



# **Experiences in ‘Learning by Doing’ Teaching at a community college and in a university abroad**

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Abstract  This report focuses mainly on my own experiences in ‘learning by doing’. The main aim was, by teaching at a community college and a university abroad, to compare whether the same teaching methods would apply to both student groups. The students at the community college were first year journalism students whereas the learners abroad were third year Finnish language students. The main conclusion was that the student groups were too different in order to make definite comparisons. The Finnish language students were already used to lecturing, as lectures were the most common teaching methods used in that university. On the other hand, the journalism students did not yet have any established working habits. Naturally, it was easier to introduce a working method – learning by doing - to journalism students than to language students. The main difficulty with the Finnish language students abroad was their inefficient language skills, which caused difficulties in understanding and learning a new subject that was Media in modern Finnish culture. However, the language students relatively soon adapted new working habits – working in pairs and using a learning log. The feedback I received from them indicated that, despite of the reluctance at the beginning, they enjoyed the new learning experience. Journalism students in Finland were interested in using the same learning method again and did not have any difficulties completing the given tasks. This experience taught me that a teacher must be prepared to teach in different ways in different situations.		
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## INTRODUCTION

I started to teach journalism in August, 2001. My 26 students came from all over Finland and they all were about the same age; 19-20 years of age. I had some teaching experience because I had had a course at the university where I taught “how to find reliable sources easily” but it was only one course and that was years ago.

I was teaching four days a week, about 24 hours per week and evenings and weekends, I was still working at the newspaper. It was exhausting, I resigned my newspaper job after Christmas 2001, and started to concentrate fully on teaching my students in a boarding school environment. From this on I will refer my school as a community college because – at the moment – we mainly teach university transferable subjects.

Our rector, Jorma Keränen describes college like this: “College is, according to its functioning principle, a high standard learning environment, in which students are encouraged to seek knowledge and increase their social and global awareness. Year after year, some two hundred eager young students gather at college. We provide a versatile and high quality education in many fields of studies. We have also the broadest selection of Open University studies among the colleges in Finland. It is even possible to complete a Bachelor's degree at College through Open University. “

“We have gained excellent results in recent years. Our working methods - close collaboration between student and the college staff - are effective both in quantity and quality. Students have been especially pleased with our efficient and encouraging study counselling system. Studying in a close-knit community is rewarding, and this community is a safe place to try wings, to learn to live away from home. College is opening its doors to the world, with student exchange programmes and intercultural and international co-operation with many people of different ethnic background.”

(<http://www.alkio.fi/english/alkio.html>)

College is also a boarding school although not all the students live on the campus.

My biggest problem in the beginning was the lack of teacher education. I knew my teaching subjects because I had worked as a journalist for 16 years but I did not know how to pass the information on: I was too complicated and

I tried to teach too advanced details. A big obstacle was also my weak computer ability although I had to use computer in a newspaper every day. The newspaper computers are designed to be tools, they are very easy to use and I had always somebody to help me if I had difficulties with the computer. At school I have had only one day training for using computer to make power point presentations.

Now after five years of teaching (on the leave in 2006) and two years of teacher education I consider my weakest point still to be in the computer skills. During the teacher education I have learned to start from the beginning and one thing at the time. But I still lack computer skills and the suitable attitude to learn more technical details which are self evident to young people all over the western world.

Why are computer skills so important? The old roles of education are breaking down. The learning environments will change and the whole idea of lecture based teaching will be changed. Internet will make it possible to study any place at any time. (Helsingin Sanomat, 7.8.2007)

This teacher education course has taught me a lot although I have been a slow student. During this course I have read a lot – I always read a lot – but now I have different attitude. I ask myself: can I use this piece of knowledge in my work. Now that I am planning new courses I have more tools to prepare courses. I have had my own ideas already before I came to study but during my teacher education studies I have been encouraged to think that learning can happen in very many ways and in many different places. Simply said, a class room is not the only learning environment and the lectures are not necessary at all.

This paper explains what I learned during these two years. First, I explain what I have tried to accomplish with the students and I also explain what kind of courses I am planning for the future needs.

Secondly, my actual development project was teaching journalism for two week in Charles University in Prague and then to compare how Finnish and Czech learners differ

from each other or do they differ at all. However the plan was ruined when I noticed that the student groups were too different from each other. The age difference was wide, students in Prague were on their 3<sup>rd</sup> year in the university and mine on their first year. Additionally, my students were studying journalism, but the students in Prague were learning Finnish language.

Nevertheless, I will explain in this report how I prepared my teaching for the Czech students and how actual teaching sessions went and what kind of feedback I received.

My school and Charles University have been exchanging students regularly over ten years. It is only natural that we also start to change teachers. But the most important reason of taking Prague experience into account is that in Central Europe the teaching methods are very different from ours. The main way of teaching is still by lecturing.

Since I use my own experiences as material here, this piece of work is not empirical but more subjective. I did not use many reference books or papers because of the nature of the work and its' conciseness.

