

Sesjon 5

Notes form session 5: *Innovative pedagogy, didactics and learning – learning about and through innovative learning processes*

This session was offered in English.

Chair:

Niels Henrik Helms, director of the Knowledge Lab, University of Southern Denmark, SDU

The Chair gave an introductory presentation in which he raised the following questions: “What is Creativity – Innovation? Can it be learned? Followed by a tentative definition, which entails the practice of turning potential into accepted new forms, innovation was explained as turning creativity into new practice(s). In the endeavour to trigger off a discussion, the chair claimed that those who benefit most from education are people who already have some education. These people are the most frequent users of adult education (AE). This raises the question of inclusion. How do we involve people in AE and open up to creativity and innovation?

He further claimed that both educational institutions and enterprises are rather conservative in their practices which means that creativity and innovation are not given much space in such contexts except in extracurricular activities. Creativity and innovation will be part of learning processes that are in the ‘design mode’. This he defined as being concerned with usefulness, adequacy, improvability and the developmental potential of ideas. Focus must be put on multidisciplinary rather than sameness, and inclusion is key – expressed as empowerment through competence. Education in the knowledge society must work in the dual mode, i.e. generate dual competences. Helms concluded by stating that learning processes must be authentic – as educators and learners we must think about how to do things in an authentic way. We must train and train. Mastery is equal to continuous training. This is often a contrast to the way AE is organised. Therefore, we need educational programmes where active participation is at the centre and where reflecting on what we really want is of paramount importance.

Presentation 1: **Otava Folk Highschool: An Online Upper Secondary School**

Presenters: Taru Kekkonen, e-learning coordinator, who is captivated by learning processes and opportunities, thrilled by learning innovations and impressed by learners.

Her co-presenter was **Aki Luostarinen**, who is engaged in e-learning and phenomenon based learning. In addition to teaching psychology and Finnish, he



tutors and guides students, tests and develops new ways to facilitate cooperative learning and productive knowledge practices for different learners.

Otava Folk High School is an online Upper Secondary School that serves its five hundred students round the clock and round the world. The school offers three kinds of learning tables for their students to meet their various needs. Non-stop-courses are available in a 'buffet', collaborative courses in an 'à la carte restaurant' and 'the kitchen' is equipped for phenomenon based learning. The students can pick the alternative(s) that best suit their learning needs and their current situation. Guiding principles and key values are **openness** and **trust**.

The presentation gave a broad overview of all three types of learning routes, but main emphasis was on the nonstop buffet- type courses. Through these courses the school meets the students wherever they are based; the school is always open, it adapts to the rhythm of the students and students proceed at their own pace. At Otava they argue that tests and exams do not support learning, therefore no traditional exams are undertaken. Students get feedback on all their work and are assessed on their coursework. However, most students sit for national exams afterwards. National curriculum needs to be fulfilled, but methods are up to the school. Resources are spent on supporting learning.

The student body consists of adults with an age range from 16 to 75. They are very different kinds of students, who face different life situations. All have a reason for choosing this particular school and study mode. Thus, the student body includes expatriots studying in the Finnish language, employees working in shifts, mothers with small children, people with health problems, second-chance learners, people who live in remote areas as well as entrepreneurs who can only find time for studying certain times a year.

In the 'à la carte' study mode the school offers collaborative courses that run for six weeks. On these courses students have online discussions and do group assignments. In the 'kitchen' type of courses, in which phenomenon-based learning is at the centre, students need to explore to find the 'ingredients'. The teachers serve as facilitators who help the students to make plans and to organise their work.

The success at Otava Folk High School may be explained by its innovative practices in the form of around the clock courses. It is characterized by extreme flexibility, which in turn creates the opportunity to include a wide range of students from all walks of life.

Presentation 2: The Teachers' Role in Social Inclusion in Adult Education

Presenter: Pia Johanne Nielsen Leader of educations, Copenhagen Adult Education Institute (Voksen Pædagogisk Center - VPC); works with development of educator competences, guidance, supervision and coaching. Her



presentation was based on a European project entitled EDAM (Education against marginalisation: www.social.eu), in which she is a partner, and the title of her presentation was “The teacher’s role in improving social inclusion in adult education”.

Pia began her presentation by stating that the biggest threat in Europe is social exclusion. Some of the initial questions she raised were: What impact does social exclusion have on people’s daily life? What factors in the learning environment have an impact on learning and success? What changes take place regarding people’s life competences after periods of learning? When are you in danger of being excluded? These questions led to the main one which was: What part of the learning environment has an influence on social inclusion? In giving an answer she emphasised three main factors. The first one was “transfer possibilities”. If there are opportunities to transfer learning outcomes into life situations, it is more likely that social inclusion is enhanced. Secondly, “activation and internalisation” play a role. In this context the most important part is support from the teacher. The third factor mentioned was “participation and connectedness”.

In order to practice social inclusion, it is important to focus on the competences of the adult educator. Teachers need to be aware of and know how to practice social inclusion. Some of the competences and qualities that were underlined were:

- Using a participant oriented planning method with the aim of meeting the learners’ needs and to improve transfer
- Designing learning activities that involve different learning styles with the aim of improving transformative learning, empowerment and recognition
- Meeting barriers and defence mechanisms towards learning in a constructive way
- Being authentic and appreciative

In elaborating on the methodological aspects of facilitating social inclusion in AE, the presenter gave examples of various teaching and learning approaches. These included art, dialogue, aesthetic learning, games, different types of theatre (e.g. the theatre of the oppressed), role play, scaffolding and witnessing. When learning is meaningful and learners feel included, there is great potential for creativity. In addition, learners need a voice, and we as educators need a philosophy behind the methods that we choose and use.

In conclusion, teacher competences play an important role in enhancing social inclusion. Therefore, communication, empathy and ability to relate to others are of essential importance in adult education. These are competences that need to be trained and mastered in order to enhance social inclusion. In other words, we need a holistic approach to teaching where cognitive, emotional and social abilities interact and are valued.



After each presentation there were question rounds. After the final presentation there was a short discussion and the question that was formulated at the end of session 5 was:

How do you on the one hand scaffold innovative processes in adult education and on the other hand ensure social inclusion?

