The Pace of Learning
Combining Face-to-Face and Online Teaching in Architectural History

Anu Koponen, Sari Kivimäki
Aalto University
School of Arts, Design and Architecture
Department of Architecture
anu.koponen@aalto.fi, sari.kivimaki@aalto.fi

Abstract:

Finding the proper timing and rhythm between different platforms of learning turned out to be the most crucial issue according to our experience of online teaching. Our online course called 'Pompeii A.D. 79' was a pedagogical experiment in architectural history. As a result, this article reflects on how online and face-to-face meetings could be combined together to form a balanced learning experience in similar BA-level courses focusing on visual art and architecture. Online working has many advantages compared to traditional teaching methods. It is enhanced with an abundant image flow and numerous tools supporting collaborative work, to name but a few advantages. It is obvious that the highest quality teaching cannot be practiced online only; face-to-face meetings are also needed. In this article we discuss in which situations face-to-face teaching seems to be the most appropriate method and what learning outcomes are best achieved while working online. When designing a blended learning course, it is important to formulate some fixed points that will help both students and teachers to orientate in their multifaceted learning environment. Therefore we will introduce some practical advice and a pedagogical script for planning an online course. We will also discuss the diverse roles of the teacher in online courses. This article is aimed especially for teachers of architectural and art history who will hopefully benefit from our detailed and practical descriptions.

Introduction

In order to enhance learning in architectural history, we propose to build up a carefully rhythmically arranged blended learning experience composed of online working and face-to-face meetings.[1] Our main emphasis is on the proper timing and rhythm between different platforms of learning. This article is based on our experiences in teaching and student feedback on an online course of architectural history called 'Pompeii A.D. 79', conducted during spring 2012.

The course 'Pompeii A.D. 79' was a BA-level course that we designed as a teaching experiment in the Department of Architecture at the Aalto University School of Art, Design and Architecture. During our studies in university pedagogy, we had an opportunity to analyze this online course, including student feedback. As a result, in this article we will present our improved version of a similar course. According to our experience, the multiple tools used in the online platforms create a fruitful opportunity for collaborative learning and knowledge-building. We believe that by combining traditional contact teaching with online working in a balanced way, it is possible to create a learning environment where learning becomes more diverse and leads to a deeper assimilation of the content and various working skills.

In this article we will first present the online course 'Pompeii A.D. 79' by explaining its aims and the implementation of the course. We will introduce some practical advice and a pedagogical script as a core tool in planning an online course. We will also discuss the diverse roles of the teacher in teaching online. After rethinking and reflecting on our experiences, we will elaborate on how to arrange face-to-face meetings to create a more balanced learning experience for students. Our aim is to advance the discussion of a balanced pace of learning, especially within the teaching and learning of architectural history.

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1 In this article, the term 'blended learning' refers to the range of possibilities presented by combining the Internet and digital media with face-to-face teaching. The latter requires the physical co-presence of teacher and students and varies from diverse classroom forms to excursions.

Figure 1. The Forum of Pompeii. Photo: Anu Koponen.

The online course 'Pompeii A.D. 79'

Our online teaching experiment 'Pompeii A.D. 79' was a compulsory course for second-year students on the Bachelor's Degree Program in Architecture. The overall learning outcomes of the course were to retrieve information about historical topics, exercise source criticism and analyze information, as well as to practice piecing together three-dimensional architectural entities out of two-dimensional images. The course featured an assignment that changed each year in which the students were to collect information about architectural history and compose a written, graphic, modeled or sculptural work. In spring 2013 this assignment was to create a written role play situated in ancient Pompeii.

This Pompeii course was our first online teaching experiment[2]. Both of us were used to giving lectures, arranging students' group work sessions and tutoring individual assignments. Sari Kivimäki specializes in university pedagogy and teaching methods and has a long career as a teacher in the history of architecture. Anu Koponen is a researcher in ancient Roman art and architecture and teaches occasionally at Aalto University's Department of Architecture. At the time of the course, both teachers were living abroad. Thus, due to practical reasons the Pompeii course included only one face-to-face meeting at the end of the course at Aalto University.

The Pompeii course consisted of five parts: 1) It began with orientating questions and 2) continued with an information retrieval task, which was carried out individually. This was followed by two simultaneous assignments: 3) the written role play in peer groups, and 4) individual participation in asynchronous discussions. 5) The course closed with a final live discussion. (See figure 2.)

The learning environment of the course consisted of two platforms: the wiki space and a Facebook group. All the teacher-to-student material such as timetables, instructions and workload calculations

2 The Pompeii course was presented in a conference paper in the First International Symposium on Pedagogical Research 2014 at Tongji University, Shanghai (Kivimäki & Koponen 2013a).

were distributed via the wiki space that was located on the wiki platform of Aalto University. The wiki space served as a core environment for the Pompeii course; hence the results of the students' information retrieval and the work of writing the role play were located there. Asynchronous discussion took place in a Facebook group. Both the wiki space and the Facebook group were set up for the course and access to them was restricted to course participants only. These platforms were open to all participants so that all writings, images, discussions, tutoring, and feedback were visible to every student.
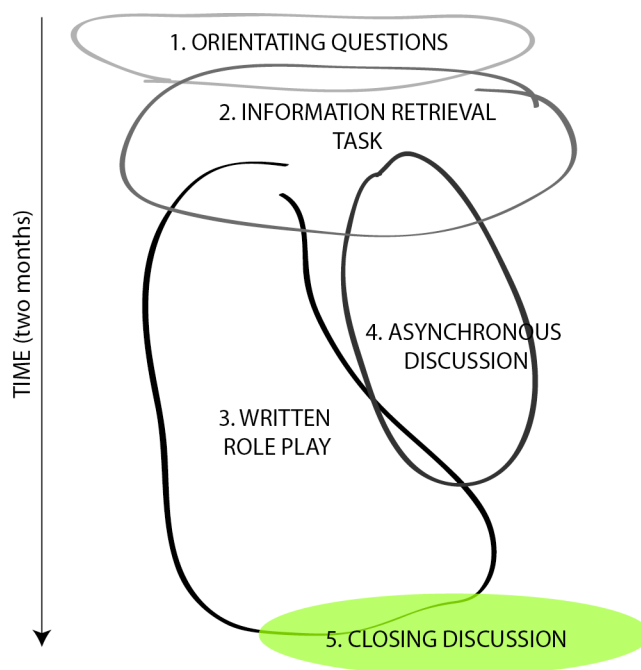

Figure 2. The progression of the course 'Pompeii A.D. 79'.

The major aims of the Pompeii course were that the students 1) learned to describe the ancient Roman build environment through words and drawings; 2) became aware of the diverse archaeological layers of the Pompeian ruins; and 3) got an idea of the social life occurring in the city of Pompeii in A.D. 79. The final result from each group was an illustrated story, where the emphasis of both the storytelling and illustration was on the architectural experience.

As an orientating task for the actual course, the students were to get acquainted with a Pompeii website (Anonymous, 2009) and to answer questions concerning its content. The last question was personal: '*Who would you like to be and what would you do in Pompeii at the beginning of August A.D. 79?*'

By answering this question the students created role play characters for themselves. We grouped the characters into five-person peer groups, such as a priest, an architect, a former slave, a free citizen, and a rich widow. Each group was given a task or situation to begin with. The peer groups were to work with a specific ancient building type; for example the above-mentioned group was '*to discuss and plan some*

repair work on a temple'. We did not specify the temple, so the group had to find out about temples in Pompeii and decide which one to work with themselves.

Providing a link to the course's wiki space launched the actual online work, which started with information retrieval. Each student was to find three different sources on Pompeii or ancient Roman architecture, whether online or printed, attempt to evaluate the reliability of the sources, and present them to others in the course wiki space. In one week the students gathered a list of sources varying from websites and videos to printed books.

Anu Koponen started the discussion board in the Facebook group by uploading the first of eight stories. The weekly posts by Anu concentrated on Roman religion, architecture, and society, the last decades of Pompeii and its everyday life, as well as the conservation of the ruins. When students turned out to be especially interested in finding out about researchers' motivations, one post was dedicated to this subject. The task of the students was to comment on the posts and participate in the discussion. The Facebook group also served as a forum for students to ask questions.

After the information retrieval task, the work in the role play groups got started. In the written role play located in ancient Pompeii, the task of the students was to focus on spaces and functions, and to some extent also materials and building techniques. Through different approaches and techniques, the students started to write the role play, locate their characters in the knowledge that exists about ancient Pompeii, and follow the lives of these imaginary characters for five days. The students examined visual information, such as maps, photos, floor plans, illustrations, and written texts in the way an architect does, searching for spatial, functional, and constructional information. In their texts the students were to show which parts in the text were based on scientific sources and which parts were products of their imagination. During the process they become aware of the limits of available reliable information and how the printed media and online media differ in character. The task indicated how broad an amount of information was needed to compose an informative story.

In the closing discussion, the students gave oral feedback on the course, and then the instructors gave their feedback to the groups, focusing mainly on the role play. In conclusion, the students anonymously completed a short feedback form.

Learning: Continuous spinning of information

In order to define the aims of the course clearly, we found it fruitful to discuss the pedagogical ideas between us, the responsible teachers. As a pedagogical foundation for the course based on the visual world, we shared the semiotic theory of knowledge-building introduced by Charles Sanders Peirce. This theory sees knowledge-building as an endless spinning, and its focus is not only in texts but also in visual signs. Therefore, it is fitting for visual and spatial studies including architectural history. This semiotic

theory was useful for us as it puts the discourse of knowing and ignorance aside and underlines personal history as a foundation of knowledge-building.

Smith-Shank (1995), an expert on art education, underlines that we can only learn new things if we are able to connect them to our previous experiences. It is essential that the teacher uses signs – whether verbal, visual, gestural, or musical – which students can associate with things already familiar to them. Such collateral experience is a previous experience, which makes a novel situation accessible. By helping the students to connect new experiences to the vast network of their own past experiences, teachers nurture learning. The key to semiotic pedagogy is engagement: when students are empowered to tap their own store of collateral experience as a starting point for understanding new information, they are not in alien territory. Rather, they take the unexpected, the unclear, and the unknown, and juxtapose it with their collateral experience to build thoughtful connections or even initiate hypotheses.

Figure 3. The *fullonica*, the fuller's shop of the family of Pateina Horatia—a character of Iina Koskinen.   Drawing by Iina Koskinen.

Smith-Shank (1995) argues that in order to learn, students need not only collateral experiences but simultaneously they need to face the unknown and the uncertain. Profound learning is possible when habits are disrupted to the point that the students become uncomfortable. Only then can they become ready to reassess their previous beliefs and habits. As a result, the teacher should concentrate on finding a proper balance between familiar and new elements in each pedagogical situation. Right at the beginning of the course, it is important to have an idea of what the students already know and what things they are interested in. It is equally important to inform the students clearly about the aims and the whole structure of the course so that they are better prepared to go through frustrating but often fruitful and pedagogically

essential moments of uncertainty. During our course, the detailed and jointly-shared pedagogical script enhanced students' motivation, even though the structure of the course (divided into diverse platforms and exercises) was quite complex.

Visual images and the Internet

Art historian Donahue-Wallace (2008) points out that the teaching of art history has always leaned on reproductions: pictures, prints, copies, even plaster casts. Changes in the character of the reproductions have an effect on teaching. As art historian Witcombe (2008) notes, new technologies have an influence not only on teaching methods, but also on disciplines and their selection of contents. The Internet has increased the amount of images available. It, as a source of visual material, takes teaching and learning out of the classroom, and the flow of pictures can be utilized in a more versatile manner. At the same time, technical solutions and digital images give the viewer a more active role as a searcher and user – there is a possibility for scaling, switching the viewpoint, or even moving in a virtual space or model. All this has an activating effect on learning processes.

Combining literary sources with a large amount of visual images is one of the primary methods for learning about architectural history. As an ever-increasing source, the online environment is nowadays a proper place in which to introduce students to critically use both visual and literary sources. During the Pompeii course, the collaborative information retrieval aspect acquainted the students with basic sources of Pompeian archaeology. Analyzing the information, combined with comments from both the instructors and other students, trained their skills of evaluating sources and their reliability.

Figure 4. Mania Minucia Therma, a salesman's wife on her way to the baths. Drawing by Emilia Puotinen.

The Internet serves not only as a growing source of information, but also as an open platform for diverse ways of cooperative work. In the Pompeii course, the students were expected to develop their own working community, agree on communication rules and create the structure of their own wiki entity. This kind of open group work develops responsibility toward other members as well as to one's own studies. In the learning community, the open information processing and cooperative information building will emerge and the students gain experience to express and exchange information and ideas.

The roles of the teacher

When teachers step down from their traditional position as lecturers and leaders of classes, their roles are blurred. Both online teaching and collaborative learning methods have shifted the role of the teacher from the lecturer to the facilitator. Instead of giving information, the teacher helps the students to find out information by themselves and learn from each other during collaborative projects. The contact between the students and the teachers becomes broader and more diverse than in traditional classroom teaching. The roles of the participants are blended and the students' knowledge is shared.

When a teacher has an online discussion with students, the first impression might be that they are in a dialog as equals. However, the relationship between the teacher and the student in the university institution can never be a relationship between two equals. We agree with Kallio-Tavin (2013), who rightly argues that passivity, meaning the teacher as a neutral supporter, is an inherent part of pedagogical phantasies. In order to achieve a neutral pedagogical situation, we should not have pre-notions and pre-definitions of the other person. However, It is not possible for us to encounter each other with empty minds; we do it always based on our previous experiences. In addition, the university as an institution governed by laws defines our roles both as teachers and students. We have found it useful to define that during a course the teacher can have many roles varying from the facilitator to expert and ignorant master. In the following we will discuss how we applied these diverse roles during our course.

The facilitator

The teacher as a facilitator helps the learning process to start and continue. We found out that when the learning proceeds easily the students collaborate, support, and teach each other. The teacher mostly observes in the background. However, during moments of difficulty and disorientation, the teacher is more active and helps to resolve diverse problems. In the Pompeii course, we monitored the work process of the students in the wiki platform. When necessary, we turned into active tutors. We were ready to give our support during moments of confusion or when the collaborative work did not proceed on schedule.

Being a facilitator in an online course, one has to take into account the feelings of isolation and disconnectedness that naturally occur when the teacher and the students are separated by distance and time. Lane (2011) emphasizes that reducing this distance is highly significant for the facilitator of an

online course. Otherwise, there is a risk of creating a feeling of an automated process, which easily gives a student a feeling of being unnecessary and can lead to high dropout rates.

Figure 5. Tullia Livia Ponti, wife to a rich patronus, in the atrium of their domus with her slave. Drawing by Tuuli Kanerva.

In our course the students had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss problems connected to the course in the wiki, in the Facebook discussion group and by sending e-mail to the teachers. The Facebook discussion group turned out to be an efficient way of reducing the distance and the feeling of isolation. It was important to get the discussion to start right from the beginning, and as teachers we were actively present in the group answering and commenting. In addition, through the Facebook discussion the

students were able to include the themes they found most interesting – which was something that we teachers strongly encouraged the students to do.

For example, the first post by Anu Koponen in the Facebook discussion group was about Roman ritual sacrifice. It was followed with a lively discussion among the students on the treatment of animals in various cultures of different eras. The exchange of opinions was intense while the students shifted the focus onto numerous interesting and essential themes. When students asked questions, it was the most fruitful moment for a teacher to explain how and where to search for information by using scientific methods instead of answering only the question – this was the time for the teacher to shift to the role of expert.

The expert

While the students have collected and evaluated their sources of information a teacher takes the role of an expert and explains the scientific principles of the knowledge-building. The Internet is a giant step toward uncertain information that has no author or authority. Therefore, one of the roles of the teacher is to act as an expert and exemplify the difference between freely floating information and scientific knowledge composed with references. Visits to scientific libraries and archives give the students an understanding of historical depth in knowledge construction and can concretize the difference between information and scientific knowledge better than any online exercise. For this purpose, real books and archives are invaluable.

In the Pompeii course, the students mainly used Internet-based information as their sources, even though they were expected to visit libraries by themselves. We teachers were active in commenting on the reliability of the material they referred to and were eager to suggest that they focus on specific books in addition to Internet sources when the students asked questions.

For the role of an expert it is essential that the students perceive that their teachers are present. We wanted to create a feeling of being available so that if questions arose, no one would hesitate to ask. The asynchronous discussion in the Facebook group brought forward the professional differences of us as teachers, one being a researcher (Anu Koponen), and the other a university teacher (Sari Kivimäki). The latter did not hesitate to demonstrate the limits of her knowledge during the discussions and ask from the former – the level of knowledge that the researcher had accomplished through academic work was clear. However, the Pompeian researcher also turned out to be an ignorant master when the students became curious and posed questions related to their areas of interest.

The ignorant master

If we leave the idea of a knowing teacher behind and accept that we are ignorant teachers, it is possible to create a more flexible – and perhaps more equal and democratic – space for learning. The idea of 'the ignorant schoolmaster' was introduced by philosopher Jacques Rancière in his Le Maître ignorant: Cinq leçons sur l'émancipation intellectuelle (1987). Rancière (2007) writes: "The distance that the

"ignorant" person has to cover is not the gap between his ignorance and the knowledge of his master; it is the distance between what he already knows and what he still does not know but can learn by the same process" (p. 275). He (ibid.) continues: "The student of the ignorant master learns what his master does not know […]The student learns something as an effect of his master's mastery. But he does not learn his masters' knowledge" (p. 277).

The teacher's ignorance of the studied subject matter both forces and encourages students to take responsibility for the whole learning process. Students become more active in defining the borderline between the known and unknown themselves. The aim of the Pompeii course was to give them an idea of the continuous knowledge-building process in which scientific knowledge is constructed and put into doubt. Therefore, the focus of the course was repeatedly turned on the borderline of the scientific knowledge concerning Pompeii and the things that we do not know. Students asked many questions that we teachers were not able to answer. Instead of searching for information ourselves as teachers, we gave instructions for the students on how to search for the answer. We, two teachers from different backgrounds, occasionally gave contradictory information. This encouraged the students to ponder their own solutions to the problems.
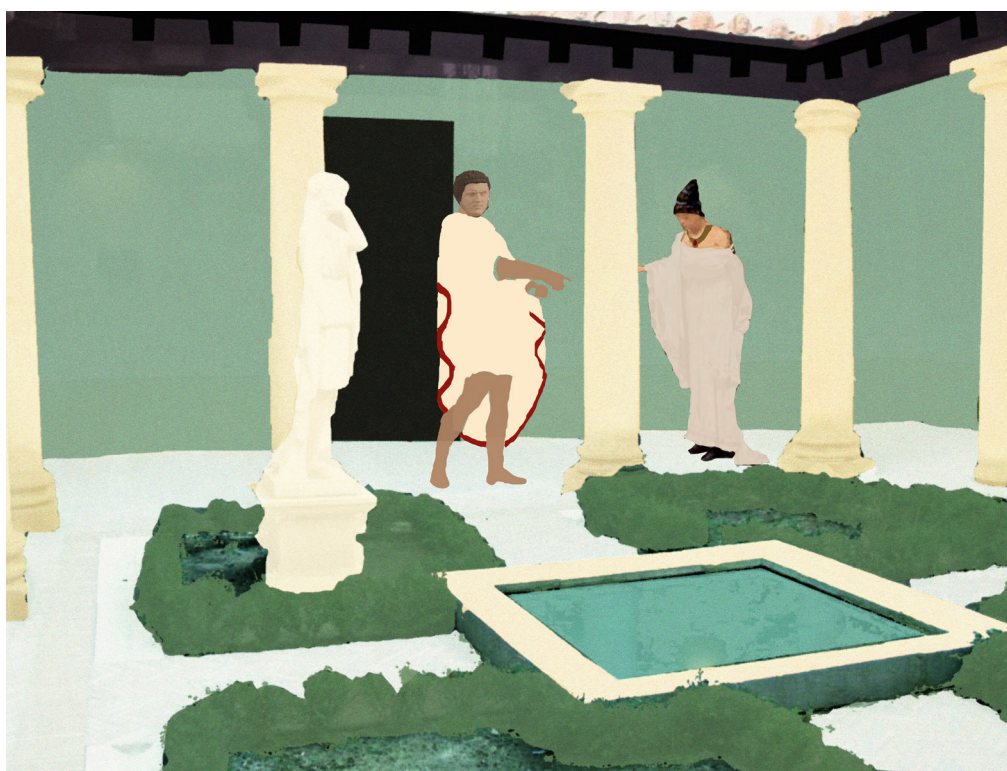

Figure 6. Patronus Aulus Aurius Nero in the *atrium* of his domus. Drawing by Anna Kontuniemi.

A practical example of teachers being ignorant masters occurred during the writing phase of the role play. The task of the students was to describe the ancient Pompeian environment, with their focus on architectural and social spaces. The aim was to train the students to describe the built surroundings and to have their written expression filled with architectural descriptions. The students did not find the idea

of 'an architectural description' easily comprehensible, and they asked questions about it during the course. As teachers, we had different opinions about the answer. Sari Kivimäki was concerned about the students not being able to keep to the timetable, and would have been ready to give a straight example. Anu Koponen thought that a given model would have steered the students' work too much. We continued by giving further explanation the idea of an architectural description. Anu was an ignorant master and encouraged the students to find the solution from within their peer groups. Having struggled with a new concept, creating one's own solution to it, getting feedback from it and seeing how others have solved the same assignment, this gives the student a stronger learning experience than copying a model that the teacher has given. However, in the final feedback there were still mentions of the obscurity of this matter (Kivimäki & Koponen, 2013b).

A core tool: A pedagogical script

In order to create a smooth learning experience and a supporting learning environment, it is useful that the essential information is collected in one place. The core tool for the planning work in the Pompeii course was a pedagogical script. It is a plan, within a timetable, for teaching and learning activities that are located in different learning environments (Anonymous, 2007a). It is a tool for teachers to plan and implement a course, and for students to orientate and instruct themselves in their study. Pedagogical script can be a valuable part of any course, especially those being composed of various sub-entities. In online surroundings, this kind of spine of action helps to compose a solid entity out of abstract content. The cooperation between us teachers proceeds more fluently with the help of this script encapsulating all the crucial points and timetables of the course.

A convenient way of passing on multi-layered information is to write the pedagogical script in a form of a chart. In the chart the actions are itemized in chronological order, having one single studying or teaching activity on each row. With every action the teachers take into account several questions that act as the headings of the chart. The main questions are: *'What does the student do?'*, *'What does she learn?'*, *'What does the teacher do?'* and *'When? Where?'* Further questions are: *'What kind of material is needed?'* and *'How and by whom will the student be assessed?'* We suggest that the chart should also contain the workloads of both the students and the teachers.

Date	What does the teacher do?	Teacher's workload	Material needed?	Location?	What does the student do?	What does the student learn?	Student's workload	Submission, date and place/ assessment

The pedagogical script demonstrates the different actions and learning environments of the course, and helps to emphasize the link between them (Anonymous, 2007b). The pacing of different working methods as well as the assessment of the workloads becomes easier. The pace of learning emerges when the periods between teaching activities are made visible. The teacher can point out what she would like the students to do independently and at the same time estimate the time needed for the students' work. With the help of the script, the teacher can also predict the occasions when the different roles of the teacher emerge and more support from the teacher is likely to be needed.

The planning and preparation work phase of the Pompeii course was very short. We teachers did the planning work in the wiki, and composed the course entity by co-writing the pedagogical script online. The script worked as an efficient tool to introduce different ideas, locate them in the timeframe and then discuss them. The script was finished by the beginning of the course and published to the students as such – there was no separate teachers-only version.

Based on our experiences, the script worked as the spine of the course and supported the coordination of activities of both the students and the teachers. Having the course entity visible in one chart helped both the teachers and the students to space out their work within the time frame of the course. By publishing the script to the students, not only did we convey the course entity and the timetable to them, but also the requirements that exist for their work.

The students on the Pompeii course asked only a few practical questions concerning the requirements and timetable of the course and still they proceeded well, as expected. What we learned later on from their feedback was that the beginning of the course was not that smooth an experience for them (Kivimäki & Koponen, 2013b). It took a while for them to learn how to study on this course, and asking questions right at the beginning was not easy. However, considering the very small amount of questions concerning 'what, when, where and how', our pedagogical script must have worked – all the students completed the course, and the number of the students missing deadlines was smaller than in the traditional implementations of the same course in previous years.

Rethinking the course

After focusing on the feedback on our course, we were able to formulate how the teaching of architectural history could be rhythmically arranged, so that the fluidity of the online environment would be best counterbalanced by face-to-face meetings and lectures offered at the most crucial moments. While designing the structure of the course in the blended learning environment, it is wise to pay attention to three factors in the timetable: 1) When face-to-face meetings are arranged in between online sessions, 2)

How different exercises are rhythmically composed to support each other, and 3) How the pedagogical roles of teachers vary according to diverse learning phases.

The students' feedback indicated that the best elements of the experiment for the participants were the possibility to work at varied times and from various locations (Kivimäki & Koponen, 2013b). Our online presence was very active, as it was the only way for us to support the learning process of the students. It was taxing on us teachers to have written text as the only medium for tutoring, since the message was always one-way only, and you had to formulate your messages carefully in order to convey the message right. We made a decision that the students could build up the structure of the wiki entity of the peer group, as they wanted. This led to situations where it was not always easy for us to decide where to post our comments and tutorial messages. According to the feedback, it was not always easy to find our comments either (Kivimäki & Koponen, 2013b). All in all, it would have been clearer to locate all the assignments on one platform instead of working both in the wiki space and in the Facebook group—and furthermore, it would have been preferable to work solely on a platform offered by the university.

Figure 7. Captain Jublius Mullius Caligula checking the bookkeeping of his trading activity. Drawing by Joni Virkki.

Lane (2011) notes that on an online course, quite a considerable amount of the students' work is done alone. Encountering the expectations of the teaching by themselves may easily lead to loss of interest and confidence. During the Pompeii course we emphasized the feeling of the presence of teachers by commenting on students' works and answering their questions frequently and continuously during the whole course. However, as a counterbalance to individual online work, some face-to-face meetings offered at the most critical moments of the course would support the students most effectively.

In concluding our experiences and the feedback of the students, it would be good to organize at least one face-to-face meeting at the beginning of the course, right after the students have received the course syllabus. By talking with the students face-to-face, it would be easier to ensure that the students knew what to do and where to start and what kind of support they needed. Meeting the teachers may also lower the threshold for the students to ask questions at a later stage.

If the course is composed of various sub-entities starting at different times, a meeting should be arranged to support the start of every assignment. This would give the teacher an opportunity to receive instant feedback from the students. When assigning the task, the teacher should give the students the chance to analyze, assimilate, and ponder it. This could happen in peer groups, for example. After pondering the assignment, the students could set goals for their work and make a plan of action. While presenting their plans to the teacher, any possible misunderstandings would emerge, and the teacher could solve them. The requirements of the work would get clarified, starting the work would get easier, and time would be effectively used to solve questions instead of wondering about them.

The students can proceed independently to a certain point in their work. An experienced teacher can predict the moments that the students will most probably encounter difficulties and when support from the teacher is needed. In these moments the options for face-to-face tutoring should be arranged. For example, in the middle of the information retrieval work, the students start to think about the reliability of information through their early trials and errors. The teacher, as a facilitator and a master, should induct students into also finding the printed information. This could be put into practice by visiting research libraries, for example, and instructing the students to compare different kinds of sources (such as books, articles, and maps) to Internet sources. The age and layers of information can only be presented by having different kinds of sources available and comparable at the same time.

The final face-to-face meeting is indispensable in order to conduct a feedback discussion with the students. It is not only the teacher giving feedback to the students about their work, and the students giving feedback to the teachers about their learning experience. It is also sharing and concluding a common experience and completing the work which may color the memory that the students will have about the course.

Based on our experience, we think that if there are two or more separate online parts of a course, their starting dates should be phased. For example, starting the interactive discussion earlier than other parts would give the instructors an opportunity to modify the exercise according to the skills and interests of the students. If there are two or more parts to the course, one of them should be the main task and the others should be there in support. On the Pompeii course, the main task was to write a role play in a peer group. In the scheduling of the course the supporting parts should step aside when the students need more space for the main task. Indeed, in this case, the discussion ended before the role play's final working phase began.

Following the feedback and rethinking, we created a refined version of the course that would proceed in the phases shown in Figure 8.
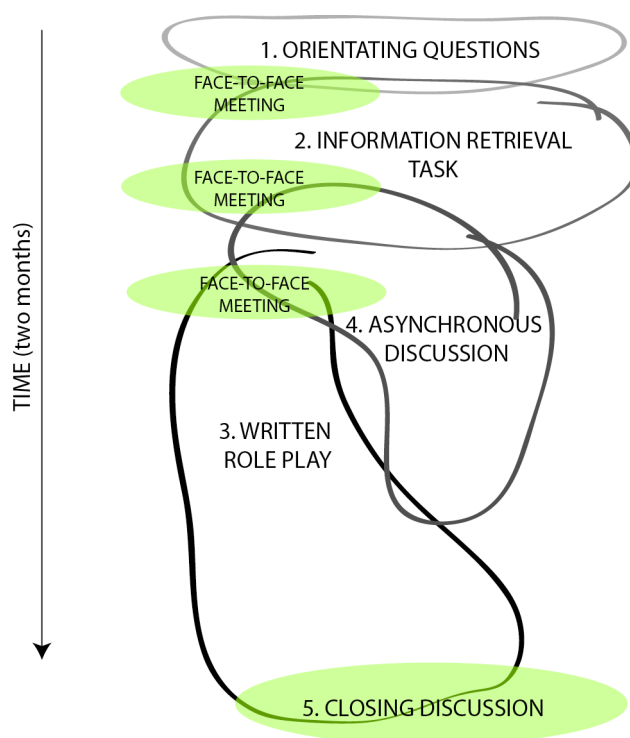

Figure 8. Refined version of the course 'Pompeii A.D. 79'.

The roles of teachers can vary from the expert and the facilitator to ignorant master according to a specific learning stage. If we take the Pompeii course as an example, at the beginning of the course the teacher is a facilitator who helps the students to orientate and start working on their tasks. When the students have collected and evaluated their sources of information, the teacher takes the role of an expert and explains the scientific principles of knowledge-building. During the role play, the teacher is mainly a facilitator who helps the work to proceed fluently so that the students can learn from each other. When necessary, the teacher may intervene in the group work in the role of expert and help the group to evaluate the information according to scientific methods. In the online discussion, the teacher acts more as an expert who focuses on essential points of the studied subject. The discussions of the students following the posts

help the teacher to select the subjects of her future posts and other exercises according to the students' interests. During the discussion or in the middle of the main assignment, the teacher takes on the role of ignorant master when the students ask questions to which the teacher is not able or willing to give an answer. Instead of providing the answer, the teacher explains the methods a student can use to proceed in order either to find the answer or become conscious of the limits of our scientific knowledge. Instead of giving a straight model, the teacher forces the students to try themselves.

Architecture cannot be fully understood from books and web sites; it is always a multimodal experience that has to be experienced on-site. Therefore, lectures, information retrieval and collaborative working under the guidance of a teacher-with-many-roles are at best good elements of preparatory work for architectural excursions to architectural sites. On-site, while experiencing the place, the spatial volumes, the light, the sounds, the structures and the materials, the student will challenge the individual knowledge that she has collected herself during previous learning experiences. Collaborative teaching and learning in blended environments gives us many ways to create opportunities to develop supportive circumstances for this individual spinning.

Figure 9. Architecture cannot be fully understood from books and websites; it is always a multimodal experience that has to be experienced on-site. In the spring term 2013 the Pompeii course was followed by a special course of History of Architecture taught by professor Aino Niskanen and researcher Anu Koponen. This course included a four-day trip to the Bay of Naples during which the students sketched the ancient ruins of Pompeii. Photo: Anu Koponen

Figure 10. During the field trips of the history of architecture it is essential to gather together in the evenings to examine the sketches made during the day. Photo: Anu Koponen.

Sharing pedagogical experiences

Different online tools make it possible to diversify the learning process and bring such working methods into teaching and learning that will surely be useful to our students in the future. To be able to use collaborative tools in teaching and teach their use in learning, as teachers we should be working more collaboratively and sharing across our teaching community. Taking the online tools into the teaching community to plan, work and share information together might bring about more opportunities to collaborate, more flexibility in the work and more chances to benefit from support from the group. It would also give more ways to connect distant researchers and other members of the academic community to teaching.

Therefore, there is a need to have an open discussion about pedagogical aims and tools, and to have a defined policy of online teaching at the institutional level. The policy of online teaching could create an atmosphere of controlled forethought and a clear action plan for how to proceed. It could raise a common awareness about the possibilities of online methods and experiments in the department. There could be a common interest in sharing experiences, and develop future experiments. As Wallace-Donahue et al. (2008) point out, by sharing knowledge, the teaching community could avoid the mistakes of the inexperienced newcomers to online teaching and also tutor new teachers in their trials. The art and architecture historian Simmins (2008) believes that a policy of online teaching could lower the threshold for trying out new methods, so that it is not just junior faculty members carrying out online teaching.

By having a policy of online teaching, the department would also be able to show the projected progress and to discuss it in resource negotiations. Simmins (2008) underlines that teachers should be given the opportunity and the time to modify their courses toward suitable online solutions, given credit for it – and also a chance to continue to modify the implementations. In any policy of online teaching, the department

could also take a stand on which software and which platforms could be used, and how the digital course materials could be archived. This would also include the discussion of whether to keep a distance from the commercial social media in higher education and use platforms offered by the university in order to avoid the risks to privacy rights and to keep the ownership of the content clear.

Every discipline has its unique characters and traditions of teaching and different emphases on learning outcomes, and these have to be taken into consideration in order to teach in blended learning environments. There is still considerably little pedagogical research published on online teaching in the history of art and architecture field at university level. Thus, the sharing of our teaching experiences is indispensable – as well as the continuous discussion of the role, forms, methods, and solutions of online teaching in the university. This debate is closely connected to the question of the role of the university in society.

Figure 11. The work done during the field trip of 2013 was rethought and reprocessed back home. The final result was an exhibition in Aalto University in autumn 2013. Photo: Jere Keskinen.

Acknowledgements

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