



Curriculum Design in Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences Porvoo Campus 2.0

Ivan Berazhny¹

Abstract

The paper will report about a current process of curriculum design in Porvoo Campus (Haaga-Helia, Finland) led by a group of staff members and supported by an active involvement of the students, industry partners, and other stakeholders. This curriculum project, Campus 2.0, in a form of an action research, brings a number of innovative pedagogical and administrative initiatives into a more unified, simplified, resilient and efficient framework.

The paper will outline how such curriculum design process can be initiated, planned and implemented with several benefits, namely staff engagement and student empowerment. The paper will also show how project management can be used as a tool to support the process.

The paper will share the main outcomes of the process, including 1) a module based unified curriculum for all degree programmes offered on Porvoo Campus; 2) a transformation of basic level language studies into areal studies; 3) an integration of communication and advanced language courses with content subjects within modules; 4) and an overhaul of the traditional subject-based curriculum towards a new curriculum that is defined by competence pillars, i.e. competences that are relevant in work-life, such as global mindset, business and entrepreneurial acumen, the "right" attitude, employee advocacy, and other.

The paper will also reflect on how complex and challenging such process can be in an educational institution, and what university staff and management can do with the help of change management tools to adjust and to enable each other towards uninterrupted innovation of their work.

1. Introduction

This section will highlight the changes that happen in the Finnish educational system and the strengths that enable Haaga-Helia's Porvoo Campus to lead the change by developing an innovative and more efficient curriculum.

1.1 Leading the change in Haaga-Helia

Today Finnish educational system is going through an adjustment towards more efficiency. In this context, Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences [1] has remained the leading university of its profile due to, among other things, its strategic focus on modernisation and optimisation. The new strategy has simplified the university's structure and profile – innovation and digitalisation in sales and services with human touch. Haaga-Helia has avoided employment termination negotiations, has been hiring, launching new degree programmes, and investing in staff training, equipment, and future-oriented initiatives. With about 600 staff, 10 000 students, the leading place in Finnish educational system, Haaga-Helia has been responsibly reinventing its curricula to meet the new demands of its stakeholders. This paper shares several insights into such reinvention process, namely the changes that take place in the curricula on Porvoo Campus (a sub-unit with about 60 staff and 1000 students).

1.2 Porvoo Campus as a pioneer

Porvoo Campus hosts six Bachelor degree programmes, all sharing Haaga-Helia's strategic focus (see 1.1 above): international business (offered in Finnish and in English as two programmes), tourism (similarly in Finnish and English), visual marketing (with bilingual instruction in Swedish and Finnish), and aviation business (to be offered in January 2017 in English). Porvoo Campus established itself as an innovative actor in Haaga-Helia via its pedagogical approach (inquiry learning), its agility in creating value for the industry, strong performance results in graduation numbers and quality of its services for the students. With the above strengths, Porvoo Campus is an ideal platform to develop curriculum models, degree programmes, tuition models, and pedagogical solutions. Recently, Porvoo Campus has been leading the Campus 2.0 initiative that sees to align its six degree programmes by removing organisational silos, to find new synergies for the formation of up-to-date professional graduates, and

¹ Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences Porvoo Campus, Finland



to institutionalise the competence-based curriculum. This would put in place many earlier pedagogical initiatives that were difficult to implement due to rigid structures and insufficient team-teaching.

2. Planning phase of Porvoo Campus 2.0

This section will introduce the curriculum design research commissioned by the senior management.

2.1 Curriculum design team

The senior management on Porvoo Campus formed an internal CORE group in August 2015 to lead the development of new Campus 2.0 curriculum (to be drafted by May 2016, tested in Autumn 2016 and launched in January 2017). The CORE group are six staff members (four female and two male staff, including the author of this paper), who, besides pedagogical and teaching qualifications, have taken part in international services, teachers' trade unions, worked in a number of industries, also as entrepreneurs. The CORE members have experience of content and language/communication teaching, academic advising, tutoring, and thesis supervision. Additionally, they represent several nationalities. The CORE team include both lately hired employees and employees with more legacy. From the start, the CORE group made a clear commitment to being transparent, open, inclusive, interactive, and efficient. Equally important are objectivity and avoidance of office politics in times of organisational changes.