## **2. TEACHING JOURNALISM AT A COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

### **2.1 Objectives of teaching journalism in a community college**

The general purpose of teaching journalism in community colleges is to teach the principles of the discipline and to give a student tools to start a journalistic profession in media. ( Kokooma tiedotus- ja viestintäalan koulutusmahdollisuuksista, 4.) At my college we concentrate on printed media.

Most of my students are 19 years old. A typical student has applied for journalistic studies in the university and after not being accepted he/she has decided to study the first university year in a college as journalism studies are university transferables. At least Helsinki university, Jyväskylä, Tampere and Vaasa universities have accepted credits after a student has been accepted to the university.

The academic year starts every year with a student-teacher personal meeting. The meeting lasts usually 30 minutes to 1,5 hours. It depends how talkative the student is; I am not in a habit of hurrying students up when we plan the future. In the meeting I discuss with the student why she/he is studying journalism. What is her/his aim during the year and how she/he plans to acquire the desired target. Where is she/he going after community college year?

After fall break we meet again face-to-face but this time for only 15-20 minutes just to see how the first part of the semester has started and if a student needs extra help etc. After Christmas break there is one meeting and in the end of the year we will sum everything up together again in a meeting.

A journalism student can select other subjects to support hers/his studies. Good supporting subject would be history, political science, anthropology, psychology, sociology and also languages.

The curriculum is divided into two main parts: College's own curriculum and the open university curriculum. The open university curriculum is designed so that the student is able to study the first part of the academic studies during the one year in a college.

University studies are academic and that is why they consist a certain part of theoretical lectures, as well.

College version of journalistic studies is practice oriented. We have, for instance, at least four hours of journalistic work (news writing mainly) per week and also four hours of layout work per week.

In the beginning of the semester I ask whether anybody has ever written a story for a newspaper. Usually there are 2-4 students who have experience of newspaper writing. Then they explain their findings depending on the time they have worked at the newspaper. First assignment is writing so called police news. I have authentic handouts which police sends to different newspapers so that journalists will write news based on the facts given by police officers. Of course, very often a writer has to phone to the police and complete the information required. This is not an easy task because one has to remember many things and also remember not to add irrelevant things. It is difficult at the beginning. After this assignment we discuss of the nature of the news: *What is news*, is a relatively easy question but to answer in reality, it is not.

News has to answer six questions: what, where, why, how, when, who. The most important sentence is in the beginning. The headline must be attractive so that a reader notices it among hundreds of similar pieces of news. We speak about these basic things and do assignments during the first month. At the same time we start active newspaper reading. Active means that we read all the articles and writings and compare those. If the articles will not answer all our criteria for news (six important questions) they are considered not to be news at all. (epäutinen).

After couple of weeks studying we will start to do “real work”. I have made contracts with some societies (retired people, Rotary clubs, Lions etc.) to produce their papers from the beginning - that is planning the contents - to the very end, meaning that we transfer the material to the printing house. Usually that kind of papers are not in a hurry and so we have enough time to work properly and learn at the same time.

Spring 2007 we had a popular course based on discussions and written work. Discussions were based on the papers they wrote during the course. In the beginning of the course students decide what subject they want to write about they can freely select an interesting topic which has something to do with journalism. All subjects have something to do with journalism. Then they have to write a report which is handed in two days before presentation to everybody in the group. Then all read the paper and during the two hour



session we will do “the post mortem”. There is always one person who will read the paper very carefully and ask all the difficult questions related to that particular subject. Then the writer answers and explains his/hers decisions. After that everybody in the group has to make a question. These learning sessions are of particular interest because we have had actual and modern subjects: commercialism in journalism, power and journalism, criminals on the news, entertainment in news, infotainment etc.

I have emphasized to the students that it is very important to be able to speak many foreign languages in this profession. Arabic language, Russian, Spanish, Hindi, Chinese and Japanese will be important languages in the future. Unfortunately we do not have these languages on our curriculum. Many of my former students have started to study some language in the university, language studies will take years, it is very important to start language studies early in life.

Teaching also includes field trips. During the fall term we usually visit local provincial newspaper and local radio station. After Christmas – students already know the basic things of writing and how media houses operate – we make a two day trip to Helsinki where we visit every time at least Helsingin Sanomat, National Broadcasting Company and Finnish Parliament. Usually we see six to seven different media houses, for instance: some ladies’ magazine, afternoon newspaper, tv-station, commercial newspaper and so on.



*Journalism students on a field trip to Savon Sanomat, October 2002.*

Because we produce real products, that is, magazines for Christmas, our own PR-magazine and other papers, we are financially equipped to travel. We make a visit every year to some interesting European place to become acquainted with European media, culture and journalism studies. During my teaching time we have visited Amsterdam, Warsaw, Baltic countries, Prague, Krakow and many towns in Germany including Cologne and Frankfurt. Our next target is Barcelona; the male students started studying Spanish in the beginning of the semester because of this trip.

These field trips are the most waited happenings during the academic year.

## **2.2. The amount of journalism teaching available**

As I have referred earlier Finland has an overdose of journalistic teaching: We have 10 universities where journalism can be studied as a main subject, we have 28 community

colleges which have one year courses and we have at least 16 colleges where communications studies are offered. ( Kokooma tiedotus- ja viestintäalan koulutusmahdollisuuksista, 4-36.) The biggest newspapers, Helsingin Sanomat and Aamulehti, have their own schools of journalism.

These colleges, community colleges and universities offer teaching with different names: journalism, communications etc. but the main idea is that the subject has something to do with the mass communications and the media.

Ten years ago, Jyrki Vesikansa (Suomen Lehdistö 10/1997) wrote in his article that in universities the teaching merits were more on the academical side: most of the teachers did not have much own experience of making news or doing any other journalistic work. It was appreciated and considered good if a teacher had a lot of academic publications. This is not completely true because I started my own studies in the university of Jyväskylä, 1987 and we had many teachers who had newspaper or tv/radio experience.

Universities concentrate on research and publications and colleges concentrate professional skills. Professional skills will develop finally at work but the common principles can be taught at school. Journalistic work is governed with Finnish law, journalist's ethical rules and common good practice (hyvä tapa) ( Huovila, 43; Okkonen 117.)

Since there are so many opportunities for future journalists to study, there will be a competition of students. One sign of that is that even in the university a teacher's pedagogical studies are appreciated. The students are clients who can select many things, even teachers.

### **2.3 Journalism teaching in the future**

Newspapers are making good profits at the moment but at the same time the prices of the newspaper copies are climbing up and the salaries of the journalists' are declining ( Aamu-tv 1, 26.07.2007). Most of the media is on the stock market where stockholders want all the time bigger profits. There are not very many independent media houses because big houses like Sanoma -Wsoy, Alma Media and Väli-Suomen Media have

bought smaller newspapers. That kind of progress is called centralization (keskittyminen) (Söderholm, 49; Kunelius, 86).

Sanoma-Wsoy and Alma Media are buying newspapers as business operations. Väli-Suomen Media was founded to guarantee co-operation between five provincial newspapers. By co-operating these newspapers reduce their costs, for instance, they can buy together large amounts of newspaper-paper and receive big discounts. (Kiiskinen, 2.)

The journalistic material; news and other ingredients have to be quite unexpensive, the newspaper is a delicate product because it is old tomorrow. The journalistic products must be such that they can be used in many papers during a long period of time. Fifteen years ago journalists were able to sell their work to many media houses but nowadays it is impossible because the media house buys the journalistic product only if the house or some other media in the same company can use it again. That calls for special kinds of journalists.

In my opinion we have to have at least two kinds of journalists in the future and that leads also into two different schooling systems and two different pay check systems. First there will be journalists who graduate from universities. They will inherit finally the good work places in the media houses. Among these there must be specialists who master the modern technics well. I would imagine that graduates from colleges will fill up this need.

Then there will be good writers who will be mostly free lancers. These writers are not interested in technics or any other other tasks in the newspapers. Writing can be learned by writing and reading. The one year journalistic courses are enough for these writers because they learn all the needed details in real journalistic work.

We have to keep these changes in mind when we plan our future teaching. On the other hand it may even happen that the journalism teaching will completely be finished in the community colleges. That will happen easily if the state decides that there is enough education elsewhere. Although my teaching environment is a private school, it receives 57 percent of the funding from the government.

The journalism education is reduced in community colleges drastically because of the new studying opportunities in colleges (University of Applied Sciences). The college

education in my field started some ten years ago. There are too many places where one can study journalism. Community colleges have to change their field of teaching. Community colleges have mainly concentrated on recent years on the university courses. Now it seems that our students are not inevitably university students. They could be old people, unemployed people or immigrants. According to one recent newspaper article there will be 650 teacher vacancies in the year 2012. I, myself as a teacher have to consider soon some new options, as well. (Helsingin Sanomat, 13.6. 2007)

### 3. LEARNING BY DOING

#### 3.1. Theories behind teaching

In this paper I mainly back up to one theory and that is David A. Kolb's *experiential learning*. But as a background, I repeat the basic models because learning is often combining many models.

*Behaviorism* alone is too limited model for learning: it mainly states that learning is a new behaviour. In fifties and sixties the educational research was interested in behaviouristic concept. It meant that learning happens because of some external reasons: a student is bright, he has a good home background and a teacher is wise enough to use suitable teaching methods. The learning was measured by the result of tests and exams. In journalism which is my field of teaching, we have so called injection model from the same time period (Kunelius, 130). This theory states that a recipient is injected with certain information and due to the information will act in a certain way. Later researchers have noticed that information from a sender to a recipient does not move so simply because human beings are more complicated than robots. According to this theory for instance, children are not allowed to watch violent movies because they might learn to act violently. In Japan, they are showing the most violent programs on TV, but Japan has a low crime percent, so the theory cannot completely explain the learning process.

*Cognitivism* is a bit more advanced form of learning. Cognitive theorists recognize that much learning involves associations established through contiguity and repetition. They also acknowledge the importance of reinforcement, although they stress its role in providing feedback about the correctness of responses over its role as a motivator.

