A holistic competence-based approach to student engagement in innovation processes at the humanities

Purpose:

This paper presents a holistic based approach to an integration of a variety of competences into innovation courses as a way to enhance student engagement in learning processes in higher education.

The paper argues that ‘The Creative University’ demands engagement at the personal level from students and that a more holistic approach to competence development can foster the personal engagement because students can apply competences from both their personal and professional lives to create new ideas and thereby act as whole ‘persons-in-the-world’ (Lave & Wenger 2011).

Theoretical framework:

The connection between personal engagement and personal points of departure for creativity and innovation is documented in research in the fields of innovation and entrepreneurship education (Sarasvathy 2001, FFE-YE 2013, Lynfort 2014, Blenker et al 2014) and in relation to professional work life and student learning in general (Bakker et al 2011, Evans et al 2015). Holistic approaches to competences are elaborated in several fields (Sundberg 2001, Beckett 2008, Lynfort 2014) and definitions of concepts of competence in relation to student learning and teaching have been developed in recent years (Field 2006, Le Deist & Winterton 2007, Oganisjana & Koke 2012, Jones & Warnock 2014, Stecher & Hamilton 2014, Seal et al 2015). The paper draws upon different perspectives of competence concepts to describe and discuss the specific holistic approach.

Methodology:

Through educational action research as teacher-researchers, data were collected through a mixed methods research project at five innovation classes in 2014 at the University of Southern Denmark (Mandrup & Lynfort 2016). For the purpose of this paper, I will focus on a selected part of the data from two of the five classes: 47 personal so-called competence cards made by students at the beginning and after the course, qualitative observations of student innovation processes in class and student-team business plans. The three types of data illustrates the students’ activation of holistic competences and personal engagement in their efforts to generate innovative ideas.

Implications:

- The possibility for students to break down the silos between their everyday life and their student/professional life and apply this method in their way through the educational system as a source to engagement in learning processes
- The possibility to transfer the approach to other disciplines than innovation and entrepreneurship education
- New demands for students and teachers at the Creative University: involvement and personal engagement – ethical and realistic goals to set?
References:

