



TRACING THE ROLES OF THE PBL TUTOR

A Journey of Learning



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To construct knowledge
In the learning community
With a strong affinity

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Of our work and this book
Let's take a closer look

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For the discussion leader and recorder
And for the observer

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Instead of hesitate
Her model is here for you to read
That's all you may need

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Her discussion on these pages
Helps us in our trigger-writing stages

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With our reading audience
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Continue your good work
Let your voice be heard
Share your talent and inspiration
Without hesitation

Helsinki, 9 September 2008

Matti Helelä
Harriet Fagerholm

1

Introduction

Dear Reader

*With this book, we would like to tell
How we're using PBL
To give our students confidence
Providing them with competence
That goes beyond the content base
And carries through their career days*

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■ If you are or want to be a tutor, student, resource person, curriculum or course designer, or anybody else interested in our work as PBL tutors, please stay with us on these pages. This book is part of our legacy: we would like to share our understanding and experience of PBL tutoring. We have great respect for problem-based learning and our students and colleagues. They are the inspiration for our work as tutors and for writing this book.

The ideas in this book can be applied to group facilitation in general. We believe that our PBL experiences can help you in many kinds of group work.

We hope not only to move your head but also touch your heart. Above everything, PBL is an attitude towards learning and, we dare say, life. Thinking about all the rewarding experiences it has given us along the years, we can say that PBL seems to have involved a great deal of internal healing among our students and our working community. It has included its mountains and valleys, and provided us with colourful scenery full of fascinating adventures.

We hope to give you useful tips and ideas for problem-based learning. You may find some of our practical suggestions worth trying. Or you may find a new perspective to your learning philosophy. Or maybe we can help you to strengthen your own beliefs and perspectives. It is always important to share and contemplate our PBL experiences together, both formally and informally. We find tutor meetings and training sessions necessary and rewarding, and sometimes a discussion in the school

hallway is just as important. This book is part of that ongoing and never-ending discussion.

Continuous PBL research provides a strong theoretical base for understanding problem-based learning. During our work as PBL programme developers, we have used a great deal of Finnish and international sources. In this book, however, we don't aim to present theory on how to use PBL. Instead, our text is more reflective and personal by nature and we hope to inspire newcomers to try PBL.

The tutor's work involves a great deal of preparation and coordination: getting ready for tutorials as well as planning and updating the whole study programme, writing triggers, organising workshops and resource lectures, supervising projects and work placement, and many other activities on top of the PBL tutorials. The tutorial process is the core of our work, and our work continues in many ways after each tutorial. In the tutorials, we focus on the knowledge construction process at many levels, doing our best to balance our interventions according to the context. In this book, we discuss the tutor's work mainly from the perspective of tutorial facilitation. We wish to share our feelings and open up the emotional dynamics involved in teamwork and its facilitation.

The role of emotions is much stronger than we ever expected when we began our journey of PBL. Our own and the students' emotions often took us by surprise. We would like you to be somewhat better prepared for that than we were back then. There is a range of negative and positive emotions involved, since working in a small group in a student-oriented way is very different from our previous work in the centre of the classroom. Like the students, the tutors have to face their fears and try their best to tolerate uncertainty. And when the positive results occur, the emotional experiences may still be quite strong and worth discussing. We need to understand them, in order to empower ourselves to continue our work as tutors.

We will show you the model of PBL used in business education at HAAGA-HELIA, explaining what PBL means to us and what kinds of principles guide our work. You will notice the shift from focus on content to focus on process and skills.

We discuss the roles in the learning community, emphasizing the importance of mutual support and values, and the idea of learning from one another constructively and collaboratively. Perhaps the biggest favour a tutor can do to the learning community is to create a positive learning environment where students are welcome to make mistakes to learn from them. It is important for the tutor to believe in PBL and trust the students. Trust and faith are contagious and they cannot be faked. Or one

could say: if you are not enthusiastic but you want to learn it, you may practice by faking it as a good actor would, and after a few minutes you may find yourself genuinely enthusiastic. It all depends on your attitude and willingness to learn. Give it a try!

Sometimes the tutor's short but important interventions and the tutor's own examples have a key role in encouraging the students. It is also necessary for the tutor to step aside, even when stronger participation seems very tempting. The balance between silence and intervention is a delicate question, while in some issues the tutor has a central role and in other issues the opposite. Balancing between the two is art. The tutor must be intensely present even when remaining silent in the background.

Based on our work with international students, we also explain the tutor's role in forming multicultural learning teams and groups. We will share examples of how the team has turned a crisis or chaos into victory. A crisis is often a good thing because it provides the ground for an important learning experience, making the learners better equipped for corresponding challenges in the workplace.

The voices of our tutor colleagues and students enrich the contents of this book. We trust that you will learn from their experiences. You will notice that we are using expressions such as "yesterday" or other corresponding time references. We do this to refer to recent experiences as we are writing this book. This also helps you to see how we learn a great deal in every PBL tutorial even after eight years of experience.

The following table summarizes our mutual understanding of PBL in HAAGA-HELIA's business education. In the next few chapters, you can find our further contemplation.

WHAT IS PBL?	HOW DO WE DO PBL?
Learning together	Family Sports team Network Community
Supporting learning	Students are responsible learners Uncertainty and problem Pedagogical support
Social construction of knowledge	Tutorials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DL ▪ Recorder ▪ Observer ▪ Small groups
Guiding principles	Focus on the students Triggers Instructor's attitude: listening, accessibility 8 steps Assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continuous, self and peer Feedback Evaluation seminars (mid, final)
Professionalism	Professional behaviour Mutual support Participation and being on time Preparedness
Values	Curriculum values (such as respect, trust and growth) Positivity Enthusiasm

From the tutor's perspective, PBL involves a great deal of responsibilities. This book focuses on facilitation in tutorials, but it is good to remember that the tutor's work includes a wide range of tasks. Sometimes it includes curriculum design and course development. In most cases, it includes such responsibilities as cooperation with partner organizations and other tutors and instructors; preparing and updating course manuals, schedules, triggers, bibliographies, assignments, lectures, exams, feedback forms and study materials; preparing and updating the eLearning platform; familiarization with the students and forming the tutorial teams and project groups; assigning the PBL roles; checking the tutorial memos and agendas; preparing for tutorials and lectures; continuous assessment and coaching; tutorial facilitation; and other related tasks.

Facilitation in tutorials is the key focus in our text, and we discuss it from different perspectives throughout this book. We try to limit our discussion to topics closely related to tutorial and team facilitation. For example, we don't discuss curriculum design or the preparation of assignments, but we have dedicated one subchapter to writing triggers because

of their special character in problem-based learning. We also briefly discuss tutorial memos and agendas in connection with the PBL roles. We share some ideas concerning team and group formation. We pay special attention to feedback and assessment, since they part of a solid foundation for PBL.

It is worth mentioning that PBL can also be used in an eLearning environment. Face-to-face tutorials are replaced with synchronous or asynchronous online discussions, and the PBL cycle is the same. We will not discuss the special characters of online learning in this book, but, based on our own experience, we can warmly recommend PBL for online learning.

2

PBL – What and Why?

■ In August 2006, we received the following email from one of our BBA graduates.

Dear Harriet

Greetings from Indonesia! How is everything in Finland? I hope all is well.

The other day, as I was preparing a presentation for a management meeting about our company's future advertising and promotion budget & concepts, Helia and its Managing Global Brands suddenly popped into my mind. I just remember all those long nights reading, applying concepts and finalizing our final project. At that time I just thought that it was too much work. But now, I just can't thank you enough for the pushing us and giving us so much work. The practical approach and general knowledge gained during my time at Helia really has paid off greatly. The PBL approach has done wonders for my everyday problem-solving skills at work.

And I even started my own diet catering company and head the marketing department. I truly believe that your dedication to students has a long-lasting impact. Just keep doing what you're doing.

Best regards

We believe that the creative development needed in knowledge-based work and study requires genuine interaction within the working and learning community. People can gain results and maintain their personal strength best through joint contemplation and by learning from the others.

Our understanding of PBL is determined by how we view the world, the human being and knowledge. We have a participatory worldview: the human being needs other people to develop. We see the individual as autonomous, responsible and active. People create knowledge together in interaction and each individual gives knowledge his or her own meaning.

In our work, we constantly ask ourselves: How does learning develop and support the following skills, much called for in the workplace today and tomorrow?

- Responsibility for one's own learning
- Assessment of one's own learning and action
- Setting personal goals

- Self-confidence
- Information search
- Analysis of information (into knowledge) and finding the essential
- Applying knowledge
- Analytical approach, problem recognition, creative problem solving, critical thinking
- Argumentation skills
- Respect for others
- Teamwork and cooperation skills
- Presentation skills

According to our experience, problem-based learning provides an ideal framework for learners to develop these skills through guided teamwork and independent study. PBL can be defined as social construction of knowledge, or, in other words, constructing knowledge together in tutorial work and projects. We find the PBL cycle, including the tutorial process and preparation for the tutorial through personal study and possible group work, to be the core process or the spine of PBL.

*Without interaction
We learn a fraction
Together we learn indeed
The skills we really need*

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We consider PBL to be more than a method. Hearing people talk about “the PBL method” sounds wrong every time, like a false key or dissonance, reflecting a narrow view or even a misunderstanding of the whole concept. In fact, the PBL approach gives room to a wide spectrum of various methods that can be incorporated into the learning cycle. For example, lectures and workshops of various kinds, held between the tutorials, may be part of the cycle, representing the step reserved for information search, teamwork and independent study. If the students study business, for example, language classes or parts of them could be fluently incorporated into the cycle. This naturally requires mutual planning between the instructors. Language courses could also have their own PBL cycles, but integration with other studies may be a better solution. PBL studies may also include projects, and tutorials can effectively support project work and vice versa.

Even PBL tutorials with the various steps are good venues for creativity. While it may be safe to observe a familiar pattern in the first few

tutorials, creativity is always welcome and it doesn't have to contradict with the chosen PBL model. On the contrary, creativity may support the chosen model.

Although the discussions in PBL tutorials focus on the relevant professional contents, the core of the learning is actually more on the process and skills rather than on the contents. One could say, perhaps, that the contents serve the learning of the process skills. And, at the same time, the process skills help the learners to critically view the contents more and more as they develop their process skills. Through student-centred learning, the learners gain more and more self-confidence, which is often the key to success on a personal and professional level.

Yesterday one of us tutored a PBL tutorial for a new beginning group of sales students. It was their first tutorial ever. The student chosen for the role of the observer gave her feedback at the end, saying that the team members succeeded surprisingly well in arguing their views. One of the participants found this comment surprising and very valuable, something she wouldn't have thought about. She began to think: Did I really argue my reasoning? In other words, the observer's comments helped her to reflect on her argumentation skills. This was an encouraging sign of personal reflection: the student began to assess her own skills in her very first PBL tutorial. Her personal reflection had a social dimension: the other participants were able to relate her comments to their own reasoning skills.

Unfortunately, feeding the information to the students or staff members from above seems to be the dominating practice both in education and leadership. In the academic world, this is easy to notice when looking through the glass wall to the classroom. The instructor is talking and the students expose their backs to each other. Interaction is reduced to the minimum. This is not how we work in problem-based learning.

In our learning community, we tutors together have concluded the following principles to be of utmost importance.

PBL PRINCIPLES

For successful PBL, the tutor should

1. Be enthusiastic – to create a positive atmosphere.
2. Believe in PBL and trust the students.
3. Be an example.
4. Require professional behaviour (including being on time).

We agree to

5. Observe the 8 steps (PBL cycle).
6. Have a student discussion leader, recorder and observer in every tutorial.
7. The observer evaluates group dynamics and each participant's personal contribution in every tutorial.
8. Give tutorial grades after receiving self-assessments (or explain the suggestive nature of the grades published before self-assessment).
9. Provide clear evaluation of students' major work achievements (such as project reports and presentations).
10. Explain the absence rules and require the students to observe them – the consequences from any deviations are subjected to the teachers' group decision (one voice).
11. Avoid mini-lecturing. Instead, we may use re-directing questions and well-balanced comments and examples.

3

Learning Together

■ Since people learn to know each other in a knowledge construction team, the team can be compared to a family or sports team, or even a network or community. We came up with this team characterization together in a meeting of teachers from the Degree Programme in International Business in June 2006. We have learned that knowledge construction always involves emotions, since people do not act only on the basis of cold facts or reasoning. The more we have worked with PBL, the more aware of the emotional dynamics we have become. It is the tutor's role in any learning facilitation to make the process visible to the participants. In other words, transparency is important. We are there to help the other learners, the students, to become aware of what is going on in their personal and group learning processes, including the cognitive and emotional levels. In fact, we help the whole person to grow, not only to acquire a knowledge base full of applicable information.

*PBL helps us to grow
And it helps us to know
What is going on
When we move on*

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3.1 Family

In a “family team”, the tutor is a parent who helps the family members to grow and to become more and more responsible and less dependent on the tutor. The challenge is to see their existing potential and still push them forward. The tutor is genuinely interested in everyone's learning and the tutor's care and concern are clearly visible.

There must be genuine trust within the family team. Trust makes it possible for the tutor to create the right environment and atmosphere for learning. On the one hand, the students can rely on the tutor's help if

they have problems in understanding something; on the other hand, the tutor has to control the level of his or her own involvement, to prevent the students from using the tutor as an easy textbook. When the tutor trusts the students, he or she doesn't let them off the hook too easily. Instead, the tutor may think that next time the students will do better, after noticing that it is their job to prepare for the tutorials.

Perhaps the most important lesson that we can learn from the family team concept is the fact that the learners always develop as human beings, not only as professionals. This is important for the tutors to understand, since we are not only training the professional "part" of our students, if such a part even exists. All human characteristics, attributes, talents and capacities are somehow combined, and tutors who understand this can more easily accept the real nature of their work: we are helping learners to develop as human beings as well as professionals.

The family team metaphor is particularly valuable during the first semester. Many young students appreciate a tutor who is sensitive and caring as a person, since the ground for further study in the PBL programme is set in the first semester. Therefore, it is very important to create a feeling of acceptance among all team members. Positive core beliefs about the individual's own capacity and inner motivation create a good soil for further learning and personal growth. A discouraging first-semester tutor demanding too much may challenge further cooperation and cause distrust in the student's own learning skills. Core beliefs about one's own capacity are slow to change.

*We want both:
Personal and professional growth*

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Now the question is: how can we succeed in this kind of tutor's role? We know it requires both humbleness and pride. Life is a paradox, so is our profession. When we understand our limits, we can start pushing them towards untouched areas. We can proudly do our work, when we understand that we are equal learners with our students and colleagues. We personally have gone through a tremendous change in our profession from lecturers to learning process facilitators, and it is difficult to even describe what this change has meant to us as human beings. We dare say that our work with our students and colleagues over the years has made us better persons. We are truly grateful to them.

3.2 Sports Team

In a “sports team”, the tutor is a coach who helps the team members to perform better and better all the time, to play well together, and to understand that it is all about supporting the whole team to reach the goal hand in hand. “I can be better if I help the others to be better.” The coach does not play along but makes the sports team play well together. The coach’s role is important but the coach stays on the side. You can facilitate students’ learning only by listening to them and observing their performance. This is comparable to sports coaching.

*Use your endeavour
To play together*

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3.3 Network Team

In a “network team”, the tutor helps the network partners to value the contact that the learners learn to establish, starting from the first tutorial. In one of our PBL tutorials two days ago, one student mentioned how important it was to be in friendly terms with everyone, since a couple of years later they could be business partners together. The student discussion leader added: “That’s what they told us: be nice to everyone.” In fact, the discussion leader was full of encouraging and enthusiastic spirit, as if he was embracing the whole team with his friendly and encouraging attitude.

*A good network
Will help you in your work*

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3.4 Community

The PBL learners create a learning community with a common goal and understanding. In this kind of community, it is possible to tackle both encouraging and challenging issues openly, since the learners become used to always sharing feedback. This way constructive criticism is easier to accept and it doesn’t seem like such a big issue. Students even learn how

to demand feedback, because they know that it is impossible to develop and grow without honest feedback.

The community also encourages its members to think about the quality of their own networks. One prerequisite for individuals who want to continuously develop themselves is a high-quality network. If we stay too long with the same people, our thinking becomes streamlined and starts to decrease at some point of our development. Networking skills might be the key success factor in a workplace where insecurity is increasing.

*A learning community
Strengthens your professional identity*

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4

Supporting Learning

■ As we said above, the tutor's biggest favour to the learning community is perhaps the creation of a positive learning environment where students are welcome to make mistakes and learn from them.

We must tutor our students with the heart, trusting them and giving them the opportunity to learn. This will inevitably result in very positive learning results. We feel that the best times of our work week are the times that we spend in the tutorials with our students. These few hours are the highlights of our work. It is a joy to see the students experiencing collaborative knowledge building together, and to see their personal growth as well as their growth as a team, not only as learners but as human beings and members of a community. Their social interaction has so many levels that after all these years we tutors still learn new perspectives and maybe tomorrow will give us something that we haven't even been able to think of.

*PBL is a learning approach
And I'm the coach*

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We have witnessed students eagerly waiting for the next tutorial, saying, for example, that the tutorials are the best time of the week. In our personal performance reviews with the students, they often express how much they like PBL. It seems to be the best way for them to learn. Naturally we sometimes have students who would prefer more teacher-centred ways of instruction, but luckily they form only a small minority among our students. We have managed to pay attention to the students' fitness into our programmes in our entrance examination process and student selection criteria.

Over the years, many sceptical people have asked us how suitable PBL is for shy students. One of the most rewarding processes for a PBL tutor to witness is a shy student starting to blossom. This can happen slowly or in a moment. Fellow students have a great opportunity to help others

to develop, by gently asking the shy and silent ones to speak. This way the silent students gradually begin to participate.

The tutor's role is significant: some extra positive remarks and a smiling face can make a huge difference. We have witnessed how fellow students have responded to a shy student's participation. Sometimes the whole team gives positive feedback, and this naturally helps the student to contribute further. Peers have an enormous impact on each other, since they are at the same level and share the same goal to learn. The tutor, however, is always at another level, although part of the team.

4.1 View of Learning

In our PBL programmes, we view each individual as an autonomous person, with skills and potential to develop. In a favourable and challenging learning environment, an individual's potential can grow a great deal. It is a fact that many people never develop their fullest potential. The reason can be found in the core beliefs hindering people from taking the next steps in their professional development. There may be a rigid context with poor feedback, preventing people from moving between jobs and borders. Therefore, it is important to help the students to see their own core beliefs about their potential to grow professionally and as individuals.

According to our understanding, learning takes place at many levels in an individual. So far, the focus of pedagogical discussion has evolved around the cognitive aspect of learning. In other words, the focus has been on what happens in the learner's mind. However, a person also learns through the body and soul. The soul requires meaning, as well as a sense of belonging and fairness. Many students may be totally unaware of the reason why they are studying in a certain field. In this case, the meaning is lacking, and the students are just following their friends and the trends without reflecting on why they are studying.

In a personal letter to the tutor, one of our students recently shared her deepest feelings about the lack of meaning in studying business. She had always felt like an outsider in the business programme, as if she were forced to adapt to certain hard business values – until one tutorial discussion where she realised that she needed to learn about business to be able to change how business is conducted in the future. This released her emotional pain and lack of meaning, and she gained new energy to proceed in her studies.

How does the individual learn with the body? If we truly want to internalise a thought or an idea, we usually feel the effect in our entire

body. Deep relaxation, a sense of the truth and easiness in the body show us that we are on the right track in our learning. Tension, uneasiness and anxiety in the body tell us that something is not suitable. Too much stress affects learning negatively, and the body is the place where we first notice the stress, if we are willing to read the signals. A skilled tutor notices the bodily reactions in the students, and advice and suitable feedback at the right time can ease the stress for many people. If someone notices our uneasiness, it helps us to refocus our energy on learning instead of using it to fight uneasiness and anxiety, and we will feel more relaxed.

4.2 Students Are Responsible Learners

Trusting the students creates learning. PBL wouldn't work without the tutor's genuine trust and faith in the learners, and they have to see and feel that they are trusted. Trust and faith show in how we encourage and motivate the students. The tutor's faith in the students is as visible as the sport coach's faith in the sports team. Trust creates a positive atmosphere for learning. Trust inspires the tutor and the students. In other words: trust, trust, and trust!

Trust is visible in all areas of activity. It shows when we prepare the study program, when we interact in the tutorials or in other classroom activities, when we assess the students, and basically in all direct and indirect involvement with the students.

*In education, it is trust
That gives a thrust
It creates a positive atmosphere
And learning can appear*

*Sharing the responsibility
Enhances the ability
To learn the knowledge and skills
That give the chills*

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For example, the assessment process is not the tutor's ownership. In the problem-based learning philosophy, the students participate in their own assessment, as well as peer assessment. In some contexts where a large number of students gather in tutorials at the same time and only one tutor is available, our tutors have even learned to delegate all tutorial

performance assessment to student observers. We can gain this kind of trust in the students when we strongly believe in PBL and our students. Experience helps our trust to grow in this area as well. Trust is something that we have to nourish and cherish. This way we can make it our tool or assistant.