The third, popular theory of learning is *costructivism*.

“Constructivism is a philosophy of learning founded on the premise that, by reflecting on our experiences, we construct our own understanding of the world we live in. Each of us generates our own "rules" and "mental models," which we use to make sense of our experiences. Learning, therefore, is simply the process of adjusting our mental models to accommodate new experiences.” (<http://www.funderstanding.com/theories.cfm>) 30.10.

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### 3.2. Experiential learning by Kolb

There is really only one way to learn how to do something and that is to do it. If one wants to learn to cook gourmet food, drive a car or write a newspaper story, one must have a go at doing it. Young people have always been apprenticed to masters in order to learn a trade. Learning a skill means eventually trying your hand at the skill. When there is no real harm in simply trying we allow novices to "give it a shot."

Instead of allowing students to learn by doing, teachers create courses of instruction that tell students about the theory of the task without concentrating on the doing of the task. Because it is difficult to see how to apply apprenticeship to mass education, teachers lecture. Since I was not a qualified teacher in the beginning of my teaching career I did not lecture. I simply showed what I had done at my own journalistic work.

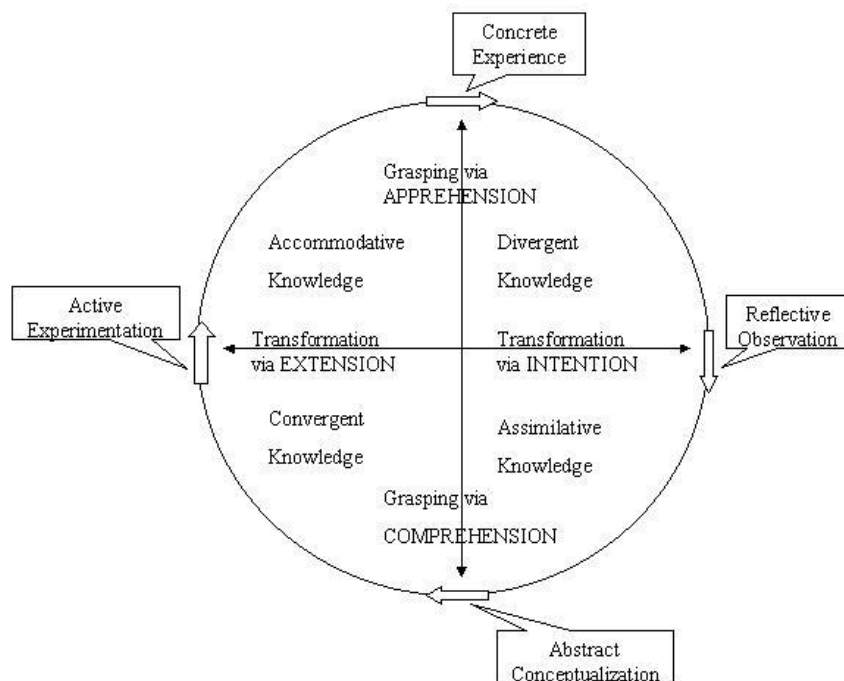


Figure 1. Structural Dimensions Underlying the Process of Experiential Learning and the Resulting Basic Knowledge Forms (Kolb, 42).

“The process of experiential learning can be described as a four-stage cycle involving four adaptive learning modes – concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation.” (Kolb, 40.)

“In this model, concrete experience/abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation/reflective observation are two distinct dimensions, each representing two dialectically opposed adaptive orientations. The structural bases of the learning process lie in the transactions among these four adaptive modes and the way in which the adaptive dialectics get resolved. (Kolb, 41.)

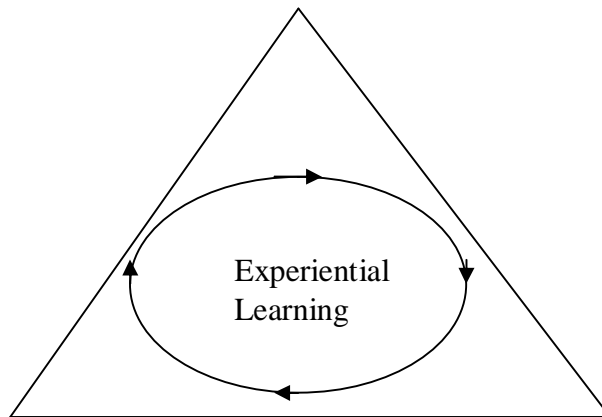
“Experience grasped through apprehension and transformed through intention results in what will be called divergent knowledge. Experience grasped through comprehension and transformed through intention results in assimilative knowledge. When experience is grasped through comprehension and transformed through extension, the result is convergent knowledge. When experience is grasped by apprehension and transformed by extension, accommodative knowledge is the result.” (Kolb, 41.)

The main point is that learning requires both a grasp of figurative representation of experience and some transformation of that representation. The mere perception of experience is not enough for learning, something must be done with that. And again, transformation alone cannot represent learning, for there must be something to be transformed, some experience that is being acted upon.

