Learning and knowledge in the north

Eija Jumisko, PhD, MSc, Development Manager, Lapland University of Applied Sciences
Anu Pruikkonen, PhD, MEd, Development Manager, Lapland University of Applied Sciences

Continuous learning means that people's knowledge and skills develop, and are consciously developed, throughout their lives. Learning can be intentional and organised, but it also occurs as part of daily activities (Competence secures the future.Parliamentary policy approaches for reforming continuous learning 2020). Our working life keeps changing, so individuals, organisations and societies must also develop their knowledge and skills. Learning new skills and knowledge is one of the cornerstones of life.

The ability to learn continuously is one of the key skills in the future. For example, three in four technology industry companies view individuals' ability and motivation to learn continuously as a skill that is becoming the most relevant general skill. (Teknologiateollisuuden Osaamispulssi 2021. Technology Industries of Finland 2021.) It involves various learning skills such as study techniques and strategies, interaction skills and an open and curious attitude towards learning new things. The good news is that learning skills can be practised. People must develop their learning skills, because in the future, learning may require algorithmic reading skills, for example (see, e.g., Rusanen 2021).

Learning occurs everywhere, even unnoticed and by chance. This is often referred to as informal learning. Individuals and organisations should have the ability to evaluate the knowledge and skills they have acquired in different ways and to make them visible. For universities, this means they should develop how they identify and recognise knowledge and skills, as well as their tools for identifying related development needs. At the same time, new types of guidance services will be needed to support career planning, for example.

Constant changes in working life have become the new normal, and it results in a situation in which competence development is part of work for more and more people. Work gives rise to new learning needs at an increasing pace. People must be able to solve problems individually

and collectively and acquire new knowledge continuously. YouTube, various online communities, Spotify, etc. are excellent sources of information when you need to solve a puzzling issue or learn to use a new type of software. This sets universities the challenge of developing flexible learning opportunities such as micro learning models. Knowledge and skills can also be developed by participating in codevelopment and development activities. Various research and development activities offer a learning environment shared by the working world and university.

The vision of Lapland's continuous learning strategy for 2025 is "Competence, participation and well-being – Lapland of opportunities". Key values include customer orientation, equality, internationality, responsibility and transparency, love and joy of learning and Lapland identity. Lapland identity involves a hard-working, committed and creative spirit of "getting things done" in a multicultural county neighbouring three different countries. The strategy stresses the importance of updating and developing the knowledge and skills of employed working-age citizens to meet the county's competence needs. (Pitkospuilta revontulille – Lapin jatkuvan oppimisen strategia vuosille 2021–2025).

The topic of this issue of *Lumen* is continuous learning and the opportunities for continuous learning in different career stages and situations.

Digital education products offer the possibility of organising learning. Karme and Elo, as well as Partanen and Hartikainen, discuss the planning of online training. They also emphasise the importance of enabling interaction in online learning environments. Partanen and Hartikainen describe how a MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) study module can be built and discuss the issue of finding a suitable course from a wide range of studies. They also discuss copyright and ways to activate learners after they have completed a course.

Finding and distinguishing relevant and quality information from large amounts of data may be difficult. Halttunen and Helavirta launched a project to create a textbook to support teaching about foster care. The project originated from the need expressed by various actors to have compiled and research-based material on the topic representing several perspectives. The creation of the textbook involved a broad group of experts. Students also participated in the project.

Learning takes place **in various kinds of learning environments**. Simulation training is an effective supplement to learning on the ground. Research and development projects provide excellent learning environments too. Keränen and Saarela describe the SERI project in Sea

Lapland, in which UAS students implemented activities related to the project topics. Their article exemplifies how real work assignments provide a meaningful learning environment and enhance the knowledge and skills of all parties involved. Kestilä and Herkkola also give an account of a development project and how the different parties learned from it. Tyni takes a closer look at the various learning opportunities offered by daily UAS work duties and encourages us all to share our knowledge and skills with our colleagues.

