



LUND UNIVERSITY

Experiencing the role of PBL tutor.

Lyberg Åhlander, Viveka; Lundskog, Margareta; Hansson, Kristina

Published in:
Clinical Linguistics & Phonetics

DOI:
[10.3109/02699206.2013.816371](https://doi.org/10.3109/02699206.2013.816371)

2014

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Lyberg Åhlander, V., Lundskog, M., & Hansson, K. (2014). Experiencing the role of PBL tutor. *Clinical Linguistics & Phonetics*, 28(1-2), 36-46. <https://doi.org/10.3109/02699206.2013.816371>

Total number of authors:
3

General rights

Unless other specific re-use rights are stated the following general rights apply:
Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal

Read more about Creative commons licenses: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/>

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

LUND UNIVERSITY

PO Box 117
221 00 Lund
+46 46-222 00 00

Developing as a PBL-tutor

Viveka Lyberg-Åhlander, Margareta Lundskog, Kristina Hansson

Department of Logopedics, Phoniatics & Audiology, Clinical Sciences Lund,
Lund University, Sweden

Corresponding author:

Viveka Lyberg Åhlander

Department of Logopedics, Phoniatics and Audiology

Clinical Sciences, Lund

Lund University Hospital

221 85 Lund

Sweden

Telephone: +46 46 17 27 xx

Fax: +46 46 17 17 32

E-mail: viveka.lyberg_ahlander@med.lu.se

Abstract

The tutor is important for student learning in the PBL-group. This is expressed by students in course evaluations, where they state the importance of the tutor's way of intervening. The tutor is expected to monitor and steer the group process and to support the students in their learning process, helping them to become aware of their own learning. The tutor's role is situated at a meta-level and the tutor's interventions have been shown to have an impact on both the productiveness and the effectiveness of the PBL group's work. The purpose of this study was to investigate the PBL-tutor's role. Five PBL tutors at the Speech/Language Pathology program at Lund University were interviewed regarding their view of the tutors' role and what support they need. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The analysis focused on finding patterns and variation regarding tutor-activity at different stages in the PBL-group and in their views of their progress as tutors. The results indicate that being a tutor is a balancing act and that the tutor need continuous support and input from different sources. Tutors should be encouraged to reflect on their own reactions and interventions and to be explicit and confident in their thoughts about PBL.

Keywords:

Tutoring, PBL, feedback, Communities of Practice

Background

The PBL tutor is important for student learning. A skilled tutor who is secure in her/his role can contribute significantly to the PBL groups' work, and thus to students' learning (Dolmans & Wolfhagen, 2005). It is therefore important to provide support and continued training to enable PBL tutors to feel secure and to progress in their role as tutors, and for the tutor to be able to adapt to the students' level of development. Many studies explore the tutor role (for an overview, see e.g. Dolmans, Gijsselaers, Moust, de Grave, Wolfhagen, & van der Vleuten, 2002) and what the tutor has to be able to do (e.g., Silver & Wilkerson, 1991; Schmidt & Moust, 1995; Tipping, 1995; Irby, 1996; de Grave, Dolmans, & Van Der Vleuten, 1999; Baroffio, Nendaz, Perrier, & Vu, 2007). Studies that explicitly focus on continued training and support to tutors are less common. Some exceptions are Holmes and Kaufman (1994), Kaufman and Holmes (1996), Wetzel (1996) and Tremblay, Tryssenaar and Jung (2001). Aiming at the development of a model for support and continued tutor training, we interviewed the tutors at the Audiology- and Speech and Language Pathology programs, Lund University about how they perceive their role, what support they do get and what support they need.

The importance of tutor competence is expressed by students in course evaluations, where they state the importance of the tutor's way of intervening. The tutor is preferred not to contribute content, but to monitor and, if necessary, steer the group process and to support and encourage the students in their learning process (e.g., Irby, 1996; Jung, Tryssenaar, & Wilkins, 2005; Kaufman & Holmes, 1996). The tutor should also help the students become aware of their own learning. The tutor's role is situated at a meta-level and the tutor's acts have been shown to have an impact on both the productiveness and the effectiveness of the PBL group's work (Dolmans & Wolfhagen, 2005). The tutor role is thus a different kind of teacher role (e.g., Irby, 1996; Wetzel, 1996; De Grave et al., 1999; Neville, 1999) and for

some it may be difficult to leave the traditional teacher role (Abrandt Dahlgren, Castensson & Dahlgren, 1998). It may also be difficult for the students to accept this role (Abrandt Dahlgren et al., 1998).

