Title: Embedding innovation pedagogy in teaching journalism

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to test how to integrate innovation pedagogy into journalism and information and communication technology (ICT) teaching while creating a new product for a national media industry. The objectives of the study were to create a new joint course model in which students from different degree programmes would learn and create products and services together in three different stages: networked and collaborative learning, group-based learning and individual learning.

Design/methodology/approach

Innovation pedagogy is a practically oriented method and can be used for doing applied research. This new learning approach defines how knowledge is assimilated, produced and used while innovating. The research focus is on applied research, and one vital aim is to enhance students' ability to participate in research and development activities with businesses and other organisations in society.

Findings

The learning outcomes based on learning at all stages, i.e. individual, group and networks, were successfully achieved, and a new course model was created. However, the model needs further development.

Keywords:

Learning outcomes, Design thinking, Innovation pedagogy, Journalism teaching

Background

The world of the media is changing at an accelerating pace as are the teaching methods for journalism. Merely being one part of making news programmes, reporting, publishing magazines and newspapers, producing online journalism and participating in social media is no longer enough. Journalists nowadays have to work as producers, social media architects, bloggers or vloggers, curators, co-creators, data analysts and entrepreneurs – all the while adapting to and adopting innovative new media products (Dyer, 2015; Blanding, 2015; LeComte, 2015; Seitz, 2015; Watson, 2015). New skills and diversity in expertise are thus needed for work (Bedwell et al., 2014; Robles, 2012; Wardrope, 2002); at the same time, schools and universities need to promote high-quality teaching. The current discussions about educational policy often try to seek out innovations that may help educational systems and institutes prepare students for a changing world (Vieluf et al., 2012). In brief, higher education institutions need to respond to the needs of the media environment and create flexible curricula (Kettunen, Kairisto-Mertanen & Penttilä). Integrating innovation into the teaching of journalism is a demanding task and raises at least these questions:

Q1. Why does our society need new innovations?

Q2. What is innovation?

Q3. What is pedagogy?

Society needs a new approach to innovation that aligns the needs of human beings and the natural world because technological innovations are unable to do that alone (Brown, 2009). Many countries like Singapore, China, Korea and India are investing in educational systems by embedding innovative thinking throughout their curricula (Beckman and Barry, 2007). An innovation can be defined as a new product, idea or the further development of an existing product, service, process or method, and it should create added value for its users (Kirkland and Sutch, 2009). Thus, the modern journalist must be able to develop their working processes and new journalistic products.

"Good pedagogy requires a broad repertoire of strategies and sustained attention to what produces student learning in a specific content domain" (Chapuis, 2003). Pedagogy can be seen as enhancing student learning and the way teachers facilitate learning. Innovation pedagogy and innovative pedagogy are new learning approaches that are similar. Innovation pedagogy prepares citizens for the digital knowledge society and educates people who are creative and able to manage and analyse information as well as work with knowledge.

Miles and Louis (1990) claim that universities can offer supporting conditions for innovation as well as for being innovative. Universities can also excite change and encourage improvements in universities (Darling-Hammond, 1996; Little, 2002; McLaughlin and Talbert, 1993).

The background theory is based on design thinking and innovation pedagogy.

Design thinking can be described as a conversation process that starts with a description of the project's goal and ends with up a representation of that goal (Nagai and Noguchi, 2003). Owen (1998) stresses that design is a creation process through which we use tools and language to invent artefacts and institutions. As society has evolved, so has our ability to design. A design thinking process has recognisable phases, and while not always in the same order, they nearly always begin with the analytical phases of searching for and understanding information and data, and they end with synthetic phases of experimentation and invention.

Brown (2009) says that design thinking contains three general phases to get a product from the project room to the market: inspiration to discover the opportunity; an ideation phase, which means generating and testing the ideas; and during the implementation phase, the innovation, product or service is made ready for the market. While moving through these three phases, one must keep in mind the intersection of three constraints: feasibility, viability and desirability.

Design thinkers must find solutions to cope with these constraints in addition to developing through four mental stages. The first stage is divergent thinking, which generates alternatives to current reality, for example, by using ethnographic observation and finding practical solutions to a customer's proposed journey. In the convergent thinking stage, individuals must discover and study all options and then choose the best one. The analysis stage categorises patterns. Finally, the synthesis stage identifies meaningful patterns (Brown, 2009).

However, using only design thinking is inadequate for the whole process because when students are involved in the innovation process, we need a pedagogical approach as well, which is when innovation pedagogy enters the picture. Innovation pedagogy is a practically oriented method and can be used for doing applied research. This new learning approach defines how knowledge is assimilated, produced and used while innovating. The research focus is on applied research and one vital aim is to enhance students' ability to participate in research and development activities with businesses and other organisations in society.

Innovation competences are based on knowledge, skills and attitudes that can be developed by implementing new teaching and learning methods (Kettunen et al., 2013). The interactive dialogue between the higher education institute, the students and the immediate business and societal environment they inhabit is the core of innovation pedagogy. Learning outcomes are achieved in three different ways: individual, group-based and networked learning. Individual learning is broadened to group-based learning, which typically takes place in the classrooms, virtual networks, e-learning platforms, laboratories or other learning environments of the institution. Group-based learning is a good choice when learning is integrated into innovation, research and development projects and learning tasks include argumentative learning, negotiation and debating. Networked learning extends learning to regional development, international activities and electronic networks. Networked learning takes place when participating in demanding I&R&D projects and allows students to learn from their whole environment (Kettunen et al., 2013). Figure 1 shows the different learning stages and learning activities.

Innovation pedagogy also prepares citizens for the digital knowledge society and educates people to be creative and analytical and manage information. Isn't that what journalists do?

The research questions were as follows:

RQ1. How does innovation pedagogy support the achievement of learning outcomes?

RQ2. What type of collaborative learning, group-based learning and individual learning

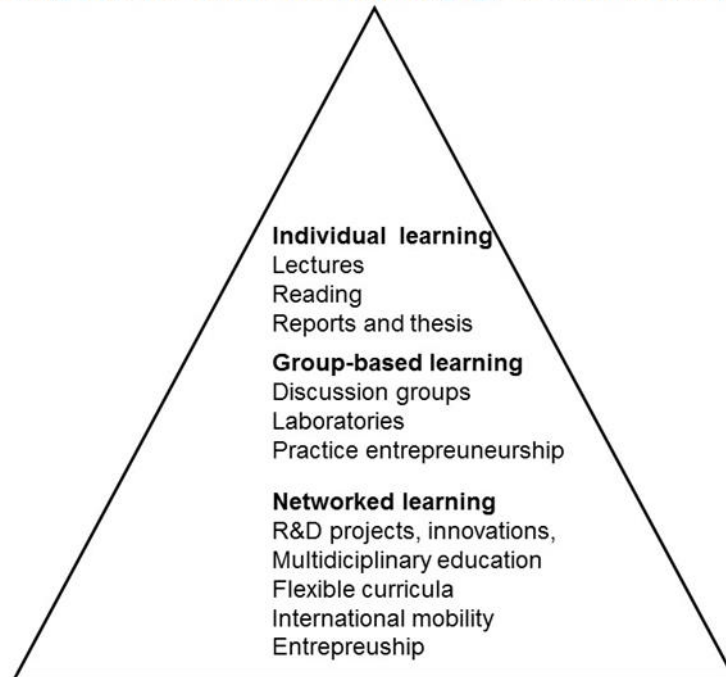is found in the context of the two different degree programmes?

RQ3. What are the roles of the commissioning company and the teachers in the innovation and learning process and what are their opinions about the whole process?

The data were collected during the autumn term of 2015 by interviewing the students and the commissioning company, assessing the innovation process and the collaboratively produced documents and assessing the individual and group assignments. The final outcome of the new product we developed by using the learning pyramid (Kettunen et al., 2013).

Our method was experimental even though we followed the steps of the action research cycle (Tripp, 2005): plan action; implement action and act; collect the data and analyse it; and finally, evaluate and reflect on the action by reviewing the whole process.

Figure 1 Learning pyramid of innovation pedagogy

Learning pyramid of Innovation pedagogy Kettunen et al. (2013)

Individual learning
Lectures
Reading
Reports and thesis

Group-based learning
Discussion groups
Laboratories
Practice entrepreneurship

Networked learning
R&D projects, innovations,
Multidiciplinary education
Flexible curricula
International mobility
Entrepreuship

Action research is a collaborative, critical and self-critical enquiry, for example teachers who want to develop their own practice (Hult and Lennug, 1980; McKeernan, 1991). Actually, Fischer (2001) claims that action research is a natural part of teaching because teachers observe students, interact in the classroom and explore effective ways of teaching.

Planning and conducting the course

The design of the new joint course began in the 2015 by searching for a suitable pilot partner. The Finnish Broadcasting Company (YLE) was looking for a partner to create a new experimental service called YLE-visit and at the same time find a new use for the empty spaces on YLE's campus. YLE's need was to ideate new experiences for people who will participate in YLE-visit. Their target group is young adults 18 to 25 years old. Some of YLE's archive material was made available for our use. Three negotiation rounds with Haaga-Helia lecturers (3) and YLE were needed before an assignment was agreed on and the contracts were signed. The challenge was to develop a prototype for "something digital" including some journalistic material for the YLE-visitors. At the same time, lecturers were designing the new joint course. We discussed and decided on the desired learning outcomes, assignments and timetables.