Actually, lack of trust may be one of the biggest obstacles to PBL. Teachers who are used to more teacher-centred ways of instruction may be afraid of failure in case they give all the responsibility to the students. In fact, we ourselves have often been positively surprised by the huge potential that our students have. It becomes visible when we give them responsibility. This helps us to give them encouraging feedback, which further increases the mutual trust. At the same time, we coach them to perform even better. This way there is no illusion about them having already gained the highest level. Growth is continuous and it takes place in an atmosphere of mutual trust.

When we trust the students, we help them to empower their own potential. We can no longer feed our own thoughts and ideas from above. We must help them take responsibility for their own learning. They have to be able to recognize problems and ask questions. They need to have the initiative to seek and analyze information, apply it to practice, and to share knowledge with each other. They must learn to lead the discussion and to prepare memos. They cannot even verify the correctness of the information with the instructor just like that – they have to participate in personal and peer assessment in an open atmosphere. This way they learn to support one another instead of competing as individuals. Responsibility for oneself and for the group is emphasized when the tutor trusts the students and moves aside from the centre.

4.3 Uncertainty and the Related Emotions

Coping with uncertainty may be one of the most important skills in the future. Yet, both teachers and students may find uncertainty very inconvenient when they are first learning to work and study with PBL. The degree of uncertainty avoidance varies from culture to culture and from individual to individual. It is important for the tutor to make the students aware of uncertainty as a natural and even necessary part of personal growth to professionalism. It is a rewarding learning experience to learn to cope with uncertainty.

We need to create a positive attitude towards problems. We live in a world where we tend to outsource the problems, and we are even afraid of

problems and conflicts. This leads to bigger problems in the workplace and in organisations. We also need to admit our own part in the problem. A problem should be seen as an opportunity, the chance to learn and grow. By facing the problem honestly, we can find new solutions. By sharing our problems openly, we can achieve a higher level of understanding. According to Einstein, problems are never solved at the same level as they were created. We are challenged today to solve old problems with new methods. We need to see through the problems, and look for different perspectives, interests and motives behind the problem. We can find these methods together, through honest communication and collaboration.

*Develop your ability
To cope with uncertainty*

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Learning to cope with uncertainty is also an emotional challenge. This increases the emotional load involved in tutorial work. The tutor and the students may be uncertain of the whole process, as well as their personal success. But awareness is the first step to accepting the fact that uncertainty and other emotional challenges exist and we can learn to cope with them.

Fear is the basic emotion hindering the individual from taking risks and exposing herself to unfamiliar situations. We may be afraid of becoming rejected, misunderstood and humiliated. We may feel shame and guilt. These are all very strong factors behind the scenes of an unconscious human being. Increasing self-awareness (being aware of one's own reaction patterns, emotions, thoughts and values) is regarded as a crucial skill in the future, since most problems are related to interpersonal relations instead of work-related content. Openly sharing the fears in a group is a powerful tool to diminish the power of hidden fear, which could make an individual either too timid and shy or too risk-taking and daring. Fear is a useful emotion, since it makes us sensitive to situations where we should be cautious and protect ourselves. The tutorial should never be a place where students have to protect themselves against other people's reactions.

Emotions provide important information about hidden group dynamics, since every message between people includes a hidden emotional message. It may be either supportive or negative. Sometimes even the tutor's expression of his or her own frustration may be fruitful for the group. One of us, as a tutor, felt she didn't have the respect of some students who were joking and making funny faces, while the tutor praised

another student's performance. In the next tutorial, the tutor expressed her anger and disappointment, and the students really responded and apologised their behaviour. After that, the feedback atmosphere and support changed in the team remarkably. The tutor felt that she had earned her respect back. Without expressing herself clearly, the tutor perhaps would have lost her respect.

Another time, one of us received feedback from a student, saying that she felt the tutor had an angry face during the tutorial. This affected the student's study motivation. The tutor was genuinely surprised and told the student that it must have been because PBL was so new to her and she had to concentrate hard to listen to the comments made by the students. It is not easy to know when to interrupt the discussion or not.

When we allow the expression of emotions in the tutorials, the team gains valuable feedback about the group dynamics and this can diminish uncertainty. All learners should have the right to express their emotions, but there is a difference between mastering one's own emotions through thoughtful expression and openly letting them out like an explosion. Emotional mastery is among the most important skills of a conscious employee. The importance of being aware of one's own emotions is not very well understood in organisations yet, but the role will increase in the future. The tutorial team is a great place to learn about oneself and how one's emotions affect the others.

4.4 Pedagogical Support

We can talk about real PBL when it takes place at the curriculum level instead of separate courses scattered around the study program. When the program is designed around problems rather than divided into old-fashioned disciplines, we can talk about full-immersion PBL. The various content perspectives are then integrated together, and assignments, projects and exams have a well-planned position in the learning process. This calls for genuine support from the organization at all levels. Pedagogical support should be comprehensive, ranging from a supportive atmosphere to practical resources at all levels. PBL also requires changes to many practical arrangements from schedule planning to classroom facilities.

If the mainstream educational system is not designed according to PBL, pedagogical support is equally crucial. In such a case, there may be many conflicting practices and arrangements challenging the motivation of the staff and students.

The school management and pedagogical leadership must recognize the value of PBL and support its planning and implementation with their attitude and resources. This means providing proper training and coaching for PBL tutors, instructors, academic advisors and other staff involved in the process. Introducing new tutors and instructors to the system is highly important. They usually need to unlearn many old practices. Even though we ourselves have worked as PBL tutors for eight years, we need to be careful not to act according to our old habits. Instead, we need to step aside and let the students be in the centre of attention, so that they can run the “show”. This is easier when we are engaged in an ongoing discussion with our colleagues and students, contemplating our experiences and ideas.

The organization should have a systematic plan for training and coaching new PBL staff. In addition to possible national and even international conferences, the organization should provide internal training and staff meetings where PBL can be discussed from the local perspectives. It is important to establish a shared understanding of PBL, since there are many different ways to understand it. The staff should agree on the common principles that everyone should respect, as well as the framework for possible variation. PBL offers a great deal of potential for creativity and different methods, but the tutors should understand some core issues in the same way, so that the organization can make the best of PBL and the learners will reach their full potential at all levels of learning.

The tutor’s own attitude is important. We have seen many instructors actively seek training and consultation with more experienced PBL colleagues. It would be less encouraging to see instructors start PBL tutoring without much preparation or systematic PBL training. The organisation should be concerned for this and the managers should understand what PBL really is. Otherwise there is always a risk of conflict between a new tutor and the students. In such cases, the problems may be reflected on other PBL tutors, as they may hear student complaints about a tutor whose principles essentially deviate from the general practices in the learning community. Therefore, all new tutors should be interested in the generally accepted principles.

The word is free, please share your views

We all would like to hear your news

What does learning mean to you?

What kind of learning is the clue?

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In addition to PBL training for groups, the organization should appoint a mentor or other support person for each new PBL tutor, and give enough resources for this purpose. The mentor should attend the new tutor's first PBL tutorials, after which the two persons should have immediate feedback discussions. The new PBL tutor should also attend the tutorials of other tutors, especially before starting his or her own tutorials. Subchapter 6.2.2. includes an example of systematic tutor-to-tutor peer assessment (see the table about tutorial observations at the end of the chapter).

*Don't fall short
Of pedagogical support*

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Schedule design requires many differences compared to more conventional study programs. Priority should be given to timing the PBL tutorials, and the resource lectures, workshops and all other activities should be designed bearing in mind the ideal PBL cycle. We must reserve enough time for independent study and teamwork, and we need to emphasize to the students that they need a large number of weekly hours that don't directly show in the schedule. It is advisable to reserve time slots for independent study and group work in the official study schedule. It is also important to warn the students against filling their timetable with too many extracurricular activities. They also need time to relax and take care of their physical and mental condition. After all, the purpose of PBL is to help the learners to grow as professionals as well as individuals. According to our experience, the interaction and personal contacts created in PBL have been a highly empowering experience to many students. We feel that we tutors have also been able to grow immensely in interaction with our students and colleagues.

An ideal PBL classroom includes a large round or square table or a set of tables for the tutorial team, so that the participants are close enough to each other and can create good eye contact. There should be a whiteboard or another suitable board for illustrations and brainstorming. We are used to both writing on the whiteboard and posting adhesive notes. Sometimes our students like to show illustrations with the document camera, and this can be an effective way to share information and knowledge.

We find a suitable table formation to be the most important consideration when planning and using the classroom facilities. The school should support this at the organization level. It may be very frustrating for the tutors if they have to fight against arrangements and attitudes favour-

ing a classroom setting designed for teacher-centred ways of instruction, with the students showing their backs at each other. Support from the organization should show in practical arrangements and in the attitudes of the whole learning community.

5

Social Construction of Knowledge

*PBL is like a snowball that keeps rolling and growing.
New knowledge and skills keep gathering on top of what is
already learned.*

Emilia Hartikainen
PBL student

■ Problem-based learning (PBL) is an approach that activates the students to take responsibility for their own learning. It challenges them to learn through engagement in a real problem. It simultaneously develops both problem-solving strategies and disciplinary knowledge bases and skills by placing students in the active role of problem-solvers.

Problems form the basis for the whole curriculum, and the problem-solving process determines what kind of knowledge is needed to explore the problem content. PBL is learner-centred and requires a fundamental change in the teacher's work compared with a traditional, discipline-based curriculum. Profound cooperation between teachers and tutors characterise a PBL curriculum.

Tutorials form the core of PBL. Social construction of knowledge takes place in tutorials. It requires a clear structure for the learning process. The 8-step model used in PBL provides the tools for learning, determines the roles of the participants, and provides the context for possible negotiations. There is space for flexible ways of working, but a clear structure for the process is well justified. Too much negotiation is not possible and the tutor should know the reasons why.

The socio-constructive learning approach is also present in projects and teamwork, but usually the tutor is not present in student project meetings, and therefore PBL tutorials are the backbone of the PBL process. The tutor is present, helping the participants to become aware of the various perspectives and characteristics of the process. Without the tutor's facilitation, it would be more difficult for the participants to recognize many important sub-processes and outcomes. Without the tutor's presence, the focus could easily turn away from many important issues. The tutor also helps to bring the group back to track, when needed. However,

the tutor should remain on the side, helping the group to replace the tutor in many ways along the process. Occasionally, the tutor could be totally absent – we will discuss this further below.

*We believe in instruction
Through social knowledge construction*

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5.1 Tutorials

Students open a new learning task in each tutorial session, including the formulation of new learning objectives. To prepare for the next tutorial, each student finds and explores relevant information. The students close the learning task in the next tutorial by sharing what they have learned during personal study. The purpose is to understand the theoretical concepts and to apply them to practice.

*Apply theoretical concepts
To new contexts
Practice shows
How it really goes*

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After closing the learning task in the tutorial, the students open the next task. This means that they define new learning objectives based on the “ill-defined problem” given by the tutor in the form of a text or videotape or another “trigger”. The trigger helps to create a new attitude towards learning, based on the core issues of the future career.

By explaining their own reflection and hearing other perspectives, students learn and build up their own knowledge more effectively than they would by listening to readily given solutions. Between tutorial sessions, instructors or business experts may give some well-focused lectures, used among other relevant information sources. Any project reports and assignment are based on the themes supported by the tutorial sessions.

The special skills learned through the PBL approach are related to problem-solving, active information search, knowledge and feedback sharing, communication, teamwork and continuous self-assessment. Students will retain knowledge in their long-time memory, with an ability to use that knowledge directly in their future profession. Research conducted at the University of Maastricht has proven that PBL students are able to

retrieve the knowledge better after a long period of time compared with students in traditional degree programmes. Quantitatively, PBL students might be exposed to less content than students in traditional programmes, but qualitatively they learn more and more deeply, and, above all, they remember it afterwards. Not to mention the skills discussed above, which will be embodied in the students' behaviour forever. PBL at its deepest level really embodies the human being. The behaviour begins to change. Recognising and analysing problems, as well as finding participative ways to solve them, will become automatic behaviour. These skills are truly valuable in everyday life.

The key roles in the tutorials are the discussion leader (DL), recorder and observer. These roles rotate, and it is important to give every student the chance to learn the responsibilities of each role. Through discussion leadership they learn important group and meeting leadership skills needed in the workplace. Writing memos of the meetings and summarizing the discussion helps the students to practice the related skills. The role of the observer helps the students to adopt the right attitude and practice of giving, receiving and using direct and honest feedback. The students learn to open their minds and hearts to feedback. These skills are of utmost importance, and they cannot be learned through teacher-centred ways of instruction.

The tutor's role is to act as a facilitator and supporter in the process, to be part of the group showing an example of an expert's work. The responsibility for learning shifts to the students, and they have the real chance to develop on the basis of team support and feedback.

The core process, the PBL tutorial, involves 8–12 students in each team: discussion leader, recorder, observer and other members. The tutor provides the problem triggers to be opened in the opening discussion. The opening discussion includes five steps: (1) clarifying unfamiliar concepts, (2) defining the problem, (3) brainstorming, (4) analysis / systematic classification, and (5) formulating the learning objectives. The opening tutorial is followed by information search and independent study (step 6). After this the closing tutorial includes the closing discussion (step 7) and evaluation (step 8).

Students sometimes question the steps and the reasons for going through them. In later semesters, the students may get tired of using all the eight steps. Then the tutor needs to motivate the students and justify why the steps are needed, or the tutor and the tutorial team together may come up with alternative ways to accomplish the same results.

The functions of the steps are the following. Clarifying unfamiliar words at the beginning of the discussion (step 1) sets the ground for a

good atmosphere for asking all kinds of clarifying questions later as well. The trigger should contain some new concepts and difficult words, since their existence challenge the students in their thinking and arouse their curiosity. Curiosity and willingness to explore more are very important energy for learning. If the trigger is dull and too easy, the team might be bored from the very beginning. When concepts and words are clarified, the discussion around the trigger content already begins. It is important to take time to generally approach the trigger content: what is said, who is doing what, and what different perspectives should be considered. The team may deliberately look at the content with different eyeglasses.

Problem definition (step 2) is the most crucial part, leading the way to the whole learning process and the possible outcomes. To formulate a clear, well-structured problem in a group is a skill many people lack even after completing their higher education. This skill also defines the quality of thesis research, for example. Problem formulation skills are also highly needed in everyday life, but there are few places to practice it.

The levels of the problem need to be considered (individual, group, organisational, societal) as well as the knowledge base involved. It is not always easy to balance between defining a problem that is too easy and dull and formulating a problem that is too difficult. The student team will notice how their problem formulation skills improve over time. Failures are a good way to learn here as well. Many times students admit that their problem formulation hasn't been so good, and they want to improve. So, although the tutor has an idea about the problem formulation in the tutor's guide, the tutor might want to let the students take responsibility and sometimes go a little bit astray in order to enhance their learning.

Brainstorming (step 3) activates the existing knowledge and opens up the big picture for the whole issue. When using adhesive notes, it is easy to form an overall perception of the topics involved in solving the problem. Brainstorming also allows the learners to activate their previous knowledge and the team can notice how much they already know and what is still lacking.

Although brainstorming is considered to be the creative part, systematic categorisation and analysis of the brainstorming outcome (step 4) is even more creative and interesting. It really reveals the existing knowledge and ideas of the team, and it motivates the students to go deeper. Many times the teams are totally absorbed in this phase and their energy level is very high. Other times the students are bored and they go through the step on a routine basis.

The tutor may try to increase the energy level by involving everybody in the analysis of the brainstorming, or rather by encouraging the

discussion leader to involve everyone. The categories of knowledge and their relations should form a comprehensive picture of the problem, preferably visualised on the whiteboard. If this phase is done well, it is also easier to formulate the learning objectives in the next phase. Usually the learning objectives emerge from the different categories, and students often recognise the need to start with definitions needed in the problem solving. The last learning objective should be related to the application of the theory to the trigger context or to another practical issue that the team agrees on.

Each step is justified from the perspective of a deep learning experience and the quality of the closing discussions, discussed further below.

Coming back to the triggers, they should be real, inspiring and based on the topic to be learned. Teamwork is often connected with a large project, which also generates triggers to the discussion. There should be enough time for personal study between the tutorials, so that the students have time to adopt the new concepts and materials.

The tutor must provide questions, whenever the student discussion leader needs support, to help the group to see different perspectives. The tutor should present critical viewpoints and challenge the students to develop their own thinking. According to our experience, sometimes we tutors hardly need to say anything in a closing discussion, and sometimes we have to throw in several questions that help the discussion leader and the group to discuss the topic either deeper or from another perspective. If the discussion is clearly going in the wrong direction and nobody seems to disagree with something that was totally misunderstood, the tutor may be wise to ask if the other students agree or not. This may help the students to think again.

We avoid, however, participating in the discussion in a student's role, because the students themselves need to share their experiences and learn to trust their own wings. Sometimes we may have tempting examples to share, but then we ask ourselves: is this example any better than the students' own examples? We don't want to steal time and opportunities away from the students. There have been times, however, when we have shared some examples or experiences, but we feel that there should be a special reason for us to do so. The tutor's should mainly stay in the background but be intensely present the whole time.

Providing guiding feedback is very important. Here, as well, the tutor should not steal the observer's role but rather support and facilitate it with questions and comments if need be. The tutor must remember that he or she does not own the assessment process alone.

Senior Lecturer Seija Ranta-aho, our colleague and learning process facilitator, has co-written with us the following instructions for the discussion leader, recorder and observer.

ROLES IN THE TUTORIAL

In PBL, the students act in the key roles of the discussion leader (DL), recorder, observer, and team members. The purpose of these instructions is to explain the purpose of these roles.

The student discussion leader (DL) directs the discussion in the tutorial, while the recorder writes a memo of the whole tutorial discussion and summarizes the discussion at the end. The observer gives direct feedback to the group and individual participants at the end of the closing discussion (step 8). In many of our tutorials, we have also asked the observer to facilitate in the analysis and systematic classification (step 4) of the results from brainstorming (step 3). The other team members are active participants, while the instructor's role as the tutor is to facilitate the flow of discussion with guiding questions when necessary.

The team members contribute to the discussion by elaborating the topic. They may also ask for information and clarification. Team members must listen actively and summarize what has been discussed. They should give, ask for and receive feedback. They are expected to give their active contribution to creating an understanding of the team's view.

Learning is not a top-down process, but an equal exchange of information to construct knowledge in the team. Therefore, the tutor is a learning facilitator, supporting independent learning among the students. An expert in the subject, the tutor helps to find sources. The tutor accepts the feelings encountered when learning.

Students take turns in the roles of the DL and the recorder as agreed. A rotation that allows the recorder to be the DL in the following tutorial may be beneficial from the perspective of integration. At the beginning of each tutorial, it is advisable to ask the previous DL and observer to briefly comment on the tutorial memo published between the tutorials. Each student is responsible for reading the memo before the next tutorial and they should also be ready to give their comments when asked. In our recent tutorials, we have usually asked the previous observer to give feedback about the memo, since the observer was the one to give feedback about the corresponding closing discussion.

Discussion Leader

The discussion leader plays the most important role in a PBL tutorial. The **outcome of the tutorial lies very much on the DL**, who must therefore be very well prepared as to the contents, concepts and structure of the topic. The DL should understand the highlights or main points of the topic and take care that these are included on the agenda.

The DL prepares the meeting **agenda**, encourages and facilitates the participation of the other team members, regulates the flow of communication, summarizes the essential points, paraphrases to enhance understanding, and concludes the session. The DL also makes sure that the recorder gets all the essential information and the tempo is right. The agenda covers the main points of the topic; it is much more detailed than just the list of learning objectives.

The DL keeps questioning and keeps the discussion going by encouraging the participants and by giving everyone the chance to express their views, **making everyone responsible** for their contribution. The challenging part is to **build a bridge** between people, referring to previous statements, and throwing the same ball forward. There is no discussion if people, one after another, just read their findings from paper! **The DL encourages the peers to go to the whiteboard to draw or design or write down the most essential information.**

Sometimes the discussion may be escalating to its heights and the rules and good manners may be forgotten. This is when the DL has to put the group back into order – not rudely but decisively. Raising hands is usually the best way to express the willingness to say something.

As a discussion leader, the student learns real leadership and management skills for the future.

Agenda

The purpose of the agenda is to provide a specific structure for the discussion. The DL should then ask the tutorial team, at the beginning of the tutorial, whether the team accepts the agenda as such or whether someone would like to suggest any changes. Any team member could also ask the DL, if need be, if a certain topic would be brought up in the discussion, if the agenda doesn't clearly suggest it. A well-prepared agenda serves the team throughout the discussion, as it shows how the discussion is moving from topic to topic, even when it seems to zigzag back and forth.

Perhaps "a table of contents" would be a good phrase to describe the nature of the expected agenda, since the agenda may consist of headings and subheadings. Alternatively, the agenda may include questions, although the DL should have a larger reserve of questions in his or her notes without including them all on the agenda. The DL can use these questions to lead the closing discussion.

An agenda that includes only the usual time frame for the procedure that always takes place and the learning objectives chosen in the previous tutorial is only a reminder of previously given information.

We also welcome the use of concept maps and models on the agenda, if applicable. The agenda should always visualize the structure of the planned discussion for the whole team, whether constructed as a list or as an inspiring illustration.

Recorder

The **recorder's** main responsibility is to take notes. The recorder also categorizes the results from brainstorming, while the other team members provide their active contribution to creating an understanding of the team's view.

