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## **CampusOnline.fi - The National Portal for Online Studies in the Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences – some results**

### **Introduction**

This article focusses on the changes in the learning environments and how the higher education institutions have reacted to digitalization. We discuss some of the results of the eAMK project ([www.eamk.fi/en](http://www.eamk.fi/en)), which has been conducted in Finland in cooperation with 23 universities of applied sciences.

The rationale for changing the educational models in higher education comes from the surrounding world and the global drivers for change. It is widely discussed that the education system cannot remain the same. For example, the concept of Education 4.0. relies on the industrial change and the concept of Economy 4.0., where the virtual world and the reality are blended and which is described as an era of creating innovative knowledge (Puncreobutr, 2016, p. 93). According to The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2016), learning to learn and flexibility are the key competences in the future work. Education should train students to manage in a world, where they continuously need to adapt to new working methods, new technologies and new business models (Konst et al. 2018).

Education 4.0. caters to the needs of the society in ‘innovative era’. Learning management has an important role to help the learner to grow with knowledge, skills and attitude for the life ahead. Models for such skills are many. Based on a long-term development work the Fincoda model includes such skills as creativity, critical thinking, initiative teamwork and networking (Keinänen et al. 2019, p.21) Education 4.0. also has features, such as flexible delivery, anywhere anytime, student ownership, personal, peers and mentors (Fisk 2017) and it predicts the end of the

predominance of the lecture (Feldman 2018). Finally, the buzz trend of digitalization is radically remodeling the educational design.

One of the main trends in all educational sectors is to transfer the teaching online. This can cater to the need for education to remodel both education and the innovative society. However, a lot of pedagogical work has to be done in order to wisely support learning and to exploit digitalization to its full potential. Firstly, it is not always clear what we mean by online learning. The crucial points are, for example, whether online learning means that the learning takes place only online or if there are also face-to-face meetings with the learning group. Does it mean that the learning process is independent or tutored and are there online meetings, which are preset for a certain timeslot or not? Or, is the learning totally independent without any interaction between the peers or the teacher (Joshi 2018). In CampusOnline, the prerequisite is that the students are able to carry on the studies 100 percent online. Other attributes can vary. Secondly, how are we able to support the development of such future work skills, which we know little about today? The methods used must support the learning of the skills described above.

### The national online study portal CampusOnline.fi – getting there

In Finland, we have foreseen the change in the digitalized education and have developed a national portal for all Finnish universities of applied sciences (UASs). the UASs can offer their online courses on the year-round basis for all students. This has been developed within the framework of the eAMK project. A lot of background work was executed in order to reach the final results. A mapping was carried out as how the UASs would profit from specialising in some areas while at the same time some basic courses need to be offered by several universities for the need of a vast amount of students (Kosonen, R., & Sjöholm, T. 2018).

Digitalization is one of the social drivers to change the practices in education. When transferring teaching online, the teachers have to adapt the teaching practices bearing in mind that the next generation is constantly in multimodal social environments (Konst et al. 2018, p 4.). A scanning was made about the teachers' work and a possible change in the teacher work load when the teaching is transferred online in the summer semester (Scheinin, M. 2017). The main result was that there were no major challenges in the workload online, neither did the summer semester disrupt the teachers' holiday period. We also studied the students' expectations about the prerequisites of an online course, which would support deep learning. Such qualities are a clear design of the course, the course content to be relevant to learning and challenge the student and the learning process must be socially active (Forss 2017). The master's degree students reported that they would need more non-stop courses, where students can hop on and off according to their own timetable. Additionally, these students expressed that the courses must meet the quality criteria and the content must be relevant to the working life context. (Böckelman et al. 2018). The Quality criteria for online learning were also developed in order to support the teachers in designing good quality online courses (Varonen et al. 2018, eAMK 2017).

### CampusOnline.fi is launched

The main aim of the project was to develop the portal for the year-round online offering of all universities of applied sciences in Finland. This aim was reached in the autumn of 2018 as the

portal CampusOnline.fi ([www.campusonline.fi](http://www.campusonline.fi)) was launched. The experience gained and feedback gathered from the pilot version of the summer semester portal (summers 2016, 2017 and 2018) was of valuable help when designing the portal. The CampusOnline.fi was extended in autumn 2018. The spring term of 2019 offered 380 courses and the summer term of 2019 altogether 600 courses.

The portal was designed to be user-friendly and easy to use. The student can search for studies for example according to the field or level of study, the language of instruction, semester or the university offering the course. The student can then scroll the list of courses and make acquaintance with the short description of each course. When he/she chooses to enroll to the course, he/she is directed to the enrollment system of the offering institution. This means that the main function of the Campusonline.fi -portal is to bring the visibility of all online courses to one site, where the student can learn what is offered and when. This design alone has demanded a lot of work and cooperative will to serve the students in the best possible way in their search for online studies.

### Cross-institutional studies and information management – challenges to be solved

The main focus in CampusOnline.fi has been to develop a user-friendly portal for showing the online studies of UASs in Finland In CampusOnline.fi. However, the cross-institutional studies have been recognized as a national technology challenge. A lot of work is being done to find technical solutions. This is coordinated by another national project funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The information and student management challenges still remain to be solved. These are, for example, access permission issues, the student enrollments as well as the credits transfer system. As we expect the volume of the studies to increase in the future, the present solutions will not be sufficient. In the framework of another project, the aim is to develop the technical infrastructure and the interoperability of the different interfaces and platforms. This would enable automated information and student management process between the institutions. The vision is that, in the future, students can enroll to and access the cross-institutional courses as well as get the credits transferred to the home institution by automated processes between the institutions.

### What has changed?

Every project should be able to answer the question: what is the impact of the project? According to the statistics and student feedback from summer 2018 and autumn 2018 the change is evident. In the summer of 2018, 529 courses were offered nationally and over 55 000 credits were gained through cross-institutional studies. As for autumn 2018, the students were mainly very happy about the usability of the portal as well as the study offering. The reasons to select studies from other universities of applied sciences are many: students want to choose courses that are not available in their home university. Online courses also enable studies for those who are in the working life and not able to attend lectures. Also family commitments may be difficult to combine with studies and students report that online studies are then the only possibility to carry on studies. The cross-institutional studies have also made it possible to learn about the studies of other universities and to study in multidisciplinary groups.

To conclude, the national online course offering has so far had a recognised impact on the possibility for the students to choose studies from all universities of applied sciences. The students also report that online studies have enabled them to flexibly gain missing credits for the graduation. Flexible studies are one focus area in the vision roadmap of the Ministry of Education and Culture. Therefore we think that by enlarging the study offerings also more widely for the working life as well as ensuring the good quality of the courses we work in line with the expectations for flexible studies and lifelong learning.

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