



INTEGRATING THE FIN-TAN INNOVATION PEDAGOGY MODEL INTO CO-OPERATIVE EDUCATION AND LEARNING COMMUNITIES

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Abstract

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) play a central role in the development of nations. They are considered to be the think tanks from which major solutions to address national challenges are generated. In addition, HEIs are thought to be dynamic communities of learning that influence social, economic and technological changes in societies. The labour market demands quality graduates who are prepared to work in professional duties and working life is willing to recruit people who have the necessary tools in terms of innovation and competence but also networks in society. However, the extent to which HEIs graduates are prepared to meet the needs of the current labour market is still questionable. HEIs are being claimed to send to the labour market graduates who are not ready and prepared to work in professional environments. The situation raises questions of pedagogy in terms of teaching and learning methods and particularly how learning is defined in HEIs. Further, it is uncertain as to whether the used curricula are suitable to allow innovation, critical thinking and multiple skills acquisition. However, for the HEIs to educate future generations and ensure that they reach the right set of skills and knowledge, the teaching and learning methods should be appropriate. This paper proposes that the gap between working life demands and higher education could be diminished by utilising the innovative pedagogy approach, the FinTan model, which includes the idea of reverse innovation and social inclusion.

1. Introduction

Currently, the term 'innovation' is much used and the concept is included in a variety of contexts and pedagogical discussions. It emerged in the 21st century. Innovation pedagogy, as such was developed in Finland and it is a holistic approach to learning. The roots of innovation pedagogy are in the concepts of constructivism and social learning which emphasise learning as an outcome of group interaction (Kettunen *et al.*, 2013). The innovative pedagogical approach is a response of universities to the demand that education and working life should interact increasingly to be able to improve the competence and employability of graduates (Gharehbaghi, 2015). Innovative pedagogy utilises active learning and teaching methods, which emphasise multidisciplinary networks and collaborative team-based learning (Kettunen *et al.*, 2013.) According to Kettunen *et al.* (2013), "innovation pedagogy is a learning approach, which defines in a new way how knowledge is assimilated, produced and used in a manner that can create innovations." The Tanzanian Tumaini University Dar es Salaam College (TUDARCo) has successfully executed the FinTan pedagogy model that is based on the innovative pedagogy thinking developed by the Finnish Turku University of Applied Sciences (TUAS). In the FinTan framework, inclusion is included in the learning process which is not limited to the university but it is seen as an expanding process that invites local communities in the learning process, and through learning the development of positive and distinctive social identity is enabled. Learning is not only linked with the skills and knowledge in practice but is a major factor in terms of inclusion in professional collectives as part

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of education. One important concept connected to the FinTan model is reverse innovation thinking, which is only shortly referred to in this paper. The current project SUSIE (<https://susie.turkuamk.fi/>), in turn, develops the FinTan model further and scales it up including the variety of communities in learning processes. This paper proposes that FinTan Pedagogy is a suitable model for HEIs to improve learning interaction with co-operatives.

2. Theoretical Underpinning

This paper is informed by Roger's Diffusion of Innovation (DIO) theory which postulates that in any innovation there are innovators who adopt new ideas like technologies, concepts, and behaviours in early stages; early adopters, early majority, late majority and the laggards. It is also expected that Innovation pedagogy in HEIs will follow the same trend. Innovators adopt new changes easily; they are not afraid to use the try and error method in learning. They are eager to learn new things and apply the knowledge and skills gained in solving real-life problems. Early adopters are visionaries and they are quick to solve problems they are invested in. They seek out solutions and communicate them to beneficiaries. The early majority adopt innovations because they work and solve immediate problems, they are pragmatic. The late majority accept innovations a bit late but they are flexible and willing to change. The laggards are sceptical of innovations. However, the question is to what extent are HEIs instructors and facilitators prepared to nurture these innovators in their process of learning. What about parents and other education stakeholders? Similarly, innovation in co-operative education institutions and co-operative societies have different people who adopt innovation differently, innovation pedagogy approach, and particularly the FinTan model, is suggested to be the best approach. Penttilä, (2016) and Henningsen, (2016) argued that Innovation pedagogy is all about finding solutions and implementing them, regardless of whether they are novel solutions to the problem or they add value to the improvement of the solutions used to solve the problem. The emphasis is on solving community problems. In shaping and preparing the future workforce, HEIs have a role to serve as test-beds for innovation and entrepreneurship. Innovation, competitiveness and the growth of the local industry need to be stimulated, catalysed, nurtured, developed and promoted for any country to prosper in this era of the knowledge economy and globalisation. This can be attained if HEIs implement relevant teaching and learning approaches.