The recorder is expected to prepare properly to be able to grasp the essentials of the discussion. The recorder is welcome to ask for help and clarification from the peer group as well as the tutor.

The recorder writes a tutorial memo and makes it available to all team members according to the team agreement. It is recommended to post the memo in Blackboard by the end of the tutorial day.

Team members are expected to read the memo after each tutorial. The memos are helpful reading material for the examination as well.

Observer

The **observer's** responsibility is to pay attention to the discussion in general, the DL and the participants. The following checklists may help you to focus on the essential.

Observer's Checklist 1	
Discussion in general	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Level of discussion▪ Depth of the content▪ Quality of the sources used
DL	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Preparedness▪ Ability to involve the participants▪ Building bridges between comments when needed▪ Leadership skills
Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Preparedness▪ Pluses▪ Minuses: what to improve

Observer's Checklist 2		
1.	Structure of the tutorial	How well did the tutorial proceed according to the agenda? How well did the agenda serve its purpose from the perspective of our learning objectives?
2.	Preparation	How well was everyone prepared for the discussion?
3.	Equal participation	How well could everyone contribute to knowledge construction? Did some people tend to start the discussion, giving the others the follower's role? Did anyone dominate the discussion? Did some people remain in the background?
4.	Listening and referring to one another's ideas	How well did everyone listen to the discussion? How well did they engage with each other's ideas? Did people evaluate each other's ideas and even challenge them, or did everyone tend to agree with the "opinion leaders"?
5.	Explaining and understanding	Did people explain the reasoning behind their argumentation? Did people have problems in formulating their expressions so that everyone could understand? What could have been done to avoid unclarity in these cases?
6.	Application of theory	How effectively did the team apply theory to practice in the closing discussion?
7.	Summarizing to see the big picture	Did the team sum up any parts of the discussion so that everyone could remember what has been said and understand how the discussion should proceed?
8.	Using prior knowledge in the opening discussion	How effectively did the team use their prior knowledge in idea generation and categorization?
9.	Feedback	Quantity and quality of the feedback?
10.	Other important observations	

When answering the above questions, refer to **evidence how all this showed in our tutorial**. Make notes!

5.2 Discussion Leader

The DL prepares the agenda and leads the discussion, also taking care of the timing. A successful tutorial from a DL's perspective means that everyone contributes to the learning discussion in a positive atmosphere, the team reaches its learning objectives, and everyone feels good about the discussion afterwards.

*The discussion leader
Is like a heater
Giving energy
To group synergy*

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5.2.1 Agenda

Preparing an agenda for the closing discussion is a special challenge for the discussion leader. The students need a great deal of guidance for this at the beginning of their studies. We should explain that the purpose of the agenda is to provide a specific structure for the discussion. The DL should then ask the tutorial team, at the beginning of the tutorial, whether the team accepts the agenda as such or whether someone would like to suggest any changes. Any team member could also ask the DL, if need be, if a certain topic would be brought up in the discussion, if the agenda doesn't clearly suggest it. A well-prepared agenda serves the team throughout the discussion, as it shows how the discussion is moving from topic to topic, even when it seems to zigzag back and forth.

Preparing the agenda is not easy for new students. We have seen many agendas with very little new information. An agenda that includes only the usual time frame for the procedure that always takes place and the learning objectives chosen in the previous tutorial is only a reminder of previously given information. We nonetheless expect much more from the agenda. Thus, the DL should learn to provide a more specific table of contents for the closing discussion. Perhaps "a table of contents" would be a good phrase to describe the nature of the expected agenda, since the agenda may indeed consist of headings and subheadings. Alternatively, the agenda may include questions, although the DL should have a larger reserve of questions in his or her notes without including them all on the agenda. The DL can use these questions to lead the closing discussion.

*The agenda shows
How the discussion flows*

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We also welcome the use of concept maps and models on the agenda, if applicable. The agenda should always visualize the structure of the planned discussion for the whole team, whether constructed as a list or as an inspiring illustration. We should allow and encourage creativity here as well, as long as the team can use the agenda for their benefit. We should emphasize to the students that our agendas serve discussions where the participants construct knowledge in a team and therefore our agendas differ from, for example, agendas used in company board meetings where the participants often make quick decisions based on well-prepared proposals.

In some courses, our DLs have published the agenda in our eLearning platform in advance. The benefits include the chance for other group members to suggest additions to the agenda before the tutorial. This may

facilitate the DL in preparing for the tutorial. In most cases, the DL brings a copy of the agenda to the tutorial for each participant. Some DLs have written it on the whiteboard well before the tutorial begins. The document camera and projector are not recommended, since the participants may use the same devices for presenting their findings and ideas.

5.2.2 Positive Atmosphere

We tutors are the key persons to create a positive atmosphere. Our favourable attitude helps the discussion leader, whose role is even more decisive in making the tutorial successful. The tutor should help the DL to feel good about himself or herself, in case the DL needs special encouragement. Especially when a student is acting in the DL's role for the very first time, the tutor should encourage the DL personally just before the tutorial. Some students have more self-confidence than others, and the tutor should realize that it is often self-confidence that makes a big difference in student performance. We have seen students hide their talents at the beginning of their studies. Later, when they have begun to prosper, they have told us that they have gained self-confidence, which has allowed them to use their potential in the learning discussions and project work.

*A positive atmosphere
Without fear
Is the best you can provide
As a guide*

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5.2.3 Involving Everyone

Even if the DL hasn't succeeded in making the best possible agenda, involving everyone and building bridges between people and their comments can result in a successful tutorial. When the participants are well prepared for the discussion, they can help the DL to check and revise the agenda accordingly. Involving all team members and taking care that nobody dominates is more important than getting the best possible answers from those willing to start the discussion each time.

Some DLs may be shy to involve passive team members. The DL may be afraid of embarrassing someone who is silent. After all, how can you know if silent students are prepared or not, or if they are just shy? When the tutor gives an example of how to involve everyone and makes this

practice a visible and natural part of the process, the DL and the other students begin to understand that it is not rude to balance the discussion between the most and least active members. The observer's comments about the distribution of the discussion among the team members at the end of the closing discussion are also very valuable for this purpose.

After the team becomes used to the fact that the DL's job really is to involve all members (allowing, however, the observer and recorder to focus on their notes), the DLs seem to take care of this responsibility quite naturally.

Make the team interactive

Make everyone active

Everyone's contribution

Is our constitution

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If the DL allows some students to dominate too long, the tutor should intervene, for example, by saying, "The discussion seems to focus on this side of the table, and maybe that side of the table could present the next few comments", or "Maybe Laura, Tony and Maria could give some examples of the concepts that were just presented".

The role of the individual in a group is different in different cultures. A wise tutor fosters cultural awareness in a multicultural team, to create a comfortable atmosphere for everyone to get involved. It would be wise to discuss cultural issues during the early stages of team formation.

The DL should pay attention to professional behaviour among the team members and encourage mutual support. It is important that nobody be interrupted, but if people tend to speak too long, the DL may ask them to say it briefly.

The DL may sometimes ask the participants to show their models and illustrations on the whiteboard or with the document camera, or pass them around on paper. In some rare cases, the DLs have summarized the discussion on the whiteboard, and it has been very good. This seems to require practice or special skills to work well. The DL may ask any team member to make notes on the whiteboard, since the recorder should be allowed to write the memo without interruption.

A skilful DL summarizes parts of the discussion when moving from an entity to another. The DL should learn to build bridges between people and comments by referring to what has been said.

5.3 Recorder and the Tutorial Memo

In our tutorials at HAAGA-HELIA, the recorder writes a tutorial memo and posts it on the eLearning platform for everyone to see. The memo should be available early enough for the team members to review the contents of the discussion when preparing for the next tutorial. The tutorial team should decide about the general deadline for posting the memo. Further, the memo is evaluated with constructive feedback at the beginning of the following tutorial. In our tutorials, it has been customary for the previous observer to give the first comments about the pluses and minuses of the memo. This way, the observer continues his or her feedback for the recorder after reading the memo. The whole team should nonetheless read the memo and be prepared to provide their comments. The tutor should encourage the students to really read the memo. It enhances their learning further and helps them to write better memos.

When we tutors assess the students' tutorial performance, we take into account the recorder's memo as his or her main performance for that day. Some tutors like to assess the memo with a visible grade. Here, however, we must understand that the first few recorders in the first semester are sort of pioneers in their field and their memo-writing skills develop as the students learn from their own experience and from the experience of their peers. We tutors also tend to provide instructions for memo writing along the first few weeks. In the first school day or week, it is not possible to explain everything in depth.

Since our tutorials include a closing discussion and an opening discussion concerning the following learning task, the memo correspondingly includes these two parts. The recorder does not normally participate in the discussion, since he or she has to focus on making notes. Naturally the recorder should ask for clarification from the DL and the team when needed.

As you can see in our suggested tutorial schedule in subchapter 6.3, the closing discussion includes five minutes for a summary given by the recorder at the end, right before the observer's ten-minute feedback. Thus, we do hear the recorder's voice in the tutorials. Summarising the discussion is not all that easy, and it partly depends on the structure of the closing discussion and on the easiness of the topic. Some recorders tend to repeat too many details, while others focus more on the big picture. The recorder's role is a great opportunity for the students to learn the skills related to making notes, summarising them, and writing and publishing the final memo.

A good tutorial memo reflects the contents of the discussion. Sometimes the discussion may zigzag from point to point. The recorder should nonetheless structure the memo logically according to the contents of the discussion. In other words, the structure should be based on the topics and concepts, rather than on a chronological sequence of the comments in the discussion. The concepts could be somehow visually highlighted and followed by explanations and practical examples given in the tutorial discussion. In addition, the recorder should include a simple list of the main keywords at the end of the closing discussion. On the basis of the memo contents, the recorder should select these keywords according to his or her own discretion.

*With an open ear
The recorder must hear
And use his or her potential
To write down the essential*

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The recorder should not add content from outside the discussion, unless specifically agreed in the discussion. For example, if the team did not have time to elaborate on something that was briefly mentioned, the team may decide that the recorder add this information as an appendix to the memo. This kind of addition would nevertheless be an exception rather than a customary practice.

In our tutorials, the DL normally asks the team members what sources they have studied. Often the recorder circulates a list where the participants can write their sources. This information is then easily included in the memo.

The recorder should use headings and subheadings according to the contents of the discussion and according to recorder's own discretion. The layout should conform to the proper document standard. Thus, writing the memo should support the studies related to word processing and document writing and vice versa. The memo should also include the illustrations shared in the tutorial discussion, and thus the recorder may practice using the drawing features of the word processing program.

In the opening discussion, the recorder or another team member should facilitate in the analysis and categorization of brainstorming. In many of our tutorials, we have designated the observer for this purpose, since the recorder may want to focus on writing the memo during the analysis phase as well.

The recorder should also write down the main feedback comments from the observer, particularly the evaluation of the group dynamics rather than the personal feedback given to each team member. If agreed, the observer may send his or her own summary of the evaluation and to the recorder before the memo is published.

When the opening discussion begins and the students start to suggest alternative problem definitions, it is hard for the team to remember the suggestions after a while. Therefore, the recorder should keep record of the suggestions (it wouldn't hurt for everyone to do this). Then the DL may ask the recorder to repeat the suggestions so far. Or if the DL is not very active in this role, the recorder could take the initiative in reporting his or her notes if need be.

The recorder should draw an illustration of the brainstorming analysis and categorization to be included in the memo. Or the recorder may take a digital picture of the illustration, since many students seem to carry a phone with a camera.

Finally, the recorder writes down the learning objectives formulated by the team. Here again, the recorder should keep record of the suggestions to facilitate the final selection and formulation. It may be advisable for the recorder to write the problem and learning objectives on the whiteboard for everyone to see them clearly. If not, the recorder should read the final learning objectives out loud. This way everyone gets them in the right form and any corrections are easier to make before the tutorial is over.

The recorder should also include the keywords decided in this connection. The suggested contents of the tutorial memo are given below.

CONTENTS OF THE TUTORIAL MEMO	
Close task 1.1	
Learning objectives	Learning objectives defined in the previous tutorial and recorded at the end of the previous memo.
Discussion (use subheadings)	Well-structured description of the central learning results on the basis of the closing discussion. Theory and application. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The memo must reflect the contents of the discussion (no content from outside, unless the team authorizes the recorder to add more specific information as an appendix). ▪ The structure should be based on the topics and concepts rather than on a chronological sequence of comments. ▪ Concepts should be visually highlighted and followed by explanations and practical examples given in the tutorial discussion.
Keywords	Theoretical key concepts related to the topic. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The recorder selects the main keywords on the basis of the memo contents.

Sources	Sources studied by the participants.
Evaluation	Evaluation of the task and the learning results. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The main feedback comments from the observer (group dynamics rather than personal feedback).
Open task 1.2	
Discussion	Brief description of how the team approached the topic represented by the trigger.
Problem	Title of the topic or chosen perspective in the form of a question, statement or concept.
Categorization of brainstorming	Outline of the conceptual framework based on the team's current knowledge. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Drawing (or photo) of the illustration.
Learning objectives	Objectives and tasks on the basis of the chosen problem area.
Keywords	Theoretical key concepts related to the topic.

5.4 Observer

The observer observes and evaluates group dynamics and each participant's personal contribution in every tutorial. The tutor should encourage the observer to share feedback effectively. After hearing the observer's feedback at the end of the discussion, the tutor should adjust his or her own comments according to the feedback already given. Repeating the same comments may not be wise, but the tutor might emphasize certain points or add some missing perspectives or observations. The tutor should show that the students are co-owners of the assessment process through self and peer assessment.

In our tutorials, we have used the observer mainly in the closing discussion, but we sometimes assess the opening discussion in some other way. We will explain this below. We select the discussion leaders and recorders from an alphabetical list, to make the system easy, but usually we appoint the observer at random each time, still making sure that everyone acts in this role once before anyone is chosen for the second time. If the observers know their turn in advance, they might be tempted not to study for the tutorial. In some special cases (for example, when the following tutorial includes a special debate), we may announce the observer in advance to allow the observer to prepare for this slightly different closing. This book includes a subchapter about including a debate in the closing discussion.

It is important that the observer remain quiet during the discussion, focusing on intensive observation and making notes. If the observer par-

ticipates in the discussion, he or she easily neglects the main responsibility. It is easier to make sharp observations without participating in the discussion. The observers have told us that it is a very educating experience to learn to keep one's mouth shut even when tempted to participate in the discussion. Silence observation provides good intensive training for that. Naturally giving room to other people may still be a challenge to talkative students every time, and they should be encouraged to listen to the others and not always be the first to offer their views right after the discussion leader begins a new topic or asks a new question.

The observer's role has turned out to be a crucial empowering force in PBL. During the first few years, we did not fully understand how effectively the observer could share feedback when given the proper instructions and encouragement. After some observers began to do this really well, we learned more about this important process ourselves. We began to reserve more time for feedback sharing at the end. Nowadays, we have reserved a total of ten minutes at the end of most of our closing discussions.

First the observer gives feedback about group dynamics, explaining, for example, how the monologues at the beginning gradually started to evolve towards a dialogue. Or how some students tended to start the discussion or otherwise dominate until the discussion leader or tutor actively involved everyone. Or how some participants referred to each other's comments, contemplating them further or even challenging them. Or how some students clearly agreed or disagreed with each other. Or how well the participants explained the reasoning behind their argumentation, making their points clear so that everyone could understand.

In short, the observer should assess the group performance from different perspectives, aiming to see the big picture. The guiding idea is how well the group fulfils their learning objectives and how the process itself succeeds from the perspective of effective, constructive, and professional teamwork. Thus, the observer pays attention to the level of discussion and the depth of the contents, making a distinction between discussion based on high-quality sources and chitchat with questionable value.

After the overall group assessment, the observer should move on to individual feedback, starting from the discussion leader and covering every member. The feedback should focus on pluses and minuses, always challenging everyone to perform better, still making it clear that there is room for mistakes and the tutorial is a safe place to make them, as long as everyone tries their best. The attitude towards collaborative learning is what counts.

*Whatever it takes
Make space for mistakes
Not to spoil creativity
As the basis for activity*

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The observer evaluates the discussion leader's performance from the perspective of involving and activating all participants, building bridges, and maintaining a successful professional discussion. The observer also pays attention to the agenda and the DL's questions.

The observer should pay attention to how well the participants have prepared for the tutorial (including their notes) and how effectively they refer to and discuss with their sources (using the author's name) and, in the best case and especially at advanced levels of study, how well they compare or even challenge their sources. This way all students gradually learn to refer to evidence and they begin to understand the value and purpose of source references. Further, the observer should notice the use of theoretical concepts and their application to the practical context (based on the trigger or other relevant context) through the participants' own examples. The observer's comments may cover how well the members listen to each other, even how they use their voice and body language. Mutual respect and group support are also commented, and anything related to professional behaviour and team values. The guiding principle in our tutorial performance feedback and assessment is this: We evaluate and assess what we consider valuable.

According to our experience, some observers have been very good at giving feedback about the overall group performance, while others have focused a great deal on giving individual feedback. The topics in group and individual feedback are partly quite similar, but the perspectives are different: group level and individual level. Both feedback sections are very important, since group feedback helps the participants to understand how the team works effectively together, and individual feedback both strengthens each student's self-confidence and helps to improve the weak areas.

*The observer pays attention
To the level of preparation
The level of contribution
And its distribution*

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In one of our tutorials two days ago, the observer gave thanks to the team for supporting a student who had shown some difficulty expressing his ideas in the closing discussion. He had started his studies a week late and the group now wanted to support him in this second tutorial of his, where he was trying to increase his active participation. The observer's comments put a smile on the student's face and everyone understood that this kind of supportive professional behaviour, included among the criteria to be assessed, is very valuable and worth our feedback.

The observer's feedback takes a big burden off the tutor's chest. During our first few years, we had many more worries about how to help certain students to understand what we really expect from them, if we were not satisfied with their tutorial performance. With direct and constructive feedback given by the observer and, if need be, supplemented by the tutor, can directly tackle even the difficult issues right on the spot: at the end of the closing discussion. In addition, we do have private student-to-tutor performance reviews (15 minutes reserved for each student) a few weeks after the first tutorial. This has turned out to nicely boost student performance directly after the performance reviews. In these discussions, the students have the chance to explain their own performance and set their personal goals. It seems that they tend to be better committed to their goals when they discuss with their tutor.

When listening to the observer's successful feedback, the tutor realizes how valuable PBL is for the wellbeing of the student. The student grows not only as a professional but also as a human being. The experiences can be quite healing sometimes. We have received positive feedback about this from the students afterwards.

Also, when hearing the feedback, the tutor can ultimately see that PBL provides many valuable skills that many other learning approaches can only dream of. Yet, these skills are much in demand in today's and tomorrow's workplace. After a couple of years of work experience, one of our PBL graduates told us that the skills to give and receive feedback had been the most beneficial skills acquired through the PBL programme.

After the observer has given feedback to the group and each member, the discussion leader or another team member should give feedback to the observer. In one of our tutorials today, the observer's word selection sounded a bit non-constructive. The cultural differences and personal characteristics may explain some of it, but obviously the observer wasn't fully aware of some of the nuances of the English words that he was using in this international tutorial team. One team member then kindly explained to the observer and the whole group how the observer could have selected his words in a more constructive way. The team member did this

for the benefit of everyone's learning. This was a sign of a good and open atmosphere in our tutorial team; the student felt free to give constructive criticism to the observer after the observer had finished.

Normally, we tutors explain to the students that the observer's viewpoint is her or his own and there is no need to start defending oneself. We are not in a trial. Today, the students did not begin to defend themselves, either. Instead, the student giving feedback to the observer did a favour to the learning community, since he focused on how the observer can advance his commenting techniques, focusing on performance instead of the person.

Thanks to our feedback system, the students learn to give and receive constructive criticism and use it to improve their performance. They also gain self-confidence, which is decisive in their personal and professional growth. This way we really help our students to have better work opportunities in the future.

In most of our tutorials, we haven't had any observer's feedback at the end of the opening discussion. Having an observer for the opening discussion could be very useful, and the students should be able to receive some feedback about the opening discussion. On the other hand, using other ways to assess the opening tutorial may be a good idea. For example, at the end of the opening tutorial, the tutor or the discussion leader could ask the participants to take a standing position on an imaginary line going from wall to wall on the classroom floor. One side is "cold" and the other side is "hot". The students could then indicate how hot or cold they are, depending on how effective and useful the opening discussion was from their personal perspective and how intensively they set their mind to it. This has turned out to be a good way for the students to give their personal perspective and for everyone to see how the others view the opening discussion. Using different ways to assess the opening discussion are also a tool to boost creativity and a positive attitude towards self and group assessment.

5.5 Small Groups

If a tutorial group includes eight members, there are five ordinary team members each time in addition to the DL, recorder and observer. But if one is absent, the number of active discussers is reduced to four. Maybe an ideal team size is 8–12 students. In most of our tutorials, we have had about twelve students (DL, recorder, observer and nine other members), and this size seems to work quite well.