2.2 Stakeholders in curriculum design

The commission for the CORE group included a research of stakeholders to identify the expectations for the new curriculum: what and how students should learn on Porvoo Campus. The industry, the students, the alumni, the future/current applicants, international and domestic university partners, and the staff on Porvoo Campus were the main stakeholder groups that were interviewed, observed, invited to workshops. The CORE group interviewed staff members, while a group of students designed a survey for all Campus students. Each staff member agreed to interview several industry contacts. The CORE group also benchmarked recent research on curriculum design and pedagogics.

3. Results of Porvoo Campus 2.0 research

This section will showcase the research results from the above described curriculum design initiative.

3.1 The core findings

The vision for Haaga-Helia's Porvoo Campus was defined as follows: Campus 2.0 will be more efficient, sustainable, flexible, competitive, credible, in the core of networks, and with a human touch. Porvoo Campus will have a unified Campus curriculum and culture with a clear profile and a strong extra-curricular identity.

Efficiency will be achieved with structural changes, bridging all degree programmes on Porvoo Campus, whereby all degree programmes will get the same module-based structure (three levels plus a bachelor thesis), organised in large 10-credit modules.

Sustainability will come with staff reorganisation due to the current economical downsizing and the upcoming retirement of a number of staff. The modules will be based on team teaching, making sure that the staff is not locked into permanent teams. The number of implementations of each module on Campus will better match the number of students (minimum 15 students for an implementation to take place). The staff will also work on various levels and be deeply knowledgeable about each other's work across all levels and all degree programmes. Thus, despite changes in funding and human resources, Porvoo Campus 2.0 will ensure its viability to achieve more despite decreasing resources.

Flexibility will come by removing the walls between degree programmes and empowering the students to build their individual paths through the curriculum by enrolling into various modules across all degree programmes. The scope of compulsory studies will get smaller, while the scope and range of elective and free-choice studies will increase. The choice of language of instruction will be more flexible (English, Finnish, Swedish), not tied to the original degree programme, i.e. a student may opt for any language of instruction and specialised content by switching to respective implementations.

Competitiveness of Porvoo Campus in and outside Finland will be achieved by having a clearer profile that increases the visibility of inquiry learning, project-based learning, and career support for the students. Porvoo Campus will have a unified curriculum, where every staff member acts as a coach, and every student gets guidance directly into the industry of his or her choice. Additionally, Porvoo Campus would empower students even further to market Campus around the globe.



Credibility will grow with more engaged staff and a quality management system that is being currently audited. All staff will be encouraged towards work rotation periods, further pedagogical training, and multi-skilled qualifications. Porvoo Campus 2.0 will also integrate industry-certified qualifications for students as part of modules. Additionally, a higher priority will be given to the development of work-life competences, i.e. meta-competences that are not based on the disciplinary subjects, but on the work attitude and professional identity of the student.

A focus on networks will ensure that Porvoo Campus cooperates actively and fruitfully with lower level, higher level, and same-level educational establishments. Agreements have been reached with the respective schools to design joint modules and recognise professionally valid experience as studies. A particular focus will be on consistent strategic partnership with selected partners rather than diverse international mobility across large networks.

A human touch will be seen as a new dimension of student services, based on individualised coaching and student well-being. Additionally, following the feedback from the stakeholder groups, Porvoo Campus launched a new initiative Campus Does Good – events and activities that implement social responsibility on Campus, i.e. help for refugees, engaging with local senior citizens and child organisations, charity programmes, etc. A human touch is also a commitment to ensure that the students acquire and nurture people skills in the time of intensive digitalisation.

All the above points were taken as the foundations to build the Porvoo Campus 2.0 curriculum. Yet a competence-based approach to the curriculum is the most significant achievement.