3. An Overview of Innovation Pedagogy in HEIs

We may argue that the development of countries depends on the quality of education which depends on several factors, one of them being an innovation in teaching and learning particularly in higher education institutions. Being at the centre of addressing the social and economic development of the country, HEIs cannot isolate themselves and operate without interaction with other operators in the society. Vice versa, universities should be continuously aware of the changing needs of the working life, labour market and community to justify their existence and relevance. In today's world, all sectors emphasise the importance of innovation. Employers look for creative, competent, skilled and innovative employees, organisations need innovations to remain competitive in the market and the public sector needs innovations to produce high quality and cost-efficient services (Avvisati *et al.*, 2013). This situation calls for HEIs to produce competent professionals fit for the market; individuals, who are sufficiently equipped with the required knowledge and skills to solve community problems and turn the challenges into opportunities (Msola, 2019; Avvisati *et al.*, 2013). HEIs are seen as neutral and influential players uniquely placed to lead the society by providing the invaluable source of expertise in teaching and learning, research and development and most importantly in rendering community services and addressing diverse community challenges. The Tanzania vision 2025, among other things, envisions developing a well-educated society in an attempt to address development challenges. Advocating Education for Self-Reliance, Nyerere (1967) said that the purpose of education, higher education in Tanzania is to nurture and encourage the development of proud, independent and free citizenry which relies on itself for its development. His notion on education, particularly higher education, was to produce highly skilled individuals capable of being productive to the community.

Collaborative elements have been implemented into active learning processes but also increasingly such aims as co-creation and co-designing have been included in the research, development and innovation (RDI) projects. Co-approaches indicate that complex challenges of the 21st century require common involvement and thus public, private and third sectors are encouraged to work together to find solutions in terms of innovations. In general, how innovation is understood and how it is included in pedagogical thinking depends much on the environment where the education is placed. Particularly in Europe, the innovation loop is mainly connected to innovation policies and innovations are aimed at producing large-scale impacts on societies and markets. This in turn implies that innovation includes the idea of large resources and investments. In reverse innovation thinking, the setting has been turned upside down. The innovative idea arises from a community and it is processed locally and not in another environment

or society. Like all innovations, reverse innovation utilises creativity for seeking novelty and changes in an uncertain and complex process. Reverse innovation is close to the concepts of open innovation (Chesbrough *et al.* 2006), user innovation (von Hippel 2005) and social innovation (Mulgan *et al.* 2007) and it pays attention to everyday needs, stakeholders and interaction between local communities and facilitators.

Reverse innovation thinking is an innovative approach that could be a suitable framework for Tanzanian innovation pedagogy. It is a flexible concept and Jalonen (2020) views its complexity thinking and reverse innovation resonate particularly because they are both based on unpredictability so that the outcome of the process is not known beforehand. The result depends on the interlinked causes (cf. McCrystal *et al.*, 2015). Jalonen (2020) presents that behind reverse innovation there are several enablers which increase the options to find solutions that are often unforeseen and require a new kind of interaction.

4. Active Learning Approach

During the current pandemic, university students have indicated their concern about the impact of studying alone. They are anxious that if they are expected to process new topics without common discussion, they might not be able to adopt needed skills and knowledge. In addition, long-standing social isolation can increase experiences of exclusion. In fact, besides skills and knowledge, studies provide students with an arena to seek their membership, the role among communities and to build their identities. Although these might not be stated as priority learning goals of the courses, they are significant at the individual level. Traditionally, the curricula of higher education institutions have expressed rather explicitly; the knowledge the students are expected to receive in courses but universities have not described implicit learning which is generated through a variety of teaching methods. During the last two decades, the tendency in Finland has been that higher education curricula have become multidimensional documents that do not only indicate the content and courses of programmes but rather describe the pedagogical strategy of the institution. A pedagogical strategy explains how learning is understood in the institution, how teaching and learning are organised and what are the processes of evaluation and assessments. As regards innovation pedagogy, it is built on constructivism and social learning theories according to which learning is based on the interaction of learners (Kettunen *et al.*, 2013.) According to constructivism, the learner is an information constructor (see Piaget, 2013; Vygotsky, 1980) and, in terms of active learning, the question is about the active engagement and participation of learners which in turn improves their ownership of knowledge (Misseyyanni *et al.*, 2018).