A question that has been discussed since the implementation of PBL is that of whether and to what degree the tutor needs content knowledge (for an overview, see De Grave et al., 2002; Dolmans et al., 2002). Schmidt (1994) distinguishes three conditions for tutor content knowledge: 1. non-expert; 2. semi-expert (general knowledge) and 3. subject expert. Some authors argue that content knowledge can entail a risk for the tutor to be more directive and for tutor-student interactions to dominate the PBL-session (e.g., Silver & Wilkerson, 1991) whereas others emphasize that content knowledge is important (e.g. Wilkerson, 1994; Schmidt & Moust, 1995; De Grave et al., 1999; Dolmans et al., 2002), even if many studies have shown that teacher expertise is unrelated to student's success in learning (Wilkerson, 1994).

In studies on PBL tutors' view on their tutor-role the tutors often emphasize that they enjoy being tutors (e.g., Kaufman & Holmes, 1996; Tremblay et al., 2001; Jung et al., 2005). But what kind of support do they need in order to be able to handle the task and to continue enjoying it? According to Silén (2006) "...tutor training is an ongoing process." But after introductory courses, usually focusing mainly on underlying rationale and skills, there are very few chances for ongoing tutor education and for a platform to focus on the tutor's own process, which is also needed (Irby, 1996). A continuous effort to develop teacher competence is crucial for being able to develop and sustain the quality of the educational program (Baroffio et al., 2007). Furthermore, a "community of practice" is important for joint development and joint learning (Wenger, 1998) and PBL tutors need tutor networks (Tremblay et al., 2001).

Several studies also mention the importance of instructing students about PBL and about how to behave in the PBL group (Tipping, 1995; Wetzel, 1996). These two goals should be combined, since, according to Baroffio et al. (2007), the students' perception and understanding of the tutor's skills is enhanced when the tutor receives continued education.

Purpose

The general purpose of the study was to explore the PBL tutors' role with a special focus on the need for support and training using data from semi-structured interviews with tutors regarding their view of their PBL-tutor role. More specifically we wanted to find out what they perceive as challenging/demanding and what support they need.

Method

The goal was to describe the participants' subjective experiences and views using their own words. The general question was 'What are your experiences of being a PBL-tutor at the audiology and speech-language pathology (SLP) programs in Lund?' Subquestions were 'What is your background as a PBL-tutor?' 'What are the causes for rejoicing and distress as a PBL-tutor?' 'With what interventions and background knowledge can you best support the students in their PBL-work and learning?' 'What kind of support and education do you need in order to be a competent PBL-tutor who enjoys your mission?' (see the Appendix).

Context

The SLP program at Lund University is a four-year program, admitting 24 new students each fall. PBL has been the main pedagogical model since 1990 and is today also the main pedagogical model at the Medical Faculty, Lund University. The audiology program is separate from the SLP program, but is taught at the same department since 1998, and has

since then also applied PBL as the main pedagogical model. This program is also a four-year program and admits new 16 students each fall.

The students are introduced to PBL principles, PBL methodology and learning through a lecture in an introductory course when first entering the program. During this course they also work with a PBL-scenario in program mixed groups. During the first two semesters, the students of the two programs take the same basic courses in psychology, linguistics and phonetics. These courses are taught at the Departments of Psychology and Linguistics, where PBL is not applied. The theoretical courses in SLP and audiology during semesters 3-7 are taught using PBL. These courses are separate for the two programs, thus, the PBL-groups are not mixed. At the beginning of the 3rd semester, there is an updating lecture to remind the students of the PBL methodology and a follow-up during semester 4. PBL-meetings are three-hour sessions held weekly, or every other week, depending on what other activities the students may have (e.g. clinical education). The students also have two to three lectures every week and different types of group activities and clinical skills training.

