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The learning organisation 2.0? A participative and exploratory case study on corporate blogging

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Abstract

The phenomenons called blogging and learning organisations are both contemporary and research is inconclusive (e.g. Easterby-Smith et al., 2000 and Wattal et al., 2009). This study aims to merge the two by means of a participative and exploratory case study on corporate blogging. By use of qualitative interviews and a data analysis focusing on concentrated meanings and thematic categorisation, the purpose is to explore how corporate blogging could be related to developing learning organisations – for which the scientific base mainly consists of Senge's (1990) five disciplines regarding learning organisation; personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, team learning, and systems thinking; and various prior research on blogging (e.g. Gilbert et al., 2009 and Adamic & Glance, 2004). This study aims towards deepening the understanding of the above relationship and to generate new ideas for future research.

The case study takes place at a department working with electronic communication, part of a global company with over 20 000 employees, that use an internal pilot blog for a period of one month. There are 21 full-time employed persons and about five consultants working in this specific department.

Findings reveal that some aspects of creating learning organisations seem to have different kinds of relations to corporate blogging – taking either the role of an enabling process for blogs or for the development of a learning organisation – following which a general framework is used to depict how these different aspects may operate and suggestions on future research are presented.

Keywords: Learning organisations, corporate blogging, social media, web 2.0, social and organisational psychology

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The learning organisation 2.0?

A participative and exploratory case study on corporate blogging

Once upon a time, corporations wanted to ban the internet from work. Then they wanted to ban e-mail, mobile phones, specific sites, and so on. All because someone might use something to do something he or she should not do according to someone. But times are changing. Both technology and business environment, which are the central concepts of this thesis – in form of corporate blogging and organisational learning.

The statement on everyone's mind is "social media" – a look at trend statistics (“Social media”, 2010) may not necessarily represent growth of a coherent phenomenon, but the trend revolving around the concept itself seems clear. Alas, it is also the question. Social media appears huge, ever-expanding and seemingly has yet-to-be-seen potential – but where exactly this potential lies, how it could be tapped, or even if it can be measured remains uncertain. Both private and business users of social media may either swayed enough to give it a shot or scared to action by the impending change that social media might bring about. Or skeptical enough to not to anything at all. One thing is for certain though, all the question prompts another question – are there any research on the phenomenon? Not enough.

Another popular phenomenon is the “learning organisation”. We know that it is supposedly something that provides a competitive edge, and that it – of course – has to do with learning and organisations. Organisations that are learning, some might say. Research on the topic has expanded since the 1990's (Swan, Scarbrough, & Preston, 1999), but there seems to be disagreement as to what this phenomenon really means and (Fiol & Lyles, 1985).

A few figures represent the base of this study:

Figure 1 Main theoretical concepts around which the study revolves

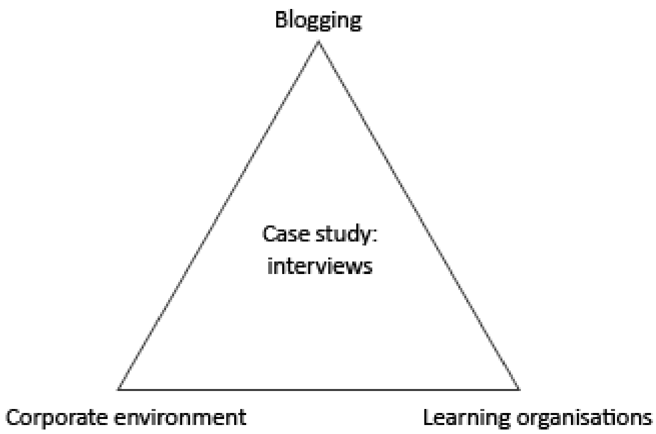


Figure 2 Depiction of how key components of the study are combined through analysis

Figure 1. Depicts the main components involved in this study.

Figure 2. The framework on which I base my reasoning and methodology. Without going into the depths of the method here it will suffice to say that I aim to investigate a potential relation between corporate blogging and organisational learning by combining interview learnings with prior research. More on this under the Research questions section.

Definitions

Blog. Based on Wikipedia being one of the many so called "web 2.0" tools, just like blogs, it seems only fitting to use Wikipedia's definition (i.e. the public's definition) of a blog ("Blog", 2010): "A blog (a contraction of the term 'web log') is a type of website, usually maintained by an individual with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video". The same source also states that “Entries are commonly displayed in reverse-chronological order”.

Alas, the above definition is not fully applicable to this study. I will focus on corporate blogging where several individuals share the same web page, i.e. it is not maintained by a single author. Additionally, this case study's blog is not – in difference to many blogs – open to the public, it is exclusively used by a single department – albeit accessible by any employee, its existence is still unbeknownst to them. Definitions of a “blog” aside, it is important to consider which concepts the word itself may be associated with due its spread and characteristics in the private sphere. Even so, I will not refrain from using the word “blog”, but I do not mean to imply anything beyond reasonable limits of the definition used above.

Why has “2.0” been added to the title of this thesis? Actually, it started out as a reference to “Web 2.0”, which is a shift in how the World Wide Web is being used and is characterised by interactive information sharing, interoperability, user-centered design and collaboration (“Web 2.0”, 2010). The very same source article on Wikipedia provides a few examples of Web 2.0 tools: “[...]

web-based communities, hosted services, web applications, social-networking sites, video-sharing sites, wikis, blogs, mashups and folksonomies". Now, take these definitions and tools and compare them to what, as quoted in Landy & Conte (2007), is typical for learning organisations:

1. Emphasising problem solving and innovation.
2. Developing systems that enhance knowledge generation and sharing.
3. Encouraging flexibility and experimentation.
4. Valuing the well-being and development of all employees.
5. Encouraging employees to find or make opportunities to learn from whatever situation is presented.

Innovation, collaboration, learning, flexibility, participation, and so forth – we can hardly deny that the terminologies overlap. And so, in line with this relation one may be tempted to merge the two concepts of learning organisations and web 2.0 to create "The learning organisation 2.0".

Learning organisations. Before proceeding, the concept of "learning organisations" needs further clarification than offered in preceding paragraphs. Senge (1990), who is an early pioneer on the subject, outlines the following as key dimensions of learning organisations:

- Personal mastery.
- Mental models.
- Shared vision.
- Team learning.
- Systems thinking.

And so we are faced with the issue of wishing for a concrete understanding of a momentarily truly abstract concept. On top of this, the sub-concepts could also be considered abstracts, e.g. "organisation" – is it the board of directors? The employees on the floor? Or just about everyone in the organisation? Perhaps it is not even an issue of people, but rather the structure entailed in "organisation"? I will get back to these concepts and definitions when presenting prior research, and do so in the context of prior research on blogging – in the hopes of finding additive value.

Prior research

Blogging. Drawing upon top-list charts from the Swedish online "Bloggportalen" (Swedish blog portal) – which ranks highest when searching for both blog portals and most read blogs ("Bloggportal", 2010; "Sveriges största blogg", 2010), and should therefore be representable of public blogs in general – we can fairly well conclude that:

1. Among the most often chosen as a favourite blogs six of the top ten are maintained by young women and the large majority of the top ten could be categorised as lifestyle blogs or

diaries (“Mest vald som favorit”, 2009).

2. Among the most visited private blogs the trend is similar to that of the above (“Mest besökta privata bloggar”, 2009).
3. Among the most visited professional blogs the main categories remain lifestyle and diaries, and the main topics are style and celebrities (“Mest besökta proffsbloggar”, 2009).
4. Interestingly, the most linked blogs display a new trend. Eight of the top ten bloggers are males and many of them adult. Nine of the top ten blogs are best categorised as political or opinion-related (“Mest länkade bloggar”, 2009).
5. In relation to the above, corporate blogging may be just as much about lifestyle (though work-related) as about opinions. Regardless of how one wants to use the corporate blog these different types of blogs and their implications should not be ignored.

Nowson & Oberlander (2006) identify bloggers as being “20-something females […] and highly Open to Experience”, based on a linguistic analysis of bloggers. This is partly consistent with the above top-list charts. However, if we combine these findings with the above top-list charts the findings themselves are not very surprising – we should rather focus on the fact that there seems to be a differentiated clique of bloggers in the most-linked-to group. What we can say is that males and political bloggers tend to link to each other more than young females with lifestyle blogs. We may also speculate that this might depend on young female bloggers having more anonymous readers – a larger not-as-engaged mass of readers; in contrast to the most-linked-to group which may have a more engaged and “official” audience (e.g. people that comment more, use their real name, and maintain their own blogs). Gilbert, Bergstrom, & Karahalios (2009) actually present results underlining that bloggers may tend to create cliques – “echo chambers”, wherein individuals of similar opinions and lifestyles gather together. These findings were based on ratios of commentary; agreeing, disagreeing, and neither agreeing nor disagreeing. One may start to believe that political blogs could create the most promising arena when it comes to debate. Alas, the politically oriented blogs are characterised by a higher level of agreement than entertainment blogs and a lesser level of disagreement than lifestyle blogs (Gilbert et al., 2009). The concept of opinion-blogs being echo chambers is further made clear by Adamic & Glance (2004) in the context of political election.

It could be that topics themselves attract and result in individuals' activities rather than the opposite. Kaltenbrunner, Gonzalez-Bailon, and Banchs (2009) investigated the topic of which mechanisms underlie the emergence of certain discussion networks – among the findings were “it is the topic of the conversation, not the characteristics of those participating, what drives the emergence of certain types of networks” (p.1). I.e., users engage in different patterns of interaction depending on the topic, which Kaltenbrunner et al. (2009) accurately point out: “[...] much in the same way as different roles are played in different social settings” (p.1). Hence we may reason that employees would adopt to the topics available on a corporate blog (which may be more or less controlled for), but if we actually agree with the notion that social setting determines how we act, we may as well reason that the concept of a “blog” in itself is a social setting with its own norms and implications.

One of the few articles out there that focus specifically on corporate blogs investigates how employees adopt blogging (Wattal, Racherla, & Mandviwalla, 2009), i.e. which demographic factors and social influences that affect blog usage in a corporate environment. On a side note, these authors state that “[...] this study is one of the first to model […] blog usage in the corporate environment” (p.6). Indeed, scientific articles on the subject are scarce. The authors took into account the following in relation to employee blog adoption:

- Age, gender, and level in the organisation.
- Managerial influences (number of blog posts made by immediate manager).
- Social networks (spatial and relational).

