INSPIRED BY LEARNING

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Abstract

When googling motivation + learning, you will get in less than one second 185.000.000 results. It is obvious that we do not lack information about what is motivation and how it is related to learning. How is it then possible, that at the same time even 60% of students think teaching they are participating is boring at least half of the time? We claim that it is much easier to tell in theory what is interesting or how to build motivation, than to do it in practice. Since 2011, we have been developing tools for inspiring learning. With this article, we will share some of our principles of inspiring learning as well as give examples about how to do it in practice. Principles are connected to the powerful relationship between student and teacher, using natural environments as part of learning, providing possibilities for personalized learning, connecting learning to a story that has purpose and having fun when learning. Teachers should focus to empower students to learn, instead of teaching them. To learn is the most important competence to learn and teachers should provide possibilities for students to focus on why, instead of focusing on how or what lo learn.

1. Introduction

We are two teachers of occupational therapy, who met each other when working for Erasmus Intensive Program about Community Based Mental Health (CBMH). We both enjoy studying, but most of time we have found it boring. As occupational therapists, we strongly believe on the power of learning by doing. That is one of the fundamental principles of occupational therapy since the beginning of the profession. (Reed & Sanderson, 1999.)

In 2011 we started together to think, what we could do to make studying more fun. We found many studies and literature about motivation and learning; when googling motivation + learning, you will get in less than one second 185.00.000 results. It is evident, that there is enough knowledge about what affects and effects to motivation when learning. We also found evidence we are not the only ones, who are bored in school; 60% of high school students think that at least

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half of the time lectures are boring (Mann & Robinson, 2009). So how come there is so much knowledge about what should make studying more interesting, but still studying is boring? This was why we wanted to start developing tools that we assumed could make learning more interesting and fun.

2. Learning as shared process

One of the first things we discussed when developing more interesting and funnier learning, or inspiring learning as we call it, was learning as a process in which multiple stakeholders are involved. Teaching is often focused on a teacher, who is teaching e.g. is in the center of the process. The teacher is the one, who allows students to study. In practice this means that a teacher will give the assignments when he / she thinks it is the best way and moment for students to study or a teachers chooses when is the best moment for student to prove in theory or in practice what the students have learned. The teacher decides what should be done during the process of studying and what are the right answers students will come up in the end of the process. A teacher, working like this, is one who sees transforming information as the main task as a teacher (Carnell, 2007). Little time is used to build the relationship and to discover why students are supposed to study. Our point of view is that learning is a process where student(s) are in the center of this process. The teacher is an enabler, who will provide tools that will help students to learn - in co-operation with other students - competences that are needed as professional The most important competence to learn is how to learn. Focus is in a learning process of constructing the knowledge in co-operation with students (Carnell, 2007)

Teachers' job is to create positive learning atmosphere, where students will learn by discussing and exploring together. For learning, there should be different kinds of tools in order to provide information that will be used for learning, but also that students are able to use different channels of learning (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). This will enable students to learn those competences that are important and needed. Learning is based on exploring and sharing. There is not one right answer, but different answers; some of them will work on certain situations, others in other situations and with clients. In this process, students will learn that when working with clients there are not only right ways of doing – there is no cookbook, but also decisions are based on clients´ situation and the expertise of the team working with client. The most crucial is that in a process like this, the teacher is a coach, who will work with students, when they need support from teacher. The need for support could be recognized by students themselves or by the teacher.

3. Developing innovative tools for learning

In the field of health and social care education, client examples are used quite often as tool for learning. We know that learning is more interesting and inviting when there is a story connected to the learning (Kapp, 2012). In course CBMH, our team of teachers decided to have client-case as one of the starting points for learning. That is why two of us got as assignment to make a client-case for our course. Often these client-cases are stories told from the point of view of teacher.

We wanted to start it a bit different way; we wanted students to learn more deeply who our client is, not just as a paper case, but also about story of the client.

First, we created a story of this client. We live in different countries and we were not able to meet each other's, so we did the story creation by chatting in Facebook. For us from the beginning it was obvious that we wanted to create a story that was believable. Later on we have described that we want to have a story like Santa Claus; all of us know that he doesn´t exist for real, but we want to believe in him. This was also, what we wanted to do when creating the story and tools of the life of our client. We discussed about all details. We decided she is a person living in UK. That was because of the common language of the course is English. Then we created the story of her life with her husband, children and grandchildren.