It is wise to distribute the genders and nationalities evenly. In our Degree Programme in International Business, our intake has been approximately 36 new students twice a year, and we've had three tutorial teams with a dozen students in each. If we've had six Russian students, for example, we have placed two of them in each tutorial team, possibly one female and one male student. If we've had three Chinese students, each of them has enriched the cultural background in one tutorial team. If we've had nine Finnish female students, we placed three in each tutorial team. Correspondingly, we've divided the rest of the students evenly. We haven't used any other criteria than the gender and nationality. Otherwise the division has been clearly alphabetical, to avoid any selection based on personalities or work experience. We have usually met the students as one big group in the first school day before a division into tutorial teams.

*Group diversity
At the university
Enhances our ability
For creativity*

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The above description is related to our first-semester students. In our first semester, we have not used any tutor specialization in our integrated business course. In other words, the tutor stays with his or her team throughout the 16 weeks included in the semester, and each tutorial team meets at the same time. So there are three tutors and three tutorial teams.

In the second semester and the other semesters, the tutor has changed according to the theme in our integrated international business courses. Each theme has lasted for a couple or more weeks. During each theme, the same tutor has tutored all three tutorial groups successively on the same day. The division into tutorial teams has partly been based on work-related project groups, since students in the same project group must be in the same tutorial team, to find common time for project work outside the tutorial time. The project group division has been partly based on what kinds of interests the different students have had in the various project topics. Before making the tutorial division, the coordinating instructor has also considered the students' wishes for the time of the day reserved for each tutorial team.

6

Guiding Principles

■ In problem-based learning, our focus is on the students. The core of PBL is the tutorial, the cornerstone of the PBL cycle, which also includes personal study. Without preparation, the tutorials would not be successful, although a tremendous amount of learning is generated in the tutorials. Without tutorials, the students would not learn the necessary process skills. The knowledge shared in the tutorials must be based on the requirements in the workplace today and tomorrow, but it is not only the content that matters in problem-based learning.

*Use your principles as a guide
And you won't slide*

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After a few words about focusing on the students, we will share our views about writing triggers for the opening discussions in tutorials. After that will introduce the 8-step model applied to the PBL cycle at HAAGA-HELIA and take a look into our assessment system.

6.1 Focus on Students

As the focus is on the students in PBL, the teacher has become a tutor and co-learner. The teacher may also have the role of a resource lecturer, which means that the lectures do not define the plot or story for the course. The story is rather provided through tutorials, and a typical resource lecture is one among the various sources of information for personal study.

For example, when we give resource lectures, the students are expected to attend with an inquiry-based attitude. Our lectures should ideally provide the students with tools to answer the learning objectives in the tutorials. The students should have a mindset for asking questions at the lectures. They should be thinking about how the lecture could help them in the next closing discussion. This has, in fact, been a good motivator

for the students. They recognise the immediate value from the lecture; they don't have to wait until the next exam to use the knowledge shared at the lectures.

*It is prudent
To focus on the student*

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Naturally we use workshops, company visits, and various other activities as part of the personal study phase in the PBL cycle. Some of these activities provide further guidance for understanding the PBL process and for using self- and peer assessment. The focus should always be on the students and their learning.

We tutors must be easily accessible and willing to listen to them. The student-focused approach means more than just being available during our office consultation hours or in and around class time, and maybe replying to student email. We should give the truthful impression about caring for the students. If they have a crisis in project work, for example, we must be able to meet the group within a reasonable amount of time.

In tutorials, the tutor should make sure that the learners are seated preferably around a round or square formation of tables, to allow all participants to see each other well. The discussion leader should have direct eye contact with everyone present. If the names are unfamiliar to anyone, clear name tags should be visible in all directions.

The tutor must always remember that the participants themselves are in the active roles, “running the show”, which must never be tutor-centred but learner-centred. In other words, the tutor does not deliver the content and knowledge, but adopts the role of a coach and learning facilitator. This process requires a total change from a more traditional way of looking at the instructor's work, where the instructor may be used to having control over content and what is happening in class. The tutor must also tolerate uncertainty and chaos.

6.2 Writing Triggers

When we open a new learning task in a PBL tutorial, we trigger the minds of the students with a text that is usually shorter than one page. Maybe the length of the text varies from a few sentences to several paragraphs, or even to a few pages in some exceptional cases. Instead of a text, the trigger may be a picture or another illustration, a video clip, or even a

short presentation. Some universities use the word “stimulus” or “scenario” to refer to the trigger.

*Please be kind
To trigger my mind
Let me find
The reasons behind
Give me space
To test my case*

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What is a good trigger like? On 16 April 2008, our colleague Seija Rantaaho sat down with us for an hour to discuss what kinds of PBL triggers we should give our students. The following paragraphs about triggers are based on Matti’s interpretation of the discussion between Seija and Harriet.

Seija calls the trigger an eye-opening phenomenon. Harriet continues by calling it a contradictory expression of a phenomenon in real life, containing different perspectives, backgrounds, voices, dimensions and layers. In a dialogue, Seija and Harriet come up with the following characterization.

A trigger includes different amounts of power, sometimes more hidden, sometime obvious or even explosive. Triggers are explorations, inspiring the learners to explore new topics. This reminds us of the definition of our colleague Irma Pulkkinen: “A trigger is an adventure to a new place.”

Triggers invite and challenge the learners. They motivate the students to find out, they wake them up. At its best, a trigger is a story where students can identify themselves or see themselves in their future work. Seija often asks the students to put themselves into the shoes of the person or persons described in the trigger. This is extremely important, for example, when studying leadership. The students should also select the perspective: either the leader’s or subordinate’s viewpoint. The students should think that they are highly involved, participants of the group under review. Harriet has used the metaphor of wearing different kinds of eyeglasses. Whether shoes or eyeglasses, we need to bring the trigger very close to the lives of our students.

Triggers should not be too abstract. As Dr Wim Gijsselaers from the University of Maastricht has said, there is a risk of making the trigger too academic, something that the tutor falls in love with. For example, triggers about huge multinational companies may interest the tutor very

much, but their problems seldom come close to the student's world of experiences. The following example shows a trigger that should not be used.

1986 is when IBM began to lose it. For reasons of their own, they were reluctant to get involved with the 386 microprocessor. That's when Compaq got into the act. Then in 1990, Microsoft split with IBM and introduced Windows 3.0. For his part, William Gates (founder and CEO of Microsoft) concurred: "Compaq's decision to come out with a 386 system before IBM is the big transition. Both our companies really encouraged Compaq to not just be the leader in portables, which is what they were at that point, but to be the performance leader, too. After that, there was a bit of a vacuum in PC leadership and both of our organisations recognized the need and opportunity to step in and fill it. But one key thing to know about the chronology of our relationship is that there's been more time spent on the Intel/Microsoft collaboration in the last couple of years than in all the preceding decades put together."

We must be careful not to fall into this kind of trap. Instead, triggers should make the students curious to learn more.

In problem-based learning, our integrated studies include various themes. A series of triggers should form a story related to the theme. We may start from basic concepts and expand the theme with new triggers, to provide a better understanding of the whole theme every time. This way we can avoid offering bits and pieces of scattered information. We feel the need to develop this kind of practice further and deeper.

A trigger may provide the ground for development. For example, it may include a story of a company or other organisation, providing the starting point from which the students may continue with their own improvement ideas. For her new Competence management online course, Seija is writing a background story about a store that employs several salespersons. The five triggers are related to this background story, following a certain development path. On the basis of their learning, the students will build a proposal for the company to identify and develop their competences.

There are many types of triggers. Sometimes they lead the students to a new area to be explored, and sometimes they present a clear problem from the context of the workplace. Sometimes the students write triggers based on their projects. This way different project groups can share their learning and provide useful ideas for each other.

Instead of giving any answers, triggers should raise questions. We must nonetheless be careful not to write our own questions at the end of the trigger text. It is very typical of the tutors to try to give a hint to the problem.

It is rather easy to find a problem, but finding a relevant problem is tricky. The students easily come up with a seemingly suitable problem, or a problem that would fit into any trigger, such as “communication is insufficient” or “lack of motivation”. For example, in team leadership studies, students easily suggest such a problem as team diversity or lack of leadership. But the real problem related to dysfunctions lies deeper and is usually more focused. We tutors should encourage the students to analyse the phenomenon and problem deeply by making further questions.

The following team leadership trigger (again, a true story) is an example of a problem easily disguised by a more superficial problem.

Securities Ltd is a worldwide organisation in the financial sector. One of its departments includes a team that is responsible for doing risk analyses on companies to be acquired.

These people have always worked long hours, but recently the team has begun to work from 7 a.m. to 8 or 9 p.m. every day, due to Jennifer’s ambition and devotion (she wants to get far and earn the quarterly bonuses). The customers have praised the team for their excellent work, and the top management has praised the team for reaching the most demanding targets every time.

Jennifer is doing great: the job is her baby, her boyfriend and her life, but the rest of the team simply seems to get tired. Eric and Tim are suffering from various physical symptoms, such as insomnia and headache, and their girlfriends are losing interest in their workaholic dates. Anne and her husband have had serious talks about her priorities in life.

When the students see this trigger, they easily focus on the team leader, explaining how she should avoid causing burnouts and how she should communicate. What the students should notice is that everyone must take responsibility for their own life. In general, people tend to see the problem outside rather than inside, in themselves. We easily externalise the problem, although every reasonable person should be able to take the responsibility. This is actually something that all students in all disciplines should learn.

The students may easily say that poor Jennifer is a wreck, destroying herself, causing a problem not only to herself but to the team. But can the students come up with the question: “Why do the team members let Jennifer go so far?” Sooner or later the team members have to face the real problem.

As shown in the above examples, students are sometimes slow to find the real problems. They are often right, but the tutor should not let them off the hook too easily. For example, one suitable learning objective in the above example would be: “Why is it so hard for people to take responsibility

for their own contribution?” The team leader is just like any of the team members, although she happens to have the coordination responsibility. The team members should help her to get help.

As we tutors encourage the students to position themselves in the shoes of the people in the trigger, we should challenge them to see their own part in the problem. This way the students can learn to understand that we people either create or destroy the reality around us. Our aim is to create real understanding, instead of providing truths chewed by other people.

Where to generate triggers? As a tutor in HR studies, Seija walks with her eyes and ears open. When hearing something interesting, she writes it down and begins to develop the trigger. The world is full of small problems. After collecting trigger ideas, Seija lets them develop in her subconscious mind.

We can find triggers anywhere, for example in articles. Trigger development is a continuous process. The triggers should continue their life, to stay up to date. We need to include new concepts or elements in our triggers. We can even discuss macro-level issues from the student’s perspective. For example, we can make the price of food personal to the students.

The best triggers can be found in living organisations: they are full of problems, big and small, easy and difficult. It would be ideal for us to cooperate with some companies and get their daily problems to be solved. Then we could offer the solutions by the students to these organisations. We have had a few of Finnish enterprises as our network companies with fruitful cooperation.

Triggers are good tools to solve real problems. On the course Communities of Practice, Seija gave the students the following trigger related to organisational problems. The subject area was very close to Seija’s heart: the context was familiar and she kept asking questions such as “Why did we fail?” at least to some extent.

In Supreme Consultants, a new department was established in 2000. One of the partners had the chance (and the courage due to a few excessive glasses of wine), at the Company’s Christmas, party to discuss with the Company’s President about his idea to create an Innovative Team to experiment certain tests and processes and generate new consulting methods.

The president gave her support to this idea, and a new department was set up employing 16 professionals (out of 90). The Innovative Team had been working together in various projects for a long time, knowing each other’s strengths and weaknesses. The team created totally new working

methods, they were extremely enthusiastic, they gained new customers, and there was euphoria in the air. In their enthusiasm and after six months of experience, the Team decided to present their new inventions and solutions to the rest of the organisation – to leverage the elaborated procedures and working practices to other departments. The Team truly believed in their superiority.

In their first presentations to the rest of the organisation, there were quite a few interested participants, but when these attendants learned what moves, what changes, and how many extra hours the implementation of new systems would take time, the interest decreased little by little and vanished totally. On the contrary, the Innovative Team was the target of gossiping, suspicion and ridicule. Rumours emerged about the employees in the Innovative Team having better salaries – and running very high costs. Sooner or later, the President also felt that she was not quite sure about the excellence – or even the importance of the Team. She had not had the time (and/or interest) to follow their newest processes. (The truth was that she never bothered to find out and learn the new methods due to her other commitments.) One of the consequences of this ‘feedback’ to the Innovative Team was that the members grew closer internally and found the outer organisation ill-willed.

To Seija’s amazement, the students formulated the problem as “Poor project management” (which had never occurred to Seija and probably not to her colleagues, either) and they formulated the following learning objectives:

1. Project management process
2. What are the boundaries of the communication?
3. What causes change resistance?

Seija accepted their proposals, even though she thought her (unspoken) learning objectives would have been better. The closing discussion in a few days was most interesting. The students had studied project management in their previous course, and they made new research for the tutorial. Their problem solving came with the following findings:

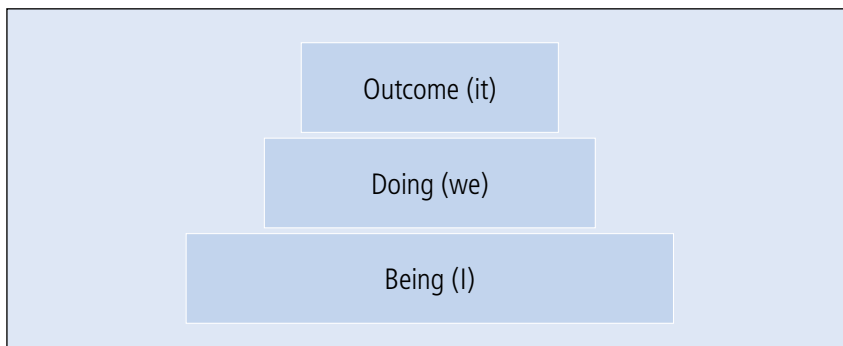
- The Innovative Team did not have a steering group for regular meetings with management. A meeting at least once a semester was needed.
- The Innovative team did not have a communication plan to make their message articulated enough for the rest of the organisation.
- They should have created understandable and accepted measures to measure their achievements.

- Jargon should have been avoided when discussing with the rest of the organisation.

In practice, the Innovative Team had never thought about using project management tools. Instead, it had tried to push and force their ideas with open fists.

Seija says that this was a genuine learning experience for the old and experienced tutor.

Harriet shows the following three-layer model by Ken Wilber¹ to describe people's attention to everyday phenomena. The core foundation of human activity is *being (I)*, the second layer is *doing (we)*, and the third layer on the top is the *outcome (it)*. When trying to analyse and solve problems, people often focus too much attention to the outcome or even doing, although they should try to get to the core: being.



A trigger may describe the tension between these three layers. We should help the students to focus more on the core foundation and challenge the being. Very often they stay around the outcome. Being is related to the questions “Why do we do this?” and “Why am I here doing this?” In the context of an organisation, for example, the mission (purpose) is related to being.

Admitting that she has sometimes been too high in the above model, Seija says that we should start from the empathy and sympathy perspective. “Start from the real being, and then the development perspective is always included,” Harriet adds.

Problems should not just be something to be diagnosed, like a medical condition, or something that is wrong. There should always be some kind of development involved, how to continue from here. For example, what kinds of results will there be after five years if Jenna doesn't change

¹ Kofman, Fred 2006. *Conscious Business: How to Build Value through Values*. Boulder, CO: Sounds True.

anything? Or how do you see the team after two years? Different actions can produce different scenarios.

In the model above, *being (I)* refers to the student perspective, and *doing (we)* refers to what is going on. The *outcome (it)* is related to the question “What does it produce?” We must provide an understanding for our students. For example, in an organisation, *being (I)* could be related to cultural backgrounds. To understand different types of behaviour, a salesperson needs behaviour-related knowledge about different people. In the salesperson’s shoes, the students must think about the value of this knowledge for themselves.

The students should ask themselves: What will result if we act in a certain way? On a branding course, for example, the students could relate their personal values to brand values and they should learn to understand the importance of being ethically systematic according to their values.

6.3 8 Steps

In problem-based learning, each learning task is approached systematically step by step. Let’s take a more detailed look into the different steps in the PBL learning cycle. The 8-step approach used at HAAGA-HELIA means that each learning task is opened (steps 1–5) and closed (steps 6, 7 and 8) in a clearly structured fashion. Each opening discussion results in clear learning objectives formulated by the student team itself. After an active personal study, the students close the learning task together in a closing discussion.

*The eight-step learning cycle
Helps every Maria and Michael
To structure the learning process
And study with success*

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The 8-step approach to open and close each learning task proceeds as follows:

Opening

1. Clarifying unfamiliar concepts
2. Defining the problem
3. Brainstorming
4. Analysis / Systematic classification
5. Formulating learning objectives

Closing

6. Personal study
7. Closing discussion
8. Evaluation

The following table shows a suggested schedule and structure for the tutorial. In this model, the closing discussion (steps 7 and 8) takes one hour and twenty minutes, including ten-minute feedback given by the observer. Then we take a break for ten minutes, and after that our opening discussion (steps 1–5) includes one hour. Sometimes we may finish a little earlier, but there is no feeling of rush when we have reserved 60 minutes for the opening.

SUGGESTED TIMETABLE FOR A PBL TUTORIAL

8:15		DL arrives and makes sure the tables are in a PBL formation. Everyone is seated with their papers and nameplates ready before 8:30	
8:30–8:35	Step 7	Appoint/announce the recorder and observer Assess the previous memo Check/amend the agenda	Close
8:35–9:35		Closing discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What sources did you study? ▪ Discussion based on the DL’s agenda and questions ▪ Involve everyone! 	
9:35–9:40		Closing summary by recorder	
9:40–9:50	Step 8	Evaluation by observer	
10:00–10:05	Step 1	Read trigger and clarify unfamiliar words	Open
10:05–10:15	Step 2	Define the problem <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Discuss the issue briefly ▪ Recorder writes down all the suggestions ▪ Name the issue 	
10:15–10:45	Steps 3–4	Brainstorm and categorize	
10:45–11:00	Step 5	Formulate the learning objectives and keywords <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recorder writes down all the suggestions ▪ Select two or more learning objectives ▪ Select keywords for information search 	
	Step 6	Personal study	

We have written the following instructions for the 8-step approach for the students.

8 STEPS	
Step 1	Clarifying unfamiliar concepts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Read or view the trigger given by the tutor. ▪ To understand the trigger, check any unfamiliar terms and ask what they mean.
Step 2	Defining the problem <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Discuss the trigger. ▪ Think about the possible problems and formulate one. ▪ Ask yourself: “What is going on here?” The word “problem” here refers to what the trigger is all about. In other words, defining the problem is comparable to giving a title to the issue, in the form of a sentence: either a statement or a question.

Step 3	<p>Brainstorming</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Elaborate on the problem and think about what you already know about the problem area. ▪ Write down words, concepts and ideas related to the problem. ▪ Try to come up with many ideas and do not be critical at this stage.
Step 4	<p>Analysis / Systematic classification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Give the results of your brainstorming to the recorder (or another person assigned to this task). ▪ Assisted by the recorder (or another person assigned to this task), analyze the results of the whole team's brainstorming. ▪ Think about the relations between the different concepts. ▪ Use these concepts and their relations to build a conceptual framework or map, also called "working theory," based on your conceptions.
Step 5	<p>Formulating learning objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Formulate two to four learning objectives in the form of questions or statements. ▪ The learning objectives should guide you to apply new theoretical concepts to a jointly selected practical solution, related to the trigger or a chosen company, product or phenomenon.
Step 6	<p>Personal study</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Study the required and hopefully the recommended sources. You are also expected to find more sources yourself, since one major goal is to learn to find, evaluate and apply new sources to practical solutions. ▪ Keep the learning objectives clearly in mind. Instead of reading every word or line in your text, try to find answers to the learning objectives, since they are the guiding light in your study. ▪ Apply the content of your study to the example given in the trigger or to the context chosen for the learning objectives. To apply theory, you are expected to find and analyze relevant examples in the real world (outside the textbook), including your own experiences. In a project course, you should make a strong application to the context of your project. ▪ Make notes to check that you understand the main ideas in your study. Making notes helps you to prepare for the closing discussion. ▪ Draw a concept map or illustrations of the outcome of your study. You may combine the various theories you have studied or even improve them according to your own views if you can argue your perspective. ▪ Compare your findings with the concept map (categorization of brainstorming) in the opening memo, to understand your learning. ▪ Write down your sources and try to evaluate their reliability. In other words, prepare to explain to your team members with whom you have been "discussing." ▪ Contemplate your learning process. In other words, make some notes about how the material affected your thinking. (This will also help you to include qualitative comments about your learning in the theme-specific self-assessment forms that you are expected to hand in.)

Step 7	Closing discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Be present in the tutorial and arrive on time. It is better to be ten minutes early than one minute late. ▪ Contribute to team knowledge construction by sharing your learning. Provide information and suggestions for joint consideration and public debate. ▪ Argue your opinions and perspectives. ▪ Use the whiteboard and audiovisual tools to facilitate your presentation when applicable. ▪ Ask questions to check your understanding and to challenge the others. ▪ Listen to the others. Give critical and constructive feedback about their ideas and perceptions. Challenge their statements with well-grounded argumentation. ▪ Move between different perspectives and try them. ▪ If needed, adopt another person's perspective and evaluate it critically. ▪ As a team, try to come up with a shared view of the key concepts and models. In addition to solid theory, make a strong application to the example given in the trigger or to the context chosen for the learning objectives.
Step 8	Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evaluate the level of the discussion from the perspectives of (1) group dynamics and (2) your learning in relation to reaching the learning objectives.