Our learning outcomes were assessed on a competence-based evaluation. According to Jenkins and Unwind (2001), learning outcomes can be described as statements of what a student will be able to do as a result of learning the activity. Donnelly and Frizmaurice (2005) see learning outcomes this way: a learning outcome is a statement of what a student is expected to know, understand and be able to do at the end of a course. Competences are not easy to define but the ECTS User's guide (2005) defines competences as "a dynamic combination of attributes, abilities and attitudes. [. . .] Competences are formed in various course units and assessed at different stages".

We defined our learning outcomes as follows: after the course, a student will recognise, understand and be able to forecast change, be able to retrieve and share information, be able work in a team, be able to

ideate and use ideation and prototyping tools, be able to make a project plan and know R&D and prototyping processes, be able to innovate and build networks. We decided also that we will use multiple assessment methods: self, peer-to peer and group assessment. We had a final discussion with each group during which the whole process was evaluated, and a final grade was decided on for each member. Our assessment criteria graded the students on a scale from 1 to 5.

The joint course started in August 2015 with a visit to YLE Campus. The ICT and journalism students also had the possibility to get to know each other while also asking questions of the YLE staff representing the company. The first step was to discover the population group that will form the basic users of YLE-visit and to figure out what needs they will have. To find answers to the question, What appeals to the target group?, the students organized workshops, conducted interviews and benchmarked other media companies while working both individually and in groups of five to seven students. There were five groups and 32 students, their learning and information sharing platform was Google Drive.
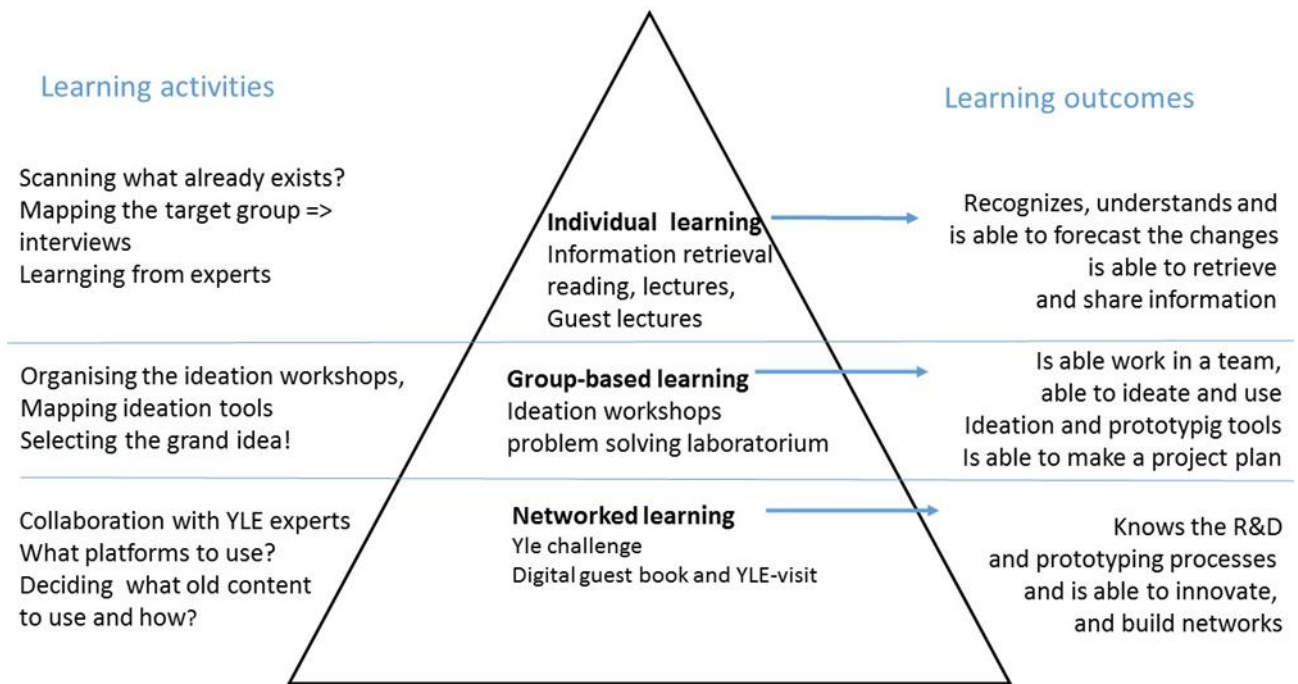
After collecting the background data of the target group, the students started ideating sessions in groups – they used both the Tecmarks 365 Ideating Tool and Idea Selection Tool (Tecmark, 2015; Byttebier, 2002). The groups competed against each other to see whose ideas were best and the best were chosen to be prototyped. All the ideas were written down for further use and the best ones were presented to YLE in a Grand Idea Workshop. At the same time, the students took lectures about product development, prototyping and the changing media and business landscape. YLE also introduced the media and journalistic material it thought could be used as the content of the new product, e.g. historical photographs, video clips, news, sounds and stories, and the broadcaster also explained copyright issues and problems the connected to the use of archive material.