The PBL-groups consist of 8-9 students and the group constellations are usually changed each semester. The tutor is always present. The group selects a chairperson and a secretary before the introduction of the scenario. The structure of the meetings follows the “seven-jumps” model (Gijsselaers, 1995): The first jump is the introduction of the scenario, which is presented visually (texts, pictures or film clips) or auditory (sound tracks). In the second jump the group agrees on a description of the problem description. Following, there is 5-10 minutes brainstorming session. In the fourth jump the group systematizes the ideas and concepts brought up during the brainstorming, and hypotheses are formulated. In jump 5 the group formulates questions which need to be answered in order to be able to evaluate and discuss the hypotheses. The session closes with a general evaluation or an evaluation of some aspect of the day’s work. The evaluation is initiated by the tutor. The tutor is responsible for

the choice of evaluation theme and also monitors the evaluation round in which every group member in turn is given the opportunity to give voice to their thoughts, feelings and reflections. In jump 6, which is carried out in-between PBL-sessions, the students collect information regarding their questions and learning outcomes. Jump 7, during which the students discuss and evaluate the information they have found and what they have learnt, is carried out at the beginning of the next PBL-session and is followed by a new scenario.

As a consequence of the collaboration between the two college programs, the tutor is sometimes an SLP and sometimes an audiologist. All PBL-tutors have taken courses in PBL-methodology and in PBL-tutoring, usually offered and held by the University or the Faculty of Medicine. New PBL tutors often have experience from PBL as students themselves. The group of active tutors, at the time of data collection consisting of 9 teachers, who are either audiologists or SLPs have monthly lunch meetings to discuss principles of tutoring and assessment of student performances and make sure there is a consensus regarding practice. Every semester there is one longer meeting held to discuss specific themes. These meetings function as internal continuing training for the tutors.

Participants and Data

Five PBL-tutors from the Department of Logopedics, Phoniatics and Audiology participated. At the time, a total of 9 tutors were active at the department, among whom three were the authors of this paper. Five of the remaining tutors were included and interviewed. The sixth tutor did not have the possibility to take part due to logistics. The tutors had between three and 20 years of experience as tutors at the SLP and audiology programs. The tutor with the shortest experience had been educated through PBL herself, during the SPL program. All tutors had gone through one or more formal courses on the basic principles of PBL and PBL tutoring. All were women. Details about the tutors and their experience and

education are presented in Table 1. Most of them have experience as PBL tutors for their own profession and for the other.

[Table 1. about here]

An independent person, outside the department, with experience of qualitative interviewing performed an interview with each of the tutors using open, semi-structured questions. Each interview lasted around 30 minutes. The interviews took shape as conversations, where the interviewer asked the tutors to respond to the questions (listed in the Appendix). They were recorded on MiniDisc and were transcribed by a second independent person. Four of the interviews were performed in June 2009 and one in August 2009.

The conversations focused on how the individuals view their role and duties as tutors, what they find difficult, challenging and fun and on what support they do receive and need. Each specific question is listed in the Appendix. The participants were informed about the purpose of the study and how the data will be used. The authors are part of the same collegiate tutor group. Complete anonymity was therefore impossible, even if efforts were made to making identification less obvious, using an independent interviewer and transcriber. The participants were well informed about this.

Analysis

The analysis was performed by the three authors, who are speech-language pathologists (SLPs) with long experience as teachers in SLP and as PBL-tutors at the SLP and audiology programs. The first author is also an educational developer at the Center for Educational Development, Lund University. Before the analysis, the interviews were coded to increase the objectivity of the analysis process. All three authors independently read the

interviews and identified relevant quotes (nodes). Thereafter, each node was discussed for its' intrinsic meaning and relevance. Following, one of the authors separated the nodes from the transcribed text. The authors independently, grouped the nodes into tentative non-overlapping categories, after which the final categories and themes were thoroughly discussed and decided in consensus. There was a large agreement between the authors in selection of statements/nodes as well as in suggested categories. The process from quotes to themes also emerges from Table 2.

[Table 2 about here]

Results

From the transcribed interviews, 104 nodes were identified as meaningful. A 'node' denotes a quote from the interviews. The nodes were grouped into categories and from these categories five themes emerged:

- Potential pitfalls
- Expert knowledge
- Difficulties and Challenges
- Students progression
- Input for the tutor's development

The themes presented below, are illustrated with quotes that are representative for each specific theme, emerging from one or more categories. All themes showed in all interviews, though with varying emphasis. The quotes are translated from Swedish to English as verbatim as possible.

Potential pitfalls

There are several potential pitfalls in the work with the PBL group. The pitfalls that the tutors identified all had to do with defining and being consistent in the tutor role and the attitude and engagement. The tutors agreed that it is of great importance to cautiously reflect on one's own role. One pitfall that was recurrently mentioned was the risk of viewing oneself as a member of the group. In some sense staying at the side of the group and not viewing oneself as one more group-member seems crucial in order to be able to view the group's actions from a meta-perspective. It also helps when the group needs to be encouraged to work itself out of a passive stage: "And it's at that point you leave this 'tea-party', that it is somehow not enough to just sit there together, there are a set of game rules that the tutor needs to bring forward." (P4) Furthermore, several of the tutors mention that the tutor needs to be aware that the tutor role is not equal to the traditional directive teacher's role. This is expressed as not to be too dominant; not to intervene with the students' learning process through "lecturing" and providing facts or to intervene too often, but to help the students with their learning process through challenging questions. "I'm not there as a teacher, I'm there as a tutor. That's actually, I think, what's most important. Not to be too dominant, remember that you are a tutor and not a teacher, I think is the most important, actually." (P4). Four of the five interviewees expressed the opinion that it is better not to have a role that is too strongly associated with the theoretical topic (course leader or examiner). "You can't really keep the distance [---] you have a connection to the theoretical content and then it is harder to observe, so to say, the group-process" (P2).

The tutor needs to show interest in the group process and in the topic itself to encourage the students to take part in the group work. In that way some of the tutors express that it is easier to have general knowledge, i. e. some relation to the theoretical content. The tutor's attitude is thus of importance. Finally, a haughty attitude hinders a permitting discussion climate.

Expert Knowledge

Whether or not you are an expert is a relative concept and depends on how you define "expert". The strictest degree is being an expert within the particular field of audiology/speech language pathology – in contrast to other audiologists/SLPs. The next degree is to be an audiologist/speech-language pathologist, not being an expert in that particular area (but you have at least a basic knowledge about it) – in contrast to, in our case, an audiologist tutoring SLP students or an SLP tutoring audiology students. Still, we do know quite a lot about each others' areas, so an audiologist is more knowledgeable about certain areas of SLP and vice versa than, for example, a nurse would be. Some of the variation in views of the role of expert was due to differences in definition and several of the tutors commented on this. Expert knowledge can both hinder and help. The advantage of not being an expert has to do with the expectations from the students: "I don't have to face so many searching eyes, waiting for the wise answer" (P3). On the other hand being an expert can also be a process-tool: "perhaps it is most important at the initial stage that you have a deeper knowledge so that you somehow can help them onto the right track from the start." (P1). And not unimportantly, expertise can make the tutor feel safe.

Difficulties and challenges

The tutor work is complex and challenging at different levels. The interviewees express both organizational – logistic difficulties as well as difficulties that concern the handling of conflicts and inequalities in the group, inequalities meaning e.g. large differences between the students' level of activity, students' capacity and varying level of competence. Examples of the organizational difficulties are to have to cope with an overly large group (>10) and a poor teaching environment. Groups with a large number of students are avoided,

but may, however, sometimes prevail due to economical or logistic reasons. A malfunctioning PBL scenario is also seen as difficult and is cause for frustration for both students and tutor: "...then it gets complicated, when the scenario somehow is too poor and they are misled in their discussions and you somehow have to wait and see if someone manages to bring them back [---]" (P4). This is also an example of one of the difficulties most commonly mentioned: to intervene or not; how and when. "Yes, but it's this balancing act, eh, when to, what to say, whether to say something and how to put it. I mean, it is, you have to, I think, weigh each word" (P1). The summative evaluation of each session is also seen as a challenge. The aim is to give the students feedback on their performance and to help them reflect on a relevant issue, related to the group's interaction and work. The challenge lies in how to evaluate, especially more delicate issues. A quite different challenge is to find out what to feed back when nothing extraordinary has happened.

Students' progression

The tutors expressed that one of the true benefits of the tutor-work is to have the opportunity to follow the students' progression during both individual courses and through the course of the educational program. The tutors express a great satisfaction in the possibility to observe the students developing and maturing at both personal and intellectual levels. "In the end, you know, the students work almost independently. [---] They have learned, towards the end, to take care of each other as human beings and still be able to argue objectively." (P4). On a personal note, the tutor perceives that with time the students get better at being active, taking up space and leading the group. On the intellectual-professional side the tutors express that with time the students focus more on the PBL topic and less on relations, they use more professional language and refer more directly to clinical work/reality. The tutor further perceives that the students get increasingly better at problem solving.

