



Title of Case Study

Widening possibilities to study university degree-oriented studies (Administrative Law) in the open university 2007-2010

Summary research–practice dialogue

The project group consisted of practitioners in different partner institutes and university teachers. In this case study the interaction between research and practice was combined mainly through the person who made her thesis during this process. At the same time she was representing project partner Kuopio Summer University and followed project as a practitioner also. The follow-ups and also the study done were quite practical concentrating on the cooperation of the network, guidance and the continuum of guidance, APEL, teaching and solutions in distance education. According the thesis the cooperation of operators changed a lot along the project. The Ministry of education granted money for this project and the after the project it was reported to the ministry.

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Abstract (100-150 words)

The group of representatives in law sciences at University of Joensuu planned in 2006 so called HTK –project (Bachelor of Administrative Sciences –project) together with open university of Joensuu University and six summer universities. The main aim of this project was to enable planned route for adults (who are in working life) towards their degree studies in law and widen this way the adult's possibilities to get into a university. The other objective was to organise law studies to wider public by organising it in the regionally wide spread Summer Universities. This caused a rush to these institutions and as a result that the open university got almost a 1000 new students in two years.

General background

Finland has a very tight equality policy regarding the admissions into the university. The main thought is that everybody who wants to study at a university has to go through same selection process, which means that almost all applicants take part in entrance exams. Study places are restricted (numerus clausus). Only a small minority of students have the



possibility to use so called open university channel which is available only in selected majors. Year 2000 only 1,6% of all the new students used this route into university and 2006 3,3% which means a total of 665 students. Even this very small number of has caused a discussion and criticism, especially from the university student's side. Open university channel has not been used before in subject of law as law studies have been very restricted as a subject in open university. This is due to the high and protected status of this particular profession (law). However, University of Joensuu has been organising law studies prior to this case at the open university and amount of students enrolled was growing. In fact University of Joensuu was the biggest organiser of law studies in the whole country in spite of that it had not the possibility to give Masters of Laws. The degree was Master of Administrative Sciences and the law studies constituted the core of this degree. Now the intention is to widen these law studies in cooperative institutions in several places with this gateway to proceed via open university channel to degree studies was extraordinary and revealed hidden demand for these kind of studies. This HTK-project was partly financed by the Ministry of Education.

Objectives and Purpose

The main purpose of this project was to develop adults' possibilities to get into a university and complete a degree in administrative sciences. In the Finnish scale this objective was pioneering act. So far the faculties of law have not been very interested to offer their education through open university to a wider public. University of Joensuu provided 75% of the amount of law studies available in open university in Finland.

The other objectives were to make law studies in general more attainable through open university and through regional operators like Summer Universities (and Folk High Schools). One objective was to develop long lasting relationship with open university and Summer Universities, as helping students to accomplish a degree means a long and patient work. One objective was to develop pedagogical solutions, to use distance education methods like video lectures and Moodle learning environment and in addition to that to support studying with special courses and language studies.

Links between Research and Practice

This project was initiated by researchers of the faculty and they were in tight cooperation with the planning officers of open university and 5 Summer Universities and one Folk High School. Studies attracted a lot of new students and their initial level was very uneven. All partners participated in developing studies and creating the supporting services. Especially professors and other teachers had to develop new methods to deliver education via new methods. This project was followed by several follow up studies by the faculty and one researcher who was working at the Summer University of Kuopio. The process was also closely monitored by regular meetings between different partners. Student's wishes concerning majors and minors were surveyed and the Summer Universities tried to arrange minors according to the students wishes.

Research Process

Meklin (2009,13-15) has used in her study as a theoretical framework developmental work research. The study material has been collected from documentary sources (10), theme interviews (9) case examples (17) and target group interviews. The main orientation of this study is qualitative. Documents formed empirical starting point for the study and they were collected from all Finnish open universities. They were asked to collect all studies and reports concerning degree oriented studies in the Finnish open universities. The researcher created from these studies and reports the description of degree oriented studies in Finland. This description was deepened by theme interviews. The main findings in this study were: a) the questions concerning the division of labour changed from the one institute to deal with the co-operation of the whole network and its partners; b) the need to develop the rules of the open university so that the special needs of the degree oriented studies can be better taken into account; c) the faculties and institutes of the university and especially their teachers have to take into account that this is a new situation where they have different type of students as a target group, they are adults who want to study part-time and they need new solutions in delivering the education like distance education methods. The researcher herself was part of the project, so she had the possibilities to know the project from inside. The other study was made by Korhonen (2009), and the aim of this survey was to get feedback of the studies but also get information about the degree oriented studies, study guidance and all the arrangements with these studies. The problem was very low percentage of answers.