6.3.1 A Successful Opening Discussion

Even after several years of PBL experience, working with new students is always a new adventure. In our eighth PBL year two days ago, one of us saw the most fascinating and enthusiastic opening discussion ever. In their fourth tutorial, our students in the new sales program were eagerly waiting for the opening of the new learning task. They read a trigger about an entrepreneur who wanted to make sculptures for gardens out of animal manure. After clarifying some unclear concepts (step 1) and discussing the issue from various perspectives, they suggested optional problems or learning issues to each other (step 2), such as making a marketing plan, making the impossible possible, and other issues somehow related to the trigger. One student had mentioned the word “idea”, and when the tutor later asked her to repeat her comment, the students managed to elaborate this issue further. They came up with the problem “How to build a business mission (in Finnish “business idea”).

What was special about this opening discussion was the enthusiasm and intensive participation that all the students demonstrated from the beginning to the end. Last fall, we began a new system where our closing tutorials (steps 7 and 8) last for one hour and 20 minutes, including the observer's 10-minute feedback. After a ten-minute break, we now have a one-hour opening discussion (steps 1–5). Thus, instead of rushing through a 30-minute opening directly following a hasty 60-minute closing (as we

used to do for years), we now feel more rested after a 10-minute break and we don't feel like having to rush through the opening.

The opening discussion showed us that, when the timing is right and when the students have the right energy, the opening discussion can be very fruitful and motivating indeed. The discussion leader was also exceptionally well present in the moment. She did not lose her grip of leading the group when thinking about the issue at hand. Sometimes the discussion leaders tend to adopt the role of a regular team member too much when thinking about the content of each step. Maybe the DLs tend to forget that their job is to get the process going instead of finding the answers themselves. We tutors should be aware of this, helping the DL to lead the discussion. Sometimes it is easier for the tutor to take the DL's role than to effectively support the DL in this role during the opening discussion. This temptation for the tutor to dominate in the opening discussion is understandable, especially when a first-semester student is acting in the DL's role the first time. The tutor should facilitate without making the DL passive, and this seems to be a special challenge sometimes.

In our opening discussion, the students were truly eager to share all their previous and existing understanding of how they saw the topic at the moment, before the upcoming independent study. At the end of the closing discussion, they seemed very eager to do their research to find out the answers to their learning objectives that they came up with. Let's see a little closer what happened during our 60 minutes of the opening discussion.

After the team had chosen "How to build a business mission" to be their problem (step 2), they wrote keywords on yellow adhesive notes (step 3), which one of the students then gathered and posted on the whiteboard. When the students were writing the keywords on making notes, they continued the discussion, explaining what they were writing and why. This way the discussion was not interrupted and everyone focused on the topic instead of daydreaming about something else. Everyone paid attention to what each team member was saying and this resulted in a real discussion. When the students mentioned out loud what they wrote, the keywords and their explanations triggered further ideas during the brainstorming (step 3). This also made the next step easier, as the group analyzed and classified the results from the brainstorming on the whiteboard (step 4). Thus the process moved rather seamlessly from brainstorming (step 3) to further analysis (step 4). This did not stop the creativity during brainstorming, where idea generation is free from criticism; the students managed to save their possible disagreements to the analysis phase. The

following figure illustrates the analysis and categorization of the student team's brainstorming.



From the tutor's perspective, the analysis phase (step 4) seemed the most fascinating. The students were fully present when discussing how to make a logical model of the adhesive notes on the whiteboard. The step started from placing the similar concepts together first, and then the big picture began to shape up little by little. The whole time, the students were interacting and explaining how they understood the different concepts. They were contemplating the relations between the concepts, placing them in a logical order. The model on the whiteboard was shaping into a model of business mission evolution from the initial idea to a business plan. On the basis of this illustration, the students chose the following learning objectives: (1) What is a business mission? (2) Evolution of the business mission? and (3) How to process and develop the business mission? (4) Apply the above learning objectives to practice.

Some students clearly had previous knowledge of how the business mission is understood in business and literature. This helped them to discuss the topic perhaps at a more advanced level than some other groups would have been able to. Their comments offered different perspectives and individual members clearly learned a great deal from each other. This kind of an opening process was ideal. It was the perfect place for establishing a common understanding of the problem at the moment. It was also a plunge into learning.

After the opening, the students' minds are already set to the topic and they are ready to receive the new concepts more easily and to learn more about them. In our tutorial, their curiosity was aroused and they were motivated to go home or to the library to study more (step 6). At the end, they even suggested that the students who happened to be absent would act as the next recorder and observer – none of the students present wanted to stay out of the actual closing discussion (step 7) in the following week's tutorial.

*The opening is a foundation
For the learner's dedication
To further contemplation*

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Now as we are adding this paragraph to the above text, one week has passed since the opening discussion described above. Today's closing discussion was indeed very successful and the positive influence of the previous week's opening discussion was clearly visible. The students referred to the opening process several times, using the tutorial memo, as they referred to the visualization of the previous week's brainstorming analysis. This way they compared their current understanding of the business mission definition process with their previous understanding. Correspondingly, in today's opening process as well, the team had the same spirit and enthusiasm as in the previous week's tutorial, and they were also aware of this themselves.

We would like to emphasise that creativity is welcome in brainstorming. The adhesive notes are not the only way, although it is widely used at HAAGA-HELIA. Brainstorming can take various forms, such as discussion, notes on board, pre-brainstorming or individually defined objectives.

After a successful opening discussion, our students sometimes say how the group helps them to gain a good understanding of new ideas – alone they could not achieve the same. In a team, their ideas reach a higher level.

6.3.2 Facilitation in a Closing Discussion

Although we discuss tutorial facilitation throughout this book, we have gathered a few central ideas under this subchapter.

The tutor's primary goal is to bring out the best of the group. In order to make this happen, the tutor must initially help to create a stimulating, encouraging, enjoyable and warm atmosphere in the tutorial team. The tutor should be sensitive to group dynamics and respond whenever problems occur. The tutor must not leave the responsibility for the group atmosphere to the learners. The building of trust among the tutorial members is crucial for the team to succeed.

The PBL tutor should focus on asking open-ended questions and leading questions to help the learners to explore the richness of the topic and situation. By asking good questions, the tutor helps the learners develop their critical thinking. The tutor should also encourage them to reflect on their own experiences; the tutor may help them take an umbrella view

of the situation. The tutor should also enable the learners to monitor the thinking process in the tutorial, always reminding them of the evaluation process. The tutor should challenge the thinking process with relevant questions to foster deeper learning. Sometimes the tutor should make the learners go back in the discussion to deepen the perspective. Very often learners tend to cover an issue too quickly, leaving out the deeper view. The tutor must react fast to intervene if the discussion is too superficial.

*Challenge your team to explore
To dig deeper for more*

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We believe that when the tutor doesn't present himself or herself as an information authority, the students also dare challenge the information sources more easily. We encourage the students to study multiple sources of evidence. At the same time, we encourage the students to look at the sources critically by comparing them and reflecting on them, creating their own understanding, which might be similar or totally different. One of our tutorial triggers centres around information sources and source criticism. This helps us to discuss the use of sources more deeply. We also emphasize the critical use of sources throughout the studies.

*Instead of typically
We should think critically*

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The tutor's interventions should be mainly meta-level interventions (to guide the discussion process) rather than substance-level interventions (commenting on the concepts or their application). Below we share with you a collection of observations that our colleague Elizabeth San Miguel made in one of our closing discussions. These comments help you to see how the tutor can be "intensely present but mainly quiet", still "hard at work to facilitate the learning discussion".

The tutor's work should model the work of an expert for the learners, demonstrating problem-solving skills, critical thinking, group process knowledge, change management knowledge, and knowledge in lifetime learning. PBL scholars often discuss whether the tutor should be an expert in the topic or not. At higher levels, we feel that the tutor should be an expert in the subject. Still the tutor's role is not to be an expert resource automatically providing the answers. The tutor should help the learners

reach the answer by asking questions. The tutor should avoid mini-lecturing in the tutorials. Lecturing should take place separately at lectures.

Learners often voice their concerns about whether they discuss the right issues in the tutorials or not. They have difficulty in taking the responsibility. They want more security, and the instructor provides security. The tutor may then assure the learners that the tutor will not let them go in the wrong direction in the discussion. This is a bigger problem when students start their PBL studies, and the tutor should be aware of it.

There are lists of good questions available for PBL tutors. They can help the tutors to reflect on their performance as a tutor and to improve the skills in formulating questions.

A big challenge in the tutor's work is to help the group reflect on the quality of the discussion in the tutorials. Sometimes the learners concentrate on telling their own opinions and ideas without really listening to the others and creating a true discussion, building the comments on what the others are saying. It is a challenge to develop a discussion based on a dialogue, rather than learners just expressing their own thoughts. We believe that the reason for this lies deeper in the social and cultural environment. Maybe in the Finnish discussion culture, children and young people are not given the real challenge and knowledge to truly discuss and create dialogues. These are factors we have to be aware of in our ambition to develop the tutorial discussion.

In order to improve the quality of the tutorial discussions at HAAGA-HELIA, we have used different tools to help us analyze the level of the discussion. There is a great deal of material about pedagogical dialogue and accountable talk in class. We recommend for PBL tutors to get familiar with them. We have also used different taxonomies, such as the SOLO taxonomy and Bloom's Taxonomy, to help the students reflect on their discussion level.

Tutors must help the learners recognize their levels of discussion, whether they are only describing, whether they have understood what they are discussing, whether they are applying their knowledge, and whether they are analyzing the content at all. In every tutorial, it is advisable to try to make a synthesis of the discussion and the content. Here, a visual presentation helps to clarify the connections between topics. Defining the key concepts in every tutorial also helps the participants build the big picture. The highest level in Bloom's taxonomy is evaluation, and it is recommendable that the tutorial team evaluates the discussion carefully. The tutor should not accept superficial evaluations, such as "the discussion went fine" or "all participated," but they should advise the learners to really assess the content and to criticize the content discussed.

PBL is said to be good for talkative learners, with the shy ones having great difficulties to manage. Here the tutors should be very sensitive, but also straightforward at times. Sometimes talkative learners have not really read the content well, and they manage only because of their good communication skills. The shy ones are usually very well prepared, but they are not able to join because of their shyness. Often the team notices this and they can help each other, but often the tutor needs to address the issue. This should be done at an early stage in the process. The tutors have to learn not to be fooled by the clever, talkative students with a great deal of experience and ideas. The content (theory and application) is the key driver of the discussion.

The level of the tutorial discussions should be increased all the time. At advanced levels, learners should learn to compare models and sources; they must choose the relevant models and justify their choices. The tutor should make sure this happens in the tutorials. The assessment of the sources used is important at every phase, but it should be emphasized more at advanced levels.

Above, we referred to the tutorial observations made by our colleague Elizabeth San Miguel. She will begin her PBL tutoring career in the fall semester 2008, and in March she came to observe our tutorial with the first semester students in the Degree Programme in International Business. Her memo shows that she paid her attention to what kinds of interventions the tutor was using to facilitate the students' learning. The discussion leader was very well prepared and guided the team throughout the discussion, but, as Elizabeth's memo shows, the tutor's meta-level interventions were useful. They helped the students to go deeper into the topic.

NOTES FROM PBL TUTORIAL OBSERVATIONS (FOCUSING ON THE TUTOR'S INTERVENTIONS)

by Elizabeth San Miguel

Tutor Matti Helelä

5 March 2008, 8:30 – 9:30 (part of the closing discussion in the tutorial)

Topic: Business models. Case organization: Amazon.

Defining concepts

Tutor intervention:

Tutor encouraged the use of the student's own words when the student read from the source.

- Clearly indicates that evaluation of individual student contribution is ongoing.
- Directs toward independent thinking and processing of sources toward internalized knowledge building.

Discussing information found ► building shared knowledge

Using ICT in the discussion:

- Students use the document camera and the computer connected to the projector to show images and texts found to support the discussion.

Tutor intervention:

- Enquires about the original source of an idea presented by the student. Directs toward academic referencing practices. (Meta-level)

Tutor intervention:

- Encourages all students to show more images in a specific discussion to highlight a specific part of the topic discussed. Ensures that the image sources are indicated. (Meta-level)

Tutor intervention:

- Enquires students to clarify and go into the topic deeper in more detail. (Meta-level)

Tutor intervention:

- Encouraging a student to speak louder to ensure all attendants hear her excellent contributions. (Meta-level)

Tutor intervention:

- Asking students to discuss a specific case organization example in more detail by asking targeted questions. ► Directs toward in-depth discussion and processing of readings ► to enrich shared knowledge creation. (Meta-level)

Tutor intervention:

- Requesting the discussion leader to summarize the discussion. (Meta-level)

Tutor intervention:

- Introduces a concept not used in the discussion (core competence) and encourages the students to utilize it to enrich the discussion. (Substance level and metal level).

Tutor intervention:

- Asks substance-related questions arising from the discussion ► to encourage the students to enrich and deepen the discussion. (Substance level and metal level).

Observer Conclusions

The tutor was intensely present but mainly quiet. It was obvious that the teacher and pedagogue in the tutor were hard at work to facilitate the learning discussion. Conducting and facilitating tutorials is hard work!

Tutor observes the students' work and guides them by making:

- Mainly **meta-level tutor interventions** to guide the working of students.
- Sparingly **substance level comments** only when needed to ensure the discussion is focused, in-depth and rich.
- Tutor is reticent as much as possible to encourage a collegial atmosphere of student-managed discussion and shared information creation. The tutor does not take the role of a substance expert, but a discussion facilitator.

Tutor makes notes on

- Mainly on **students' individual contributions and activity level for grading purposes**
- Sometimes **content** on information important for his own learning.

We warmly recommend tutor-to-tutor peer assessment in accordance with the example above. The organisation should support systematic peer assessment to help the tutors to develop their tutoring skills.

6.4 Assessment and Feedback

Our assessment system includes self-assessment and peer assessment among students. In PBL, it is important to ask “Who owns the assessment process – the student or tutor? Or do they own it together?”

Self-assessment and Tutorial Performance Review

Nowadays we have a system where our first-semester students make their first self-assessment a few weeks after the first tutorial. They fill a semi-structured self-assessment form, attach a concept map (one for each tutorial) including the key concepts related to the topics that have been studied. They bring the documents to the student-to-tutor performance review, where we discuss the student’s performance for 15 minutes and agree on the student’s personal goals.

This private performance review is important for the students. They can ask questions and express their views in privacy. The tutor and student together have the chance to understand the students’ perspective and attitudes better. This helps them both in future tutorial work. At the end of the discussion, the tutor should ask the students what his or her personal goals for future tutorial performance would be. According to our experience, the students tend to be better committed to these goals after they have discussed them with their tutor.

In a multicultural team, it is wise to tell the students in advance that the purpose of the performance review is only positive. Some students may come from cultures where a private meeting with the instructor is associated with bad behaviour.

Owners of the Assessment Process

In PBL, the tutor is not the owner of the student assessment process. The student and tutor share it. When students come to the performance review discussions with their self-assessment forms, filled with their qualitative assessment comments (giving evidence of their learning on the basis of the criteria given in our assessment rubrics) as well as their numeric self-assessment grades, we must respect their personal view before explaining our own. We must not throw our assessment or grades like a wet rag to the student’s face. Thus, according to the PBL philosophy, the teacher

should not publish any tutorial grades before the students have done their self-assessment and thus expressed their own view of their learning results. This way the students can use their right to participate in the assessment process.

Some tutors may argue that their own view is what finally counts, but in any case they should be aware of the each student's own view first. This allows the tutors to check their assessment perspectives on the basis of the student's self-assessment. Here we need to ask the question: "What is the purpose of assessment in PBL in the first place?" If the purpose is formative (guiding the students on their learning track), rather than summative (giving the final grade as a sign of the student's achievement), the tutor should adjust his or her qualitative comments according to the student's understanding and view. The tutor may, for example, challenge the student by asking whether the student's self-assessment is realistic. Or the tutor may challenge the student to give more evidence of his or her learning. Or, as it luckily seems to be in most cases, the teacher may agree with the student. If there is nonetheless a big difference between the tutor's and student's opinion, the tutor should help the student to understand the reason for the difference. Otherwise some students may lose their motivation, especially if they come from cultures where students are afraid to ask the instructor for any explanation for a low grade.

*Student assessment
Is not the tutor's judgement
Rather than process possessors
We are co-assessors*

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In our personal student-to-tutor performance review discussions, we tutors give our own feedback orally. First we review the self-assessment form that the student brings to the discussion and we let the student complement it orally. Students are different personalities with different self-confidence levels. Some of them may overestimate or underestimate themselves. Quite often they nonetheless have a fairly realistic view of their own tutorial performance, thanks to our efficient evaluation at the end of each closing discussion in the tutorials. Since the purpose of our feedback is to coach the students, publishing tutorial grades in advance could be harmful, especially with first-semester students, because giving a "cold" grade without qualitative assessment has little information value.

Some students are just learning to build their self-confidence and we must emphasize their strengths, to give them faith in themselves. Others

may need more constructive criticism; they may feel that if they get a high grade too easily, they are not motivated, “why bother?” Therefore, especially in the first semester, personal discussions with students are very valuable. In interaction, the tutor can become familiar with the student’s way of assessing himself or herself. We should carefully read or listen to the student’s own self-assessment and respect their view. Then we can supplement their self-assessment with any further comments that we consider useful and valuable. In cases when we don’t have student-to-tutor performance reviews, we may write our comments on the students’ self-assessment forms.

Let’s take an example. One of our first-semester students came to the performance review a year ago. He had graded his contribution to team knowledge construction in tutorials with grade 1. The tutor, instead of sharing his own view, which would have been somewhat higher than the student’s self-assessment, respected the student’s opinion. The tutor said: “You have graded your tutorial performance with 1.” The student replied: “Yes, I don’t deserve any better, because I can do much better, and I will, and you will see it.” Starting from the next tutorial, the student’s performance level rose to 4 in the eyes of both the tutor and the student himself.

Later, the students fill self-assessment forms without meeting the tutor in person. In a one-semester course, for example, we might ask the students to make two self-assessments: mid and final. The mid-semester self-assessment usually occurs slightly before the middle of the semester, so that the benefits from the feedback and the possible performance review discussion come into play rather early.

We use the following criteria in the self-assessment forms:

1. Level of motivation and preparedness.
 - Motivation to learn about the theme.
 - Exploring the sources during independent study.
2. Contribution to team knowledge construction in the tutorials.
3. Understanding the discussion and applying theory to the learning tasks and/or the project tasks.
4. Critical-thinking skills (idea generation, questioning, argumentation, categorization, problem-solving and other reasoning skills).
5. Professional behaviour (respect towards peers and the team agreement, punctuality and other relevant matters).
6. Giving and receiving feedback among peers and learning from it.

We also provide rubrics for the students to facilitate their self-assessment. The rubrics explain what each grade level means (on a scale of 0 to 5) regarding each criterion. We expect the students to use the ideas from these rubrics when they write qualitative comments on their forms, in addition to giving themselves the relevant numerical grade for each criterion. They should give evidence for their grades with their own words, instead of copying the text from the rubrics.

A skilled tutor should be able to see the level of the students' contribution. The tutor should ask himself or herself the question "Is the student's commenting based on preparation and deeper contemplation?" We must be able to make a difference between real contribution to the team's knowledge building and chitchat. For example, if a student only follows other learners' previous statements without having prepared any theoretical structure or examples, the student is obviously not able to go much deeper than the surface. In such cases, we must be careful not to praise such seemingly active but rather low-value participation.

In PBL, the students would ideally participate in the creation of their own self-assessment form and the related rubrics. After two or three tutorials, we have a workshop session where the students (from all tutorial teams together) discuss the criteria that they should be assessed with. We ask them to list and explain six main assessment criteria. Then we compare the students' suggestions across the groups and finally with our official self-assessment form. Every time in our workshops, we have been able to see the similarity between the students' suggestions and our official self-assessment form. This way the students have internalized the criteria given on the form, before we have given them the form. It would be beneficial to discuss what the different levels (0–5) for each criterion mean in practice, but because of the lack of time we have asked the students to study the rubrics further on their own.

Usually after each tutorial, we make our own notes with numerical grades for each student's performance. We may do this in detail by giving a grade for each of the six criteria listed above. Or we may use a more simple style and write down just a general numerical grade for that day. This number would be mostly based on the student's performance in the closing discussion, but the opening discussion may also affect it positively or even negatively. We do not, however, publish these preliminary grades since they are only the means for us to keep track of the students' development. When we give final grades to new students, in particular, we must consider their development. Thus, the first few tutorials may be times when the students are getting used to the new system. They may gradually overcome their fears and prejudices, or they may gain more self-

confidence and being to show their talent after a few weeks. In such cases, using an arithmetic average of a students' grade to nail down the final grade would not necessarily do them justice. In short, we must consider their development, including their attitude and motivation to learn.

Participation in our tutorials is compulsory. Out of 14 tutorials, for example, we usually allow two absences providing that the students write an "absence memo" for each time and post it in the eLearning platform within two weeks from the missed tutorial. (A third absence would cause a risk of failing the course and having to re-sit all tutorials in the next semester. We judge each such case individually, considering the student's learning achievements and circumstances.) We don't grade the absence memos, but by writing them the students wash away their zero performance for that day. Without an absence memo we would consider the student's performance to be zero. The reason for the absence is irrelevant.