Experiential learning is linked to human development in many ways (Fig.2). It can be described so that the learning process is in the focus of human life but work, education and personal development guide the intensity and amount of learning.



Personal development



Education

Work

Figure 2. Experiential learning in human development

## **4 TEACHING EXPERIENCES**

### **4.1. College students in a Finnish boarding school**

My students are young adults (19-20 years). They have applied for the university but failed. Some did not even try the entrance tests, they want to spend one academic year just thinking and studying what they want to do in the long run. Even though, many of the students have a good graduation diploma, Finnish high school graduates know very little about their national history, their family history, literature and arts. Students at this age know nothing of the Finnish government, politics or even municipal ways to look after common projects. Students are good with computers, games, role plays, heavy metal music and celebrities. Some students consider a celebrity to be a profession.

Boarding school is a good place to meet other people. If you need a lot of privacy, you can also live in your private room but most of the students live in the same room with some other person. Usual case is that the two persons did not know each other before their arrival to college. Often the ones who want to have private rooms are a bit older than the average student or they have some health issue to look after.

Approximately two months after the semester has started most students have adapted to the new situation; about 95 percent are satisfied with their roommates, many are very happy about the new friends.

Some leave the college right in the beginning: they have been accepted to other schools, they change their minds and go to work or they want to live outside the campus area. In my opinion it is very surprising that so many of the students will adapt to living together with another person whom they did not know previously. We have to remember that nowadays most young people don't have to share their bedrooms with siblings.

#### **4.1.1. Simple goals**

I have nine months to see how an individual student develops. The time is short but I also have very clear target in teaching: a student must learn to write a piece of news, must learn how to use camera and how to take pictures which are technically and other wise presentable. After the academic year in college journalistic student must also know how media world is financially organised, where are the news, who decides what is news and what is the role of journalist in the media.

Every August, after the first class I think that the students are too young, they are more interested in entertainment than news. In the end of every May I am amazed how much a young person can change in one semester. The change equals with personal development. They have learned to be interested in almost everything.

In human development and also in journalistic profession it is essential to be very interested in matters, one has to be curious. Half of my time in teaching goes to support a student's still unclear selfportrait. It is necessary to notice during the year that one can reach the target if one wants and is ready to work for it. Journalistic assignments are rewarding because they will often be published. Not only I but also the journalistic staff in the papers have considered the outcome good enough to be published.

Human development occurs throughout the life. And there are sometimes also blocks because we have not gone properly through the previous stage.

#### **4.1.2. Pedagogical principles**

As mentioned earlier writing can be learned, only by doing. That means that the practice makes a master. Writing is also very personal: a student needs a personal feedback on his/ her own work. There are so many different styles to write and express opinions. The journalistic teaching must be in many sense tailor made. Of course, there are theoretical principles, which are discussed during the lectures and the students must do the exams to pass the courses. But still, the main focus is on writing and learning to write so that it is easy to read and even easier to understand. That sounds naive, but easy style needs a lot of knowledge, information, interviewing skills, understanding human nature etc.

Journalist's basic task is to try to organize vast amount of information so that it makes sense.

Students receive reinforcement when their journalistic work is good enough to be published. They receive feedback from the teacher and after a while they are able to judge their own products with educated criteria. Kolb's theory states that observation and reflection lead to forming abstract concepts and after that a student is ready to experiment actively by her/himself.

#### **4.1.3. Starting a new course**

For this paper I started a new course, spring 2006. The course was designed to teach basics of editorial writing. Students mastered already the trunk of the news writing, they knew the general principles before the course started. They knew where to receive reliable information, they knew what kind of language creates a circle of trust, there is no sense to write if you cannot be convincing. Students were practising how to combine facts and educated opinions so that the article convinces the reader.

The editorial part of the journalistic studies is usually taught by so called professional journalists who write editorials as their main work. I have been editor in chief for two years, in Toronto, Canada. The weekly I worked for, is called Vapaa Sana and its circulation area is the whole Canada. I used that experience in teaching.

To teach writing takes time and teaching to write on difficult topics takes even more time. First, the student has to understand what he/she is trying to say and then he/she has to say it well and so easily that everybody will understand it.

First of all, when I start a new subject I will introduce it by examples, some times I even invite somebody to speak of his/hers special field ( business reporter etc.). I try to create some general idea. When the students seem to understand the general picture we start to go into the details. In journalism it is very important to understand "the big picture". It is very important to explain the new terminology well. It is difficult to speak about the things if you don't have the exact words.

Teaching to write editorials is challenging because the subjects are often such that young people are not interested in. That is why I tried to select topics which would interest at least a little for ex. education ( See, Appendix B). On the other hand, journalists must be

interested in everything, so the level of topics must stay in certain level, even in the beginning.

#### **4.1.4. Results**

Journalism students are very motivated. They learn by doing: writing, designing, creating, solving and researching. They want to learn how to become good journalists. The basic interest is in everybody who comes to my class. Many of my students have known for several years what they want to do after high school; they want to write.

