

In a knowledge ecosystem, everyone is a winner

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Universities of applied sciences are partners in continuous learning and professional development. This partnership means working together to develop the competence of individuals, organisations, and the region. How does this partnership work, and how do we feel about it at the University of Applied Sciences? These questions are addressed in this LUMEN theme issue with articles and texts on this topic.

The time is long gone when education was thought of as entirely separate from the rest of working life, like a ship at sea, which teachers navigated forward with their expertise. There is already a long history of cooperation with the professional world, which is confirmed by the results of a survey conducted by Arene (2021). In this survey, stakeholders were asked to describe their perceptions of universities of applied sciences, and the key themes that emerged were their practicality and proximity to the professional world.

Universities of applied sciences have many tasks: degree education, research, development, innovation activities, and regional development. In terms of the partnership, these different functions cannot be separated. A degree education offers opportunities for lifelong learning, to which we should all aspire. Lifelong learners already have extensive vocational skills and networks when they continue their education and training, which universities of applied sciences can already utilise well. Students are best motivated to study when it involves hands-on experience and cooperation with the professional world (Virkkula, 2022). It also increases their chances of finding employment in cooperating companies and organisations as soon as they graduate.

Lifelong learning and the basic tasks of the University of Applied Sciences provide a good framework for teaching and RDI staff to work together with students, professional partners and other educational organisations. The partnership works when everyone has common objectives and an end goal. In this way, all the parties involved increase and strengthen their competence – and thus, everyone wins.

What kind of knowledge ecosystem do we operate in, and with whom?

Sitra (2022) has published a new thesis, 'Skills modernise work and working modernises skills.' This thesis illustrates well how we should seek solutions together for the quickly changing operating environment and its skills needs. Organisations, companies, and associations are in a better position to develop their activities through different ecosystems and networks than by acting alone. Knowledge ecosystems are an important channel for individuals to network, learn together and modernise their skills. Universities of applied sciences are an important part of this knowledge development ecosystem, which makes lifelong learning possible and has the ability to modernise itself. The knowledge ecosystem is responsible for developing, sharing, and utilising knowledge so that everyone is involved, and their needs are met (Sitra 2022).

A flexible partner for developing knowledge

Throughout their existence, universities of applied sciences have established excellent relationships with their region's professional world. Partnerships are even more significant, and in her column, Mirva Juntti, Service Manager at Lapland University of Applied Sciences, asks the reader, "What kind of partner are you?" In her column, Mirva Juntti describes and elucidates the goals and methods of working together in contractual partnerships.

In their theme article, Ville Rauhala, Marko Merkkiniemi and Mirva Juntti have focused on how partnerships provide opportunities for forecasting and greater effectiveness in planning RDI services. The theme continues with an assessment of skills needs and opportunities for business development in Mirva Juntti, Minna Uusihanni and Janne Pohjanen's theme article, 'Universities of Applied Sciences and Financiers as Support for Continuous Learning in Companies.' In their text, Mirva Juntti, Raimo Pyöry and Taina Torvela jointly state that a high-quality RDI service requires seamless cooperation.

How cooperation with the National Land Survey of Finland has produced workplace-based expertise is covered in the theme article by Petri Notko, Iina Hellström, Mika Rostedt, Jaakko Lampinen and Kai Ryytänen. The article provides an excellent description of the process and measures included in the partnership. In their article, Anzelika Krastina, Nick Heijder, Eloïse Martin, and Aude Palancade write about teaching a course in cooperation with an international strategic partner. In the article by Ulla Mikkanen, Jarno Niskala and Eila Seppänen, 'World Heritage along the Struve Geodetic Arc,' we read about a project that brings together strategic partners and has produced historically significant results. The carefully designed, high-quality video by Karoliina Laxström, Tiia Ahola and Jonna Ylinampa gives us an inside look at how partnerships have been implemented with different actors in the university's projects.

