INFORMATION SPECIALISTS AS FACILITATORS OF LEARNING ON AN ONLINE COURSE ON INFORMATION SKILLS TRAINING

Case study: Library course for history students in the Optima learning environment at the Pegasus Library

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Greetings from Oulu University

University established 1958
Library established 1959

Fields of study
- Dentistry, Medicine, Health
- Economics, Education, Humanities
- Engineering, Natural Sciences

Key figures
- Students 15,999
- Professors 228, teachers & researchers 1,451, other staff 1,111
- Library staff 89
Oulu University Library Services

Acquisition Services

Publication Services and Library Administration

Collection Services

Education and Information Services

Lending and Guidance Services
Pegasus Library entrance hall
Aim of the presentation…

- …to share **perspectives on learning theory in planning and implementing an online course** on information skills training for history students at the Oulu University Library.
Online teaching from autumn 2011

For students
- Flexible ways to complete information skills training/courses
- Possibilities for different kind of learners

For Information Specialists
- Skills in online pedagogics
- Learning theories in practice

For the library
- Up to date education services
- Acts for the demand for distance education
The start of the track: learning theory
Socio-constructivism

Student-centred
- Student = active part her/his learning process

Learning as active cognitive activity
- Problem solving, critical thinking
- Paying attention to previously acquired knowledge

Information Specialist as facilitator of learning
- Creator of a favorable learning environment

Social atmosphere and interaction
- Learning from each other, peer experiences
Motivation & self-regulation in learning process

- Goal setting
- Planning studying process
- Structuring the content to be learned
- Practicing regularly
- Self-evaluation

=> Completing course
Things to be considered

Applying teaching methods in online environment, e.g.:

- Giving instructions
- Distribution, timing and sectioning of learning material
- Working individually or in groups
- Tutoring

Using learning environment and social media in pedagogically meaningful way

- Not just for the shake of it!
Online teaching? More than just taking old classroom content online!

New learning situations

- material to be studied
- online discussions, working together with handling, learning and evaluation of information

New learning assignments

- argumenting, reflection

Extra value from a pedagogical perspective to support learning process

- e.g. how the subject matter of the course lends itself to being taught in an online environment
Pedagogical activity on online course for history students

Multifaceted interaction

- Discussion forum, chat, email, Skype, Adobe Connect Pro
- With or without visual contact

Scaffolded instruction

- Suggestions, hints, comments, explanations, questions, examples
- Avoiding too complete answers
- Motivating and pointing students to the right direction

Constant evaluation and feedback of the learning process

- Personal feedback, Joint feedback
- Self-evaluation, Peer evaluation
How to **activate** the students' previously acquired knowledge?
- e.g. revising

How to **strengthen** the students' trust in their own abilities?
- say always something positive

What **level of activity to demand** of the students in order to achieve good results?
- amount of assignments?
- acceptable answers to assignments?
- right attitude to assignments

How to **link** the subject matter to the needs of the students?
- ideally students have their own topics

How to **motivate & inspire** students?
- demands constantly actions from information specialists!
Expert’s blind spot

Pedagogical content knowledge versus expert’s content knowledge

Could it be, that excessive expertise makes a person blind to what is most important?

Teaching skills versus in-depth content knowledge?

Lessons learned 1

More focus on the student
  - Helping the students to create new cognitive structures

Reflection & inner dialogue
  - Students to analyze, review, evaluate, rethink and argument their choices and actions,
  - look back on their own progress and
  - direct their efforts at the goals and
  - have better control over their learning process on every level

Target on deep learning
  - Connection between old and new information/experiences
  - Time to learn
  - Less is more
Lessons learned 2

Acts to support the students **completing the course and avoiding drop outs**

- Bringing the students together as a group: introducing oneselfs, group assignments and discussions
- Motivating, encouraging, reminding, inspiring etc.
- Positive emotional experiences

**Overall management** of an online course

- Less fragmented, more continuum

**Layout of the Optima learning environment**

- Inspiring & stimulating
Lessons learned 3

Online course is not about taking an easy way out for the teacher!

It demands even more **active actions and touch** than classroom teaching?

Learning theory => Teaching & Learning actions
Thank you!

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Pedagogical studies for the Oulu University Library staff

In house training
- courses aimed at the teaching staff, generally worth 1-3 credit points
- 25 credit point study module in university pedagogics.

Out house training
- 60 credits teacher education at Oulu University of Applied Sciences, School of Vocational Teacher Education

For future professionals - today’s students
- Flexible study baths
- Degree Programme of Literacies (Information Studies & Education)