We also have self-assessment forms and rubrics for assignments and examinations. We ask the students to attach them to their reports and documents, and we assess their papers using the same forms. Technically the procedure goes like this: The student checks the relevant box (on a scale of 0 to 5, with each box including qualitative descriptions) for each criterion, and the instructor circles the relevant box for each criterion from his or her perspective. This procedure helps the students to focus on the given criteria and check their work accordingly before handing it in. And they know what they are expected to do. This also greatly facilitates the instructor's work. It takes time and focus to make the rubrics, but after that the workload is much more reasonable and it is easier to be consistent in assessment. It is also useful for the instructor to see how well the students see their own strengths and weaknesses. Further, this way we can give the students more systematic feedback that they can benefit from. They are more likely to read their feedback and use it in their future studies and work.

Peer Assessment

In addition to self assessment and assessment given by the instructors, we use peer assessment. Above, we have already discussed the observer's feedback in tutorials. In project work, we also use peer assessment both within and across groups. In many projects, team members and peer groups give feedback to each other, often using similar rubrics as described above. Project groups also use project meeting logbooks. With the project meeting logbook and group assessment, student project groups can estimate the division of project work among the group members and describe the level and success of their work and each group member's contribution.

Sometimes we ask project groups to share report feedback before the reports go to the instructors. This feedback helps the groups to improve their own work on the basis of the feedback received and on the basis of their observations regarding the pluses of other groups. The instructor receives the improved version after the quality of the work has already risen on the basis of peer feedback. This is beneficial to all parties involved.

6.5 Feedback to Tutors

Above, we already discussed feedback and assessment in general. We also collect systematic feedback about the performance of the tutors. Here, the eLearning platform is of great help. We usually ask the following questions, focusing on the tutor's knowledge, attitudes and skills. Student feedback helps us tutors to improve our performance and, if need be, better explain the tutor's role.

*The feedback received
Says how we're perceived*

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These questions are a good reminder of many of the qualities that we tutors need to develop in ourselves. First, we should understand the core of the PBL process as well as the core of our content area. Second, our attitudes should reflect a genuine interest in the students and their learning. Third, we should and we can continuously enhance our skills as tutors. In fact, we personally find our work to be very fascinating because of the chance to learn new things and skills all the time. The tutor's work is not too easy and that's why it is so captivating.

FEEDBACK TO THE TUTOR QUESTIONS

Please evaluate the contribution of your tutor to the learning of your tutorial team. Your name will show in the list of the respondents but cannot be traced to any individual answers. We appreciate your feedback. Scale: 1 = lowest level, 5 = highest level (answer the questions marked with "essay" with your own words).

Knowledge of the process and the content area

- (1) Understands the objectives of the PBL process.
- (2) Is familiar with the triggers and the theme area they cover.
- (3) Understand what the student can learn in time available.
- (4) Understands the big picture behind the triggers.
- (5) Other comments on the tutor's knowledge of the PBL process (essay).

Attitudes

- (6) Shows enthusiasm as a tutor.
- (7) Is interested in students and their learning.
- (8) Provides timely feedback and completes evaluations.
- (9) Other comments on the tutor's attitudes (essay).

Skills

- (10) Asks non-directive, challenging questions.
- (11) Avoids mini-lecturing.
- (12) Is able to direct the group to alternate sources of information and learning materials.
- (13) Is able to assist the group to focus on learning issues and objectives.
- (14) Provides re-direction where necessary.
- (15) Facilitates feedback and evaluation process among students.
- (16) Encourages critical thinking and a thorough look at available material.
- (17) Assists in the creation of a comfortable, non-threatening learning atmosphere.
- (18) Other comments on the tutor's skills (essay).

Other

- (19) Additional comments you may have (essay).

The following lines are slightly modified excerpts from the feedback to tutors given on our eLearning platform (responses to essay questions). The comments show how certain tutor qualities help the students in their learning. They are mainly selected from among the most positive comments on purpose, in order to give an understanding of what the students consider important from the perspective of their learning.

FEEDBACK TO THE TUTOR ANSWERS TO OPEN QUESTIONS

Knowledge of the process and the content area

- In my opinion, the tutor has the skills to motivate everybody. Even when he has not been feeling well, he has somehow made the tutorials lively, and made us feel that we are not here only because we have to. We laughed during tutorials, which is, in my mind, really important even in the learning process.
- The tutor has done very well, because he lets us do our own talking and he knows when it is a good time to take part in the tutorials.

Attitudes

- I feel that the tutor believes deeply in the PBL process, which is totally positive for us, since he is always communicating his enthusiasm and trying to do things in the most PBL-respectful way.
- The tutor's attitude is excellent. I think that he can also understand very well the tutorials from the student's point of view. He respected us and at least I never got that feeling that he would be some way a better person than we. So really he knew how to act with us and I think that everyone felt comfortable at the tutorials and weren't scared to participate.
- The tutor has a very positive attitude towards us students and he talks to us at our "level" without exerting much his authority.
- The tutor was most of the time in a good mood and created quite a relaxed atmosphere. For me as an exchange student, it helped a lot because I felt more comfortable in this course and it incited me to participate more.
- The tutor's personality contributes to the picture that he is enthusiastic all the time. Nevertheless, I think emotions should be kept aside at work. At least the "deeper" ones. That is something what can be improved.
- He is very positive tutor, though he is busy with many things, he still in a high spirit to help us and solve our problem, I admire his attitude.
- The tutor is so enthusiastic and energetic and also motivating. He seems to care whether we learn or not and he's also enthusiastic to develop himself. And his attitude has motivated me a lot, although the motivation should come from me, but his attitude has really helped. I don't think I would have studied half this much if I hadn't had a tutor like him.
- The tutor shows very good motivation, and I believe all the students see this. He also always encourages each student to participate during the tutorials to share what they've learnt in self-study.

Skills

- The tutor is very interested in our opinions on how to improve PBL.
- He always shows his enthusiasm as a tutor, and even if you are tired, when you look at the tutor, you are ready to study and learn something new. He encouraged us to think critically. Especially when we had the role of the observer, we tried to represent our comments in a constructive way.
- I liked that the tutor was almost always more in the background, that there was no obvious navigation in the several tutorial sessions, and that the students were the ones who create the lessons.
- I think the tutor's main satisfaction was to see us exchanging our ideas during tutorials and to acquire new knowledge.

Other

- The PBL process is the key learning process of establishing confidence in students, so that they can achieve good skills in communication. So with the help of the tutor each individual student is assessed and assisted in areas that are weak. I have learned a lot and I have gained confidence from the PBL process.
- The tutor encourages students to show various findings and study materials in order to promote the studying enthusiasm.
- I enjoy the way the tutor listens to what we have to say during the tutorials and only comments when he notices that we seem a bit lost!
- Also, it is good that you say it straight up when someone is late or otherwise misbehaving.
- And the great thing that I want to say about my tutor is that he helped me become more self-confident.

6.6 Evaluation Seminars

We gather mid-semester and final evaluation feedback from our students for two reasons. First, the feedback helps us to develop the degree programme further. Second, we tutors need to make the students' learning processes visible to them, helping them to realize the vast amount of learning that they have achieved.

*Systematic evaluation
Provides the manifestation
Of personal reflection
And shows the direction
For any correction*

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Students give their mid-semester evaluation only in the eLearning platform. They give their final evaluation both in the eLearning platform (individually) and in the 90-minute evaluation seminar (as a group). We usually ask the following questions in our mid-semester evaluation in the first semester of our Degree Programme in International Business.

**MID-SEMESTER EVALUATION
DEGREE PROGRAMME IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS
FIRST SEMESTER**

To help us enhance the degree programme and to reflect on your own learning, please give us your first-semester evaluation according to the course schedule. Your answers will be anonymous; we will see only a list of all the respondents. Please discuss the following topics in writing. Be honest. We appreciate your feedback.

Assessment and feedback to the tutor

- How could the tutor assist you even more in your learning process?

Evaluation of the content

- The aim of the first theme was to understand the connection between PBL and the international business profession, and the aim of the second theme was to understand how the company operates in the international business environment. How well have you achieved the aims? Describe in a few words.

Give some examples of the major learning experiences you have had during the first two themes.

- Evaluate the development of your metacognitive skills:
 - (a) How confident are you in the PBL tutorials?
 - (b) How well do you understand your own learning process?
 - (c) How does the self-assessment form help you?
- Evaluate the group dynamics and the group performance:
 - (d) Level and content of the discussions in tutorials.
 - (e) Respect for others and the team values.
 - (f) Listening and feedback skills.
- How have you experienced the PBL approach to learning?

Discuss the different roles in tutorials, the eight steps and taking responsibility for your own learning.

How does each of the following degree programme values manifest in your performance and how could you improve?

- (a) Respect
- (b) Trust
- (c) Growth

We usually ask the questions below in our final evaluation in the first semester of our Degree Programme in International Business. First the students answer them in the eLearning platform. Then they come to the evaluation seminar, where we focus on the first set of questions: the student groups go through evidence of the four learning processes in each course theme.

In the evaluation seminar, we divide the students into small groups, and each group discusses and lists the evidence related to one of the learning processes. For example, one group explains how they have learned to take responsibility for their own learning throughout the semester. Correspondingly, another group discusses how they have developed their

professional skills in international business. In the same way they go through all the given learning processes. After this group work, we share the discussion across the groups. This way, we tutors help the students to become aware of the learning processes that are now developing in them. The evaluation seminar nicely wraps up the semester from the learning perspective. Thus, we tutors don't only focus on business contents but we take an active approach to learning facilitation. The metacognitive skills will help the students further in all their learning.

FINAL EVALUATION DEGREE PROGRAMME IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS FIRST SEMESTER

Please help us to make the degree programme even better by giving us your own evaluation of the first-semester course according to the course schedule. Your answers will be anonymous; we will see only a list of all the respondents.

The final evaluation is part of completing the first semester and you should include a printout of your answers in your portfolio. And please come to the Evaluation Seminar.

To answer question 7, please read Section 4 in the Learning Portfolio Instructions. Please discuss the following topics in writing. Be honest. We appreciate your feedback.

Part 1: Seeking Evidence

Please go through these learning processes and themes of the course. Try to find evidence from your own materials, such as self-assessment forms, reports, concept maps, tutorial memos and communication skills documents. Discuss every theme and show, with concrete examples, how you have achieved the aims and how your learning processes have developed.

Learning processes

1. Take responsibility for your own learning.
2. Develop your professional skills in international business.
3. Understand why a company exists.
4. Understand customer-focused entrepreneurship.

Theme 1: Orientation to PBL and the International Business Profession.

Aim: Understand the connection between PBL and the international business profession.

Theme 2: Company in its International Business Environment.

Aim: Understand how a company operates in the international business environment.

Theme 3: Business Mission Workshop.

Aim: (Learn to) create a viable business mission for a starting company.

Theme 4: Operational Profitability.

Aim: Understand why the company exists and how to make a profit.

Theme 5: Customer Behaviour on Various Markets.

Aim: Adopt a customer-focused attitude.

Part 2: Learning Portfolio

Read section 4 in your Learning Portfolio Instructions and reflect to which extent you have learned those skills during the first semester.

Part 3: Different Learning Environments

Evaluate how well the following learning environments have supported your learning.

- (a) Tutorials (triggers, cooperation with peers and tutor)
- (b) Personal study (use of time, sources, cooperation with peers)
- (c) Lectures (topics, guest speakers, material, timing)
- (d) Event (idea, project management, execution)
- (e) Company contacts (company visit/visits and/or interview)

Part 4: General

Your Message to a New Beginning Student?

Which grade would you give to the course in general

(1=poor, 2=satisfactory, 3=good, 4=good, 5=excellent)?

6.7 Specialities

The following two subchapters include examples of special tutorial arrangements. The tutor may organise effective tutorials without being present every time. It is important to trust the students with certain responsibilities to make the tutorials work well. Another specialty is to include a debate in the closing discussion.

6.7.1 Tutorials without the Tutor's Presence

Some of our colleagues have successfully tutored more than one tutorial group at the same time. Or it would be more correct to say that the tutor has trusted one or more tutorial teams at a time to work without the tutor's presence. A tutor with enough PBL experience can successfully plan this kind of team rotation, delegating the team assessment responsibility to student observers. The tutors have gained good feedback about this arrangement and the students have worked and learned effectively. In most cases, the tutorial teams have included at least some students with previous PBL experience, which makes it easier for the group to manage well without the tutor.

The following rotation system, designed by our colleagues, has proven successful. Our example is from our course *Managing Global Brands*, where we have two tutors and three tutorial groups. When writing this text, we have 33 international students. They are divided into two home teams: 16 plus 17. Each team has their own tutor, and the two teams meet at the same time. A third group meets at the same time without a tutor. This independent group has a different composition each time. Each of the two home teams “lends” four students to the independent group, and

the eight (four plus four) students meet without the tutor, while there are 12 and 13 students left in the home teams. This way the tutorial size is reasonable. The independent group is smaller, which makes it easier for the students to have a well-balanced and motivated discussion where everybody has the chance to be heard.

The tutors have delegated the assessment responsibility to the observer, a different student each time, according to the general practice in the PBL tutorials. In tutorials where the tutor is present, the observer gives only qualitative feedback to the group and to each student, but in the independent group the observer also records a numerical grade for each student and gives it to the tutors after the tutorial. The tutors provide the discussion leader with opening instructions (mainly with a given problem and given learning objectives), so that the DL can ensure that the group does not deviate from the expected path too much. Naturally, the problem and the learning objectives don't have to be exactly the same as stated in the instructions, but the purpose of the instructions is to provide a safe framework for the group.

*Trust the students with the ability
To assume the responsibility*

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The smaller group size in the independent group makes it easier for the observer to give grades. Trusting the observer with this task is an important factor that can boost the students' personal growth as professionals and human beings in general.

On our branding course, the two home teams have had their two first tutorials with all of the 16 and 17 students present, so that all exchange students and other PBL newcomers have had the chance to get used to the system in the tutor's presence first. Starting from the third tutorial, the independent group has begun to meet.

Further, with our first-semester students, we have also had times when the tutors have been absent due to various reasons. We have never cancelled any tutorials if the tutor has been absent because of sickness or some other reason. Instead, we provide the observer or the discussion leader or another student with extra instructions for the opening process, to make sure they won't get too far from the area described in the trigger or ill-defined problem. Recently, we have begun to specifically arrange for even our first-semester students to have one tutorial without the tutor. This has turned out to be a good experience for the students, boosting their self-confidence and strengthening their group identity. In

most cases, however, the tutor's presence in the tutorials is very needed and valuable, as long as the tutor understands his or her role outside the students' main focus.

6.7.2 Debate in a Closing Discussion

There are many ways to provide fruitful variation to all learning discussions. For example, using a debate in the closing discussion can be PBL at its best. The students must really argue their points and convince the audience. They must work as a team. After their first debate experience, our students have asked us to provide more debate opportunities in tutorials. Our colleague Seija Ranta-aho designed a debate pattern for us to discuss the company's social responsibility.

According to this model, we have divided the students into attackers and defenders, as we have discussed the business operations of Wal-Mart or Fair Trade from the ethical perspective. Either the company does what is best for its stakeholders or it pursues its goals without much concern for its stakeholders. We have given the students an attacker's or defender's role regardless of their own personal perceptions. This way they have been able to really practice debating and arguing their statements.

*Don't hesitate
To debate
There are many ways
To argue your case
Prepare the evidence
For your defence
Listen and respond
And create a bond*

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The DL's role in the debate is to keep the discussion within the schedule and give the floor to both teams and to individual participants on equal terms. The DL must also be prepared to ask questions to make sure the debate doesn't get stuck but rather covers the topic from the perspective of several stakeholders. The observer will carefully observe the discussion and give the normal feedback at the end, including group dynamics, group performance, and individual performance. Compared with an ordinary closing discussion, the special feedback elements in the debate are related to how well each group (attackers and defenders) performed together, and in the end the observer declares the winner on the basis of the group's

argumentation and referrals to evidence from information sources. The debate instructions are as follows.

Debate Instructions

The closing of the learning task takes place in the form of a debate as follows (the closing tutorial is 10 minutes longer than usual and the opening tutorial for the next learning task takes place 10:15–11:00).

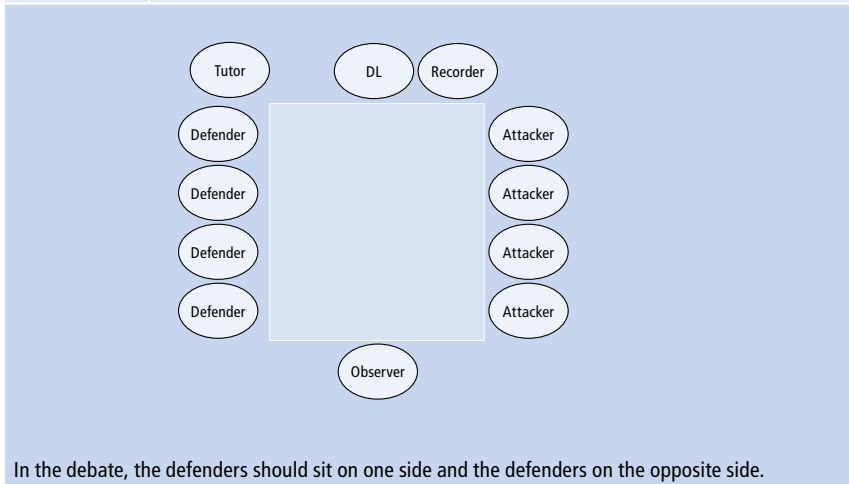
Wal-Mart

Read the trigger carefully. The company itself (management and shareholders) regards its operations as ethical and justified (defenders). Most of its stakeholders – especially the media – find that Wal-Mart tries to evade its social responsibilities when chasing exclusively after maximal profits (attackers).

You are divided into two groups with opposing opinions. No matter what your real viewpoint about Wal-Mart's moral is, you are supposed to defend the company or attack its measures. That is why you have to read and study hard to be able to argue your statements. The key role players are the DL and the observer.

The debate will proceed as follows:

8:30	Defenders meet to agree on their opening statement.
	Attackers meet to agree on their opening statement.
8:45	Defenders present their opening statement: Wal-Mart is a fully ethical company, because...
8:50	Attackers present their opening statement: Wal-Mart is an unethical company, because...
8:55	Discussion
	The DL gives the word to the attackers and defenders on equal terms.
	The DL asks relevant questions and builds bridges (e.g. asking what the other side thinks about something that was just said). The DL may also stop someone from interrupting another person or from speaking too long.
9:30	Attackers meet to agree on their closing statement.
	Defenders meet to agree on their closing statement.
9:40	Attackers present their closing statement.
9:45	Defenders present their closing statement.
9:50–10:05	Observer declares the winning side and assess the debate using the following criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Preparedness ▪ Ability to argue ▪ Staying unemotional



7

Professionalism and Values

■ As discussed above, we encourage and expect professional behaviour among our students. It is a target of our self, peer and group assessment, and our final assessment. As we said above, we evaluate and assess what we consider valuable.

For example, in our tutorials, we pay attention to professional behaviour among the team members and we encourage mutual support. The DL and the observer pay special attention to these factors, in order to make the tutorials run smoothly and to give relevant feedback. The students fill a self-assessment with professional behaviour as one of the six criteria. Under it, we have itemised “respect towards peers and the team agreement, punctuality and other relevant matters”.

*Mutual respect
Helps us to connect*

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When our students understand that we expect and encourage professional behaviour, they are very motivated to contribute to the good team spirit. In our student-centred way of learning, students become aware of how mutual support and trust support the organisation and are therefore part of sustainable business. Professionalism is visible in our discussion and feedback system and therefore it has real power in our learning community.

We have heard students praise our punctuality principles. They are motivated to be prepared and to come to the tutorials on time, since everyone is expected to do the same. The students see the immediate benefits of professionalism in our and their own everyday work, and this is the foundation of motivation.

7.1 Participation and Being on Time

Among the many aspects of professionalism, we would like to emphasize the importance of participation and being on time. This is something that we tutors must emphasize and care about.

*We emphasise our dedication
To punctual participation*

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If we have a total of 14 or 15 tutorials, we usually allow two absences. Most students are not tempted to “use” these absences without a real reason; they are motivated to be present for the benefit of their learning. But obviously we need some guidelines for borderline cases. The following text shows our participation and punctuality guidelines written for the students.

PARTICIPATION POLICIES

Participation in tutorials is compulsory. If you are sick or have another very compelling reason to be absent, we allow two absences providing that you write an “absence memo” for each time and post it on the Discussion Board in Blackboard within two weeks from the missed tutorial. A third absence causes a risk of failing the course and having to re-sit all tutorials in the next semester – we will judge each such case individually, considering the student’s learning achievements and circumstances. Therefore, do not be absent for a small reason because you may be sick at the end of the course and need the two “unused absences”.

If you are absent once or twice and neglect writing the absence memos, your grade for each missed tutorial is zero. An acceptable absence memo written on time erases the zero and that particular tutorial is not calculated for the final grade. We do not give grades on absence memos.