Every year I ask students literally in the beginning of the academic year what expectations they have. Most of them want to learn writing, make good friends and meet some “real” reporters. At the end of every academic year I ask my students what was the best experience during your journalistic studies.

The most interesting and well liked learning experience is training in the **real** newspaper for two weeks. The second best experience is making **real** papers in school’s own news room. And the third best experience is to make visits to **real** news rooms where **real** journalists tell about their **real** work.

I have noticed that young adults are very keen to talk. They learn a lot by comparing ideas and thoughts but a teacher must know his subject very well because she/he has to answer very many questions during one learning session. Also, a teacher needs to keep the conversation on the main subject so that the subject will be thoroughly discussed. And also, some students have so much to say that a teacher’s obligation is to take care that everybody has time say her/his opinion. Some students are not quick and they need more time to formulate what they really mean. Everybody is entitled to have enough time to say his opinion.

## **4.2. University students in Prague**

October 2006 I visited Charles University in Prague as a guest teacher for two weeks. I planned the two weeks carefully during the summer before (See, Appendix, A). The students were third year Finnish language students, many of them had already visited Finland. Since my college has an exchange program with Charles university I even knew some of the students before I went there.

The students are 2-3 years older than my journalism students. These Czech students seem to master their history well, they are very interested in other countries' history as well, they know poems and stories by heart in their own language, even in English, some in Finnish.

They have different schooling system: it is considered self-evident that everybody must master some literature after high school, historical events are taught carefully and a teacher is the main talker in the class room. Most part of the university education comes in lectures given by professors (Lindroos-Cermakova, 2006). The conversation in the classroom is not rare anymore but lectures are the core of the university education. The students were not familiar with learning diaries which were used during the two weeks. My teaching was part of the course where students were studying Facts about Finland (Suomitietous-kurssi).

### **4.2.1. Good plan, but it did not work**

After two days I noticed that the planned course was too difficult for the third year Finnish students. I had to change my plans, luckily I had a lot of material with me. Instead of lectures, I arranged group work with Finnish newspapers. That was interesting in students' opinion. At the same time they learned new, modern Finnish words, they learned about modern life style in Finland (periodicals) and they had group discussions in Finnish. Most of all I remember the critic: I was speaking too fast, I expected answers too

hastily and due those two things I did not let students to take part as much as it might have been possible.

For these lectures I was very well prepared in advance. I had gathered newspaper articles and taped programs from television the whole summer. I had read the newest books from my field and I had planned the program carefully. I used the whole October for this course: I used the beginning of the month for preparing lecture.

First of all, I had a lot of material but still I would have needed a copy machine. Since the copy machine was on the other side of the town I used the black board. The Prague university has its departments all over the city. Students were complaining how difficult it is to move constantly. The class room was small and hot but the view from the window was breath taking; old Prague. The class room had surprisingly modern audio-visual system. It was easy to show texts from the books, show taped programs etc.

#### **4.2.2.Results**

I received eight (8) feedback sheets. The most common comment was that I was speaking too quickly and the vocabulary was too difficult. Since I did not understand this fact in the beginning I grew tired of asking anything from the students. The students were in total silence when I asked something. They would have needed more time to answer my questions: first you have to understand the question, then you have to understand the topic, then you have to develop your answer and then translate it into Finnish. It took more time than I had planned.

Some of the students were very much interested in Finnish media. It was excellent idea to carry one suitcase of newspapers to the classes. It is easier explain matters with good, real life examples. During these newspaper readings we had good discussions. The students were relaxed because there were also funny news in the papers.

All in all, the teaching experience was very good. I had thought many things and still I was not completely prepared for teaching these Finnish language students. I had also

some post graduate students there who, of course, were waiting to hear something else than third year students.

Students were prepared to listen to the lectures. When I changed my program to group work they were a little surprised but did not complain. In the end they commented how interesting it is to work in groups.

Only two students were familiar with a learning log. All students liked to make notes after a class. They were also advised to ask questions from me in writing if that would be easier than speaking during the class.



## 5 CONCLUSIONS

**Motivation:** After these two years in teacher training I noticed that I have used many forms of motivation. Also, I have discovered during these studies how important it is to know that people and students are individuals, everything is not applicable to everybody. Young people need a lot of encouragement in the beginning before they have reserved positive feedback from their personal achievements.

I need to be motivated as well. When I was on my sabbatical year I burned all my teaching materials, I thought that I will start a new teaching life after this training. I have not needed a single paper I burned. When I plan a course I try to find new books on journalism so that I am motivated myself, something new is essential for the teacher, as well. Then I write down the target of the course. Then I cut the course in smaller units and decide what is being done during every two hour lesson.

**Clear and simple instructions:** Since the teaching days in Prague I have tried to keep in mind how important it is to be well organized before every lesson. Even that is not enough, you have to have an alternative plan. And sometimes you have to change all good plans if the material seems to be too difficult. One needs to explain basic things and especially new things in a simple way and with lots of examples.

**Lecturing /other methods:** I noticed that in Prague students were waiting for lectures, they are used to lectures. Students told me that lectures are an old academic tradition in Europe. On the other hand they easily adopted new ways to learn: working in pairs, learning logs, learning circles etc. Teaching journalism cannot be done by only lecturing. That was clear for me already before this training. News writing needs a lot of practise.

**Feedback:** Feedback is essential part of teaching. Students in Prague were used to have numbers and everything in writing. Journalism students will accept spoken words and instructions. Journalism students must learn already early in their career to bear feedback because their writings are constantly under the public critique.

I was happy about the critique which I was given by Czech students: they clearly stated that I spoke too fast, used too difficult words and expressions and I did not give enough background to all my stories. And very important piece of feedback: I did not wait long

enough for a student to answer. A teacher must remember that it takes time to create a sensible sentence with foreign language and unfamiliar topic.

**Personal guidance:** Nobody spoke of their personal difficulties in Prague. I was there two weeks. Compared to my Finnish students that is different. My students come to see me during the first week of the year and they (not all) speak about their personal matters, difficulties in learning, health and mental health issues, all kinds of problems at home etc. Students want me to take these matters into account when judging their performance. After the Prague experience I would say that personal life openness is Finnish tendency and possible because of the boarding school environment. Teachers and students spend more time together than in other learning environments.

Personal guidance in a class room is very important in journalism. Students ask many kinds of questions during the newspaper projects when we produce actual papers.

Personal guidance seems to be more important now than six years ago when I started teaching. Students in Prague were familiar with personal teaching, as well. They were eager to talk about every day news as we gradually grew into our casual working habits.

**Computer skills:** Students in Prague and students in Finland understand that computer is part of the modern learning system. They know how to find information from the internet and they can easily use many difficult programs. Computer skills are only my problem. During these two years I have learned to study in the net environment and I will improve slowly but surely.

**New courses:** Because of the experience of these well liked courses which I described earlier I plan to teach basic politics course next spring. As long as I can remember politics course has been disliked. I will change this, no more tiring lectures when I am teaching (see, Appendix C).

This concludes my two years at teacher training college. I am ready for the future.

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## **APPENDICE:**

A)Toimittaja-opettaja (FM) Eija Kiiskisen opetus 16.10.– 27.10. 2006 Kaarlen yliopistossa

**MEDIA SUOMALAISESSA NYKYKULTTUURISSA**

B)Editorials in dailies/ teaching at the college

C)New course / spring 2008 for journalism students and political science students

APP A:

**Toimittaja-opettaja (FM) Eija Kiiskisen opetus 16.10. – 27.10. 2006 Kaarlen yliopistossa**

MEDIA SUOMALAISESSA NYKYKULTTUURISSA

*Viikko 1: Suomalaisen median esittelyä*

**MA 16.10. 2006**

- osallistujien lyhyet esittelyt
- kahden viikon aiheiden esittelyt, ohjelmarunko muuttuu opiskelijoiden tarpeiden mukaisesti
- työskentelytavat (aloitusluennot ja niihin liittyvä materiaali lehdistä, kirjoista ja televisiosta, oppimispäiväkirjan laatiminen (kirjalliset ohjeet), pari- ja ryhmätyöskentely, mahdolliset kotitehtävät)

Suomalaisen median synty, lyhyt historia pääpiirteissään ja nykyinen tilanne pähkinänkuoressa. Mediasanastoa.

**TI 17.10. 2006**

**Osaatko lukea uutista?**

Suomalainen päivälehdistö viihteellistyy.

**Tässä osiossa käsittelemme aluksi uutista, sitten viihdettä. Mitä on tuotteistaminen?  
Mikä ero on uutisella ja viihdellä? Esimerkkejä Suomen ajankohtaisista  
tapahtumista syksyllä 2006 ( esimerkiksi kulttuuriministeri Tanja Saarelan  
mediajulkisuus).**

**Uutiskriteerit. Toimittajan huoneentaulu. Journalistin eettiset ohjeet. Suomen laki.  
Toimittajan diskurssi (kulttuurinen tausta).**

Ke 18.10. 2006

Suomalainen aikakauslehdistö kasvaa jatkuvasti, vaikka televisioon ja radioon tulee koko ajan uutta tarjontaa.

**Muun suomalaisen lehdistön esittely. Suomessa on noin 2800 viikkolehteä ja luku kasvaa koko ajan. Ammatti- ja harrastuslehdet. Näytteitä.**

**Ajankohtaisohjelmat televisiossa.**

To 19.10. 2006

**Sähköinen media: Yleisradio ja kaupalliset kanavat. Miksi maksamme lupamaksuja?  
Tuhoaako Internet perinteisen tiedonvälityksen?  
Yleisradion toimittaja Jaana Hevonoja kertoo työstään teksti-tv:ssä.**

***Viikko 2: Suomalaisen kulttuurin esittelyä. Mitä media nostaa kulttuurista esille?***

MA 23.10. 2006

**Mitä on kulttuuri? Esittelen suomalaista nykykulttuuria lehtiartikkeleiden, kirjojen ja tv-ohjelmien yms. avulla (runoilija Arja Tiainen, mediakriitikko Kaarina Hazard, Nobel-ehdokas Martti Ahtisaari jne) Tosi-tv: Big Brother ja Maajussille vaimo.).**

## Kuvan lukeminen

1. kuvailu
2. kuvan tekniikka
3. tulkinta a) yleinen b) kulttuurinen
4. kuvan motiivi ja konteksti (miksi kuva on lähetetty ja kenelle se on tarkoitettu?)

TI 24.10. 2006

Kulttuurin ja median avioliitto. Vertailemme tiedotusvälineiden tilannetta Tsekeissä ja Suomessa. Ryhmätyöpäivä.

KE 25.10. 2006

Ryhmätöiden purku. Opiskelijat jättävät oppimispäiväkirjat opettajalle.

TO 26.10. 2006

Palautteet. Opiskelijat antavat palautetta opettajalle kirjallisesti (lomake) ja opettaja oppilaille (oppimispäiväkirjat). Opiskelijoiden ”kyselytunti”. Yhteenveto kahden viikon aiheista. Mitä opimme ja mistä saamme lisää tietoa?

APP B:

**Editorials in dailies / teaching at the college**

**13.-14.3. 2006 ( 12 h) and 20.-21.3. 2006 ( 12 h). Altogether 24 hours.**

I had two groups of students, altogether 17 students. The program was same on both groups.

**The program 13.3. – 14.3. 2006**

9.00 – 10.30

Editorial – what is it? The main ingredients in writing an editorial. Two main types were introduced. Examples from different dailies.

10.45 – 12.15 Students write an editorial based on the given topics.

Assignment:

Write an editorial. Length 2200-2500 signs. Return your assignment by the 15<sup>th</sup> of March on Kati's table. Remember to give a headline to your article.

Topics:

- 1.The left wing party (Vasemmistoliitto) in the next parliament election (Vasemmistoliitto seuraavissa eduskuntavaaleissa)
- 2.Bird influenza (Lintuinfluensa)
- 3.The municipal co-operation in Finland (Kunnallinen yhteistyö Suomessa)

12.15. – 13.00 Lunch

13.00 – 13.30 Finalizing the editorial



13.30 – 14.15 Students have an opportunity to ask questions, comment and they leave their assignments to the teacher.

To teach writing takes time and teaching to write on difficult topics takes time even more. First, the student has to understand what he/she is trying to say and then he/she has to say it well and so easily that everybody will understand it.

### **The program 20. – 21.3. 2006-11-28**

9.00 – 9.45 Returning the editorials. Personal comments to everybody. Students wanted to hear the comments personally and so that everybody in the group was present. That is understandable because in so called office feed back meetings journalists are given feed back anyways. It is wise policy to learn to take criticism and feed back with open mind because it is a big part of the journalistic work.

9.45 – 10.30 How to express your own opinion in an article ( that is allowed in editorials but not in news)?

10.45 – 12.15 Students write an editorial where they state their own opinion with supporting facts.

12.15 – 12.50 Lunch

12.50- 13. 45 Returning the assignments to the teacher and comments. What was difficult, what was easy, how to find reliable information for the writing etc.

Topics for the article with own opinions

- 1.Fertilizing treatments (Hedelmällisyshoidot)
- 2.A student needs / does not need a salary for studying (Opiskelijan palkka)
- 3.There should / should not be entrancy exams for the universities (Yliopistojen pääsykokeet)

The article must be under 2500 signs and it must have a headline.

APP C:

### **New course / spring 2008 for journalism students and political science students**

The group will be circa 30 students, we will have 24 contact hours plus assignments. We will have six meetings, one of the meetings is in Finnish parliament in Helsinki.

• First lecture must be about the meaning of the local administration: why local politics is needed and how does the organisation work. This part could be partly lecture, partly group work. Students will find out the core of the local administration by given tasks. For the next meeting I will hand out the agenda of the next Jyväskylä city council meeting. I will explain the backgrounds before our visit to city hall.

• Second meeting could be about the work of local administration. We will visit for instance Jyväskylä city hall and follow the monthly meeting of the city council. Students must write a newspaper article about some important issue which was discussed and solved during the city council meeting.

• Third meeting will start with the questions arisen from the visit to city hall and the meeting. This time we could have somebody from Jyväskylä city to explain why Jyväskylä, Jyväskylän maalaiskunta and Korpilahti plan to merge during the next years.

• Fourth meeting will be in Helsinki, we visit Helsinki usually in the end of January. We will meet some local MP in Finnish parliament and then we will have a guided tour through the whole parliament house. After this trip students write an essay of 2500 words describing interesting discovery in the core of Finnish parliamentary.

• Fifth meeting is reserved for the assignment to do with everybody's own home village politics. A student needs to interview at least two politicians from hers/his own municipal. The interview must explain what are the key topics in the political life of that particular region.

• Sixth meeting is for a local political journalist who will go through last meeting's assignments and comment on them. The journalist will talk about his/hers interesting cases in local politics.