Second, we wanted to have a story that evokes emotions. According to Kolb & Kolb (2005) learning is more effective when there are different emotions involved in the learning situation. We were planning what could be things to create atmosphere for different kind of feelings towards to our client. Students in CBMH are average 20-25 years old. Our imaginary client was, at the time of making the story, 62-years old. So how to create a story that students - perhaps 40-years younger- would find emotional and exited? We decided to develop tools that would enable getting different kind of information from different sources; confidential client papers, public profile in social media and meaningful memories in memory box.

We wanted to provide to the students the possibility to have the experience of understanding the life events of this client. That is why we wanted to have her personal memories from the past as part of the learning experience; memories of childhood, adolescence, from the time when her children were born and current memories. We wanted to have something surprising and powerful. When we were working on developing the story of our client, at the same time in Oulu University of Applied Sciences (OAMK) there was a project about mixed reality (OAMK a, 2013). One part of this project was to develop Mobile Spatial Design Application. This application originally was developed to visualize environmental design in 3D in real environment. (OAMK b, 2013). We got the possibility in co-operation with engineers specialized in 3D-technology to develop a tool to get to know and have insight to the memories that are private and treasured by the client. This tool was made to have a view on what could be life events that a client would like to share with the professionals who are working with her.

Thirdly, we wanted to have a tool that would be as easy as possible to access and that could be vivid and developing all the time. We are interested about learning that could be possible everywhere and all the time, so as part of the students natural environment. Students for CBMH where coming from seven different countries and nine different higher education institutes. We needed to use some kind of platform, but we did not had one that was common for all. Still we wanted to have something that would be easy to use and something where students would like to go as platform. Most of all we wanted to use something where students already are. 85-95% of students in higher education are using Facebook (Junco, 2011), so this is why we choose that as platform to work with our client.

In order to learn about the public life events of our client we created to her a Facebook profile, where students could see and follow what she is posting about her life. In the beginning, we had only profile of our client, but soon we also become interested to provide for students the possibility to discuss with our client. First, some of the students wanted to send messages to her and later on some of them started to chat with her. Like told earlier, this client does not really exist, so one of us was acting as client and chatting with students. When we got the possibility to observe students chatting with the client, it become obvious for us that it was a really exciting and powerful experience for the students. They really prepared themselves to discuss with the client by planning in co-operation how to build trust, how to make meaningful questions, how to answer to her and what could be proposals they could make to her. In the beginning, students were chatting with Nancy one time, but soon they wanted to have another possibility too. And some of them wanted to share with her their ideas of her treatment ja rehabilitation plan.

Fourthly we wanted students to learn as interprfessional team. Interprofessional education (IPE) has been defined as "members or students of two or more professions associated with health or social care, engaged in learning with, from and about each other" (Barr et al., 2005). By learning interprofessionally students will have possibility to learn about shared values, they will share knowledge and skills between professionals and develop respect towards each other's professions (Craddock, 2006). For most of the students, joining CBMH working with the client as interprofessional group was the first time they learned together with students from another profession. From the beginning, students were expected to work as interprofessional team. They worked together during several days sharing their own profession-based understanding of the client and after that, they made shared view of the client. As a team, they made a treatment and rehabilitation plan. Each group presented their plan in a poster session.

From the beginning of using this way of learning, we have been collecting data from the students who have been learning by using these methods. These students have been evaluation the utility and attractiveness of these methods. Later on, we also add questions about effeteness towards to the learning outcomes. Now we have data from 170 students from 14 different countries and 14 different degree programs. Students find these methods interesting and inspiring. The most important experience when learning with this client and with these methods, by students, is the process of learning together.

4. Discussion and conclusions

Teachers are all the time facing new challenges when working with students. Students who are using social media, ICT-tools etc. are used to ways of interacting and transferring information in different ways than what so called traditional teaching is offering. In order to support and enable learning new methods should be developed. In best possible situation, these tools could provide possibilities for students to learn that learning is fun and interesting. This kind of experiences could have effect that attitudes towards learning could become more positive and support

becoming of lifelong learners. However, it something to notice is that developing inspiring tools takes a lot of time and resources. With this article, we are sharing part of the work and principles we have been using and developing when creating new methods and tools for learning.

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