The study presents the following significant results:

- Employees born before 1980 showed less adoption ($p < 0,05$).
- Employees born after 1980 showed higher adoption ($p < 0,01$).
- More blog posts by immediate managers resulted in higher adoption (though only at $p < 0,1$).
- More blog posts by employees in the same branch office ($p < 0,01$).

Consequently, we should cram all employees in a small room and appoint them a snotty young boss. Joking aside, the fact that age and spatial network had such high significance levels carries merit when implementing corporate blogs, which of course managerial influence also has – even if we were to contest the above significance level it is difficult to contest the notion that launching a corporate blog requires managerial support of some form. The fact that gender did not prove to be a significant factor is also interesting in itself if reflected back on other prior research claiming e.g. that bloggers are “20-something females” (Nowson & Oberlander, 2006).

The study by Wattal et al. (2009) shows that managerial support and advocacy is a factor determining blog adoption, which may be considered in relation to a study showing that managerial advocacy is likely one of the most important factors facilitating a learning organisation (Farrell, 2000). These two studies individually implicate that managers have an effect on the behaviour of employees, but more importantly – for this study – on organisational learning and blogging. To add an additional base of understanding the organisational culture's affect on organisational learning could be applied: Fard, Rostamy, & Taghiloo (2009) associate different types of organisational cultures to Iranian learning public organisations. They define a “learning” culture as being high on two primary factors: environmental adaption and internal integration. In their study, they argue that organisations high on these factors are, to a higher degree, learning organisations. This goes beyond the “managers have a saying” and actually claims that it is of a significant matter *what* is said. And not only by managers.

Individuals declare a variety of motivational causes underlying their blogging, among these the seven main categories are identified (Li, 2005):

- Self-documentation.
- Improving writing.
- Self-expression.
- Medium appeal.
- Information.
- Passing time.
- Socialisation.

While the seven are related to each other, further reasoning around them could be argued. Self-documentation, improving writing, and information seem rather “classic” in the sense that they could apply to all kinds of other media channels, e.g. watching the news, writing in school, or watching the news on TV. However, self-expression, medium appeal, passing time, and socialisation could be considered to be of a more specific blog-related nature. Self-expression and passing time are self-explanatory. But socialisation and medium appeal carry interesting implications – they represent the social functionality of blogs and the fact that blogs are a unique and new medium of communication. All seven categories together carries merit – the common message seems to be that blogs satisfy instrumental gratifications rather than ritual ones, due to underlying motivations' association with patterns of blog usage (Li, 2005). Furthermore; self-documentation, improving writing, and information are clearly related to either acquiring or spreading knowledge.

Learning organisations. I will not engage in a semantic debate on exactly *what* a learning organisation “truly” is. In fact, there is no need to directly do so when focusing on general definitional outlines and specific studies of applicability as a base. General definitional outlines will serve to define a wide scope of dimensions related to learning organisations and is therefore well-suited when creating interview questions that are meant to encompass a wide scope of aspects.

General outlines are however not perfectly useful when elaborating on specific results, which is why I will apply the specific topics of research when interpreting and discussing the results.

Since I will not engage in a semantic debate, the very least I can do is to declare what I mean with “organisational learning”. Senge (1990) defines a learning organisation as “Organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to learn together” (p.484). However, “learning organisations” shall henceforth be regarded as per my own interpretation that they are “organisations that facilitate organisational learning”. This may seem to shorten the definition of Senge down quite a bit, but there are substantial variances concerning the definition of what “organisational learning” really is. As early as in 1985 Fiol & Lyles identify discrepancies among researchers' definition of what organisational learning means, by identifying the labels and meanings used by 15 prior researchers' reports. Kim (1993) came to focus on the role of shared mental models to bridge the gap between individual and organisational learning and thereby define the process itself. The critical review on the concept of learning organisations by Wang & Ahmed (2003) even propose a new set of terms to define the concept – a more contemporary definition, e.g. replacing systems thinking with creative thinking. Easterby-Smith, Crossan, & Crossan (2000) even identify the issue of what constitutes the difference between organisational learning and the learning organisation as something discarded in the contemporary debate.

These general, specific, and inconclusive definitions cannot be said to be “true” – merely well outlined frames. Instead, I will digress to the definition that a learning organisation is simply an organisation that facilitates organisational learning. This may seem like a circular train of thought, but I would reason that “learning organisations” necessarily contains “organisational learning”, whereas the opposite may not be true – the reason being the organisational learning can be viewed more as a process and learning organisations more as a concept. So what was the reason behind presenting this confusing way of reasoning? Because I want to underline that I cannot base the scope of this study on a semantic debate concerning a process (organisational learning), but I rather have to base it on general concepts (learning organisations) still encompassing the processes, which finally enables me to – without making logical errors – draw upon specific parts of the process to discuss the results being produced by the concepts. However, this does not mean that I will totally circle back to the definition of Senge (1990), but that a few widespread key concepts will be used as a general base on which to build the methodology on:

- Personal mastery.
- Mental models.

- Shared vision.
- Team learning.
- Systems thinking.

As you may have noticed, these concepts were introduced when presenting definitions. However, I will now explain each of them, present parallel research on learning organisations, and build upon the concepts on which this thesis rests – that is to say, the general outlines of research on learning organisations.

Systems thinking is essentially the common body that unites all the other four disciplines – which is why it is referred to precisely that; “the fifth discipline” (Senge, p.489, 1990). Senge argues that each part has to be consciously present in order for organisations to develop into learning organisations. Though O'Keeffee (2002) believes that not all other parts have to be simultaneously present in order for a learning organisation to develop. Viewing system thinking as a frame from which within learning organisations develop would not provide much insight if directly applied to interviews, which is why the definition will be restricted to openness and spread of a blog – thereby reflecting “the big picture” (see Appendix 1, last section, for further understanding).

Personal mastery is defined as the commitment of the individual to learning (Senge, 1990) and is increased through the process of training and development (McHugh, Groves, & Alker, 1998). Though this process can not be forced upon employees, argues Senge (1990). Additionally, McHugh et al. (1998) propose the real learning may not even be a realistic possibility due to the process demanding that the employees themselves are driving the learning process. “Training and development” of employees sounds like a rather conscious process, but Marsick & Watkins (2001) identify learning at the workplace as:

- It is integrated with daily routines.
- It is triggered by an internal or external jolt.
- It is not highly conscious.
- It is haphazard and influenced by chance.
- It is an inductive process of reflection and action.
- It is linked to learning of others.

I would be tempted to question where to draw the line – would, for example, a setting created for spontaneous learning, in which learning takes place in a chaotic fashion, be considered a conscious process or not? Nevertheless, the main point is that it is likely faulty to believe that learning within an organisation is exclusively conscious, which is why developing an organisational climate where learning is a natural component could be of great importance.

Senge (1990) describes mental models as the mental pictures, views, and assumptions held by individuals and the organisation. These are to be the surfaced and scrutinised, or at least be up for discussion, which in turn demands a climate of honest discussion and dialogue. One could also reason that this is at least as important in a vertical fashion (i.e. between managers and employees) as it is between employees, which is partly what Schein (2003) propose should be the very purpose of dialogues: "The process of communicating across the hierarchical levels [...] will require further dialogue because [...] different strata operate with different assumptions" (p.37). The mental models can also be thought of as being kept in a kind of organisational memory through which they are reproduced, kept alive, and are subject to change (Easterby-Smith et al., 2000).

Sharing a common vision is important in order to channel focus and energy in the direction of learning (Senge, 1990). Successful visions should be related to individual visions of employees throughout the organisation – at all levels in the hierarchy (McHugh et al., 1998). As such, imposing "shared" visions from the top of the organisation to the bottom is likely trifle the development of a true shared vision (O'Keeffe, 2002). The thought of flat-structured organisations as more likely to successfully create shared visions does not seem very farfetched. Goals are a natural concept related to shared vision and may be used as such, although long-term goals should prove more beneficial than short-term ones in respect to building a shared vision (Senge, 1990). That is to say, sharing the vision of being better than competitors may seem lacking – a shared vision related to learning seems close to the internal core of the organisation, which is why externally focused goals such as the aforementioned one could prove problematic.

Team learning could be said to encompass the sum of all individual learning (O'Keeffe, 2002). This may seem to implicate a proportionate increase in learning, whereas I would view team learning as added learning with exponential increase. Especially if knowledge is decentralised and not tied down to individuals. In line with this, McHugh et al (1998) propose that team learning is improved through the process of making knowledge and expertise more available. This rings intuitively true when considering electronic information-storage such as wikis or blogs. But in order for team learning to occur, team members must actually engage in dialogue and discussion, which is why open communication and understanding is also paramount (O'Keeffe, 2002). Wang & Ahmet (2003) add that this is why learning organisations excel at knowledge management – to allow for knowledge to be spread throughout the organisation. And of course, team learning gone wrong can consequently create exponential *decrease* in learning ability (Senge, 1990).

Theoretical concepts do not alone make for an excellent base when defining good interview questions. Hoff, Pohl, & Bartfield (2010) present associated best practices related to the concepts presented above. Drawing upon the research presented thus far and combining it with the associated best practices a good and well-grounded framework on which to build the methodology takes form.

On a side note, much of the research on organisational learning may not carry an identical terminology, but it tends to overlap. All in all, choosing a fixed set of terminologies is preferred to trying to use a complete and all-encompassing base – doing so would prove impossible. I wish to reproduce something said concerning a review on the topic of organisational learning by Easterby-Smith et al. (2000): “there is now far too much material available to allow full coverage in any single publication” (p. 783). That being said, please consider this short collection of prior research on the subject as brief glimpses of the basic core concepts. It is enough to define a scope, but not to grasp the whole concept of what organisational learning truly is.

An area of theory that partly overlaps the concept of learning organisations is that of knowledge management – a topic discussed by Swan et al. (1999). The authors argue that there may be a noteworthy shift in people focus that separates the two theoretical areas of research (meaning that knowledge management is focusing less on the human aspect), which is one of the reasons why I will not use knowledge management as a prominent theoretical base in this thesis – learning is highly people oriented. Another reason is the comprehensive and general research available on learning organisations.

Purpose

And so we are stuck with two topics that are contemporary, hard to define and grasp, relevant for research and business, and also quite macro-oriented. But should not research on topics focusing on organisation and media be looking at the bigger picture? If we view these topics is detached from each other and other topics – perhaps. Although the purpose of this study is to unite the two and bring them into the corporate environment in the form of a case study on internal corporate blogging carried out through the method of qualitative interviews. This could seem counter-intuitive due to my set-up being rather skeptical of the big picture. Even so, it would be virtually impossible to grasp the relation between these concepts in a few months of researching – and it would not be very applicable. However, starting small and examining the individual's take on corporate blogging is do-able, carries applicability, and provides a unique opportunity to learn more and prompt future research.

As mentioned, I will be focusing on blogs by means of a case study method in a corporate setting. This approach is further defined to take on the perspective of organisational learning – i.e. organisations exhibiting learning as a competitive edge. Still, studying corporate blogging in a learning context without considering the construct of blogging itself would most likely prove to be futile, which is why prior research directly or indirectly related to corporate blogging needs to constitute a second scientific base.

Research questions

The methodology of choice may start out in general by drawing upon the concept of learning organisations, but the data that will come of it will most certainly have its specific areas of focus, which makes sense of interpreting it in the light of more specific theory – among which is organisational learning. Furthermore, this process has the advantage of being able to focus on some aspects of organisational learning depending on the characteristics of the data obtained, which significantly narrows down the quantity of relevant research.

The hypothesis is that corporate blogging at some level aids the becoming of a learning organisation. But since to which levels this applies to remains unknown for the moment and study is exploratory this hypothesis is better stated in the form of research questions. The below research questions may give the impression of being rather (too) general, although an important part of this study is to keep on open mind and investigate a relatively unknown phenomenon.

- RQ1 – Can corporate blogging aid the development of a learning organisation? Under which conditions?
- RQ2 – Based on the case study, what are the opportunities and obstacles of corporate blogging in relation to developing a learning organisation?
- RQ3 – Which are the relevant issues to focus future research on?

Method

Background and setting

The department taking part in this study works with electronic communication. It is located in Sweden and belongs to a company focusing on production, has a global reach, and over 20 000 employees worldwide. There are 21 full-time employed persons and about five consultants working in this specific department.

A corporate blog based on the open source tool called WordPress is launched for piloting during a period of 1 month. During this time all employees of the department taking part in the pilot are obligated to contribute with at least one post per week – e.g. a status report, meaning a somewhat formalised and professional way of summarising work progress. Additional posting was encouraged and the only guideline given concerning how and what to write about was to not make it too stiff. In other words, the premise of the blog is rather open and leaves room for personal judgment and style.

A core purpose of initiating the launch of this blog was to enable higher transparency – knowledge about goings-on in the department and who is working on what. This study however goes beyond the transparency aspect and investigates the corporate blog in a broader sense by adding theory on organisational learning.

The department is split in two parts: internal and external. There are several different teams divided amongst the internal and external functions. Though it should be noted that the different teams work in a highly integrated and collaborative fashion – there are no solid lines drawn between them. In fact, the spatial distance between employees and teams is virtually none. The office landscape is open and spacious – everyone is within shouting distance and walking through the whole department would take less than thirty seconds.

To provide a "feel of the company", it could be mention that, among the key basic cornerstones of the organisation, people development and learning constitutes about 10% of the balanced scorecard (reading Kaplan & Norton, 1996, should provide on idea of the concept of "balanced scorecard"). Furthermore, explicitly stated core values (a set of official norms and values of the organisation) should be perfectly well compatible with the basics of a learning organisation. Which may also be of relevance is that the company's core business is production – i.e. the department may not be representable for the company as a whole in respect to employee characteristics and experience with blogs.

It should be kept in mind that this study is participative in the sense that I have been a colleague of the participants for about a year now. It is also important to note that my active participation consists of me writing blog posts just like everyone else. I realise that this can be viewed both as a limitation and a unique opportunity, but I shall devote parts of my Discussion to further address this issue.

The exploratory part of this study takes form as a strict hypothesis is not assumed, neither is a limited set of variables targeted nor a true experiment conducted. The aim of this study is to explore a rather wide and rapidly expanding phenomenon that is new to both researchers and business professionals in order to create a higher degree of understanding on how blogging could be related to developing learning organisations. The drawback is that I cannot make generalisations or "prove" a certain effect, but the strength is that I have a higher chance of finding those relevant variables that are not easily identified when it comes to new areas of research. Also, a case-based study has clear roots in "reality" and could hence provide more concrete learnings of applicability.

Lastly, the difference between a blog (and social media) and e.g. e-mail, server storage, telephone, internal paper mail, etc. could be looked at in the same way as you would look at the difference between googling (yes, that is a verb) and trying out different URLs in order to find information. That is to say from a technical point if view – the analogy is not meant to state any differences in potential.

Participants

Every participant is between 30–50 years of age and an e-communication professional, i.e. a person specialised in communication in an electronic context; e.g. external channels such as corporate web sites or internal channels such as corporate intranet. Furthermore, the total number of individuals taking part in the interviews were five people – four men and one woman.

Four out of five participants are native Swedes, whereas the remaining participant has a Spanish background. None of the participants is a manager, all are employees.

Participants are selected by me sending a short e-mail to the whole department asking for participants willing to take part in my study. This is done when 2 weeks of the piloting period remain. Since the sample share the same basic primary traits, mostly related to their profession, there is not much call for pooling participants from the small number of voluntary ones (seven) in a random fashion.

No reward or motivational trinket was given to encourage participation. All participants are informed on the basis of the study, how the data will be handled, and that they are to remain anonymous, i.e., there was informed consent.

Material

The physical materials consist only of a few pieces of paper, a computer for taking notes, and an Apple iPod Nano for recording purposes. One of these pieces of paper contains interview questions related to different categories..

The interview questions may be viewed in the Appendix 1 section. These focus on the person (background), the blog phenomenon (writing, reading, and functionality), and the theory of learning organisations (all remaining questions) – namely the core concepts of Senge (1990). However, do keep in mind that they are more a reflection of the scope and than depth. Please read about Design and Procedure in order to fully grasp the use of these questions. The Discussion will also help in understanding the concept behind the interview structure.

Design

Qualitative interviews are used to assess answers to the aforesaid research questions. I do so by using a semi-structured form of interviewing focusing on reaching insight into participants' situation with regard to the study (resembling e.g. the realist interview, Cassell & Symon, 2006) – questions are rather open but still frame the focus of my study. This way, the aim is to obtain a wide scope of data whilst still defining the study in relation to existing theoretical concepts.

Interview sessions are set take 30–40 minutes. But in the end, they actually took about 1 hour each, and participants being interested in the subject seems to be the main reason for this. Sessions are carried out over a 2 week-period of time. Even if the interviews took more time than intended, Table 1 gives a good idea of the time *disposition*.

Table 1 Time committed to a certain category of interview questions

Introduction	3 min
Background	3 min
Writing	3 min
Reading	3 min
Functionality	3 min
Organisational learning	15 min
Debriefing	3 min
Total	**33 min**

I do not measure specific variables, nor do I measure an exact magnitude of such. The study is designed to explore the phenomenon of corporate blogging in relation to learning organisations, which is why defining *frames* rather than *variables* and *scope* rather than *magnitude* is of great importance.

Since there is no reasonable way of assigning individuals to groups in this setting, I use the same conditions and questions for all participants.

Before starting the actual interviews a pilot interview with a separate participant is carried out. Its main purpose is to test what kind of answers the question prompts and to provide me with experience in relation to the setting, method, and procedure.

The interview questions (Appendix 1) are meant as guidelines, but there is room for freely moving within these boundaries. The categories do however create a firm structure which should be followed in order to capture the big picture. Follow-up questions are asked, but since they tend to go into detail in relation to a specific concept of importance to the participant the answers to them serve to broaden my understanding – i.e., they are not analysed in the same fashion as the core data (answers to the interview questions prepared beforehand).

Answers to the interview questions aside, specific notes are taken to ascertain key learnings that may not be “sortable” under the categories during the data analysis or may be particularly noteworthy in respect to e.g. tone of voice, participants' emphasising, novelty, etc.

When an interview is finished and the participant has been debriefed I transfer the data from the iPod to a computer, following which is listen to it and transcribe it to a document. The methodology for doing this is to transcribe exactly what is being said, but not to use one of the many approaches on how to do the actual writing (e.g. Jefferson transcription, summarised by Howitt & Cramer, 2005a). Mainly because the notes taken during the session and the recordings themselves serve the purpose of providing “in context” understanding, but also that using such a system would consume time better used for analysis.

Procedure

All interviews are conducted on site in a meeting room specifically designed for “talk”. This could yield a calmer and more conversational atmosphere than the spacious conference rooms. In line with this, the interview was carried out in a familiar fashion, inspired by Kvale & Brinkmann (2009a)

Following the arrival of the participant to the assigned meeting room, which is located near everyone's working space, the interview process begins (freely adapted from Cassell & Symon, 2006; Howitt & Cramer, 2005b; and Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009b):

- Participant receives an introduction on the purpose of the study.
- Participant is informed on how the interview will be carried out and that he or she will be anonymous.
- Participant is informed that content written on the blog will not be analysed due to ethical reasons (which was also stated as soon as everyone in the department were notified of my study).
- Participant is informed that there will be a short debriefing following the interview.
- I inform the participant that I will record the interview for further reference and that I will be taking a few notes in order to better remember.
- Participant is asked if he or she has any questions or comments before we start.

As the interview itself is commenced I use the interview questions (Appendix 1) as a guide in how to proceed. The procedure for the actual interviewing is best described by these questions alone. Typically, all sessions have a streak of openness to them – participants are not holding back on information and are very cooperative in collaborating to discover new knowledge around the subject.

After having finished the interview session the participants are debriefed according to the following procedure:

- We go through what impression the participant has with regard to the session.
- Participant is asked why he or she wanted to take part in the study. The reason for this being to increase chances of detecting any selection bias.
- I ask if I may contact the participant to discuss issues or thoughts that may arise later on. Of course, he or she may also contact me for any reason whatsoever.
- I inform the participant that the results will be available for anyone interested in them.

Data analysis

Briefly, the data analysis procedure is structured according to the following steps:

- Conduct recording of interviews and take notes on thoughts and specific observations.
- Transcribe interviews from recording into documents, word by word.
- Concentrate the meaning of statements into shorter sentences, describing the gist of what participants are saying (a less speculative variant of the one described by Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009c). See samples under the Results section.
- Extract descriptive statistics from the transcribed interview documents and concentrated meanings. The purpose of this is to work with and better getting to know the data, as well as detecting potentially obvious errors or anomalous tendencies.
- Collect the concentrated notes together and code them thematically in order to identify the main concepts of the investigated phenomenon (inspired by Strauss & Corbin, 1990 and adapted from categorisation procedures of Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009d). See samples under the Results section.
- Lastly, the data is compared to the recorded interviews and notes taken during the sessions in order to ascertain that the data represents what the participants were saying.
- Make necessary adjustment if the data does not correspond well to recordings or notes.
- Summarise the data into results.
- Draw conclusions, or rather to present well-grounded reasoning around likely implications and limitations, in relation to the results.

During the course of the interviewing sessions several follow-up questions are asked. These serve the purpose of better understanding what participants mean and are as such not a part of the data being directly analysed.

Results

The first heading under this section is secondary regarding analytical implications and serves the purpose of getting to know the data and check for any possible problems or glitches as well as how these could be explained. The actual analysis that this study culminates in is centered around in the last heading – “Thematic categorisation”, which is also the main subject of discussion.

Interview descriptives

The quantity of symbols used in the transcribed interviews in regard to interview questions and participants are listed in Table 2. Participant x1 had one question taken out and participant x4 had two questions taken out. This is not due to errors, but to the participant obviously already having provided answers to the question when answering other ones.

Table 2 Descriptives of *N* of symbols produced per participant and interview question in the transcribed interviews

QUESTION	x1	x2	x3	x4	x5	TOTAL	MEAN
Background	2055	757	985	2017	1565	7379	1475,8
Writing	322	1410	339	1567	578	4216	843,2
Reading	355	1732	956	933	598	4574	914,8
Functionality	739	1897	840	1181	756	5467	1093,4
~~							
Manager opinion	1259	1812	1808	1271	1100	7250	1450
Feedback	545	1671	675	513	766	4170	834
Own purpose	823	904	498	419	743	3387	677,4
Interaction	500	1656	393	1288	486	4323	864,6
Time	333	429	572	625	332	2291	458,2
Climate/tone	1202	761	645	345	561	3514	702,8
Disc./dialogue	220	454	108	1059	256	2097	419,4
Free posting	523	681	1133	--	594	2931	732,75
Language	1380	641	702	--	852	3575	893,75
Flat/hierarc.	1	999	453	115	377	1945	389
Agree/disagr.	1043	587	386	620	481	3117	623,4
Manager post.	--	386	392	231	222	1231	307,75
Others' react.	87	355	581	298	179	1500	300
Access/spread	823	1312	722	983	923	4763	952,6
TOTAL:	12264*	18444	12188	13465*	11369		
MEAN:	721,41	1024,67	677,1	841,56	631,6		

*One or more answers missing. These are accounted for when figuring the mean.

Comments:
The sample is too small to undergo statistical procedures. Plus, even if it was larger, the tendency would only tell us how much someone in general speaks at certain points - not what the person is actually saying.

The difference between participant x2 and x5 may be of interested. The relatively wide range (from 300–1475,8) in mean number of symbols per question may also be worth noting (sorted under Table 3).

Table 3 Descriptives on *N* of symbols produced per transcribed interview question category and concepts related to learning organisations

QUESTIONS RANKED - DESCENDING (mean no of symbols)		LEARN.ORG. CATEGORY
Background	1475,8	--
Manager opinion	1450	Personal mastery
Functionality	1093	--
Access/spread	952,6	Systems thinking
Reading	914,8	--
Language	893,75	Shared vision
Interaction	864,6	Personal mastery
Writing	843,2	--
Feedback	834	Personal mastery
Free posting	732,75	Shared vision
Climate/tone	702,8	Mental models
Own purpose	677,4	Personal mastery
Agree/disagr.	623,4	Team learning
Time	458,2	Mental models
Disc./dialogue	419,4	Mental models
Flat/hierarc.	389	Shared vision
Manager/post	307,75	Team learning
Others' react.	300	Team learning

Comments:
Personal mastery, systems thinking, and shared vision are high.
Team learning and mental models are low.

CATEGORY	MEAN NO OF SYMBOLS
Personal mastery	956,5
Systems thinking	952,6
Shared vision	671,83
Mental models	526,8
Team learning	410,4

These statistics or just to provide a quick overview of the interview data.

Concentration of meanings

The written interviews are converted to concentrated meanings capturing the gist of what participants are saying. There is no additional categorisation or discrimination among the data at this point – the purpose is merely to decrease the substantial amount of data. A total of 208 items were created. Figure 4 displays the difference in items per person.

Additionally, which persons were referred to during the interviews created a separate set of items with a total of 23 referrals (Table 4).

Figure 4 Total contribution of participants with regard to concentrated meanings

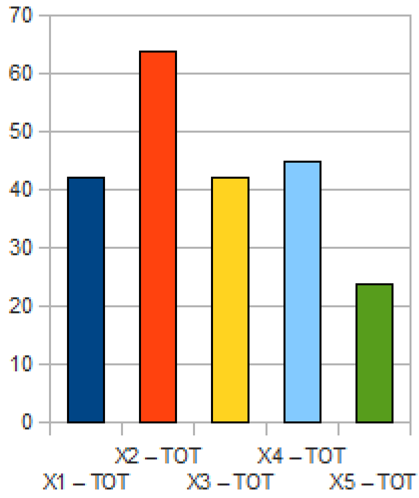


Table 4 Number of times a person is referred to be participants, where *yX* equals a certain person and *N* equals number of referrals to that person

y1	4
y3	4
y2	3
y5	2
y6	2
y9	2
y4	1
y7	1
y8	1
y10	1
y11	1
y12	1

All of the 208 concentrated meaning codes are not available in this document. However, Figure 5 displays a selection of typical concentrations of varying degrees (though are all in Swedish), which should provide at the very least a hint on my reasoning.

Figure 5 Sample of how what participants' say creates concentrated meanings

Regarding own purpose

Det blir lätt att jag hänger upp mig på ordet som används hela tiden... Transparency och awereness, att ha en uppfattning om vad som pågår. Saker ändrar sig hela tiden... Jag kan hitta många exempel från de senaste veckorna då vi har upptäckt att vi är inne på samma saker. Man kanske hade kunnat få bort behovet av den awereness-nivån med en kommuniké från management, men det skulle bli omständigt – var och en kan lika gärna berätta vad de gör.

Medvetenhet om vad andra gör

Regarding feedback

Eftersom skriven text ofta är rätt så trubbig är det lätt att missförstå... Positiv feedback är nog lätt att ge, lite blink blink, men så fort feedbacken inte är 100 procent positiv så är det väldigt lätt att missförstå. Så att naah... ... Skall det vara positivt snackar vi snarare hyllningskör, risken är stor att det blir missförstånd, det tror jag.

Skriven text kan lätt missförstås

Regarding agreement/disagreement

Ja, jag tycker att man är överens. Jag har inte sett någon form av... eh... någon form av motsägningar eller kraftiga diskussioner. Det är mer glada kommentarer. Bloggen har inte använts i något annat syfte.

Medhåll, glada kommentarer

Regarding organisational structure

... Platt. Och hierarkisk... Jag tycker att avdelningen har en platt struktur, men inom *CORP NAME* är det ganska hierarkiskt.

Org. - hierarkisk, avd. - platt

Regarding others' reactions to posts

Inga... Inga reaktioner. Mer generella. Att det är bra att folk känner sig uppdaterade.

Inga reaktioner

Folk känner sig uppdaterade

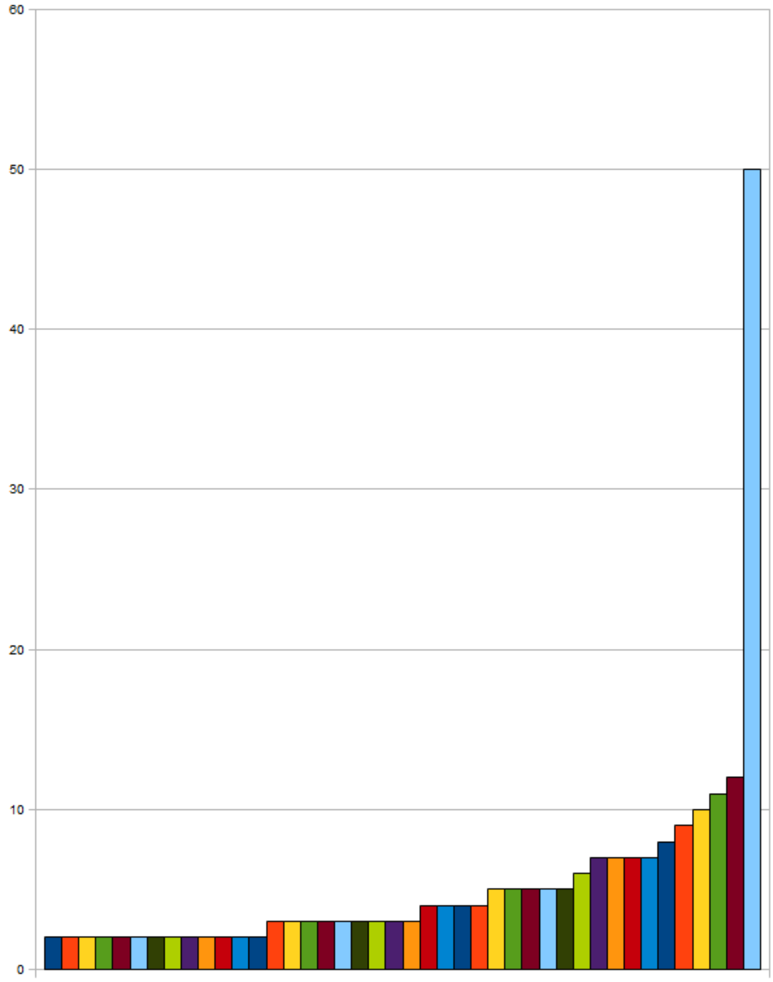
Thematic categorisations

All concentrated items are sorted under main themes underlining what they are actually saying. A total of 42 themes are identified, containing 228 concentrated meaning items. The reason for the concentrations having increased from 208 to 228 is that ten of them are categorised under two themes. All other items are however assigned to only one theme. The top 15 themes and their contained items can be viewed in Figure 3 and the full list of themes, their contained items, and how many of the participants that had items under related to the theme (i.e. agreeing with it) are displayed in Table 5. Note that the theme called "*only" contains specific meanings expressed only one time and that are not sortable under any of the other themes.

Table 5 Highest ranking themes sorted descending

Themes	***N* of concentrated meanings**
*only	50
Feels that there is too little time to be as active on the blog as is desirable	12
Managers should share more information than they currently do	11
Managers are skeptical in relation to blogging at work	10
Feedback and dialogue are either lacking or needs to be asked for	9
Written communication carries with it a risk of conflict	8
"Noise" is a problem, based on redundant content – generally scans through	7
There should be some kind of rules, frames or explicit purpose to the blog	7
Colleagues are encouraging, supportive, and agreeable	7
Status reports are either not meaningful or not interesting	7
Feels well-informed of what colleagues are working on	6
The organisation is hierarchic, which may cause problems for blogging	5
Thinks that parts of the blog system are complicated and discouraging	5
Would prefer another tool than the blog to share knowledge	5
Sometimes feels that he/she does not have anything to add or post	5
Prefers spontaneous writing to writing according to time-related rules	5
Would like to have additional kinds of functionality	4
Thinks that blogging has several advantages in comparison to meetings	4
The type of content on the blog decides how many discussions are present	4
Believes that all blogs should be at least readable by all employees	4
The language and tone is simple, kind, and easily understandable	3
Has positive experience with the blog's system	3
Dialogues started on the blog are picked up face-to-face	3
The blog should or does fill the need of being an information bank	3
Has a reading process based on an ambition to read everything	3
Blogging can feel like a burden in addition to regular work	3
It should not be possible to be anonymous on a blog	3
Topics related to electronic communications are good or acceptable	3
Prefers concrete information rather than texts of a social/private character	3
Reads when he/she feels like it, daily or weekly	2
Writes blog posts according to a spontaneous process	2
Writes blog posts according to a aware process	2
A little more conflict might actually do some good	2
Sees increased value in sharing blogs between departments	2
The department has a flat structure	2
Blogs must have clear purposes or areas of focus	2
A transition from the private to the professional has occured on the blog	2
Text and message are more important than functionality	2
Has a reading habit which is general, scanning, and filtering	2
Sensitive topics, names, or individuals or not to be discussed on a blog	2
Some managers see the advantages of blogging	2
Expresses an awereness of managers and others are observing behaviour	2
TOTAL	**228**

Figure 3 Highest ranking themes sorted descending



The full list of 228 concentrated meaning categories sorted under 42 themes are available in Table 5.

***N* of concentrated meanings per theme (right to left in the figure)**	
*only	50
Feels that there is too little time to be as active on the blog as is desirable	12
Managers should share more information than they currently do	11
Managers are skeptical in relation to blogging at work	10
Feedback and dialogue are either lacking or needs to be asked for	9
Written communication carries with it a risk of conflict	8
"Noise" is a problem, based on redundant content, resulting in one having to filter when reading	7
There should be some kind of rules, frames or explicit purpose to the blog	7
Colleagues are encouraging, support-ive, and agreeable	7
Status reports are either not meaning-ful or not interesting	7
Feels well-informed of what colleagues are working on	6
The organisation is hierarchic, which may cause problems for blogging	5
Thinks that parts of the blog system are complicated and discouraging	5
Would prefer another tool than the blog to share knowledge	5
Sometimes feels that he/she does not have anything to add or post	5
Prefers spontaneous writing to writing according to time-related rules	5
Etc... (< 4 concentrated meanings per theme)	

Table 6 displays sample clusters of concentrated meanings sorted under themes they have in common.

Table 6 Sample displaying clusters of concentrated meanings sorted under themes

Theme	Concentrated meanings (in Swedish)
It should not be possible to be anonymous on a blog	- Innan var man anonym, nu skall man vara den man är - Friare privat tack vare anon., men det hade inte fungerat på jobb - Ingen anonymitet
Status reports are either not meaningful or not interesting	- Statusrapporter kan bli långa, ha flera ämnen, vilket inte läses - Statusrapporter känns meningslösa - Man bör skriva när det är relevant och per ämne - Vill ha översikt, ej intresserad av detaljer - Veckorapporter blir lätt för detaljerade - Detaljrapporter ej lockande - Statusrapporter är formella, trots att bloggar är privata
Thinks that parts of the blog system are complicated and discouraging	- Nedslående att inte kunna nyttja all funktionalitet - Funktionalitet bristfällig - För krångligt system - Dashboarden kan vara avskräckande och är för komplex - Strul med systemet tar bort glädje

Discussion

Herewith I will be focusing the analysis on the 41 themes remaining after having discarded the "*only" theme. It is being discarded due to the substantial amount of total data – the line has to be drawn somewhere – every little word cannot be considered subject to analysis. These 41 themes will be discussed in the light of research on learning organisations.

In order the connect the results to the theoretical base presented in the introduction I will use the interview questions' main categories as segments to analyse. The specific themes related to writing, reading, functionality will have to be interpreted in the light of prior research concerning blogs, whereas other themes will be interpreted in the light of prior research concerning learning organisations.

When I refer the a certain theme I will also state how many percent of the concentrated meanings contained by all the 41 top themes are contained by that specific theme, like this [%]. It would however not be fair to state that "there is no theme with a percent higher than 6,7, meaning that there are no real themes of focus" – look at Figure 3 before jumping to such conclusions. Furthermore, tossing aside themes due to them having a low percent of contained concentrated meanings would essentially mean tossing away the vast majority of the data, which would both contradict the exploratory approach and blind us to how many themes in light of theory blend together and form a coherent whole, implying much more than a few percent. It is also worth considering that most interview questions could be answered in an infinite number of ways – and still; coherent themes took form.

The understanding of the below might be made simpler, alas not complete, be considering 4–7% as a large number, 2–3,9% a medium number, and 1–1,9% a small number.

Implications

The concept of not having enough the time one wishes to have available to do certain things, in this case blogging [6,7%], can hardly be considered as an issue detached from the context. This theme was the single most dominate one, but there are several reasons for thinking that it should be considered related to other themes as well. For example, time is relative in relation to what we implicitly prioritise – would one say "I do not have time to manage my usual job assignments because I am blogging"? Hardly. In part, what is prioritised can be put in relation to what managers consider important, and they are – after all – the persons evaluating what you do at work, of which an awareness is somewhat reflected in persons expressing that managers may watch and form opinions based on blogging activity [1,1%]. On the other hand, would a manager not basing his/hers opinions on observations be a good manager? Not really. Though it is in the context of time management that it becomes interesting; especially if we add another top ranking theme stating that managers carry skeptical opinions in relation to blogging at work [5,6%]. Still, one might argue that managers' skepticism is related to the concept "blogs at work" and the meaning those words carry, rather than the actual functionality and activity. This may very well be related to them (and most of us) having a highly private experience with blogs related to society as a whole. Even so, participants state many reasons for this alleged skepticism, among which prominent ones are:

- Managers do not have time.
- Managers lack interest.
- Managers think blogging is a bad idea.
- Managers are afraid of losing control over information.

A comment on managers being afraid to lose control over information – it could be argued that information shared on a blog is going to be shared anyway (e.g. face-to-face) and is thus never "under control". But logically, if we assume added learning through blogging, we would at some level have to assume information spread and dissemination. And once we do that, we also have to assume an increased flow of information, which could very well be harder to control. Though in relation to this, it can also be argued that electronic information is recorded in a way that provides *more* control. If we are to draw the line somewhere, I would say that managers gain less control over what information that is being *produced*, but gain increased control over what information that *exists*. That is to say, the choice eventually boils down to if you want prevent others from knowing things or if you want to know more things yourself.

The theme stating that some managers see the advantages of blogging [1,1%] should, even if it is a low ranking theme, not be forsaken. Johnson (1998) build upon different leadership practices associated with creating learning organisations; leaders need to communicate a vision, empower employees, and create a learning culture. Additionally, Wattal et al. (2009) present findings that managers influence blog adoption and Farrell (2000) speaks of their influence as very important when creating learning organisations. This basically means taking *active* action to *promote* learning – being a passive leader is not enough. And even if it would be, the themes presented this far speaks not of apathy, but of skepticism. But do note that amongst themes related to managers' opinions there is a general message stating that the closer managers are tend to be more positive than managers “further away”, basically meaning: “The closest managers now see the usefulness”. Though add to this the theme stating that managers should share more information on the blog [6%], which together with previous themes at the very least points out that both more support and participation of managers would be appreciated. It seems plausible to speculate that support and role-modeling of managers could have potentially positive or negative affect on what Senge (1990) describes as the individuals commitment to learning – personal mastery.

If we argue that “yes, managers affect commitment to learning”, would it apply even if we say that a blog is not related to learning at all? Considering how Marsick et al. (2001) describe the chaotic arenas of learning, the question, or rather the answer to it, could be considered secondary. Besides, the sole fact of all these themes focusing on managerial influence strengthens the notion that play a role in relation to *this* blog and could very well do so in relation to *other* blogs. Beyond if managers influence learning through blogging, we should consider the context, namely the organisational structure, which according to Hong (1999) plays a central role when becoming a learning organisation. McHugh et al. (1998) state that a shared vision should resemble that of all employees' regardless of level in the organisation and Senge (1990) points out that mental models need to surface and be discussed. All the aforementioned authors essentially contribute to the importance organisational structure when creating learning organisations. Themes related to organisational structure state that the organisation is first and foremost hierarchic, which may cause problems for corporate blogging [3%] and that the department itself has a rather flat structure [1,1%] (which if considered as an opposite to hierarchic structure would enhance blogging). These are high numbers considering that only one concentrated meaning for each participant is sorted under these themes (there is only one interview question directly addressing the issue). This could very well reflect a concept that frames the capabilities of learning through blogging. However, we should not prematurely speculate that organisational structure governs organisational learning and therefore governs corporate blogging (this would be faulty logic presuming that blogging is in fact related to organisational learning).

There are several themes concerning the content produced on the blog, among which are:

- "Noise" is a general problem based on redundant content, which prompts the reader to scan through the content [4%].
- Status reports are either not meaningful or not interesting [4%].
- The person has a reading process based on the ambition to read everything [1,7%].
- Topics related to electronic communications are good or acceptable to post about [1,7] (i.e. blog posts that touch on the business area of electronic communication, e.g. web publishing tips, social media, e-mail management, etc.).
- The blog should or does fill the need of being an interactive information bank [1,7%].
- Prefers concrete information rather than texts of a private-social character [1,7%]

The clearest connection between these seems to be that actual information has precedence over soft texts of a more private-social character. Another common concept seems to be overall striving towards finding, acquiring, and processing this information. In relation to this, one can even consider the information available to be disseminated and made available to everyone by default due to it being published and contained within an "open blog". The process of openly sharing amd increasing the availability of information (McHugh et al., 1998) is a key concept of team learning, which is well coupled with dialogue and understanding (O'Keeffe, 2002; Senge, 1990). The very openness, spread, and transparency of corporate blogging is reflected in "big picture" themes stating that blogs should at least be readable by all employees [2,2%] and that no one should be able to act in the cover of anonymity [1,7%], which may also imply a sense of systems thinking. This could be compared to the themes stating that the company's structure is hierarchic – could openness and spread really thrive within hierarchic structures? The thriving may be considered hindered, but the spread of information can still be enabled from a horisontal point of view, which is reflected in the theme stating that there is added value in sharing blogs between departments [1,1%]. Even so, why not also strive towards reaping the full rewards by considering how to enable vertical openness? Probably because justifying large-scale change of organisational structure with "spreading information vertically" seems stupid. However, judging by the *natural* dissemination of information that follows many forms of electronic learning (Wild et al., 2002), the vertical change of information sharing may happen even though the hierarchic structures remain.

An almost paradoxical relation is found between themes stating that factual information is of main interest and the status reports are of lesser interest (above bullet list regarding content). Should a report on activities not be considered the very essence of factual information, even related to themes stating that persons are more aware of what colleagues are working on [3,4%]? Well, yes, but there seems to be an added dimension to the equation – namely, themes stating that posting on a blog should not be bounded by a mandatory frequency (e.g. each Thursday) [3%]. It really matters less if the precise wording was that it is “mandatory to post *status reports* by each Thursday” or that it is “mandatory to post each Thursday, *for example*, status reports”. The two have become related somewhere along the road. The status report issue seems to be more related to the associated rule of writing rather than reading them. Though this brings us to a theme stating the opposite; there should be some kind of rules, frames, or explicit purpose to the blog [4%] and one especially underlining the importance of a clear purpose [1,1%]. However, meanings contained in this theme are merely related to *what* and *how* – not *when*. Among these are:

- Blogs should have an explicit and clear purpose.
- There should be clear guidelines available on how to blog.
- Frames and demands are needed for this to work.
- A code of conduct could be good for rare reference.

In relation to rules governing when to do something Senge (1990) argues that learning cannot successfully be forced unto employees. One could argue that the theme stating that rules or frames are necessary contradicts this, however; there is a fundamental difference between “rules” stating that something has to be done in a certain way and those stating that something cannot be done in a certain way. The latter seems to resemble frames rather than “rules forcing something upon someone”, i.e. the choice remains free within reasonable boundaries. A participant reasoned that mandatory posting could have been needed to motivate people who would not normally produce much content, but on the other hand – not everyone posted every Thursday. It seems that the issue of “rules” will have to remain inconclusive with the exception of persons wanting to write when they feel like doing so.

The themes related to content and status reports are linked to a theme stating that the content itself determines the level of discussion and dialogue [2,2%], which is in line with the notion that topics create peoples' activities rather than the opposite (Kaltenbrunner et al., 2009). Senge (1990) described discussions important as tools of questioning mental models. An interesting question can be raised with regard to mental models and discussion though; Gilbert et al. (2009) and Adamic and Glance (2004) view blogs as polarisation of opinions – there is a greater tendency to agree than to disagree, which could imply problems related to mental models. The tone itself is described by colleagues being agreeable, supportive, and encouraging [4%] and, according to one participant, even more so on the blog than face-to-face, which may further outline a problem. However, when comparing this to the potential importance of consensus in a learning organisation when framing communication (Fiol, 1994), a double-edged sword seems to take shape. What could make one edge (the positive one) more prominent than the other one could very well be themes stating that there may be an increased risk of conflict in written communication [4,5%], and that discussions outside the blog may even be prompted by the blog content [1,7%]. A theme also indicates evasion of conflict by stating that sensitive topics, names, or individuals should not be discussed on the blog [1,1%]. Furthermore, the added value of sharing the blog between departments [1,1%] could very well facilitate more in-blog discussion due to the increased physical distance, and the theme stating that a little conflict may actually do some good [1,1%] – though not only on the blog – could indicate increased possibilities of questioning mental models.

A prerequisite of both dialogue and discussion is a common and shared language (Grant, 1996), which is why the description of the blog language as simple, kind, and easily understandable [1,7%] is important. Even though this theme does not carry many percent it is something that all participants agree on – even if there seems to be a slight difference in *how* private or professional the tone *should* be, but that may be just as much related to personal preferences as the blog context. A transition from the private to the professional tone of voice [1,1%] also seems to have occurred.

The theme stating that feedback and dialogue is either lacking or has to be asked for is an interesting one [5%]. In order the separate it from other similar themes we have to assume that it is neither a matter of discussion, argument, or conflict, nor a matter of colleagues being encouraging or supportive. This leaves us having to assume that this theme has either been falsely identified as a separate one or that the feedback referred to concerns other concepts than the similar ones. Regardless, a novelty is implied in "[...] lacking or or has to be asked for"; this points towards an explicit *need* for feedback, and lack of feedback my thwart commitment (Deci et al., 1991), which is key in increasing personal mastery (Senge, 1990).

If surmised that blogging does provide advantages, regardless of them being related to organisational learning or not, one could ask the question: could another tool do it better? Several themes state that this particular system may not be optimal:

- Thinks that parts of the blog system are complicated and discouraging [3%].
- Would like to have additional kinds of functionality [2,2%] (which does not necessarily imply that the system is *lacking*).

In fact, one particular theme states that another tool, e.g. a Twitter-like concept or an online discussion forum, would be better suited for knowledge sharing than a blog [3%]. Though perhaps, as one theme states, the content itself should take precedence over functionality [1,1%]? However, one theme does imply that the system may be satisfactory [1,7%]. The take-away when comparing these themes should be to first consider the purpose and then consider the tool. Not because a blog is *not optimal*, but because it *may* not be. Nevertheless, the use of a public and interactive tool to share information could still carry advantages to traditional knowledge sharing (Majchrzak et al., 2000).

One major difference between private and professional blogging is to what degree an individual decides the topic and content to write about – you can put anything you want on your private blog, but hardly on your professional blog. A theme stating feelings of not having anything to contribute with [3%] could either underline this difference by being related to what one works with or be unrelated to the difference and more related to personal characteristics. Probably a bit of both. If this is to imply anything at all, it would be that not everyone will be as likely to blog. And it should not be expected of them.

The blog as a tool does not seem to prompt any particular patterns with regard to the writing process in itself – two rather opposite themes state:

Writes blog posts according to a spontaneous process [1,1%].

Writes blog posts according to a aware process [1,1%]

Li (2005) introduced a set of motivational factors underlying blogging. As mentioned in the introduction, three categories – self-documentation, improving writing, and information – seemed to be related to blogging. Are these carried over to corporate blogging? Themes stating that the blog is and should be used as an information bank [1,7%] and that one feels up-to-date as to what colleagues are working on [3,4%] could be related to "information", and status reports should correspond to "self-documentation". "Improved writing" could hardly be a professional purpose. Although it would be over-speculating to infer any common purpose for corporate blogging, it would be safe to conclude that the personal purpose overlaps the blog's purpose.

The initial definition of a blog provided in the introduction contained that "usually maintained by an individual" ("Blog", 2010) and although I did modify it – it is interesting to compare this notion to Table 4. It is clear that some people have appeared more central than others in relation to the blog, although the reasons vary and there is no way of concluding that this pattern does not apply in contexts other than the blog. Suffice to say that problems of sharing a blog between several persons do not seem to arise.

The implications are many and may seem diffused at a first glance. The reason being that they hint on a relation to learning organisations, but this relation is a complex one that takes many forms and exists on many different levels. Consequently, it is imperative not to exceed the boundaries that defines to which degree conclusions may be drawn. These boundaries are most clearly stated by the concepts used as scientific bases – namely corporate blogging and learning organisations.

Limitations

There are definitely possible limitations to the method of data analysis. With emphasis on possible. I choose not to separate thematic coding depending on who said what, neither do I stop counting the mentioning of a certain theme at any point. In theory, this means that a single participant with a clear agenda can repeat the very same theme four to five times and make it seem like a general trend rather than the participant's personal and most important view. Luckily there are a few ways of reasoning that point towards this still being the preferred method of choice:

- Even if one single participant has strong beliefs related to a certain theme this, at the very least, reflects that 20% (one participant out of five) cares strongly about a certain theme – that cannot be ignored.
- If it is likely that one of my participants will voice a certain theme very strongly it is not less likely than everyone else doing so, which may take out the "outlier tendency".
- Ouliers are everywhere. They are often identified with the eye or statistical tools. Whilst I reason around the result I am just as likely to identify the "flaws" around a certain theme as someone is to find outliers in a diagram.
- In Table 2 (under TOTAL) we can see how number of symbols produced in the transcribed interviews varied. Though it is in fact the concentrated meaning of what was said that make the analytical base, which is why Figure 4 should also be considered. Person X2 has more input X5 to code in respect to both tables, but – still considering this as a limitation – it should be viewed in relation to the next paragraph:
- If I was to nullify the magnitude of expressing a certain theme by dividing its occurrence with the total number of symbols used for each participant, and keep themes tied to specific participants instead of mixing them, I would ultimately end up with the same restricted data as if I had handed out a written survey – *without* participants being able to rank or rate *how much* they think something (e.g. a scale of one to seven). And being stuck with that type of nominal data would contradict the very purpose of this study.

It is noteworthy to consider that it is the depth that may distort my analysis – not the scope, i.e. it does not pose a problem if fewer individuals contribute with a wide scope of valuable information (that is in fact the very reason for choosing this method), but if someone was to contribute with a lot of information with a very limited scope it would indeed be troublesome. To keep this issue in check I compared the thematic interpretations to the original recordings to see how many persons agreed with a certain interpretation. In other words, the number of concentrated meaning codes that are accounted for under each theme defines the depth, whereas the number of persons agreeing with it defines the scope.

Another possible limitation worth considering is selection bias. One way of keeping this problem in check is to simply ask participants why they chose to take part in the study. I purposely placed this part of the interview after the recording iPod had been turned off, which is why I cannot present it as official data, but only say: the main reason for taking part was to support me with my thesis. A secondary reason was that the participant had an interest in the subject of blogging. On the basis of these reasons, there is apparently a few main reasons for taking part in the study, but on the other hand; it would be hard to imagine how these reasons could seriously skew the data.

The 42 themes identified vary from quite specific to rather general. Whereas one might say that I can freely control the level of specificity in order to fill a theme with numbers that would actually give me *very* limited frames to reason within. Hence, if the current themes and their content provide a sufficient base for reasoning they can hardly be considered neither too general nor too specific. I cannot see any tendencies of themes being more or less general depending on their number of contained meanings.

Beyond the selection of participants, the interviews themselves and the results; the coding itself, could very well be biased. To investigate this, two choices of method can be effectively used, according to this reasoning:

What participants say is true > the transcribed interview matches what participants said > the concentrated meanings represent the transcribed interviews > the concentrated meanings are correctly sorted under thematic interpretations > the thematic interpretations match what participants say.

First, I compare the thematic interpretations to the original recordings of the interviews. If they correspond, the rest of the chain should be correct. And even if there is an error along the way, it has not affected the data in a significant way. This represents what was said – the qualitative content, and as such the comparison is best carried out in a qualitative fashion; listening and comparing. Second, if the number of concentrated meanings correspond to the number of symbols used per person the proportion represented both in the transcribed interviews and the thematic interpretations should be correct. As this study does not have ambition nor structure to constitute the base of quantitative analysis, once again comparing Figure 4 (number of concentrated meaning codes per person) with Table 2 (number of symbols per question per person) should give us enough hint that proportionality is not a serious limitation.

Figure 5 displays examples of concentrated meanings. A natural limitation that inevitably accompanies the methodology is that even relatively straight-forward concentration of meanings such as this could very well be executed differently by another person with regard to his/her personal experience and perception. This limitation should however apply more to thematic categorisation (Table 6). Though when reading through the samples in Table 6 it should be kept in mind that everything is said within a context, which can either be completely discarded or embraced in an intuitive fashion. I choose the latter in order to not lose important data – even it means not being able to display the full context in a systematic way. Ultimately, regardless of both method and researcher, perfect validity with regard to universal objectivity cannot be accomplished (someone always reads something into something at some level), and as long is the reasoning remains sane the intuitive connections between themes and the interrelations between these connections should take precedence over themes as separated units and thereby result in fairly well-grounded reasoning.

It should be noted that I have worked as a consultant in the very department concerned in this study, which may be viewed as a double-edged sword, consisting of both strengths and drawbacks. It seems a tad bit more realistic that my relation with the participants in this study prompted honest opinions rather than dishonest ones. Of course, that depends not only on the formal relationship but also the nature of it; e.g. friendly, unfriendly, etc. Though I would not carry out this study if the nature of this relationship was extreme enough to severely affect the results in any reasonable way. A final thought would be considering:

- Opportunity: The relatively probable notion that a good relationship with the interviewees could contribute to an open and honest discussion.
- Risk: That there might be an individual that, as a result of me being his or her colleague, is prompted to change or modify answers.

It is noteworthy that the data analysed takes precedence over general opinions or reflections expressed by the interviewees. That is to say, there is no logically detectable risk unless a person actually *seeks* to take part in an interview and to *actively* modify *what* to say, *how* to say it, and for what *purpose* to say it. Such a sinister motive should not be seriously considered in research – it would be an unreasonable premise that could also apply to random samples. Although it does not seem very likely that this situation should pose a major problem in the sense of stimulating future research and reasoning around the phenomenon of corporate blogging. A word of caution should definitely be advised though; due to the *one true* fact that we cannot know for certain *if* or *how* my relationship with the interviewees might have affected the results.

It could also be mentioned that I, during the course of the blog pilot, have not analysed anything written by anyone, nor have I voiced my opinion in the matter.

Regardless, what the topic of corporate blogging needs right now is not a quagmire of information on a couple of variables, but rather on overview to work with and – perhaps – even apply. The core limitations of my study or best described as simple as the sample being *one* department, with *one* profession, with *one* type of blog, and *one* month's experience. That is to say, the profession and private experience of my participants most likely affect what they focus on, this specific blog could very well have prompted some system-specific issues not (or not *as*) present in other systems, and one month of experience with an internal blog cannot reflect the whole spectrum of corporate blogging.

The fact that any given interview question opens a restricted range that answers vary within also poses a problem. When comparing different themes a “true” difference cannot be identified for certain if you cannot determine that what prompted the answers had an equilibrium of answer-ranges. Alas, when conducting an exploratory study of this nature it is virtually impossible to control for this.

The concentrated meaning codes are not available amongst to the results due to their shear number and specificity – and more importantly; they decrease participants' anonymity and do not add anything in addition to the themes besides transparency of the process. I would like to ask the question: if there are errors in the coding process, will there not be errors later in the process? And if so, would the added transparency of presenting these codes really contribute to anything new? Maybe, but if so – the whole process of asking questions and transcribing interviews could also have to be included, which would reveal participants' identities. The line has to be drawn somewhere, and after considering my options I choose not to bewray the concentrated meanings.

This is not enough to make *inferences*. But plenty to *reason and speculate*.

Future research

Li (2005) found that different motivational patterns for blogging is related to actual patterns of activities engaged in on blogs. Among these are self-documentation as a predictor of feedback management, self-presentation, and readership expectation; and improving writing as a predictor for self-presentation and readership expectation. Drawing upon the implications of this study and that of Li, there seems to be a possibility that motivation could indirectly influence the developing of a learning organisation through blogging. If so, to what degree? Perhaps motivation may even an area of interest to quantify when considering implementation of a corporate blog.

A rather central tendency seems to revolve around obtaining information related to colleagues' activities, the wish to read concrete information, and the belief that some meetings could be favourably replaced by this kind of content. In relation to this future research may be able to unravel if this is a tendency of corporate blogging in general or this specific case, and if there is a more general trend implied, a pre-post measurement study investigating the affect of blogging on variables related to meeting purposes (e.g. meeting minutes, experienced level of knowledge regarding goings-on, cross-team transparency, etc.) may prove beneficial. Furthermore, the issue of "status reports" could potentially have influenced several aspects of this study, such as content type, tone-of-voice, blog climate, etc., which would lead to blog-implementing cases stating different purposes or not stating any purposes at all could provide clearer implications as to what the concept of "blogging" *naturally* carries into the corporate environment.

Lee, Hwang, & Lee (2006) investigated blogging strategies of the Fortune 500 companies and found that there seems to be a central tendency of top-down thinking, which contradicts the very essence of collaboration and could as such trifle the true use of corporate blogging. The principle of *comparing* different organisations with respect to blogging enables an opportunity to control for organisational factors e.g. culture when making comparisons, which could in turn bridge a gap between very specific research and rather general one.

The particular blog of this study is different from blogs of the private sphere described by e.g. Nowson & Oberlander (2006) and somewhat resembles descriptions made by Wattal et al. (2009) on adoption of corporate blogs. In addition to this, blogging is a phenomenon highly centered around private use (e.g. "Sveriges största blogg", 2010). Is there a clear line separating the private from the professional and, if so, could that line carry implications as to what purpose corporate blogging might serve in relation to expectations?

Obviously, the activity of blogging carries important implications in relation to group psychology. As an example, Gilbert et al. (2009) identify blogs as echo chambers; a polarisation of opinions (as referred to in Passer & Smith, 2007) seems to take place. This certainly carries powerful implications in relation to decision-making.

An important background that may not be identified in a few single sources of prior research is control, surveillance, and self-monitoring. We could consider both how the individual may be tracked and thereby supervised, but we can also reflect on how the individual self-consciously may monitor his or her own behavior. Batinic & Göritz (2009) discuss how social media may provide an important social-psychological research instrument. Why? Because of tracking and surveillance – once you put something on the web it not only stays there; it can be tracked, processed, and analysed by anyone. This goes for employees' posts and comments on a blog as well. Vivien Burr (2003) discusses the disciplinary power of the discourse – drawing upon the writings of Michel Foucault, meaning that the norms governing our behaviour hold a hidden power – the control us without us being aware of it. The blog discourse combined with the corporate discourse creates an interesting mix of something private and something public. It should also be added that Batanic & Göritz (2009) make in interesting point when discussing social tools such as blogging and their usefulness in research – perhaps new electronic communication channels could even benefit research in a more direct manner than the current databases do?

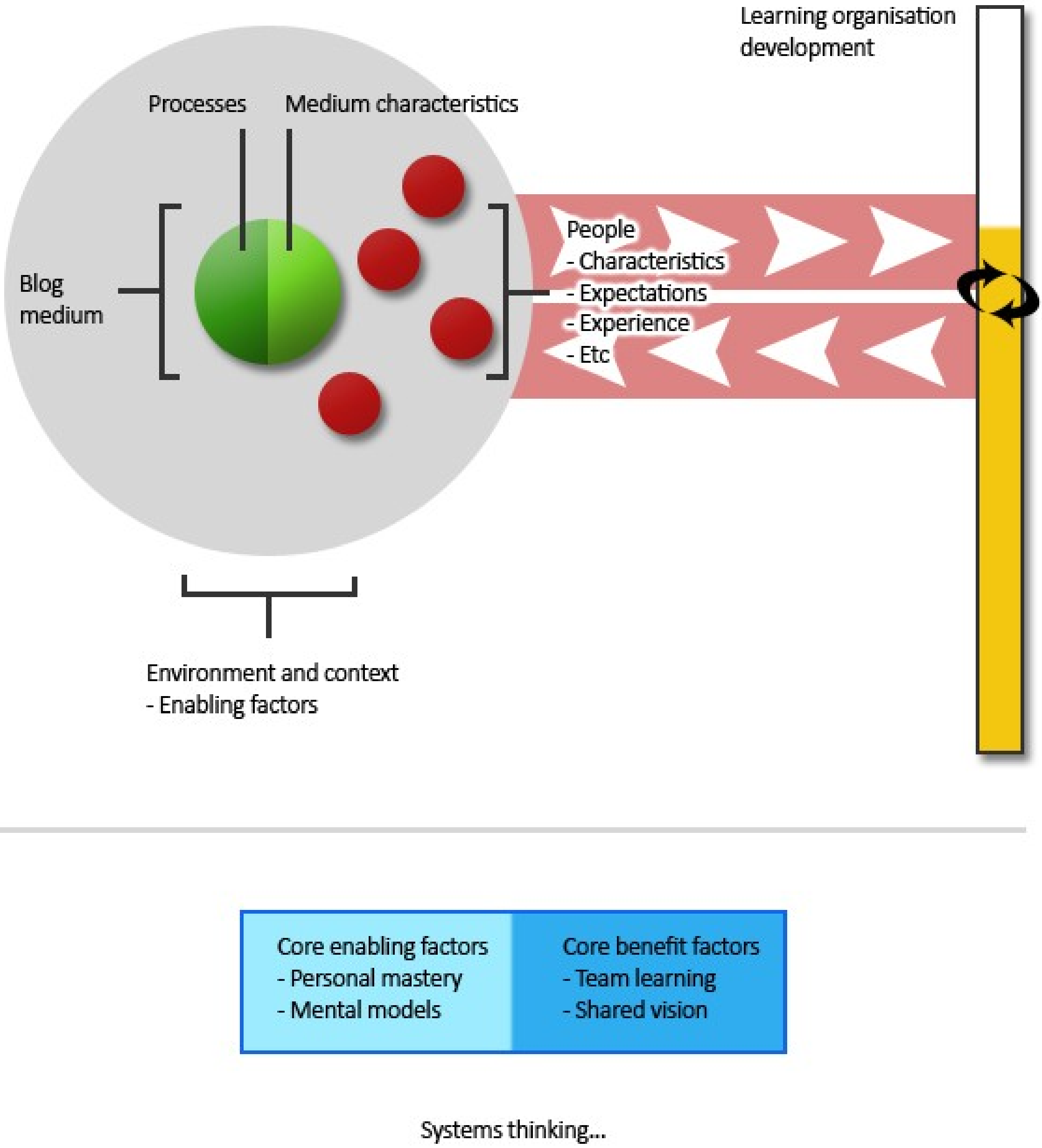
Perhaps the clue as to how corporate blogging is different from private blogging does not lay in "blogging", per say? If we turn our attention to personality research related to other channels such as e-mail and other kinds of social media – perhaps we can find some clues? This is precisely what Hertel et al. (2008) investigate, or more accurately: if shy people prefer to send e-mail to using other kinds of electronic communication channels (e.g. social media such as Facebook, blogging, etc.). The findings can basically be summarised in that extroverts prefer face-to-face communication, which could mean that they may tend to prefer more interactive alternatives to e-mail, such as social media (e.g. Facebook, blogging, etc.), while individuals high on neuroticism tend to prefer e-mail to a higher degree, which partly overlaps introverts. If placing this in the context of corporate blogging predicting adoption to some degree could be made possible.

As mentioned several times before, the topic of corporate blogging is ill-explored and suggestions for future research could be elaborated upon in many different ways and directions. And in the case of enormous potential it is sometimes easier to start off by merging existing theories together in hopes if creating greater understanding of novel phenomenons. The notion of connecting existing theories in order to fill in gap could make way for defining relevant variables to be further investigated and measured in more detail.

Conclusions

In reaching a coherent conclusion on a general, broad, and scarcely researched topic that serves the purpose of framing, integrating and identifying key concepts and generate hypothesis there is need for a somewhat restricted framework. The implications and limitations take form in Figure 6 – depicting an integrated approach whilst not stretching the boundaries of what would be reasonable to conclude, which I will return to later in my conclusion. The interview questions are based on theory on learning organisations in the form of Senges (1990) main disciplines, fused with research on blogging. Hence results pooled from the analysed data having been produced by means of the questions should represent reasonable conclusions within the theoretical and methodological boundaries.

Figure 6 Framework for implicated aspects of importance to corporate blogging



RQ1 – Can corporate blogging aid the development of a learning organisation? Under which conditions?

Considering the lack of feedback, managerial participation, and in relation to the specific blog which is the focus of this study personal mastery does not seem to be a primary benefit of building learning organisations through blogging. However, due to these issues being mentioned in a "requesting" sense they would be more likely to play a role in enabling and facilitating the process of blogging.

Mental models do not seem to be carry large benefits in relation facilitating blogging itself; blogging is not exactly the number one priority when a slot of available time appears, dialogues needed to review, retain, and build mental models are few, and the general tone seems more focused on building a positive atmosphere rather than prompting in-blog discussion. Having considered this, corporate blogging could hardly be said to directly facilitate organisational learning through affect on mental models. On the other hand, there seems to be quite a common view on discussions and dialogues as being engaged in *outside* of the blog, meaning that there could actually be reason to believe that the discipline of mental models may serve as an enabling factor for this blog. It is important to note that this blog is internal and bound to a single department with colleagues having each others' opinions within shouting distance, which seems like a logical and relatively agreed upon reason to why in-blog discussion and dialogue fall short.

The aforementioned building of consensus and a positive atmosphere may not promote processes related to mental models, but when combined with a sense of trust, avoidance of conflict, and a common perception of language it could reflect corporate blogging as an important factor in reaping the benefits of a shared vision. Alas, this reasoning has a possible thorn in its side – the hierarchic structure of the organisation could hinder the building of a shared vision. Though one may ask the question: Does blog structure necessarily resemble organisational structure? At this point; so it seems. But the answer to that question could prove to be different if the blog was open to all employees and shared amongst several departments. And while top-down imposing of visions are more likely to prevent the building of a truly shared vision (O'Keeffe, 2002), there should be only potential benefits in a top-down/bottom-up reciprocal participation.

The sense of agreement is rather clearly underlined on the blog, which can prompt team learning by creating a positive and supportive climate. However, managerial communication and feedback remains low on the blog, which could also be rather natural – if we would assume that discussions and dialogues generally take place beside the blog it would be odd to expect managerial feedback to take place in-blog, and colleagues' reactions to ones posts seem to be lacking in number albeit encouraging in abundance. It could hardly be said that this process facilitates deep-level learning, but taking the purpose of learning what ones colleagues are working on into account and adding the blog systems inherit advantage of making knowledge available, team learning could very well be said to be a potential benefit of corporate blogging when developing a learning organisation.

The interactions and frames of Figure 6 should be understood in light of the above. Blogging may be viewed as a medium, consisting of its own processes and inherit characteristics. These characteristics and processes act in the context of their environment, which enables them to exist and flow. Within this environment are people, with their set of characteristics, expectations, experiences, etc. This unity is enabled by core enabling factors regulating a blogs developmental pattern and pace, and what comes if it are the core benefit factors, which may regulate the developing of a learning organisation. However – the relationship is reciprocal; the level of core enabling factors constitutes a noteworthy base of a learning organisation. As such, the processes within these boundaries are of chaotic nature – they are hard to map but cannot be called random. This touches upon what may very well be the fifth discipline of corporate blogging. Systems thinking. Just as it could be said to govern the context in which the other disciplines of learning organisations grow and are understood (Senge, 1990) it is rather natural to view it is a, if not *the*, most prominent part in understanding corporate blogging. When considering this there is not necessarily an immediate need to know exactly how all processes interact. After all, it is called systems *thinking* – not systems *knowing*.

RQ2 – Based on the case study, what are the opportunities and obstacles of corporate blogging in relation to developing a learning organisation?

On the level of personal mastery, the obstacles lay getting individuals committed to learning through blogging. That is to say, in any form that a certain person may prefer – some are heavy content providers and some are heavy readers. Combining this simple fact of people being different (Hertel et al. 2008) with potential problems of forced learning (Senge, 1990) it seems clear that doors should be opened to people, but they should not be pushed through them. If individuals can be engaged on a level that suits them and this contributes to an active network of bloggers the learning could be substantial. Feedback from colleagues can further boost contributions to social media, and the lack of managerial feedback can trifle it (Brzozowski, Sandholm, & Hogg, 2009) – at some level, it seems that external validation acts as the pay-off for invested time.

An obstacle of some magnitude lies in the duality of building consensus, agreement and striving towards creating a positive climate. The building of a shared vision requires a setting such as this – the shared vision cannot simply be stated to exist in a top-down fashion (O'Keeffe, 2002), but must be genuinely shared (Senge, 1990) at all levels of the organisation (McHugh et al., 1998). On the other hand, the discipline of working with mental models requires self-scrutiny and a balance of inquiry and advocacy (Senge, 1990). If the hierarchic structure of an organisation seems hard to budge, an option may be to find ways of surpassing it in order to create a shared vision at all organisational levels.

The added learning that may occur in teams is enabled primarily through knowledge dissemination (McHugh et al., 1998), open communication (O'Keeffe, 2002), and effective ways of managing knowledge (Wang & Ahmet, 2003). As argued before, the blog inherently possess the knowledge dissemination trait. Still, why not further tap into this opportunity by not only considering how the knowledge shared and produced is initially made available, but to also how it could be actively distributed, or at least made as straightforwardly available as possible?

Neither corporate blogging nor social media is a self-given road to success with regard to learning, but rather catalysts to use when having a suitable base of knowledge, a clear plan, and a wide focus. Buying into the concept of social media as a solution without careful consideration of other factors could very well result in either catastrophe or success, depending more on the context than the solution itself. And if successful, the risk of attributing it to social media alone carries with it great problems when spreading to other organisations with other cultures, structures, employees, leaders, and values. This is why it is paramount to consider corporate blogging as a way of reaching a clear goal in relation to a specific organisation with its unique characteristics and particular situation.

A car is as good as its driver. But we do not yet know how well-versed at driving we are when it comes to corporate blogging – so it would be wise to keep investments low and start small. Let the organic structure grow itself and provide a good environment for it to do so. And make sure to know why it did/did not work and why the next project implementation could turn out differently.

RQ3 – Which are the relevant issues to focus future research on?

This question has been answered partly throughout this study but mainly under the heading devoted to Future research. Though a few words of consummation are in place.

Neither blogs nor Web 2.0 is the sole solution for creating the learning organisation 2.0, but may very well be one of the tools used to upgrade an already learning organisation from 1.0 to 2.0. Though perhaps in the future, research can focus more on instruments to fully utilise the full potential of blogs (e.g. Kolari et al., 2007) rather than to evaluate *if* and *what* potential they may have. Though at present, the phenomenon of corporate blogging might just be too young for that. At present, I believe that the chaotic processes moving through and withing the framework of Figure 6 are in the direst need of future research. Besides, learning more about these could likely spawn more detailed learnings as added understanding takes form – but the opposite may not be as true; getting to know the details before fully understanding the context could have strong applicable value in a set context, but it would be truly challenging to reach a higher understanding and therewith reach applicable value in the general context of corporate blogging and learning organisations.

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Appendix 1: Interview questions

Background	Want to tell me a little about your private and professional experience with blogging?
Writing	Can you tell me about a typical writing session?
Reading	Can you tell me about a typical reading session?
Functionality	Would you like to tell me about your other activities on the blog? - E.g. commenting, tag clouds, post-related, searching, updating profile... Everything besides writing and reading.
Personal mastery	What is your managers' opinion on blogging? How do you view the blog in regard to feedback? What do you primarily use the blog for? Whom do you interact with?
Mental models	Do you have as much time as you want to read and write on the blog? Could you describe the climate and tone on the blog? Do you engage in discussions and dialogues on the blog?
Shared vision	Do you feel that you can freely post anything you wish? Can you describe the language used on the blog? How would you describe the company's structure? E.g. flat or hierarchical?
Team learning	Do you think that there is a sense of agreement or disagreement on the blog? Can you describe how managers communicate on the blog? How do your colleagues react to your posts?
Systems thinking	Can you describe to what degree the blog should be open or closed? - Who should have access to do what? Can you describe how widespread a given blog should be? - Should it be tied to specific functions or departments, or more widespread?