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STUDIFICATION AS A MODEL TO LEARN DEEPER AND FASTER IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences have been developing the new learning model, studification, for some years. New forms of studification have been developed in collaboration between higher education and work in a project called Verkkovirta. Verkkovirta has aimed to develop new models for earning study credits from daily work. At the same time, new innovative ways to link studies with work are developed in addition to traditional work placement solutions.

Studification of work is a new, alternative way to study at universities of applied sciences in Finland. Learning is brought from the classroom to the workplace. Competences required for a degree are acquired by working and connecting the gained work experience with the knowledge basis of each substance. Work studification has a positive impact on the student's professional development, study progress and graduation.

The Verkkovirta project, financed by European Social Fund and implemented from 1 May 2015 to 31 December 2017, is part of project entity "Apt competence, from higher education to work" governed by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture. Haaga-Helia School of Vocational Teacher Education has coordinated the project, while the subprojects have been implemented at the following schools of vocational teacher education and universities of applied sciences: Jyväskylä, Oulu, Kymenlaakso, Lahti, Centria, Häme, Lapland, Seinäjoki, Tampere, Saimaa, Laurea and Turku. The ministry of education and Culture has named the studification as one of the top projects in higher education development.

This article concentrates on the activities and results discovered at Laurea UAS, one of the partner universities. The goals were

- the coaching of the personnel for the new way of working
- raising the awareness of the students of the new model
- the coaching of students
- raising the awareness of the work life
- developing the model towards an attempting and effective way to learn

Naturally, there were many actions accomplished during the project. Key result is that the model is processed, described and illustrated for all the students and teachers of Laurea UAS, as well as for working life representatives. It is ready to use, so to say. Raising the awareness level of the students still needs communication. Many more students could enjoy the new way of learning and do their studies faster.

Keywords: Studification, study at work, work-based learning, workplace

1 INTRODUCTION

The studification of work, or a work-based learning, is a new, alternative way to study at universities of applied sciences in Finland. Learning is brought from the schools to the workplace. Competences required for a degree are gained by working and connecting the acquired work experience with the knowledge basis of each substance. The objective is that the studification has a positive impact on the student's professional development, study progress and graduation. [1]

In this learning model required skills for a degree are acquired through work. Studification aims to combine training and work. The basic idea of studification is that work allows the student to learn and develop on many levels. Theories that guide practical work are combined with research knowledge, whose further acquisition is appropriate in the period of work-based learning. [1]

The guidance of studification is usually linked with career guidance: work is a starting point for planning - that is, the conscious expansion of professional skills with the student's workplace and his or her personal needs as starting points. A student who is working not only considers what the requirements of a degree are, but also what skills and knowledge need to be improved when he or she has a job and a career.

As students work, they acquire competence that corresponds to the objectives of their degree. In studification, the student, working life representatives and the teacher agree on which course topics or parts of topics can be learnt and how competence will be demonstrated. [2] The model requires a competence based curriculum.

The term studification is not largely used globally and there is not much written of it. The whole model is new: it is created during the Verkkovirta project, which will be presented in the next paragraph. There are a few articles in Finnish concerning the theme. The Finnish word for the term is opinnollistaminen. Yet, the ministry of education and Culture in Finland has named the studification as one of the top projects in higher education development.

There can be similarities with the term work-based learning. In Finnish educational system this term is already used in vocational school training and related to students' learning at workplaces. In this vocational education system there is more guidance from the teachers and it is obligatory for the students. In a higher education level there have been traditionally one or several internships included in the curricula. This new system, which is here called studification, differs from this. The studification can be applied to any study unit in a curriculum – any competences or skills required in receiving a bachelor degree could be learned in the working places – also the theories.

2 BACKGROUND

Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences have been developing new forms of studying at workplaces in collaboration between higher education and work in a project called Verkkovirta. Verkkovirta has aimed to develop new models for earning study credits from daily work. At the same time, new innovative ways to link studies with work are developed in addition to traditional work placement solutions.

