Danish University Colleges

CPL - a way to increase student's commitment, involvement and collaboration?

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Introduction:
UCN’s learning approach aims at (among others) to provide the students with entrepreneurial and interpersonal competencies. Attempting to enhance the student’s creativity, the Creative Platform (Byrge & Hansen, 2009a) has been used as a process-related method that teaches the students how to facilitate a creative process where unlimited use of knowledge (figure 1) helps the participants to generate new products or services. Bringing the principals from the Creative Platform a step further, they are used as a didactics, called CPL (Creative Platform Learning) (Christensen & Hansen, 2015).

In the autumn semester 2013 an experiment with CPL was conducted at UCN. The results were not unambiguous, but some elements from CPL showed positive results in regard of creating a better learning environment, hence this research will isolate these activities and test if they can stand alone.

Methodology:
Action research is chosen as the scientific approach as it constitutes an attempt to improve a condition through participant involvement and action (Greenwood and Levin, 2007). With an emphasis on participant involvement, action research is founded on a problem-solving approach where the understandings and solutions to a problem are developed through experimentation and dialogue (Karlsen, 1991). By involving the students in our experiments we will be able to test whether CPL develop certain of the students competencies.

The action research will follow Susman’s (1983) structure, where the problem identification is the first stage followed by action planning. Step three will be implementation of the action plan and last step is to evaluate the action as well as the learning.

The methods to collect data will be:
• Supervision
• Focus group interviews
• Individual interviews

CPL activities to be tested:
As mentioned CPL didactics is based on the four principles from The Creative Platform (figure 1). In CPL certain activities are combining these principles to create optimal learning conditions for the students. The activities that we want to investigate further during this research are the following:

1: Class room setting
2: Task focus
3: A structured method of teaching

1: Class room setting:
The setting of the class room is important and must be organized in a way that supports CPL. An “opposite” horseshoe is used as the basic setting (figure 2). This setting makes it easy for the students to work individually and 2 & 2 (figure 2) and makes space for activities on the floor (figure 5). When the students work individually it is easier for them to concentrate when they are looking into a wall instead of each other. When working in groups the tables are easily split and ready for group work (figure 6). When the lecturer have to teach all, the cinema setting is ideal (figure 3). The setting of the class room is important and must be organized in a way that

2: Task focus:
To increase the student’s attention during lectures, the students are told to remove their laptops and smartphones from the tables and preferably their watches (figure 4). This supports the principle task focus.

Objective of the study:
CPL has for some years been used more or less systematic in elementary and secondary schools in Denmark, but it has not really been applied in higher educational institutions. In the autumn 2013 a experiment with CPL, including all elements from CPL, was carried out at UCN. The evaluation from both students and lecturers indicated that CPL as didactics is difficult directly to adapt in teaching in higher educational level. However, the evaluation indicated that some elements from CPL contributed in a positive way by increasing student’s involvement and commitment. Also a better collaboration between the students was indicated as well as a strengthened social environment in the class. Based on the experiment, our hypothesis is that the chosen 3 CPL activities will increase the students commitment and involvement in the lectures as well as provide the students with better collaborative competencies.

Research questions:
By testing the chosen CPL activities we want to investigate how these activities are influencing:
• The student’s commitment and involvement in the lectures
• The student’s ability to collaborate in different groups

3: A structured method of teaching
1-2 groups
The teaching is structured after a model, where the students start to work one on one, then two and two followed by group work. It is easy to keep task focus when working alone and this is why they never start working in groups. When the groups are mixed, they are paired up by having to find partners with e.g. the same hair color, who woke up at the same time in the morning or other things that make them mix up in different ways every time (Christensen & Hansen, 2015). When working together with different members of the class all the time, the students become more relaxed and more willing to express thoughts and ideas on the class. The different group structures supports the principles task focus, parallel thinking and no feeling of judgment.

Use of 3D cases:
The so-called 3D cases (body, mind, language) cases are small exercises made to train the student’s creativity (Byrge & Hansen, 2014). Usually the 3D cases are followed by a 3D activity (Byrge & Hansen, 2014) but in our experiments we will mainly use the 3D cases as small exercises which forces the students to stand up; get some physical movement; a mental break; and in many cases to have a bit of fun together. 3D cases are training the students to say yes to each others ideas, and to develop on these ideas. The 3D cases are often used as a part of the mixing of groups as well. The principals of parallel thinking, no feeling of judgment and task focus are all in play when using the 3D cases.

Literature: