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Huom! Tämä on rinnakkaistallenne.

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# Continuous Learning – why and how?

19.3.2020 — Kukka-Maaria Korko



It may still be difficult for some of us to get a full grasp of what continuous learning means, could mean and will inevitably mean for us in the future. Some of you might ask then WHY?

*Why* would I need to question my situation if I am happy and successful as such? *Why* my current skills are suddenly outdated? *Why* one gets to decide that I am suddenly not good enough and I need to either update my skills or get some more? *Why* do we question degree-based education? *Why* now more than ever?

Once the why has been discussed and many see then the validity of the answers, it is time to ask **HOW**? Optimist Sinek's writing "*Start with the why*" suggests that once you have figured out the why then the how should not be such a big deal... Well sometimes the why is not so easy to process and therefore many of us still think: *how* on earth am I supposed to find time to perform in my current work and at the same time develop new skills for some tomorrow's tasks that I might or might not be allocated with? *How* the education system will be affected by this new trend of thinking? *How* do we operate to face all these changes with similar amount or less resources? *How* will I or our organizations be able to bear the costs to train or retrain ourselves in the future?

All of these questions are fair, and we should not be afraid to ask them. However, I have noticed in the past months when working on this project that continuous learning is often misunderstood or quite much narrowed down. It is actually too often approached through a negative lens. Don't get me wrong, I am not saying that what is going on is easy and that solutions are obvious. On the contrary, continuous learning is not a new topic and many have

already struggled with these questions for years. But let's stay positive! Finland has in many ways successfully dealt, for instance, with the challenges brought by the digital era. We have just now entered another era and need to rethink, change, adapt and do it in a manner that makes us struggle in many ways.

*“The pessimist complains about the wind;*

*the optimist expects it to change;*

*the realist adjusts the sails.”*

William Arthur Ward

The question is now how does the higher education sector react and can adjust to face this new shift? In Tampere, we are lucky to have a very rich education sector, Tampere University and Tampere University of Applied Sciences (TAMK) form a large and unique learning community. However, it has been made clear that we cannot anymore function within traditional silos. More than ever, we need strong connections with the industry so that we can answer better and faster to the needs of tomorrow. The aim of this project is to build a stronger ecosystem in Pirkanmaa where all education institutions, public and private institutions as well as the industry function together in the same direction. It is a massive challenge that will require changes that some of us see as far as leading to the end of diplomas, the end of traditional university programs for instance. Well, it might. But before that happens, the question is what we can do right now in Tampere to support the reinforcement of continuous learning, the way it can be done, right now, within the Finnish legislative frame. And that's what we have decided to focus on in TAMK in close collaboration with Tampere University: we have therefore launched a series of pilots that enable to test different models, different tools that will help us to renew ourselves. A few weeks ago, we launched a new webpage that enables you to follow the progression of our actions so I encourage you to visit: <https://www.tuni.fi/fi/tutustu-meihin/jatkuva-oppiminen>, so far only in Finnish, but as often it is a learning process and we are working on it!

Next time I will write about the set of opportunities that continuous learning as a mindset for life gives us, what is possible when we go beyond the acceptance of the *why* and focus and the *how* so that the pieces of the puzzle fall into place...

Text: Clementine Arpiainen, Project Manager, Continuous Learning

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