Measurement

The main measure to success in this project was the large amount of new students during the three years of its duration. Before the project the open university had 200 students in law at Summer Universities and one Folk High School. In the end of 2009 there were almost 1100 law students in these cooperative institutes. This project gathered almost 1000 new students. These students accomplished 2009 altogether 9092 credit points, which is more than in all other Finnish open universities in total. The measure for success is also the fact that 2010 altogether 103 adult students come into the University of Eastern Finland¹ through open university channel. Their mean age was 40 years, 75% of them were women.

You can perhaps draw two conclusions from this fact: first that the motivation to study in the open university has a lot to do with the possibility to accomplish the degree. The other conclusion is that there was hidden demand for law studies. The regional objective was reached very well as in all six Summer Universities there were enough students taking part in the education and approximately 50% of students lived in the southern Finland.

Korhonen (2009) sent e-formula for (N=453) students but only 13% gave the answer. So we must be a little bit cautious with the conclusions. There were also another questionnaire

¹ University of Joensuu and University of Kuopio formed together by merging the new University of Eastern Finland 2010.

(N=56, answering percentage 58%). The most of the students who gave the answer were women (77%; 70%²). This is quite normal percentage of women in the open university as a whole (2009: 75%). The median age group was 31-40 (in both studies). The mean age was 41 (also in both studies). Almost half of the students (45%) had already the bachelor's degree accomplished in the University of applied sciences. The other students had vocational education (21%) and maturity examination (32%) and only 2% had just primary school as the educational background. The majority of students (56%) had the Master's Degree as an objective of their studies and 33% of students had as an objective to accomplish bachelor's degree. As a major subject they had planned administrative law (37%; 25%), civil law (22%; 29%), financial law (16%; 12%) and criminal law and judicial procedure (14%). The other questions were normal feedback questions concerning the arrangements of study and guidance and other things like evaluation of teaching methods and so on. The students took part in the development of the practical issues and development of tutoring and guidance.

Linking Researchers and Practitioners (or Policy Makers)

Main educational policy maker, the Ministry of Education and Culture, was involved in this project. Project plan was presented to the ministry and ministry granted money for this project. The results have been reported to the ministry after the project ended. In this case researcher (Meklin) was part of the project and worked in one of the Summer Universities. Practitioner and researcher was in this case the same person. Practitioners like teachers of the university (professors of the faculty) took part in the development work on several levels.

Transferability of the Case and recommendations from the Case Study

This case does not necessary have any transferable elements, because the situation is so different in other countries. In adults case the motivation to study is the main thing. Motivation to study degree is in Finland very strong as it gives you clear advantage on the labour market. The adaptation to the circumstances of students is essential to get adults to study effectively. Widening the possibilities to study the subject of law in different parts of the country is one part of adaptation to the circumstances of adult students. Regional operators should take part from the first beginning so the study conditions can be organised together with all the partners of the project.

² The results of another questionnaire are presented after the results of Korhonen 2009.



Further Reading and literature

Kontinen, Raili 2010. HTK-tutkintoon johtavat opinnot avoimessa yliopistossa –hanke. Lopputaportti. Savonlinnan kesäyliopisto.

Korhonen, Anne 2009. Selvitys HTK-opintojen suorittamisesta Joensuun avoimessa yliopistossa

Meklin, Soili 2009. Yhteistyötä opiskelijan eduksi. Tutkintotavoitteisen avoimen yliopisto-opetuksen organisoinnin haasteita ja ratkaisuja. Joensuun yliopisto, Kasvatustieteiden tiedekunta. Aikuiskasvatustieteen pro gradu –tutkielma.