Input for the tutor's development

The theme “input for the tutor's development” emerged from six categories: 1) methodology 2) the students' readiness and knowledge of the method 3) feedback from students 4) colleagues 5) self reflection and 6) scholarship.

The tutor needs constant and varying input for the personal and professional development and to avoid stagnating. The tutor experience a development in several stages: enthusiastic novice – weariness – renewed enthusiasm. One of the more experienced tutors (>20 yrs) expressed the shifts that take place with time: “it is a process [...] as you go from great enthusiasm, that it then cools off and you think it's pretty boring, that you are regenerated and find it fun again.” (P4). The process of self-reflection comes naturally with the input from colleagues, students and literature. Continuing discussion and training is important and helps develop scholarship. “The primary education you had is not enough to live off, it needs to happen recurrently [...] you need to re-fill, discuss and renew.” (P4).

Discussion and evaluation of one's own experiences takes place both informally and formally. However, the reoccurring collegial lunch meetings that are organized at the department are of great importance and highly valued. “I think that the discussions we have here in our PBL-tutor group are very valuable. It is very rewarding to discuss both high and low.” (P1). Many of the tutors express a wish for using colleagues as “critical friends” (Handal, 1999) to get more direct feedback on the practical matters when supervising the group. Another aspect of the collegial meetings is the possibility to share and deepen the knowledge about the method: “When you've been doing PBL for a long time, to take the next step into scholarship. Simply, researching [---] That has a spin off effect for everyone else too” (P4). But of course the colleagues are of great importance for getting things off one's chest informally as well: The students' feedback is of great importance for the tutor's development and learning: “When I have dared to interfere with the group and be a little harsh

and more demanding and explain how I want them to work, then the evaluations have often been very positive.”(P4).

The stance that the tutor has to take to the students is to a great extent driven by the students’ readiness and knowledge about the PBL method. “But there's been times along the way, where they have had lectures and we have told them why PBL is important for learning” (P4).

Discussion

The tutor role is both rewarding and challenging and requires a different set of skills compared to the traditional teacher role. According to McCaughan (2008) “it has been argued that assuming a PBL facilitator role often requires an adjustment in the teacher role that is difficult for many to adopt” (McCaughan, 2008, p1). Educators who take on the tutor-role generally take an introductory course to learn the basic principles of the PBL model. The interviewees in the present study, however, clearly express the need for continuing support and the help they get from the feedback from different sources. They report that they are helped by continuing contextual discussions concerning the tutoring task and –role both for the individual’s development and to motivate the tutors in their every-day work. There is a close relationship between the tutor’s activities, the input the tutor receives from different sources and the group’s performance. Indeed, Savin-Baden and Major (2004) emphasize the teacher development as one of the key factors to PBL’s success. In this present study, the interviewees further point out sources of input and also obstacles in PBL work. Since all the interviewees have been working cross-curricular, tutoring PBL groups in both speech-language pathology and audiology, the issue of expert – non expert frequently surfaces. The tutors express both the support and comfort given by being familiar with the content and at the same time that they tend more to the group’s process when being a non-expert. Both

aspects are supported by the literature (Silver & Wilkerson, 1991; Schmidt, 1994; Wilkerson, 1994; De Grave et al., 1999; De Grave et al., 2002; Groves, Rego, & O'Rourke, 2005) although, Dolmans et al. (2002) state in a summarizing paper that they find it impossible to draw any firm conclusions on what to recommend. In common with the findings by Schmidt, Van Der Arend, Moust, Koxk and Boon (1993) the interviewees mention that there may be more need of content-expertise early in the students' learning process. We may conclude that the need for content and facilitating skills varies during the progression of an educational program, a conclusion that is given support by a study on students' views of PBL work and the tutors' contributions (Lyberg Åhlander & Hansson, 2011).