The **collaborative nature of learning and learning from one another** are features also touched on in the other articles. Saloniemi and Lehtinen describe their working life-based UAS studies as multidisciplinary and collaborative. In such studies, building trust and shared rules plays an important role, as does the ability to lead oneself, because how one acts also affects the community where one works. Perälä and Elo give an example of how the personnel's needs and wishes, as well as research data, were taken into account when the personnel received training. The aim was to improve the quality of fracture patient care and nursing by organising training that combined theoretical knowledge with a plastering workshop. This example also sheds light on how a working community builds knowledge together.

Learners need **support and guidance at different stages of their learning process**. Kangastie and Vesterinen emphasise the importance of identifying learners' own strengths and guidance based on them. They describe how the identification of strengths was used to develop UAS Master School students' network management competence. Nisula describes the use of learning analytics in social services studies. The use of learning analytics requires careful pedagogical planning to ensure it serves students in the best possible way and enables teachers to guide them when required and use the most suitable methods.

A future orientation and identifying one's strengths, knowledge and skills provide a basis for developing competence. In their article, Saari and Repo describe career planning development activities carried out in higher education, focusing specifically on strength-based career planning and its significance. They also introduce a strength-based career planning course they have developed, and how it can be implemented. Career planning is also related to alumni (graduate) activities, and graduates are also continuous learners. In their article, Kemi and Vinblad suggest that alumni activities support the development of continuous learning, and discuss ways to offer continuous learning opportunities to graduates and the related development needs. Further development to enhance graduates' competence is needed, and all the members of the university community should participate in these activities.

The development of services and solutions that best support continuous learning requires active and open-minded collaborative activities in which ideas and operations collide and are reconciled. Building a common vision of the present and the future promotes trust and commitment to long-term development activities that benefit different learners and regions. Valvimo and Polak report on the JATKUMO project, in which ten UASs participate in designing a shared service model to meet the continuous learning needs of companies and organisations. Löf and Riihiniemi write about the collaboration between the Lapland University of Applied Sciences and secondary education institutions and how this collaboration can be enhanced to promote continuous learning and the region's attractiveness. Juntti and Riihiniemi stress the importance of close cooperation between education institutions, businesses and working life services in meeting competence needs and providing guidance services.

Competence development and learning new things are related to individuals' well-being and the national economy. In their article, Majuri, Ronkainen and Väärälä describe the competence needs of reindeer herders as the industry changes. New competence can improve the profitability of the industry, promote sustainability and enhance the well-being at work of those who practise this trade. Elo, Rivinen, Vuojärvi, Ahokumpu, Jokelainen and Rasi from the Lapland University Consortium write about their work in the OdigO project managed by the University of Lapland. The project aims to improve the digital skills of those working with adults and older people in Lapland, as well as to reinforce their knowledge about how to support the digital skills of adults and older people.

We would like to express our warmest thanks to all the authors and especially to our visiting columnist Kirsi Heinivirta.

The articles in this edition of *Lumen* also echo the authors' joy of learning and doing things together. We are all continuous learners.

Sources

Competence secures the future. Parliamentary policy approaches for reforming continuous learning (in Finnish, English abstract). Publications of the Finnish Government 2020:33 Accessed on 19 January 2022. Competence secures the future.Parliamentary policy approaches for reforming continuous learning 2020.

Teknologiateollisuuden Osaamispulssi 2021 (in Finnish). Technology Industries of Finland. Accessed on 19 January 2022 https://osaamispulssi.fi/wp-content/uploads/Osaamispulssin-lyhyt-tulosesitys.pptx

Kangastie, H., Koski A., Kuisma L. (2021.) Pitkospuilta revontulille – Lapin jatkuvan oppimisen strategia vuosille 2021–2025. Publications of the Lapland University of Applied Sciences 4/2021. Accessed on 19 January 2022. Pitkospuilta revontulille – Lapin jatkuvan oppimisen strategia vuosille 2021–2025)

Rusanen, A-M. (2021.) "Algoritmien aakkoset". In *Älykäs huominen – Miten tekoäly ja digitalisaatio muuttavat maailmaa*. Gaudeamus (pp. 33–39). Accessed on 19 January 2022. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/355007655