The Verkkovirta project, financed by European Social Fund and implemented from 1 May 2015 to 31 December 2017, is part of project entity "Apt competence, from higher education to work" governed by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture. Haaga-Helia School of Vocational Teacher Education has coordinated the project, while the subprojects have been implemented at the following schools of vocational teacher education and universities of applied sciences: Jyväskylä, Oulu, Kymenlaakso, Lahti, Centria, Häme, Lapland, Seinäjoki, Tampere, Saimaa, Turku and Laurea. 14 out of 23 universities of applied sciences in Finland have been working in the project, which is quite a good cover.

2.1 Division of labour among the fields of education

Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, School of Vocational Teacher Education coordinates the project and is responsible for project administration and overall coordination of project communication. Further, Haaga-Helia is in charge of studification solutions in education related to social sciences, business and natural sciences.

Tampere University of Applied Sciences, School of Vocational Teacher Education is responsible for studification solutions on social, health and sports fields of education.

Häme University of Applied Sciences, School of Vocational Teacher Education coordinates the nationwide network co-operation in technology and traffic. Studification solutions in engineering education are developed in network meetings and by sharing best practices in social media.

Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences, School of Vocational Teacher Education is responsible for studification solutions in education related to culture, tourism, catering, and home economics.

Oulu University of Applied Sciences, School of Vocational Teacher Education plans and implements project peer assessment and disseminates different solutions to studification. " [1]

2.2 Subprojects at different UASs

Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences: Modelling, piloting and instruction of different forms of studification.

Lahti University of Applied Sciences: Piloting of an educational model based on studification.

Metropolia University of Applied Sciences: Studification of voluntary work.

Centria University of Applied Sciences: Development of studification practices in the areas of mechanical engineering and business.

Lapland University of Applied Sciences: Enhancing implementation of competence- and problem-based learning by developing new forms to validate the competence gained by students at work.

Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences: Creation of a university-level model for studification by piloting online fields of education.

Saimaa University of Applied Sciences: Development of co-operation with workplaces in competence recognition and studification.

Turku University of Applied Sciences: Mapping of the work placement learning environments in health education, recognition of the best practices enhancing expertise, professional growth and development of demonstrated competence in these learning environments.

Laurea University of Applied Sciences: Introduction of the studification process to teachers and guidance counsellors." [1]

All the projects have been working parallel and the results have been shared in seminars, newsletters, publications and peer evaluations.

In this article, the development actions made at Laurea UAS to be able to take the new model in action will be presented. During the project the goals for Laurea were focused in the following actions:

- the coaching of the personnel for the new way of working
- raising the awareness of the students of the new model
- the coaching of students
- raising the awareness of the work life
- developing the model towards an attempting and effective way to learn

3 RESULTS

There have been many actions in Laurea University of Applied Sciences to fulfill the goals and especially to make the studification model an attempting and effective way to learn. A key result is that the model is processed, described and illustrated for all the students and teachers of Laurea UAS, as well as for working life representatives. It is ready to use, so to say. Raising the awareness level of the students still needs communication. Many more students could enjoy the new way of learning and do their studies faster.

The results and actions are described in a table 1.

Result	Workshops with the personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 10 Verkkovirta-workshops• 4 info sessions for the personnel of Laurea• next to these Verkkovirta presented in 5 development days of Laurea UAS
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	Communication	<p>Internal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - social media marketing campaign together with the student union Laureamkon (2 times) - internal info letters in intra - integration in action and financial plan of Laurea UAS - table triangle– info about studification - guidance texts in intranet and webpages - workshops integrated in the pedagogical training calendar for the personnel <p>External:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - twitter #opinnoistaminen, #verkkovirta @Laurea_uas - articles in Verkkovirta publications - a conference paper - 3 videos about studification - articles in Verkkovirta newsletters - presentations in national Verkkovirta seminars - article in Opettajalehti 27/2015
Impact	New practicalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing and implementing a centralized evaluation day concept • competence demonstration concept • the recognition of competence is organized centrally at the university • the awareness has been increased within the personnel • studification cases have brought up the processes under development • more flexibility in evaluation (based on competences) • increase of the alternative ways to do studies
	Credits	356 cr
	Graduated	4

Table 1. Results and impact of Laurea sub project

3.1 Raising the awareness of the personnel, students and working life partners

At first, the process of studification was determined (fig.1) and further, communicated for the teachers and students. The learning model covers all the fields of study offered at Laurea, eg. Nursing, social services, business management, business information technology, tourism, hospitality and restaurant management, security management and beauty care management. There are about 8000 students and about 500 staff members at Laurea, who all have been the target group of communication activities.

