The wider benefits of adult learning and how to foster them

A challenge for web based learning environments?

Structure of the presentation

1. Own virtual history…
2. Wider benefits of non-vocational, non-formal adult learning
3. How these benefits develop in face-to-face learning situations
4. A challenge for web based learning environments:
   - do this kind of benefits develop in web based learning environments, if the teacher looks like avatar, group is virtual and social interaction becomes mediated?

Note:
… on the potential of web based learning environments and computer mediated communication!
The line of argument:

- Participation in face-to-face learning activities generates many benefits for adult learners
- Especially important elements for the development of benefits in f-t-f:
  - possibility to do something with own hands; group & sense of belonging to a group; social interaction; expertise and personality of the trainer
→ is it possible to create web based learning environments that generate similar benefits?

Own [virtual] background – TEACHING & DEVELOPMENT

- 1989 → Use of Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) in education
  - ‘Philosophy of Adult Education’ (Open and ‘Closed’ University), continuing education courses
  - Bulletin boards (TeleBox)
  - Usenet News, PortaCom
  - Studium (Uni of Helsinki)
  - … Moodle
  - www.studium.helsinki.fi
  - www.avoin.helsinki.fi
  - Apaja – open learning environment for academic job seekers
  - …
Own [virtual] background – main RESEARCH activities

• 2007 - 2011: **Theory of Learning Environments**

• 2011 – 2014: **Virtual Communities of Practice**

• 2013: **Learning environments evaluation programme (LEEP, OECD)**

• 2015 - : **LINE – Learning in Interactive Environments** research area ([www.uef.fi/LINE](http://www.uef.fi/LINE))

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What are the wider benefits of adult learning?

Benefits of Lifelong Learning project (Be.LL, 2011-2014)
More info & reports: [www.bell-project.eu](http://www.bell-project.eu)
What are Wider Benefits of Learning?

- Participation → Learning outcomes → **wider benefits**
  - For individual (“human, cultural, economical capital”)
  - For family, community... (“social capital, social cohesion”)
  - For labour markets (“economical growth”)
  - For society in general (“active citizenship, learning society”)
- How individuals, groups, organisations and society benefit from education?

**PARTICIPATION**
- Pottery course
- How to cook Italian food

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**
- can make pots
- can cook

**WIDER BENEFITS**
- New friends & networks (67%)
- Better health (76%) & wellbeing (84%)
- Better learning motivation (86%)
- More self-confidence (74%)
- ...

Focus in BeLL research project

- To study wider benefits of **non-formal, non-vocational adult education**
  - organized usually by Adult education centres, Folk High Schools, Associations, Third sector organizations...
  - mainly liberal arts, basic skills, civic education...
  - face-to-face groups
- Data from courses in 10 European countries:
  - Spain, England, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Finland, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Romania, and Serbia
- Combines quantitative and qualitative data:
  - survey (n = 8,646); structured change questions on a Likert scale
  - 3 open questions
  - qualitative theme interviews (n = 82).
Non-vocational adult education

- Participation is voluntary and based on individuals’ own learning interests which are not work-related, and do not lead to formal qualifications.
- singing, handicrafts, history, music, poetry, cooking, philosophy, languages, community learning etc.

UEF // University of Eastern Finland

Mental Well-being

Self-efficacy

Tolerance

Sense of Purpose in Life

Family benefits

Changes in educational experiences

SKILLS

Locus of control

Health

Social engagement

Work-related benefits
How the wider benefits develop in the face-to-face learning situations?

Data based on survey questionnaire (n = 8646), open questions (n = 1312 analyzed) and interviews (n = 82)
Open question 2.5: If Possible, please give one or two examples which illustrate, why and how these elements were important for the outcomes you listed above.

• The teacher set the tone of a supportive environment in which mistakes could be learned from rather than laughed at. The fact that students were caring and supportive of each other.
• My tutor is supportive of my need to be an individual within the group. The group has grown in the ability to support and critically assess each other’s work.
• A good teacher inspires you to learn and ensures you understand what you are learning. Other learners are important as they promote peer learning and support each other through a course.

Interviews

• … and it seems to matter quite lot that you’re involved with other people, that working alongside is nicer, than starting something on your own, not necessarily, but for example I didn’t finish that chair and it still isn’t finished, because I’d have to do it alone and I know what to do with it, but I just don’t seem to get around to do it. I mean at the course we would always start something and kept on working, so that we made some progress (FIN_G)
A short background input

My ‘definition’ of web based learning environments
Web based learning environment?

What a cute fuzzy concept! 😊

"Use of ICT in education"

How web can be used in education?

Use of web is integrated to face-to-face activities

Material bank

Communication tools

Text pictures sound

Web-based LE

MOOC, eLearning

Web-based activities only

PP-handouts on website
Additional materials
Links to Internet-resources

Email for guidance and questions
Chat
Discussion forums
Social media

Self-study online materials
Interactive tests
Multimedia, sound, video

Conferencing systems
Discussion forums
Virtual reality
Virtual worlds
Social media

Human communication

Virtual communities
Traditional classroom based teacher directed “teaching – studying – learning” process

Self-study process in the web environment (MOOC, eLearning)
A web environment based on Collaborative Inquiry

Guidance & facilitation
Other learners
Collaborative problem solving
Materials
Group
Learning

A challenge for web based learning environments?
Is it possible to develop virtual learning situations, that generate similar benefits as face-to-face learning situations do?
Important elements in face-to-face learning situation

Teacher/trainer

Group & other students

Experience of learning

Interaction & communication

Doing with own hands

How about virtual learning situation?

Virtual teacher/trainer

Virtual group & other students

Experience of learning

Mediated interaction & communication

Doing with own virtual hands?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements that generate benefits in ftf-situations</th>
<th>Challenge for web-learning?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning new things</td>
<td>How to create learning tasks that provide positive online learning experiences?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing something with own hands</td>
<td>Can virtual ‘doing’ offer similar experiences?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being a member in a group</td>
<td>Can virtual group offer similar sense of belonging?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group activities, social interaction</td>
<td>Do the web tools offer enough social interaction, engagement of participants?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other learners (feedback, questions…)</td>
<td>Does mediated communication offer similar interaction?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher/trainer/facilitator</td>
<td>Is the teacher able to support and facilitate learning processes?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Virtual communities**

**Note:** we do have ”virtual feelings” and relationships... 😊

She never clicks ‘like’ when I post something on Facebook!

After all our online chats, it’s great to finally meet you in person.

Same here.

Even though he’s a good boy, Rufus sometimes gets sucked into flame wars.
Takk fyrir!