3.2 Competence-based curriculum

The research showed that almost none of the interviewed industry representatives recommend teaching specific tools or specific knowledge. Instead, the overall majority of the interviewed strongly wished to see students develop personal and professional qualities on a meta-level, the so-called meta-competences. The majority of the interviewed Porvoo Campus staff, alumni and students also supported the focus on meta-competences. Benchmarking across the top curricula also suggested the turn towards the meta-level. Based on such results, the CORE group put together a list of meta-competences and grouped them into three pillars: 1) personal growth (self-management, self and team leadership, career branding, etc.); 2) entrepreneurial business mindset (focus on operational environment and profitability, analytics, future orientation, sustainability, etc.); and 3) sales-with-service mindset (customer understanding and communication, relationship building, etc.). Within these pillars, albeit their distinctions may be somewhat fuzzy, many sub-competences were listed and linked to each module of Porvoo Campus 2.0 curriculum. The idea was that each module, besides delivering the content to the students, would primarily advance the above meta-competences in the students.

4. Implementation phase of Porvoo Campus 2.0

This section will share several solutions by the CORE group to implement the vision of Campus 2.0

4.1 Porvoo Campus 2.0 modules

With the above results, the CORE group developed a module-based curriculum structure that applies to all degree programmes on Porvoo Campus:

- Learning Camp – an extended orientation module of 1-2 months where students learn how to learn on Porvoo Campus, develop global mindset, master IT systems, academic writing, etc. (Learning Camps will be offered in the beginning of each semester);
- first level core modules, such as Self-Leadership, Business Basics, Business Environment, and Customer Competence;
- second level core modules, such as Sales Development, Organisational Management (both project-based modules), and Business Operations (a business simulation module);
- third level core module Advanced Sales and Entrepreneurship.

These core modules will be compulsory and will be implemented slightly differently by each degree programme, based on the industry field that the modules will collaborate with. Additionally, core modules will be in-sync with the so-called Areal modules, which integrate content (business operational environment, customer competences, sales and entrepreneurship) of a certain language area with the language studies. Areal modules will include Russian, Spanish, German, Asian, Nordic (with a special integration implementation for non-Finns), and Coding (a module that introduces coding languages and IT industry). The students will be able to take several Areal modules.



Both core and areal modules are 10 credit modules (1 credit is about 27h of work). Besides, the staff will be able to develop and offer Star modules for the students who welcome more advanced studies. All modules require team teaching, whereby individual teachers have no ownership of any module. Instead, colleagues in teaching teams represent diverse fields and co-create learning activities as inseparable entities. The module-based system will also allow no separate teaching of communication, languages, and ICT. Instead, these subjects are integrated as tools to achieve the meta-competences. Competence-based modules also welcome student-to-student teaching and portfolio-based thesis. Additionally, modules will have coaching and advising by industry patrons and staff.

4.2 Change management in teaching teams

Implementing the above vision is not seamless. The CORE group, equipped with convincing research results and being transparent and inclusive, still witnessed change resistance. While the industry partners, the students, and other stakeholders strongly support the move towards competence and module based curriculum, a sizeable minority on Porvoo Campus have practiced office politics and lobbying to preserve their territories and silos, voicing fears and focusing on resources. Cases of, absenteeism, dismissal of change, sabotage, divahood and bullying occurred in teams. This is perhaps only natural in academic institutions, which have traditions of unquestionable teacher authority. With patience and understanding, the management relied on change agents on Campus, who lead by example. Additionally, coaching, mediation and performance appraisals were used to offset the change resistance.

5. Conclusion

Porvoo Campus 2.0 is still unfolding. In Autumn 2016 the newly formed teaching teams and students will co-create, test, and further specify learning activities across modules, to guarantee that both content and meta-competences are mastered by students. Once the Campus 2.0 curriculum passes the revision by the board, Porvoo Campus will be fully equipped for the future.

References

[1] www.haaga-helia.fi