Students are guided to discuss the possibility of participating in work-based learning. First, together with his or her tutor teacher, the student assesses the possibilities of utilizing his or her work to achieve the study-related goals. A student's job can be in the private or public sector, in organizational activity, or be part of a voluntary work programme. The student's own enterprise can also serve as a learning environment, or it can be an entrepreneurial idea under development or a currently ongoing research or development project at Laurea.

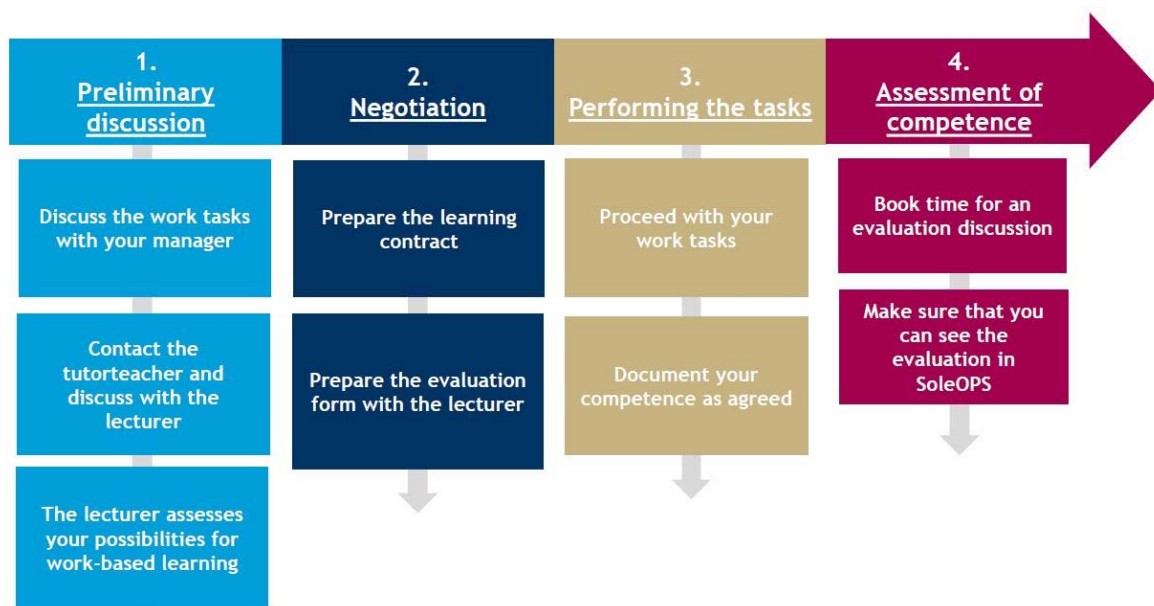


Figure 1. The process of studification at Laurea UAS

The guidance for the project is presented at the intra pages for the personnel and for the students. There is also information about the model at internet pages for future applicants and working life partners to learn about this possibility. There have been about 10 workshops for the personnel during the project, where the process has been presented, discussed and further developed. The special target groups have been the tutor teachers, who guide the students for the different alternatives in the students' individual study paths. The majority of the personnel knows the model and knows the persons in charge after all the communication activities.

To reach the students, the project team worked together with the student union of Laurea: Laureamko. There were a couple of campaigns in social media arranged with the students. Table triangles were created to support the social media campaign. There were also two videos made during the process – first in the beginning of the project especially to guide the students to learn about the new learning model and the second one in the end of the project to inform especially the working life representatives about this possibility. The videos can be found in Youtube. The awareness of the students have naturally risen, but it still could be better.

3.2 Tools for helping the guidance and evaluation processes

To be able to attempt both the teachers and the students to pilot a new learning methodology, there are several tools designed together with Laurea representatives and other universities (some of them already in the previous project called Osataan).