Sources of challenge or frustration mentioned by the group, such as malfunctioning scenarios, teacher role and the constant balancing act between intervening or not, are also reported by others (Kaufman & Holmes, 1996; Wetzel, 1996; Dolmans et al., 2002). The students of course are an important source of feedback both indirectly through their actions and non-verbal communication, and directly through the summarizing evaluation after each session. A perspective that is not so commonly mentioned in the literature is the feedback that comes from a longitudinal perspective. The tutors in this study also all have the possibility to observe the students throughout the educational programs. They report that a constant source of joy and positive feedback is the opportunity to follow the students' progress from freshman status to professional individuals. Through the thorough introduction and discussions on learning in general and the PBL method in particular, the students are well prepared to give feedback and discuss both their own and the tutor's efforts. Prosser (2004) underlines the importance of the introduction of the method to the students. McCaughan (2008) found a statistically significant relationship between the tutors' pedagogical beliefs and their comfort with PBL facilitation techniques. Further, the co-play between the tutors' interventions based on their pedagogical stance, and the students' actions are discussed by Dolmans et al. (2002)

and Dolmans and Wolfhagen (2005). Thus, the quality of the group's work and the need for tutor intervention are dependent on the way the students are prepared for the PBL method (Prosser, 2004) and on the training of the tutors and the tutor's view of students learning. The interviewees report that the recurring workshops and lectures covering learning and the PBL method seem to have increased the quality of the students' work in our PBL context and that the collegial lunch meetings held every month are of great importance for the possibility to follow and discuss interventions needed to enhance the students' performance.

As shown by a number of studies (e.g., Irby, 1996; Kaufman & Holmes, 1996; Tremblay et al., 2001; Dolmans & Wolfhagen, 2005; Jung et al., 2005; Dolmans, Janssen-Noordman, & Wolfhagen, 2006; Spronken-Smith & Harland, 2009) a continuous training is crucial for the development of the individual tutor as well as for faculty development. Irby (1996) suggests a comprehensive developmental program which the components include instructional development, professional development, leadership development and organizational development. Irby (1996) also suggests that the progression of PBL tutors can be seen in steps ranging from learning to understand and value the rationale for PBL to scholarship. Our group is largely at the later stages (they have the understanding, knowledge and skills) where the best form of continuous training is seminar-type activities to give opportunities for sharing of problems (and successes!) and experiences, i.e. with focus on process rather than on skills. Spronken-Smith and Harland (2009) discuss the tutor-groups in terms of "Communities of Practice" (COP), adapted from Lave and Wenger (1991). In a COP, learning is situated in a social context where actions and collaborations are shared within a common enterprise such as tutors in different content contexts. A tutor-group involving PBL-tutors in planning and implementing; in formulating their own questions; influencing content of meetings and to focus on individual or collegial reflection is truly in harmony with the PBL philosophy. Jung et al. (2005) showed through interviews with novice tutors that "the

tutors needed to share and analyze their stories in a safe and supportive environment”, i.e. a COP. We want to underline, based on our results that this should apply not only to novice tutors, but also to experienced ones. To take tutor education seriously, intending to support and develop the tutors’ understanding of PBL and their role and behavior at a meta-level (Irby, 1996) there is a need for continuous and varied activities and new ideas, e.g. through observation, (“critical friend”; Handal, 1999). Of course differences in view of the PBL method should be discussed, also to be able to meet doubts and questions from the students. Further, the importance of ‘water hole wisdom’, i.e. the opportunity to share stories and good practice, should not be underestimated (Jung et al., 2005).

There are some methodological considerations concerning the limited number of interviewees and the objectivity of the study’s analysis. At the time of the study, only nine tutors were active in the SPL educational program, whereof three were the authors of this paper. We considered it of great importance to explore a group of tutors that all worked in the same educational context and therefore chose not to include tutors from other educational programs or Higher Education Institutions. One may further, discuss the objectivity of the process, the authors being a part of the same tutor group as the interviewees. Even if efforts were made to make identification less obvious, using an independent interviewer and transcriber and analyzing the transcribed interviews as blindly as possible, complete anonymity is probably impossible.

Conclusions

The results indicate that being a tutor entails a balancing act and that the tutor needs continuous support and input from different sources. Tutors should be encouraged to reflect on their reactions and interventions and to be explicit and confident in their thoughts about PBL. When the tutors are trained in tutoring techniques and know the basic principles and

theory behind the PBL method, it becomes increasingly important for the tutors to meet, discuss and reflect, both formally and informally. The existence of such Communities of Practice seems to be of great importance in order to enhance and continuously inspire the tutoring in PBL groups.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to the Medical Faculty, Lund University for financial support. We are further greatly indebted to the tutors and the tutor group. Thanks to Lotta Åbjörnsson, educational developer at the Center for Educational Development at Lund University who performed the interviews, to reg. SLP, Karin Öjehagen for the transcription of the interviews and to Susanna Whitling for valuable help with revising the language