The absence memo is like a personal tutorial memo regarding the closing discussion. It does not have to include any opening discussion. In each absence memo you should:

- Write personal reflections on the learning objectives regarding the closed task. Use theoretical key concepts and models and apply them to a practical context.
- List the keywords in the end.
- Indicate the sources you have studied, using in-text references and writing a list of sources at the end.

You are also expected to arrive on time before the tutorial begins. This means that you are sitting at the table with your notes on the desk, instead of rushing through the door and creating a scene at the last minute. Traffic is no excuse; you can always take an earlier bus. It is particularly important for the discussion leader to be ready with the agenda (possibly on the whiteboard) early enough before the tutorial begins as scheduled. If you come late, your grade for that tutorial is zero. If you come very late, your lateness is considered an absence.

Please remember that coming late not only to tutorials but also to lectures and group meetings is extremely disturbing, reflecting lack of respect towards those present on time. All lectures and workshops start on time, and no latecomers are admitted. Please do not knock on the door to disturb a session that has already begun.

We expect you to adopt the values of the degree programme and contribute to a high-standard working morale. Ask yourself: Do I want to be known as a reliable team member among the learning community?

According to our experience, if the students are absent, they usually write their “absence memos” without a problem. There are two reasons why we want the students to post their absence memos in the general discussion forum in the eLearning platform. First, the visibility of the absence memos to all students of all tutorial groups encourages them to pursue a reasonable level of quality. Second, we tutors can easily check that they have written the memos without having to be worried if we have lost the paper or not (this used to happen often before we decided that the only place for acceptable absence memos is our eLearning platform).

We are proud to notice that our students usually come to the tutorials several minutes before the tutorial discussion actually begins. We do emphasize the importance of this kind of behaviour starting on day one. Especially when our tutorials used to be shorter than now, losing several minutes of tutorial time would have given us a feeling of extra hurry. It is important to have a good and relaxed atmosphere for learning, and with everyone’s support, this is possible to achieve. Our observers are quite good at commenting about the need to be on time, should anyone come to the tutorial late.

Whether we actually follow the principle of punishing the student with a zero when the student comes late really depends on how usual this problem would be. In most of our tutorials during the past year, especially after we introduced the system of having one tutorial per week, we haven’t had to deal with lateness issues very much.

The tutor’s own example is essential. We cannot expect the students to be on time if we don’t do our best to follow our own rules and principles. From our experience over the past eight years, we know that it is possible for the tutor never to be late. Students can do the same.

7.2 Preparedness

Being prepared for the tutorials and all meetings and classes is part of professional behaviour. We emphasize this to our students from day one, but very soon they internalize what it means. In fact, they feel somewhat embarrassed if they are not very well prepared. In such cases, we try to use a positive approach to motivating and encouraging them to be better prepared next time. After the observer has given feedback to the team and each individual, we tutors may emphasize something to the whole group. For example, we have often underlined the importance of referring to the sources and using more sources than one, in order to compare viewpoints. In the last academic year, we have noticed that the students

have often used more sources than before, maybe because of our new system of having only one tutorial per week. They have more time and motivation to prepare this way. In this case as well, quality matters more than quantity.

*Good preparation
Is the foundation
For learning together
And getting better*

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7.3 Degree Programme Values

Our student-centred learning approach helps us to create valuable relationships for learning and growth among all members of the learning community: students, tutors and other instructors, the University and businesses. Our work is based on mutual interdependence, aiming to create value for all parties.

Mutual cooperation is emphasized between students and instructors. We can avoid competition and conflict through an open dialogue and constructive feedback. This way we can constantly re-evaluate and improve our way of working.

Value creation for students means trustworthy personal relationships with the tutors and peers, with high-quality guidance and feedback. Knowledge construction in PBL tutorials increases the value of learning. Different individual and cultural perspectives provide additional viewpoints. This naturally requires high-quality personal study and good personal contribution from each member in the process.

*Values keep us on track
They show the way
And guide us back
If we go astray*

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We tutors learn constantly from the students. We learn from any shared knowledge, including student work and study experiences, and their cultural backgrounds. Our relationships with the students and colleagues have turned into true learning relationships, where both parties are interested in learning from each other as much as possible. This way everyone wins.

The ultimate goal is a true learning community and learning organisation. The focus is more and more on collective learning.

Since professional identity guides the content and working principles in our study programmes, our first generation of PBL students felt that specific values for the degree programme could be beneficial in guiding students in their behaviour.

Professionalism is an important value in all our work. In a learning community, this means professional behaviour in every contact between students and instructors. To adapt to a professional way of working, we can see the tutorial session as a metaphor of a professional meeting. This means high working morals, meeting the deadlines and expectations, not being late, and good interpersonal communication based on respect. Tutorial teams as well as project groups make their ground rules for working together. These usually contain ideas about punctuality, preparedness, feedback and respect.

Our first PBL students proposed a number of values for the Degree Programme in International Business. We tutors then selected the final values from among the students' suggestions, since we also have to observe the same values. We came up with the following three values and they have guided us well along the years: respect, trust and growth.

When we ask students for course feedback, we ask how these values manifest in their performance and how the students could improve. When a student project group has a crisis, we ask them how they could solve the problem through their values. We tutors must also remind ourselves of the same values, so that our words and behaviour can be as consistent as possible.

7.4 Positivity and Enthusiasm

Positivity is contagious. We tutors are the key to spread a positive atmosphere among the students. They are quick to follow and they give much more energy back to us. We believe in mutual empowerment. Positive energy has a delightful tendency to grow. We tutors and instructors in general should be positive examples of this. Students will see if we are positive or not, or even enthusiastic. Our positive attitude is at its best when we encourage and require professional behaviour. This way positivity is used for boosting better performance in learning.

*Positive energy grows
When it shows*

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Positivity means that we can turn all kinds of crises into valuable learning experiences. Instead of hiding the problems, we can make them transparent with a positive attitude and emphasize how valuable these experiences are for our learning. We tutors should emphasize that the school is a safe place to make mistakes and learn from them. This way everyone can learn from everyone's experiences. Every crisis and bad feeling can, indeed, be turned into something positive, even if it is not always easy. Life is a paradox; sometimes pride results from becoming humble first. We will give examples of this below, as we discuss how crises can be turned into victory.

When the tutors believe in PBL and the students, they can use their full potential and the students feel that it all matters.

8

PBL Experiences

■ We receive continuous feedback from our students, both systematically and at random. We gather feedback to the tutors in our eLearning platform at the end of each semester, and we discuss with them freely on various occasions. They often send us email or even postcards during and after their studies. Above, we already shared the email we received from one of our BBA graduates in Indonesia. He wrote us how the practical approach and general knowledge gained during his studies had paid off greatly, and how the PBL approach had done wonders for his everyday problem-solving skills at work.

The learner's perspective

Is our best directive

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We have personally witnessed many students grow as human beings, learners and professionals. The shy ones gain their self-confidence and recognize their talent. They do this through team performance, which helps them to highly value team power. This way they learn a healthy attitude towards themselves as individuals and towards the team as an empowering learning community.

In this chapter, some of our students and colleagues share their personal PBL experiences with you. We gathered these stories by interviewing a few colleagues, and some students and colleagues wrote their own testimonials for this book. At the end of this chapter, we share some of our own experiences about turning a crisis into a victory.

8.1 Student Experiences

The PBL process may even have a healing effect on the participants, as they have the opportunity to be heard and understood, and they have the chance to create contacts in the team. We could say that those who feel

hurt can heal their wounds and pain. One student sent us a card close to the summer, saying as follows (freely translated from Finnish):

Student's Thank-you Card

I would still like to personally thank you for the past spring semester. I have felt very much at home at Helia and I know that PBL is the suitable way to study for me.

As I have begun my studies and moved to Helsinki, it has been wonderful again to feel happiness, joy of life and enthusiasm after a very difficult year on a personal level.

A thousand thanks again and have a wonderful summer!

As the above example suggests, the learning community has many roles in a student's life. At best, it can provide perspectives and benefits with lifelong effects.

*PBL helps you to feel
It helps you to heal*

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Our student-centred way of studying makes the learning community very strong and caring among the students. This way they don't remain alone when they have a personal or family-related crisis. We have seen the students take care of each other, and a student with a crisis has a place to come to. In problem-based learning, the students take much more responsibility for their own learning than they would in a more conventional study programme. Even if they have problems related to their life outside of school, they usually feel a strong need to come to tutorials. They don't want to drop out of the system and they may also feel that the tutorial is the place where they have a sense of continuity.

During her fourth semester, our student Tara Hicks wrote the following lines about her own PBL experience.

MY PBL EXPERIENCE

by Tara Hicks, international business student, 12 March 2008

Problem Based Learning was a new experience for me when I started my International Business studies in the autumn of 2006. The first semester was reserved for orientation purposes with little appetizers of what we were to learn in the following two semesters. In that respect the learning method was rather frustrating but incredibly necessary and fun at the same time.

Our groups were large and our assignments were many. We found that we wanted to cover more of the subjects under discussion, but that we only had time to cover the most general of concepts. We struggled to prepare our individual and our team assignments efficiently and on time.

In our second semester we were more relaxed and confident of ourselves and of our peers. The tutorial groups were rearranged and it felt as if we had found our stride. This semester was more focused around the general principals involved in the establishment of a business in Finland. We found that we could delve deeper into the subjects of marketing and logistics. However, we were also introduced to such subjects as accounting and economics and once again we were only allowed two weeks for each subject to understand the general principals. We wished that we had had more lectures and more time to familiarise ourselves with the subjects.

The third semester was where PBL learning really found its place in our comfort zones. Now, we had a definite task with even more responsibility than ever before. We were to apply everything that we were to learn to the target market research of a totally official and functioning Finnish enterprise that aimed to expand abroad. We could work as a fully capable and functioning team. All the practice of previous tasks and tutorials was paying off. The information that we had stored away was ready to be applied because we had not only studied it in the previous semesters, but we had also argued our opinions and challenged the theories.

During all three semesters our class had stayed more-or-less intact with only a few that had left and a few that had joined us. But, during the fourth semester our class was dissolved and we had to go our separate ways. We were made responsible for choosing our own courses and schedules. The planning was not done for us (as it was in the first three semesters) and we were given almost free reign to study what we wished to study. Many students went on exchange, but most students stayed. We were not free of tutorials or portfolios and feedback sessions. Our classes were mixed with transfer students, exchange students and students from other courses. But, it was fun, it was a challenge...it still is a challenge. Those students familiar with PBL were asked to assist the exchange students and the transfer students and pretty soon everyone had gotten the hang of it.

The atmosphere is quite relaxed now. I'm still in the fourth semester and the deadlines and responsibilities are still there, but everybody in each of my courses and teams knows what his or her role is in our tasks and our learning is easier because it is more focused and intense. People are truly passionate about their classes. Even the tutors are enjoying their subjects more. Our tutors have played an important role as guides in our PBL experience. Even their lectures were interactive.

In every course and in every team I played a different role, but the role that I played throughout my studies was a role that everybody else played too. I played the part of a team mate who encourages a comfortable, yet challenging learning environment in every situation. My role as team mate means that I have to know how to be honest and trustworthy and how to give constructive feedback and how to receive feedback. I am confident that I will be able to use my judgement fairly and confidently in which ever situation I should find myself in.

PBL has taught me to be confident in my capabilities. It has taught me to trust the capabilities of others, too. It has taught me a lot about time management and information searching/sifting. PBL has taught me to be reliable and resourceful and it has taught me to enjoy learning. It has taught me to be objective and analytical and it has taught me that learning must be practical – even if it is based on theories and concepts. It has taught me to study hard, but to apply what I have learned. It has given me the confidence to continue with my work-placement in the knowledge that I will be thrown into the deep end of the business world, but that I will be able to cope in any situation.

If I were to describe PBL in two words then I would call it: Interactive Learning.

During his third semester, our student Mikhail Pozdnyakov wrote the following lines about his personal PBL experience.

MY PERSONAL PBL EXPERIENCE

by Mikhail Pozdnyakov, international business student, 16 April 2008

Before coming to HAAGA-HELIA, I had no idea about the PBL format and what kind of benefits it can bring to the student's learning process. At the first sight, it seemed to be very complicated, as usually a new approach of studying looks, and, at the same time, quite challenging.

I remember my first days in the new learning system. It took me only a couple of times to understand how my previous way of learning was different from the current one. However, since the first day, I found a lot of pluses that make the student's life easier and stimulate you to learn more and more.

I am very glad to say that the PBL format opened my eyes and gave me the chance to understand the real value of being free in the learning. With this point, I mean that personally for me it is very unusual if the system of learning does not push you so much and you are not afraid to make any mistakes. Moreover, it is better to make mistakes now at school than to make them when being part of the business community. The PBL format allows you to make some mistakes and it provides you with the way how to learn from them. It makes you more self-confident and it builds a big space for creativity.

An outstanding point of the PBL format that I found very interesting is sharing ideas and views with other students during the tutorials. It is a known fact that business is developing all the time and new theories appear. That is why the tutor always asked the students, when preparing for the tutorial, to use not only books but also articles that might present a different opinion. During the tutorial, I can argue with other students by using the sources that I found. This characteristic of PBL develops the ability to learn through conversation and some kind of debate. Here, we are given the chance to take a look at the business problem and its solutions from different perspectives, evaluate them and take the most appropriate action. This is what I like in PBL the most. Business economics is not mathematics – there cannot be only one solution! PBL implies participation in learning with people from different cultures and different backgrounds. It only increases the value of what can be learnt in the tutorials.

An important thing that should be mentioned is the role of the tutor in the student's personal learning. Compared with other systems of education, PBL demonstrates that students and tutors can both grow professionally. Personally, I can say that my tutor helped me a lot. The tutor encouraged me all the time and was able to create a business atmosphere in the classes. Since the first day, I am proud to say that I am a part of PBL learning society.

INTERVIEW WITH ANNA STRYAPCHIEVA, INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS STUDENT,
16 MAY 2008

Our BBA student Anna Stryapchieva began her international business studies in the autumn of 2006, and today is the last day of her fourth semester studies. Anna reflects on her personal growth and professional development throughout her studies. It is clear to her that she has gained many valuable skills and attitudes when learning together with other students and working in many tutorial teams and project groups. "I have really managed to develop something. It was clearly visible from the first to the fourth semester," Anna says with confidence. "PBL is not something that you would just take and forget. It always stays with you."

Coming to our university, Anna had to get used to interaction in our student-focused way of learning. In her previous studies, the students were mainly passive listeners and didn't know what to do in the rare cases of group work. "This was really different, but then I liked it. I was not afraid. I pushed myself. I had to talk, and at the same time I had to do it in polite way", Anna says, emphasising how important this was to her. "I don't like to speak loud if I am not sure. Here nobody is making fun of you. The tutor supports you and then it is good." In Anna's previous schools, the teachers mainly showed if the student was wrong.

Anna emphasises the effects of PBL on personal development. "In my personal life, I can use the skills. PBL builds the mind from a wider perspective. Even my mother notices that I am more open and not afraid to speak my opinion. I used to be really shy. PBL gives you the ability not only to speak but speak in the right way. I have seen how people can be successful when they know how to speak in the right way, even when they don't have any extraordinary knowledge."

When we discuss the support given by the tutors, Anna says, "When the tutor supports you, it is very helpful. They don't push you according to their own standards. Instead, they want to learn about you and understand you." Anna says that everyone remembers certain tutors afterwards. She uses the expression "family relationship". Some of Anna's friends study at universities where the teachers have all the power. The students tend to remain silent to avoid mistakes.

When looking back into the different semesters, Anna emphasises the need for a personal student-to-tutor relationship. "We are sensitive, and it is good for the tutor to be more personal at the beginning. Then we start to work seriously, and personal feelings are not that important any more. The students coming directly to the second or third semester from other universities are missing on the introduction."

Anna emphasises the importance of the personal discussion between tutor and student. This kind of performance review really helps when the tutor supports the student. "The students realise that the most important person is on their side."

According to Anna, PBL gives a lot of freedom, such as the freedom to talk. Nobody shouts and pushes the students. And most students are conscious about their studies. "We know the system and nobody is offended. If you keep pushing people, they learn not to do anything unless you push them." Anna says she became more responsible in the first semester and did not want to skip any classes. "I really respected the people in my tutorial team. They were reliable, and I did not want to let them down. I also wanted to be reliable." Anna praises the text in the student manual that asks the question "Do you want to be known as a reliable member of the learning community?"

In the second semester, the students changed the tutorial teams and project groups. Anna says the students were sad because it didn't feel as personal any more, and the tutorials became more mechanical. At the same time, the tutorials were more focused on theories, as opposed to the first semester where the students learned about their personal characteristics and the learning approach. Anna said the structure was very good and they learned the basics.

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"The first semester really helped us to be diplomatic, in case something goes wrong." Anna said she was lucky not to have any critical incidents in her project groups in the later semesters. To a large extent, this was because of the good starting point given in the first semester. Even in the later semesters, the students respected each other and there was no shouting. People tried to find a consensus. "We managed to do the work, even when we had different opinions", Anna adds. There were more difficulties in the fourth semester with so many different groups at the same time. It was important to be patient, polite, respectful and, above all, reliable. The students had four courses, each of them very demanding. Everything goes better when the students respect each other.

"I have met so many different people. There are many people who can help me in school and personal life." Anna says that working together may also negatively affect the friendship if someone is not a responsible team member.

When we discuss about transfer students coming to PBL from other universities, Anna says that often they didn't know the structure so well. "Sometimes I felt sorry for them in the tutorials. They tried their best but didn't know how to do it. This affected their grade. Sometimes it was frustrating but we also tried to help them."

Anna says that sometimes the tutor might give unfair recognition to a student who says something in a tutorial without any valuable information. Instead, the students should be awarded for useful theory and application. There may also be well-prepared students who are silent because of their cultural background, bad mood, or another reason. "Sometimes you don't feel like talking, when people look at your face and clothes and personal appearance." But thinking about the assessment system, Anna adds, "We should learn."

The interview made clear that PBL has greatly benefited Anna in her personal and professional growth. The effects are clear during her studies and we feel certain that she will benefit from these skills in her future business career and personal life.

Hearing the voice of our students helps us to understand how the learners themselves experience our study programme and their own learning. Talking to a student at a more advanced level gives us the chance to hear their reflection on their long-time development.

*It is our choice
To hear the student's voice
They will give us evidence
We can learn from their confidence*

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8.2 Tutor Experiences

We feel it is a great privilege for us to work with young talented students, often from many different countries and cultures. This gives us a continuous insight into the world from many perspectives. In student-focused learning, this privilege is present every time. Our work as tutors has also developed us not only as professionals but as human beings. We strongly feel that PBL has shaped our view of the world and of the human being to a remarkable extent. It is not exaggeration to say that PBL has helped us to become better persons.

A foreign colleague once visited one of our first-semester tutorials and, immediately after that, a tutorial with more advanced students. He changed his perception of PBL, saying that when applied systematically, it really seems to work. He saw the huge development when comparing these two groups.

What does PBL do?

What does it mean to you?

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We asked some of our colleagues to share their own experiences and we now we would like share them with you.

INTERVIEW WITH TOMAS ILLMAN, A PBL TUTOR, 26 MARCH 2008

Our colleague Tomas Illman started PBL tutoring three years ago. In his discussions with his PBL students, Tomas has heard the students explain, "We have been lucky to be in this good tutorial team". As a tutor, Tomas has helped the students to realise that they themselves have made the team the way it is.

Tomas emphasises the importance of group formation in PBL, even when the students go to the second semester and the tutorial teams change. It still takes a while for the students to get used to the new group. We tutors should understand that even experienced PBL students must go through the team formation phase whenever they start to study in a new group. In other words, the focus should not shift too much away from the process, only concentrating on the contents. People skills are important.

Tomas also emphasises that the process will not start well if the tutor doesn't believe in PBL. The students will easily see through the tutor. If the tutor doubts the benefits of the PBL process and supports the doubts of the students, the system will not work.

INTERVIEW WITH PIRJO PITKÄPAASI, A PBL TUTOR, 3 APRIL 2008

Our colleague Pirjo Pitkäpaasi began her teaching career in a conventional degree programme several years ago. After she began to use PBL in sales education, one of her students asked her: "What was the length of this tutorial?" After Pirjo said "two hours", the student continued: "Imagine how much more we learned here than in a lecture!"

According to Pirjo's experience, the students gain very good skills in assessing their own learning. Pirjo has gathered course feedback after PBL and non-PBL courses, and she can see a clear difference in how the students experience their learning. PBL students assess their learning clearly higher. When the students speak aloud what they are studying, their confidence in adopting the topic grows immensely.

After Pirjo's students had their first taste of student-centred learning, one of them said: "Now I understand why the instructor was praising this learning approach so much." The student asked further: "Is this how the students in the other degree program always study?" After Pirjo said "yes", the student continued: "I am so jealous!"

Pirjo describes her major PBL enlightenment as follows: "The point is not what the instructor can say or do, sharing her knowledge with a glow on her cheeks in the classroom. The point is to put the glow on the students' cheeks when they share their knowledge. This is what PBL can do; it makes the students enthusiastic."

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The instructor may have to step outside her comfort zone when she has to trust the students and believe that they will master the knowledge sharing process. Pirjo feels that too often we instructors tend to think that we should be the masters of the knowledge shared in the classroom. What really matters is the increment in the students' learning.