Helena Kangastie, Markus Pellikka and Krista Rautio write about the development of Nordic leadership and the importance of a forum for joint discussion. Labour market matching problems lie at the heart of the theme article by Suvi Lehojärvi, Oona Kivistö and Mona Feodoroff, and the solution could be regional workforce cooperation. Hannele Niemi and Satu Uusiautti write about the tools developed together for advancing students' digital skills. In their text, Heidi Pyyny, Niina Riihiniemi and Mervi Kutuniva describe educational cooperation in social work education with Rovala College, and Leena Välimaa's text tells us how partnerships work as learning forums in the service business of the University of Applied Sciences.

Working with partners on development projects

In their theme article, Sirpa Kokko and Sara Kuure elucidate the role of universities of applied sciences as partners in circular economy activities and its development. Tiina Keränen and Henri Saarela explain how standards can be a competitive advantage in sustainability transformation. Päivi Rautio has written about various projects and their measures related to obtaining the HINKU status for carbon-neutral municipalities. In her text, Johanna Aarnio-Keinänen provides us information about the most interesting partnerships in the circular economy.

Raimo Ruoppa, Päivi Rautio, Raimo Vierelä and Vili Kesti write about developing knowledge with a strategic partner in their article, 'A partnership of steel.' Leena Parkkila, Marika Tuomela-Pyykkönen, Mika Turska and Teemu Saralampi write about the partnership network formed during a project between the development company, training organisations and SMEs. Satu Kokko and Anne Saloniemi write about workplace-based learning with a strategic partner in forestry students' project studies, and Katri Hendriksson's text covers developing a workplace-based partnership.

Excellent insights for joint development work are highlighted in the article 'Achieving and maintaining a mutual understanding in joint projects is hard work' by Riia Valvimo, Sini Seppä-Kortelainen and Jari Kyrö. In their theme article, Mervi Angeria, Milla Hirvaskari, Outi Kähkönen, Mirva Tapaninen and Riina Tervo describe the knowledge production and results from cooperation in the tourism industry's operating environment. Sustainability communication is not simply a matter for individual tourism companies; tourism regions play an important role in this. This is the theme that Kati Koivunen, Maija Palosaari, Sisko Häikiö and Merja Koikkalainen have addressed in their theme article, 'Sustainability communications are developed together in Levi.' Petra Paloniemi and Ulla Kangastie write about how educational cooperation with companies can achieve much more than anyone alone in 'Authentic experiences through cooperation.'

Pia Peltoperä's theme article describes how the product development of Eastern Lapland's tourism services is done together and sustainably. In their theme article, Eveliina Heikkilä and Jenni Kemi

describe the importance of networks in development work in which educational institutions act as coordinators. Rovaniemi's business administration education has been developed in cooperation with the professional world, and Kaisa Lammi, Mirva Jakola, Hanna Korpua and Anu Huhnanntti write about this. The joint development that led to the creation of an urban centre association in Rovaniemi is at the heart of Jenni Kemi, Miia Taivalanti and Mari Vähäkuopus' text.

Leena Viinamäki, Pekka Iivari, Eeva Helameri and Eija Raasakka have written about many regional partnerships and co-development in their project titled 'Everyday safety roadmap – activating participation to prevent exclusion.' Satu Elo, Päivi Jauhola, Marja Kivekäs, Katja Vahtola and Anniina Tohmola have worked together with the municipality and educational organisations to create the Living Lab innovation ecosystem. Hanna Hermunen, Marjukka Rasa and Leena Viinamäki present their thesis on the skills gained through the partnership and its many dimensions. The coronavirus pandemic has also had an impact on project work with partners. Anna-Liisa Lämsä, Marjukka Rasa and Sanna Viinonen present good ideas and insights into the search for the dimensions of project resilience in their theme article 'Partnering with Corona – challenges in project work.'

The articles in this publication reflect the joy of doing things together and document this collaboration. The authors have found ways to bring out the voice of working life and partners, and they have written together. The expertise of the University of Applied Sciences in structuring and documenting information makes it possible to disseminate valuable results and outputs to a wider audience.

A warm thank you to the theme issue columnist Mirva Juntti, our partners, authors, and the staff of the University of Lapland for their interesting and diverse articles and texts on working with our partners.

Sources:

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