References

- Abrandt Dahlgren, M., Castensson, R., & Dahlgren, L.. (1998). PBL from the teachers' perspective. Conceptions of the tutor's role within problem based learning. *Higher Education, 36*, 437-447.
- Baroffio, A., Nendaz, M. R., Perrier, A., & Vu, N. V. (2007). Tutor training, evaluation criteria and teaching environment influence students' ratings of tutor feedback in problem-based learning. *Adv Health Sci Educ Theory Pract, 12*(4), 427-439. doi: 10.1007/s10459-006-9008-4
- De Grave, W. S., Dolmans, D. H. J. M., & Van Der Vleuten, C. P. M. (1999). Profiles of effective tutors in problem-based learning: scaffolding student learning. *Medical Education, 33*(12), 901-906. doi: 10.1046/j.1365-2923.1999.00492.x
- De Grave, W. S., Dolmans, D. H. J. M., & van der Vleuten, C. P. M. (2002). Student Perspectives on Critical Incidents in the Tutorial Group. *Advances in Health Sciences Education, 7*(3), 201-209. doi: 10.1023/a:1021104201303

- Dolmans, D. H. J. M., Gijselaers, W. H., Moust, J. H. C., de Grave, W. S., Wolfhagen, I. H. A. P., & van der Vleuten, C. P. M. (2002). Trends in research on the tutor in problem-based learning: conclusions and implications for educational practice and research. *Medical Teacher, 24*, 173-180.
- Dolmans, D., & Wolfhagen, I. (2005). Complex interactions between tutor performance, tutorial group productivity and the effectiveness of PBL units as perceived by students. *Advances in Health Sciences Education, 10*, 253-261.
- Dolmans, D. H. J. M., Janssen-Noordman, A., & Wolfhagen, H. A. P. (2006). Can students differentiate between PBL tutors with different tutoring deficiencies? *Medical Teacher, 28*(6), e156-e156. doi: 10.1080/01421590600776545
- Gijselaers, W. (Ed.). (1995). *Perspectives on problem-based learning*. Dordrecht, Kluwer.
- Groves, M., Rego, P., & O'Rourke, P. (2005). Tutoring in problem-based learning medical curricula: the influence of tutor background and style on effectiveness. *BMC Medical Education, 5*(1), 20.
- Handal, G. (1999). Kritiske venner: bruk av interkollegial kritik innen universitetene. Linköping: Institutionen för reglerteknik, Linköpings universitet.
- Holmes, D. B., & Kaufman, D. M. (1994). Tutoring in problem-based learning: a teacher development process. *Medical Education, 28*(4), 275-283. doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2923.1994.tb02712.x
- Irby, D. M. (1996). Models of faculty development for problem-based learning. *Advances in Health Sciences Education, 1*(1), 69-81. doi: 10.1007/bf00596230
- Jung, B., Tryssenaar, J., & Wilkins, S. (2005). Becoming a tutor: exploring the learning experiences and needs of novice tutors in a PBL programme. *Medical Teacher, 27*, 606-612.

- Kaufman, D. M., & Holmes, D. B. (1996). Tutoring in problem-based learning: perceptions of teachers and students. *Medical Education*, 30(5), 371-377.
- Lave, J. & Wenger, E. (1991) *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Lyberg Åhlander, V. & Hansson, K. (2011). Learning with PBL – frustrating or fun? The Student's Voice on Progression in Generics and Learning through Problem Based Learning (PBL) in Relation to the Tutor's Interventions. Rapport, Högskolepedagogiskt project.
- McCaughan, K. L. (2008). *Problem-based Learning tutors' beliefs and challenges*. Dissertation/Thesis. Retrieved from http://lu.summon.serialssolutions.com/link/0/eLvHCXMwA20DtjRJNDUwTjFKBHaSzSws0ywtkgwsUpOSLVITU83AF8FEhBr5OJqHulj6IJXmbqIMcm6ulc4eurBSMT4IJwd0USKwVQEsbQ0NxRhYgJ3iVL6o6wLpQoxOxTtk31wIdJG_DgA43x4r
- Neville, A. (1999). The problem-based learning tutor: Teacher? Facilitator? Evaluator? . *Medical Teacher* 21, 393-401.
- Prosser, M. (2004). A student learning perspective on teaching and learning, with implications for problem-based learning. *European Journal of Dental Education*, 8, 51-58.
- Savin-Baden, M., Major, C. H., & Society for Research into Higher, E. (2004). *Foundations of problem-based learning*. Maidenhead: Society for research into higher education & Open university press.
- Schmidt, H. G. (1994). Resolving inconsistencies in tutor expertise research: does lack of structure cause students to seek tutor guidance? *Academic Medicine*, 69(8), 656-662.
- Schmidt, H. G., & Moust, J. H. (1995). What makes a tutor effective? A structural-equations modeling approach to learning in problem-based curricula. *Academic medicine* :