The first-semester students in the sales programme have told Pirjo: "This is an ingenious model: the themes discussed in tutorials are supported by expert lectures and even Business English classes. We are discussing and learning the theory in different languages."

When thinking back to her own youth when the student's major learning took place when preparing for the exams at the end of the semester, Pirjo cites a comment from one of her students: "In our programme, it is amazing how much I've learned in just eight weeks."

INTERVIEW WITH ELINA OKSANEN-YLIKOSKI, A PBL TUTOR, 4 APRIL 2008

A couple of years ago, our colleague Elina Oksanen-Ylikoski came to HAAGA-HELIA to coordinate the planning and implementation of our new degree programme in sales, for which we adopted the same PBL approach that we had already been using in our international business programme for years. Elina herself has now been using PBL in her own classes, and, as a mentor, she has heard experiences from the PBL students of her colleagues.

After ten weeks of study, one of our first-semester students said to Elina: "I would never have believed that one can learn so much in such a short time" The student said he was in the right place, since our university is for practical people. He had previously recognised problems in his memory and concentration: he would have difficulty remembering things or focusing his mind. His thoughts would be jumping from one thing to another. The student wouldn't have thought that he could study so effectively on his own. In fact, his school success used to be rather poor and he couldn't concentrate on reading. But now PBL had changed this. He felt that this was the first time when he was really learning.

Elina compares her current job with her previous work where she gave mass lectures and took care of book exams. Now she really has to trust the students. Elina says that, in our job as PBL tutors, we are moving away from quasi authority towards trust. Elina talks about trusting another person's trust: the tutor should develop the ability to trust that the students trust the tutor as a learning process facilitator, while the students themselves take the responsibility for their own learning.

Elina finds that student-centred learning is the best that a university can offer to its students. According to her, studying in small student-centred groups is clearly the key to success in highly recognised universities abroad. Elina's personal enlightenment experience is related to the social construction of knowledge. For example, in a PBL opening discussion, the students bring the pieces of individual understanding to the common table. They visualise their understanding, to see how they see the topic right now. Then, after personal study, they can see how their understanding has developed. Referring to the opening discussion, Elina says the tutor should not and need not worry about whether the students understand everything "correctly" or not. The purpose of establishing a shared understanding in an opening discussion is to be able to formulate the learning objectives for independent study.

INTERVIEW WITH KARI HAUTAKOSKI, A PBL TUTOR, 7 APRIL 2008

Our colleague Kari Hautakoski says he jumped into a moving train when he began PBL tutoring in our international business programme. He refers to the clear structure of our studies, which made it possible for him to adopt the new system without any greater difficulty.

Kari's PBL experiences are positive. He says the student groups are always different and sometimes there are more challenges, since the students are in different phases in their personal growth. Kari says everyone has to go through various stages of personal growth in life, and PBL can be a good help in it.

In our integrated business course in the first semester, we used to have two tutorials a week. This year we increased the duration of each tutorial but reduced the number to one tutorial per week. Kari likes the new rhythm, since this way the students don't seem to lose their grip towards the end of the semester.

Kari has both PBL and non-PBL courses and he likes the variation in his work. When comparing them, Kari says he likes the fact that he can actually see how PBL students learn when they take responsibility for their learning.

According to Kari, the tutor's main challenge is always related to how to facilitate the group in the best way and to maintain enthusiasm among the students. When we discuss the future of our students and how they will likely look back to their student life, Kari says many students will probably remember us from PBL, and others may primarily think of something else. Kari assumes some students associate us more strongly with PBL than others.

When beginning their studies, our students usually have the same PBL tutor for the whole first semester. This way we can help our new students to adopt the learning approach effectively. Kari began his tutoring career as a tutor in the first semester. He says it was scary at first to think that he would have to master all that content. With time, Kari realised that one can well be a general PBL tutor in the first semester without having to be an expert in each topic.

Kari likes our system where tutor specialisation begins in the second semester. Personally he appreciates the variation between working both as a general tutor in the first semester and as a specialised tutor in other semesters.

In his teacher training, Kari and his colleagues conducted a study related to the instructors' attitudes toward PBL. Kari says the instructors had mainly positive attitudes, and the current PBL tutors wouldn't have liked to go back to the old system.

Kari thinks our PBL resources are good at the moment, hoping that the university will continue to invest in PBL. He says the success depends on how bold the individual instructors are to apply new ideas. Kari says one plus one is three in a group. In other words, when we instructors like to work together with a positive attitude, we can construct new knowledge effectively. After each semester, for example, the tutor team reviews the success of the course together and makes the required improvements.

The same willingness to work together goes for students. Those who don't care for PBL may prefer working more independently in the future, without having to engage in too much teamwork. Students who appreciate PBL are team players.

MY PBL TUTORING EXPERIENCE

by Marja Brandtberg 8 April 2008
Translated from Finnish by Matti Helelä

Based on my experience in tutoring the PBL process on more than ten online courses, I can say that PBL really works on the web. It is clear that different groups operate in different ways. Some groups have done excellent work and others have performed rather poorly. Through facilitation, the tutor can make a big difference by positively influencing some groups, and the most rewarding experience for the tutor is to see a passive group becoming enthusiastic and active. Some students seem to be too busy elsewhere and they just can't find any time to contribute, regardless of the flexibility in time and place on an online course.

Even in my classroom tutorials, I have seen PBL work just fine, although not totally without problems. The tutor's contribution as a facilitator matters a great deal.

Both online and in the classroom, I am inspired as a tutor when I see the students become enthusiastic and especially when they share their own experiences. I think that my big challenge is to motivate the students to search and study relevant information in high-quality sources and to use the new knowledge for application and problem-solving. One of my responsibilities is to guide the students to the sources of information. It is also important to give positive, encouraging and constructive feedback, and hopefully the students learn the same in the tutorials. This is not always so easy.

I always struggle with myself when I wonder how much I can direct the students, for example, when they formulate the learning objectives. I try to avoid the coveritis syndrome. It isn't worth touching the students' learning objectives too much, even if it may seem that their concepts won't cover the tutor's objectives. This is because the students always set their objectives based on their current understanding, before they know all the related concepts. Naturally the tutor has to encourage the students to clarify if the objectives are very broad. I still find this job difficult. On the one hand, sometimes it's hard for me not to add one more learning objective; on the other hand, and sometimes I decide not to comment on a certain impossible objective, if I want to see the outcome of the personal study and the closing discussion on the basis of such objective. During the closing discussion, I may nonetheless request the students to provide further information. Specifying the objectives is particularly difficult on the web, because the time difference may make complicate the necessary interactive contemplation and the group may run out of time.

As a tutor, I like to stay out of the discussion both in the classroom and online. I think it's important for the students to observe how they can carry the group forward and discuss as professionals.

MY PBL TUTORING EXPERIENCE

by Jaana Melamies, a PBL tutor, 9 April 2008
Translated from Finnish by Matti Helelä

PBL reveals quite well how students have internalised their learning. On the one hand, if they don't understand something, they cannot discuss it; on the other hand, the tutor realises how something should be explained after the students explain it with their own words. Sometimes students try to cover their lack of preparation with information that they clearly haven't internalised. For example, a student who presents something with the document camera might not be able to participate in the later discussion. Or someone may read long sections from the book. The tutor can easily notice their lack of preparation.

When the theme and tutor change in the third semester, I have noticed that the students are often confused and reserved about what is coming next. The students say they also notice that they are more silent and the atmosphere is a bit uncomfortable at first. But in the next few tutorials the atmosphere soon changes for the better.

I have noticed that some discussion leaders who work hard for their role tend to be less prepared in the following tutorial. The observer's role is sometimes problematic, because students who haven't prepared for the tutorial often want to be the observer. Therefore we must take care of the rotation of the observer's role in advance. Further, if a student has a certain label, it may be hard to change it later.

Both the tutor and the students gain various rewarding experiences in the tutorial. For example, when the students recognise the core problem or issue in the trigger, they feel "yes" and this motivates them to search for a solution.

When providing the triggers, we should be careful not to reveal the problem in the list of information sources. We should also make sure that the memos come on time, because delayed memos have hardly any value.

Using the adhesive notes in brainstorming might become routine and lose its meaning, if the tutor accepts the draft on the whiteboard too easily. I try to push the students until they come up with something reasonable and the relations between the concepts are somehow visible.

Sometimes the tutor should try to lighten the atmosphere in the tutorial, using humour that is suitable for the context. Sometimes the tutor has three tutorial teams in a row and the topics and triggers are the same. This requires extra motivation.

PBL is a well functioning learning approach, because detailed contents often change even before the students graduate, and PBL encourages information search, personal study, interaction and teamwork.

INTERVIEW WITH DR MARIA JAKUBIK, A PBL TUTOR, 10 APRIL 2008

When our colleague Dr Maria Jakubik entered into a PBL tutor's role in 2001, she asked herself: "Is this what I want to do?" Maria says an instructor has to question her old ways, and it takes different amounts of time for different people to deal with the possible resistance and to adopt a new way. One of Maria's colleagues refused to use PBL first but now she is using it enthusiastically. How to integrate newcomers is a big and critical question at the university. Maria says it is not enough to just have one core teacher team in charge, but getting new blood is crucial.

Maria shares the experiences of a European exchange student who said PBL gave him a good experience compared with his own school, where they have huge groups listening to lectures without any discussion and where it was hard to get into any direct contact with the instructor. The student appreciated the direct and informal relationship with his PBL tutor.

The exchange student found great value in listening to other students' opinions. At first, he had been very shy and afraid to talk, because of his poor English. But listening to the others, the student gradually gained self-confidence, his language skills developed, and he crossed his border. He began to talk. He felt that the other students understood what he wanted to say, although it wasn't perfect.

The exchange student had a very logical way of thinking, and he was creative with good ideas. PBL helped him to overcome his language barrier. He was always eager to learn how he could improve, based on the feedback from the student observer and the tutor. Maria also explained how he could improve his report writing skills. Direct feedback helped him to develop.

Another European student told Maria that PBL had changed his life and it was something that he wanted to take back to his home country.

According to Maria, most students want to use the feedback to change and develop. It is very nice for the instructor to see the student looking for feedback. In a PBL tutorial, continuous feedback and the observer's feedback at the end help the students to see how another person perceives the discussion and this way the participants can improve next time.

Employees depend on the knowledge of their co-workers in today's workplace. We need other people to complement our knowledge and they need us. It is a two-way street full of collaboration and connections to other people.

Maria offers an interesting perspective by explaining the needs of older students who have already begun their professional career. Maria had gathered qualitative feedback from American summer university students in 2007, after she had used PBL as a visiting professor. PBL was new to the students.

Older students look for direct benefits, so that they could apply their learning directly to their work, including organising and holding meetings, project work, and other tasks. For example, one American law student was glad to learn that legal cases could be approached as triggers in legal studies. One student said: "On this course, I learned to learn." This was the student's last course, and Maria says the students should generally be offered the opportunity of learning to learn at the beginning of their studies, not at the end. Some of the summer university students were consultants and they said they would now apply PBL to their work.

Sharing helps the students to internalise both the theory and its application to the projects. Maria says knowledge sharing is often missing from traditional teamwork where students often divide the task without integration. The review meetings on the strategy course solve this problem, as all students have to know the big picture behind their project, not only the student's individual piece of the work.

According to Maria, universities of applied sciences need PBL more than science universities, since our task is to help the students to learn how to study, how to learn, and how to organise their work. Students can then apply these skills to their everyday work. They learn to apply theory to practical business.

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As the written feedback from Maria's American students shows, several students emphasise their eagerness to start using BPL immediately in their work and studies. The feedback shows that the students have gained a new perspective to learning and knowledge. One student writes: "This has definitely been one of the most unique and valuable learning experiences for me at the University."

Maria says we need a flexible approach with PBL. She compares her strategy course with some other PBL courses, saying that they have only four tutorials and the triggers are long case triggers, as opposed to shorter one-page triggers used on other courses. The tutorials are discussions about these cases. Maria calls this an adopted version of the original model.

Students work in projects on the strategy course, applying to their project what they learn in PBL tutorials. Each of the eight project groups has their own company. The project groups meet without the tutor, but the tutor is present in special review meetings. Each review group has eight student members: one from each project group. This way all students have to know the big picture behind their own project, since each student has to explain what the project group has done. This forum is good for sharing views and asking questions. The students have the chance to learn from other projects and ask for help for their own project. This way different project groups can help each other. The tutor's contribution is the organisation of the system, but the students do the knowledge sharing.

INTERVIEW WITH IRMA PULKKINEN, A PBL TUTOR, 10 APRIL 2008

In January 2002, our colleague Irma Pulkkinen began her PBL career as the third-semester tutor in our international business programme. Irma remembers her very first tutorial ever: A colleague from Central Europe came along to observe. "It was my first time and I had a foreign guest," Irma says with a smile on her face. "No problem – everything went quite well. The guest thought this is something for him to try, and he has, indeed, used PBL in language instruction.

Visitors have never bothered Irma or the students, even when unannounced much in advance. Once again, Irma had her first tutorial with a new group of students, when two previously unknown visitors from a Central European partner school came along to observe and learn about PBL. These impressed visitors then invited Irma to their university to introduce PBL. Their first reaction was: "How is it possible that the students can discuss such a difficult task as export documentation with such enthusiasm?" The students themselves responded by saying that this approach gave them much more. They learned better when they had to find out for themselves, rather than receiving readily digested information.

Irma further analyses these experiences by emphasising the students' and her own openness and readiness to new challenges: "You couldn't experience something like this in the traditional lecturing mode." When Irma has afterwards asked the students about their feelings regarding the previous visitors, they have responded that they had hardly noticed.

When the students are in focus, they also ignore the tutor's presence quite well. They might say to Irma: "We don't really notice you unless you bring up something essential." Or they may say: "We would be more concerned if you were absent from the opening process." Irma says that a tutor's sickness is no catastrophe in PBL: the students can run a tutorial on their own. She also recommends that the university use student tutors in an organised manner. Advanced students could earn credit through tutoring and learn valuable skills.

When Irma has asked her students to evaluate how PBL has changed their preparation and reading habits, most students have answered along these thoughts: "Now that we have to take responsibility, we have the enthusiasm and interest to go deeper." They study more sources, and they get more out of the topic themselves. They also appreciate the disappearance of the traditional school-like feeling; this way of learning better matches with an adult's learning needs.

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The themes and topics related to sales and export documentation, Irma's areas of expertise, fit very well into tutorial work. When we discuss the change in the instructor's work, Irma says that a beginning PBL tutor has to face some inconvenience. The instructor can no longer control the scene; there are no slides that would guide the process. In tutorials, the tutor is no longer the king, and well-prepared students can easily cause surprises with the information that they share.

Irma gives an interesting example of a tutorial where, once again, she had a guest from another European country. A student drew a model related to documentary payments on the whiteboard. Because of an error in the original source, the student's model included a clear mistake. Without saying anything, Irma waited until one student said: "I would like to comment about the model on the whiteboard." At this point, Irma was glad she hadn't made the correcting move herself, but, instead, she had given this opportunity to the students. This gave the students faith in having come up with a fruitful search. Irma then verified the student's view, asking how she could correct the model. Another student then found a bank's slide with the correct information. Here Irma describes her role with the word "enabler": She did not correct the students immediately but kept the door open to a new learning experience. This also taught them source criticism. Irma emphasises to her students the need to always check if they are really discussing what the learning objectives suggest.

Irma's foreign guest found the PBL process amazing and unique, since it made this kind of learning possible and it was not the instructor's responsibility to share the knowledge. Irma says that visitors always become more and more interested in PBL when they come along to observe.

A foreign teacher student once came to observe Irma's tutorial. She asked Irma how she could make sure that the students learn what they are supposed to learn. Irma's answer was: What the students have to learn is shown in the course description but learning takes place in their own minds. It is the student's responsibility to make it happen, not the tutor's job. The knowledge has to enter the student's mind, through perception and internalising. After this experience, the teacher student's supervisor sent Irma email: "You have aroused interest in PBL, could you please come to tell us more?"

Irma appreciates how PBL makes continuous development possible. She says we can quickly respond to problems in student motivation, because we have relatively small groups as opposed to large lecture groups. We can tackle problems even after the first tutorial session. One student once told Irma that she was there only because of the pressure from her parents. Irma was then able to help her to focus on her own future.

Before our students got used to continuous feedback, Irma would explain the need to give and receive feedback in the workplace, emphasising that the school environment was a safe place to practice it. Irma also mentions that her tutorial team gives feedback to the observer. This helps the students further to adopt a constructive way of sharing feedback.

In her tutorials, Irma's own feedback is based on what the observer has or hasn't already said. Irma doesn't repeat what the observer has already mentioned, unless there is a need to emphasise or highlight something particularly important, or if there is a need to clarify something. Irma also gives encouraging feedback if there is a debate. Irma says that the tutorials help the students to learn argumentation, and this is what we should demand from the students. In traditional ways of instruction, the instructor used to be the one who had to do all the argumentation. In PBL tutorials, it is the students' job.

The student observer often pays more attention to giving comments to individual team members, and therefore Irma shows them how to give feedback about the group process.

If new instructors wonder whether they should get involved in PBL or not, Irma's advice is this: "Don't worry, get involved and see how people are using it, and then try it yourself. You can find out the strengths and positive things for both the student and the tutor. PBL is great for the tutor, not only for the student. You can use your expertise in new ways. A literate person can learn without listening to a lecture about it first. You can find new strengths in PBL."

8.3 From Crisis to Victory

We find transparency to be important in all our activity. Negative experiences can always be turned into something positive and useful. Let's take an example from an individual student's perspective. According to one of our colleagues, one student once said she was sorry for not having prepared for the tutorial for some reason. Perhaps one could say that her humble attitude gave her pride back. Nobody could use her unpreparedness against her. In fact, the team supported her because of her attitude to try her best according to the circumstances. The observer recognised the team support and gave constructive feedback accordingly.

Next, let's take a look into how we once solved a small crisis in a tutorial. The DL had misunderstood the learning objectives partly differently from the rest of the tutorial team and his agenda needed major modification. He had also misunderstood the memo writing and evaluation process, which affected the beginning of the tutorial discussion. The student had had a late start and therefore he needed team support.

The "old person" in the tutor would have considered this a problem and something to be worried about, or something that the tutor should solve quickly, telling the students what to do, maybe change a discussion leader. After a few seconds of worry, the "new tutor" in us considered this a fantastic learning opportunity. The tutor said to the students: "This is a great opportunity to learn, and this is exactly what we need once in a while, because this prepares you to tackle these kinds of issues in the workplace in the future. The school is the perfect place to make mistakes – we tutors have had to make our first mistakes in the workplace because we never had an opportunity like this during our studies. I will now stop talking, letting you to work this out as a team."

After the tutor's positive comments, the students began to help the discussion leader, speaking to him with a friendly tone of voice. They told him how they will afterwards explain a few things, and they decided what topics they could now add to the agenda. The team supported the discussion leader throughout the discussion, whenever he wasn't prepared to ask the relevant questions. In the end, the observer commented how well the team worked together to support the DL and to make this a very successful tutorial.

*When you have a crisis
A great opportunity arises
For a learning experience
Beyond convenience*

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Once we had a group of four students facing difficulties in group dynamics when working together in a study project. First three students came to talk to the tutor, but the tutor asked them to come back with the fourth student as soon as possible. It was obvious that the team was divided into two different camps: three on the one side and one on the other side.

When the four students and the tutor were present at the same time and the students told the tutor what the problem was, the tutor gave each student a piece of paper, asking them to write three expectations on the one side and three promises on the other side. The expectations represented what the student wanted the other party to do, and the promises represented their willingness to take a few steps towards the other party.

After the students had written down their expectations and promises, the tutor asked each student to read aloud what they themselves were ready and willing to do. Everyone had very nice comments, showing that they would try to fulfil some of the other party's expectations. After hearing all of these promises, the tutor said: "It is likely that with these promises you have already met the expectations written on the other side of the paper." Then it was time to turn the papers and read the expectations. Indeed, the promises had already covered all the expectations. This helped the group to take the challenge and work it out somehow, instead of insisting to be divided into two groups. After this, the students got the project done and the report written, although they still had some challenges. This meeting nonetheless helped them a great deal and restored their faith in being able to finish the project together. They were proud of being able to work together professionally.

9

Conclusion

■ PBL has been a fascinating journey for most of the tutors and, we dare say, the students. The perceptions of oneself in relation to others have changed profoundly for many people. The more we have given to the process, the more it has given us back.

PBL is an ongoing self-feeding process of learning, personal development and creativity. You will find new sources of interest, new depths of exploration and shared inspiration. The shared joy of learning is very empowering, but it demands that you are willing to open up to the process and to the other people involved. You cannot get the benefits from the PBL work if you remain mentally separated from other people, co-tutors and students. PBL gives you most when you are willing to express yourself and open up to a certain extent. It is all about meeting people in an authentic way and about constantly seeking new depths and levels in knowledge.

Knowledge is under constant change, and the value that we can give to the knowledge determines its meaning. The knowledge content is related to the knowledge context, to the environment it is used in, and to the process of putting the knowledge into action. PBL puts knowledge into action and it provides a lifelong process of facing problems, gaining new knowledge together with other people, and turning the knowledge into practical creative solutions with the ultimate goal to create a better world.