In September at the Grand Idea Workshop, which was organised by using the learning café concept, the ideas of the five groups were presented to the YLE representatives, who selected the winner for prototyping. The winning idea was a mobile guest book – a combination of all the ideas. In September, the ICT students started to make the prototype and the journalism students the content. After each step, the students commented on the product and the prototype and on the content on Google Drive. The prototype was tested by having the target group use the prototype. Finally, in November the prototype was introduced to YLE representatives.

Lessons learned

Each group had a final discussion with the lecturer to evaluate the learning outcomes of the course. They also presented a written self-evaluation and peer evaluation of their group mates. Regarding our RQ1 and RQ2, we found out that the learning outcomes based on learning at all stages, i.e. individual, group and networks, were successfully achieved. The target group was engaged in the creation process and thus followed design thinking and the project was interesting. Hence, innovation pedagogy can be said to support successful learning outcomes and simultaneously guide lecturers' work (Brown, 2009; Kettunen et al., 2013). We realised that it was useful to design the course using innovation pedagogy and the learning pyramid. We placed the learning activities and outcomes within the learning pyramid to see how individual learning, group-based learning and networked learning happens and how the learning activities would help to achieve the learning outcomes.

The learning outcomes and course activities are in the learning pyramid in Figure 2.

Learning activities

Scanning what already exists?
Mapping the target group =>
interviews
Learnging from experts

Organising the ideation workshops,
Mapping ideation tools
Selecting the grand idea!

Collaboration with YLE experts
What platforms to use?
Deciding what old content
to use and how?

Individual learning
Information retrieval
reading, lectures,
Guest lectures

Group-based learning
Ideation workshops
problem solving laboratorium

Networked learning
Yle challenge
Digital guest book and YLE-visit

Learning outcomes

Recognizes, understands and
is able to forecast the changes
is able to retrieve
and share information

Is able work in a team,
able to ideate and use
Ideation and prototypig tools
Is able to make a project plan

Knows the R&D
and prototyping processes
and is able to innovate,
and build networks

However, the students also stated that co-operation and touch points with two of the degree students was lacking. The main problem was that most of the lectures were always on a different week day; hence, organising common workshops and visits to YLE was demanding. Even though students used Google Drive as an information sharing platform, they argued that face-to-face working would have been more fruitful.

However, students claimed that learning how the other students talk and study took time – ICT students used diagrams and images to present the prototype but did not fully explain how the prototype should work. Furthermore, journalism students wrote long feedback papers explaining what kind of content the prototype should contain and in which order to present it, but did not state where the content should go.

We asked also: What are the roles of the commissioning company and the teachers in the innovation and learning process and what are their opinions about the whole process? The commissioning party is a vital part of both group-based and networked learning. External expertise was needed to discover what kind of digital platforms YLE used and what kind of journalistic material students were able to use in the digital guest book. The students had to make enquiries, attend expert lectures and make decisions about what kind of material to use while keeping in mind copyright restrictions.

The commissioning company YLE was pleased with the results and wanted the prototype to be coded – this project continued in spring 2016.

The lecturers of the ICT and journalism courses held their first common evaluation session just after the course and a second in January 2016. They all agreed that the experiment was interesting and successful in its educational aims. The experiment pushed lecturers out of their comfort zones, especially when working out how to promote our idea to the media industry and how to price the students' work.

It was decided that this teaching format would be continued with and that future lectures should be on a fixed day and at a fixed time. Furthermore, it was decided that it would be useful if business students would join the course. Having students from ICT, journalism and business courses should give the commissioning company a wider perspective on a project's commercial potential and the students could then work in multi-disciplinary groups. The new challenge centres on the World Figure Skating Championship 2017 and has already been negotiated; about 60 students will participate in this continuation of the innovation pedagogy method.

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