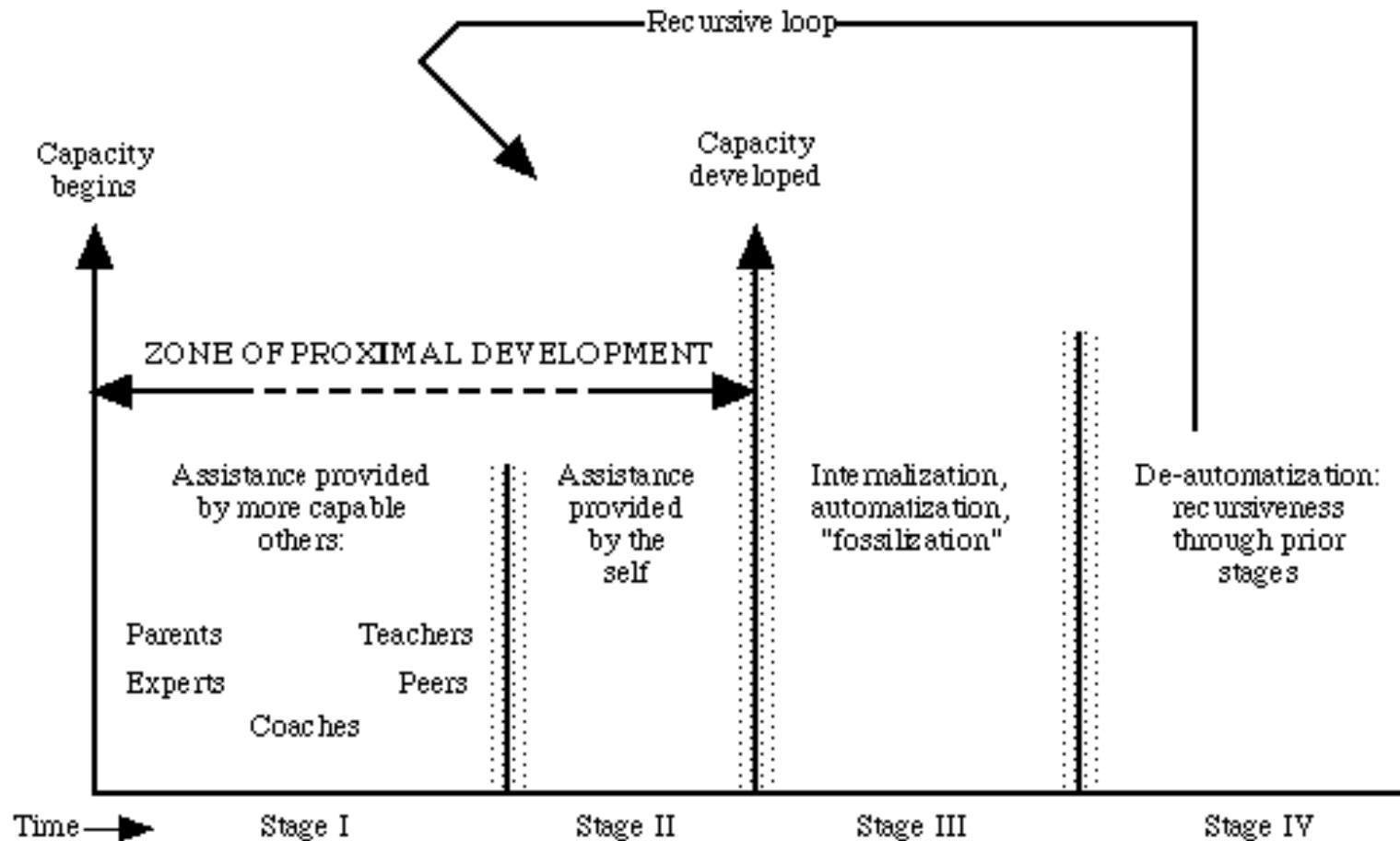
Duality of learning principle

“Every function in the child’s cultural development appears twice; first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (inter-psychological), and then inside the child (intra-psychological)... All the higher functions originate as actual relations between human individuals”
(Vygotsky 1930/1978, p. 57).



ZPD model of scaffolding

(Tharp and Gallimore, 1988)





Two types of blended learning

- Combining individual learning with social interaction creates two different types of BL
 - *Concept-based BL*: Self-paced, conceptual E-learning courses + collaborative interaction in seminars
 - *Collaboration-oriented BL*: CSCCL as the online component + individual oriented (instructor-led) seminars
- We compared these two definitions with data from an empirical study in the company



Methods

- Embedded single case study
- Triangulation of multiple data sources
- Data collection (first author)
 - Interview
 - Direct observation
 - Participant observer in two seminars
 - Written material
- 30 hours of interview data
- Transcription of data and open coding



Open coding

- Combining bottom-up and top-down analysis
- Iteratively developing themes for classifying data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990)
- Multiple passes through the data to reach the final set of themes (King, 1994)
- We came up with three main themes



Themes in the data

1. Interaction of individual and collaborative learning
2. Scaffolding self-regulated learning and social interaction
3. Adapting E-learning in a multinational organization



Interaction of individual and collaborative learning: summary

- Self-paced e-learning is appropriate for preparation, self-assessment and follow-up
- It should be supplemented by collaborative learning either online or F2F
- It should be related to daily work tasks



Data extract 1: Interview w/consultant

“Learning in the classroom can never be replaced with e-learning, because e-learning is e-learning. It is not comparable, you are not networking in e-learning, you are not meeting other people, and you are not discussing other things. The effect from meeting, classroom training is much bigger. I think you should mix them, definitely because e-learning is good for preparation, and it works. Sometimes it works very well in terms of follow-up for something done in the middle of the course, and at other times as a reminder”



Scaffolding self-regulated learning and social interaction: summary

- Short and precise content
- Collaboration with peers to augment concept-based e-learning
- Technological and pedagogical scaffolding
 - Social interaction
 - Rationale for answers to questions





Data extract 2: interview with user

“E-learning environments could be more interactive; and we could have more interactions with the system. Like you have a database behind where you have actually answered wrong ((to)) the questions and you would ((get)) some ((form)) of feedback: “It is wrong because of...,” or “You should have answered like this and that....” Because when you get some answers wrong and you can’t figure out why, “I thought they were right,” and you didn’t know why.”



Adapting E-learning in a multi-national organization: summary

- Simple language should be used
- Local context, identities, language, culture, work environments are important
- Keep content uniform at concept level, but adapted to the local context in terms of presentation style



Data extract 3: interview with developer

“Yes, because we are Nordic unit...I think, that we try to build our courses in a Nordic perspective. Taken into consideration the different things...it’s very different from Finland to Denmark, for instance. And it is also very different from Finland to Russia. It will be a tremendous big step to bring management development into Russia as we have it in the Scandinavian countries. It’s a completely different way of how they are looking at management and leadership in Russia, than it is in the Scandinavian countries.”



Summary of findings

- The company followed a concept-based blended learning model
 - Self-paced, conceptual E-learning courses + collaborative interaction in instructor-led seminars
- This did not always work as intended, according to the informants, e.g. some found it boring
- Suggestions for how to move into a collaboration-based BL model is our recommendation as it was revealed in the data



Furthermore, a blend of online and F2F learning depends on..

- Learning objectives
- Target group
- Technology affordances
- The degree of co-location vs. distributions of the learners
- How big the cultural differences are, and how important learning preferences are