The tools can be used as: (1) assessment tools for planning the ways of acquiring competences in a workplace or a project (planning the study process), and (2) assessment tool for assessing the acquired competences or for giving feedback. The assessment tools are appropriate for different phases of the process such as before or after a studification or at the end of terms or the entire study program. Thus, they are also tools for assessing and guiding the student's professional growth. The links for the tools can be found at the webpage of the Verkkovirta project <http://www.amkverkkovirta.fi/osataan-tools-english> . [1]

Form1: Learning outcomes as work tasks and assessment targets (workplace or project)

"The assessment form is meant for planning the student's study process when s/he is making one or more courses in a workplace (paid labour) or in a workplace-related project. The form can be used as familiarization to the roles or job positions/tasks in the workplace or project. It aims to help the student to transform the learning outcomes into concrete working tasks, i.e., in which job positions and tasks

the student is able to get practice in the competences. A shared understanding is negotiated with the student about the learning outcomes and how the expected competences can be seen in actual work. In addition, the assessment criteria are discussed at least for the acceptable level or for each grade (what the student is expected to know, understand and do).”
Design of the form: Antonius De Arruda Camara (Laurea UAS), Katri Aaltonen (Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, School of Vocational Teacher Education)

Form 2: Competence demonstration and assessment at work

“The assessment form is meant for students who make their study courses in a workplace or project. It works as a planning template for the study process as well as an assessment template for the gained competences. For the first time the student fills the form at the beginning of the study process and updates it throughout the working period as the competence demonstrations are completed.

The importance of the professional knowledge base is emphasised when supervising the student, the literature resources are negotiated, and the various ways to demonstrate one’s understanding of professional knowledge base are discussed. The actual artefacts produced in the work tasks make the assessment process easier. Thus, the assessment is related to the actual documents, products and work situations as well as to assessment criteria. If the job positions and tasks do not cover all learning outcomes, additional com-petence demonstrations are negotiated.
Design of the form: Antonius De Arruda Camara (Laurea UAS), Katri Aaltonen (Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, School of Vocational Teacher Education)

Form 3: Learning outcomes as work tasks (internship)

“The form is meant for familiarizing the student with the workplace and planning the internship. The student finds out what kind of job positions, duties and tasks the employees have. The student plans together with the workplace supervisor the work positions and tasks that make it possible to get practice in the learning outcomes. In addition, the colleague who is able to give peer guidance and feedback is agreed.
Design of the form: Katri Aaltonen (Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, School of Vocational Teacher Education) and Antonius De Arruda Camara (Laurea UAS).

Form 4: Work Task Passport

Work task passport is a tool for students who work while studying. The student analyses his/her work and the competences gained in different tasks as well as to prepare her/himself to competence demonstration discussion. The length of working experience as such is not the criteria for completing the study courses; the as-sessment is always based on competence recognition and demonstration. The actual competence demonstration plan is negotiated with the supervising teacher.
Design of the form: Katri Aaltonen (Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, School of Vocational Teacher Education) ja Antonius De Arruda Camara (Laurea UAS).

Form 5: Student self-assessment criterial form

“The assessment criteria for the professional knowledge base, practical skills and generic competences are described. The criteria are meant for large study mod-ules or to be used in projects or learning at work, when the assessment covers several study courses. The student relates the self-assessment to actual working situations and the arte-facts designed for competence demonstration, and argues the self-assessment on the basis of the criteria. The student illustrates how the level of competence can be seen in the working tasks by giving examples.”
Design of the form: Antonius De Arruda Camara (Laurea UAS), Katri Aaltonen (Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, School of Vocational Teacher Education)

Form 6: Student self-assessment Generic competences

The generic competences for the polytechnic Bachelor degree are described in the form (NQF level 6, Arene 2010). The students make the self-assessment after large study modules or at the end of the academic years.

Design of the form: Katri Aaltonen (Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, School of Vocational Teacher Education)

Form 7: Assessment of the student's professional development

The qualifications for the polytechnic Bachelor degree are described in the form (NQF level 6, Arene 2010). The student makes the self-assessment at the end of the academic years or education program.

Design of the form: Katri Aaltonen (Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, School of Vocational Teacher Education)

Form 8: Peer assessment during the internship

The form is meant for peer assessment during a workplace internship. It is used e.g. in the middle of the internship when the student has become trained to some extent in his/her work task and is able to identify the gained competences. The peer assessment aims to give the student feedback on assessment targets of his/her own choice from a person (peer student or colleague) who works at the same kinds of tasks.

Design of the form: Katri Aaltonen (Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, School of Vocational Teacher Education)

Form 9: Informal peer assessment at work

The form is meant for peer assessment at a workplace. It is used e.g. in situations when the colleague is studying while working and aims to get a recognition of his/her competences in the study program.

Design of the form: Katri Aaltonen (Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, School of Vocational Teacher Education)

Form 10: Manager feedback at work

The form is meant for manager feedback at a workplace. It is used e.g. in situations when the employee is studying while working and aims to get a recognition of his/her competences in the study program.

Design of the form: Katri Aaltonen (Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, School of Vocational Teacher Education)

3.3 Impact

To support the process, especially to help in the evaluation phase, a new centralized evaluation day has been launched. In Haaga-Helia UAS the evaluation day model had been piloted and implemented after the good experiences. After benchmarking the practicalities, the evaluation event has been launched at Laurea UAS, too. In this event, students give their presentation, show their portfolio or some other proof of their doings and learnings. Students themselves (also peers), working life representatives and teachers evaluate together the competences gained compared to the learning objectives in a curriculum. The centralized evaluation day has brought the model more visible, and there is a good quality and transparency in the evaluation. In Haaga-Helia the working life representatives participating the evaluation are educated for the task, which seems to be a value.

At Laurea also a Competence demonstration concept has been created in autumn 2017 to lower the threshold for the students to show their competences and ask for guidance from the teachers in different cases. The competence demonstration form can be used by students to tailor (eg. studification) or supplement their studies. One form allows a student to demonstrate their knowledge with a test, learning exercise, learning diary, portfolio or freely selectable project (organization, hobby or voluntary work). A separate competence demonstration form is filled for each demonstration. The competence demonstration process is initiated with a guidance discussion together with the student's tutor teacher (e.g. a personal study plan discussion). The competence demonstration form allows students to reserve time from the study unit teacher for a 2h/demonstration. This concept can be the initiation of the studification process.

The recognition of competencies is organized centrally at the whole university. Laurea curricula are based on expertise, and evaluating competence is based on the learning outcomes expressed in the curriculum. The learning outcomes are described as the learner's actions, so that the development of competence can be assessed with reference to the goals. With the assessment of competence, learning can be directed toward learning outcomes so that the student can observe the development of their own competence in relation to vocational competence requirements. The most central goal of the assessment is to recognise student competence. With the help of the assessment, students are

encouraged and motivated. The studification is one of the new models to grow the competence during the studies. There is also a process for identification and recognition of prior learning.

The Verkkovirta project and the studification process development have brought up these new models, concepts and assessment development needs. The project has also increased the alternative ways to do studies.

The number of credits gained through the new model is still fairly low. One reason for that might be that originally there were only qualitative objectives set for the project. If there were quantitative goals for eg the credits gained through the studification process, the numbers might have been higher. Of course, the numerical goal can be set any day now.

4 CONCLUSIONS

In the end of the project, after the pilot experiences, it can be said that all the parties involved in the studification process win. According to Liisa Vanhanen-Nuutinen & al [3] students are able to study flexibly through individual learning routes in the Finnish universities of applied sciences. Workplace competence requirements are fulfilled when working in authentic work places, and at the same time, the knowledge base, theoretical competence, is joined with these requirements. Teachers gain new knowledge and competence on current trends through students' experiences. This will effect on the future lectures and guiding sessions. Workplaces can use students' academic competences to develop their practices. Universities benefit by improving credit point accumulation, the number of early graduates and improving the integration of education and work.

The importance on management is found very important when introducing new methodologies at the university. According to Niinistö-Sivuranta & al [4] one of the central responsibilities of the pedagogical management is to optimize the learning processes. In addition, the management has to challenge the personnel to exercise new pedagogical models. The management needs to support the development by arranging the time and space for discussions and questions – listen and guide the process towards the goals. It is important to create the atmosphere, which enables trials. Most of all, the pedagogic management has to enable learning – both for the teachers and through them, to students.

However, the main goal at Laurea University of Applied Sciences still is that many more students could find the studification as an alternative way to do their studies deeper and faster at the same time when studying full time. Without the Verkkovirta project the process wouldn't have been developed as it is now – ready to be used.

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