- journal of the Association of American Medical Colleges*, 70(8), 708-714. doi:
10.1097/00001888-199508000-00015
- Schmidt, H.G., Van Der Arend, A., Moust, J.H., Koxx, I. & Boon, L. (1993). Influence of tutors' subject-matter expertise on student effort and achievement in problem-based learning. *Academic Medicine*, 68(10), 784-791.
- Silén, C. (2006). The tutor's approach in base groups (PBL). *Higher Education*, 51, 373-385.
- Silver, M., & Wilkerson, L. (1991). Effects of tutors with subjects expertise on the problem-based tutorial process. *Academic Medicine*, 66, 298-330.
- Spronken-Smith, R., & Harland, T. (2009). Learning to teach with problem-based learning. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 10(2), 138-153. doi:
10.1177/1469787409104787
- Tipping, J. (1995). Using Faculty and Student Perceptions of Group Dynamics to Develop Recommendations for PBL Training. *Academic Medicine*, 70(11), 1050-1052.
- Tremblay, M., Tryssenaar, J., & Jung, B. (2001). Problem-based learning in occupational therapy: why do health professionals choose to tutor? *Medical Teacher*, 23(6), 561-566. doi: 10.1080/01421590120090989
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning and Identity*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Wetzel, M. (1996). Developing the role of the tutor/facilitator. *Postgraduate Medical Journal* 72, 474-477.
- Wilkerson, L. (1994). The next best thing to an answer about tutors' content expertise in PBL. *Academic Medicine*, 69(8), 646-648.

Appendix 1. Interview questions

1. Education/experience

For how long have you been a PBL-tutor?

What formal instruction in/about PBL have you received?

Have you experienced PBL as a student?

2. Fun/difficult

What are the stimulating/exciting aspects of being a PBL-tutor?

What are the difficulties with being a PBL-tutor?

Which contributions/interventions do you find most difficult?

3. Student-support/obstacles/expert knowledge

What do you consider important contributions from you as a PBL-tutor to help/support the students in their work with PBL and in their learning?

What tutor behaviors do you think are likely to obstruct the students' PBL-work/learning?

What is your view on the necessity of having expert knowledge as a PBL-tutor?

4. Development/tutor support/requirements

What kind of support/continuing education would you like in order to be able to develop in your role as a PBL-tutor?

What kind of support/continuing education would you need in order to keep (or start) finding being a PBL-tutor to be a stimulating task?

What kind of support/education do you get? How could it be developed?

Do you have any thoughts regarding changes you would like to see regarding PBL-tutorship?

What is your view on the function of the PBL-tutor group? The climate in the group?

Table 1 description of the participants

Interviewee	Profession	Experience as a PBL-tutor	Courses	Comments
P1	SLP	Three semesters	One course	Experience of PBL as a student
P2	SLP	20 years	Several courses	
P3	Audiologist	10 years	Three courses	
P4	SLP	20 years	Two courses	
P5	SLP	20 years	One course	

Table 2. Description of the process of the transforming of nodes to themes.

Quote/Node	→ Category	→ Theme
<p>“And it’s at that point you leave this “tea-party”, that it is somehow not enough to just sit there together, there are a set of game rules that the tutor needs to bring forward”</p>	<p>→ View oneself as an equal member of the group</p>	<p>→ Potential pitfalls</p>
<p>“I’m not there as a teacher, I’m there as a tutor. It’s actually, I think, the most important....”</p>	<p>→ Act as a teacher</p>	<p>→</p>
<p>“The primary education you had is not enough to live off, it needs to happen recurrently [...] your need to re-fill, discuss and renew.”</p>	<p>→ Self reflection/Scholarship</p>	<p>→</p>
<p>“When I have dared to interfere with the group and be a little tough and more demanding and explain how I want them to work, the evaluations have often been very positive”</p>	<p>→ Feedback from students</p>	<p>→ Input for the tutors’ development</p>