

Creative Skills Supported by Multidisciplinary Learning: Case Innovation Course at the Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences

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Abstract : This paper presents findings from a multidisciplinary course (bachelor level) implemented at Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences, Finland. The course aims to develop innovative thinking of students, by having projects given by companies, using design thinking methods as a tool for creativity and by integrating students into multidisciplinary teams working on the given projects. The course is obligatory for all first year bachelor students across four faculties (business and culture, food and agriculture, health care and social work, and technology). The course involves around 800 students and 30 pedagogical coaches, and it is implemented as an intensive one-week course each year. The paper discusses the pedagogy, structure and coordination of the course. Also, reflections on methods for the development of creative skills are given. Experts in contemporary, global context often work in teams, which consist of people who have different areas of expertise and represent various professional backgrounds. That is why there is a strong need for new training methods where multidisciplinary approach is at the heart of learning. Creative learning takes place when different parties bring information to the discussion and learn from each other. When students in different fields are looking for professional growth for themselves and take responsibility for the professional growth of other learners, they form a mutual learning relationship with each other. Multidisciplinary team members make decisions both individually and collectively, which helps them to understand and appreciate other disciplines. Our results show that creative and multidisciplinary project learning can develop diversity of knowledge and competences, for instance, students' cultural knowledge, teamwork and innovation competences, time management and presentation skills as well as support a student's personal development as an expert. It is highly recommended that higher education curricula should include various studies for students from different study fields to work in multidisciplinary teams.

Keywords : multidisciplinary learning, creative skills, innovative thinking, project-based learning

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