Learning is overwhelming, it has an impact on mindsets, values and beliefs, to just mention some aspects and, as Misseyyanni *et al.*, (2018) emphasise, higher education is a significant tool for societies. Universities have accounted for lectures for centuries but the demand arising from working life along with globalisation and development of communication have urged universities to rethink their teaching and learning methods. It has been proved that active teaching and learning methods improve learning (e.g., Freeman *et al.*, 2014) and along with the active learning approach the focus of learning has sifted on learners and their actions. Prince (2004) defines active learning as any type of instructional method, which engages students in their learning process and requires meaningful learning activities and students to think about what they are doing. In practice, active learning includes a variety of teaching and learning methods that encourage learners in doing. Misseyyanni *et al.* (2018) see that by adopting the active learning approach higher education (HE), for instance can:

- a) Promote the development of personal values, skills, and competencies but also connects it with a socially beneficial context for their exploitations;
- b) Compensate group efforts learning content interaction and explorations and builds connections between universities and communities, different cultures, civilizations, and religions;
- c) Make HE more relevant for socially inclusive sustainable development;
- d) Build bridges between individuals, groups, institutions, and nations; and
- e) Envision a socially beneficial and effective use of resources in Academia, Industry, and Society.

It seems that current working life and societies appreciate actors, who can co-create, share knowledge and work with diverse communities and disciplines. The active learning processes enable people to reach new skills and knowledge by elaborating information and finding solutions and answers together. One significant aspect of innovation pedagogy is that it encourages inviting “outsiders” into the learning process. Outsiders refer to people who traditionally have not been included in the formal learning process but they are actors coming from various

fields who are not just in the role of visiting experts but are implemented into the learning process (Kettunen *et al.*, 2013.) According to Wenger (1999), learning is the key factor that enables individuals to become unique members of a community. He claims that a learning process generates change through new competencies and capabilities that people have adopted. Learning changes people and enables them to improve their social setting and learning changes the image people have of themselves. Shortly described, education is a tool and a gateway to people towards new groups and communities in which they might be included for their lifetime or just for a short period. New options are opened, particularly during the learning process, which utilise active learning methods and encourage learners to network and encounter diverse society actors.

The concept of Community of Practice (CoP) became especially popular when the social theory of learning was integrated into the concept in the 1990s. CoP refers to the variety of settings in which people together aim to achieve something and tackle the issues they have confronted. CoP is not limited to a certain context, institution or organisation but it can emerge in diverse settings. According to William Snyder and Etienne Wenger (2010), the main elements of CoPs are the domains of the community and practice. The “domain” refers to the common ground for participation. It is the passion shared by the members, their reason to act and gather. “Community” denotes a social setting with a shared community spirit and an interactive platform for learning and interaction. “Practice”, in turn, is both a method and action related to learning, sharing and developing knowledge among community members. (Snyder and Wenger, 2010.) University education might not be overlapping with CoP as such. Nevertheless, the innovation pedagogy approach can link university studies and CoP and provide one optional pedagogical framework for co-operatives to improve their competence, business and networks.

5. The Inclusive Approach of Learning and Social Identity

Inclusion is a significant experience for all people and membership and involvement with others in the group. This aspect is implemented in definitions of inclusion which emphasise acceptance and treatment as an insider (Pelled *et al.*, 1999), the need to tackle the obstacles of participation (Roberson, 2006), and experienced belonging (Lirio *et al.*, 2008). Kathryn, Quick and Feldman (2011) present that the sense of community is an outcome of the inclusion process. They see that “inclusion is oriented to *making connections* among people, across issues, and over time.” (Quick and Feldman, 2011, 273.) Education is a good example of the inclusion process since it aims at linking people together to a large extent. For example, at school, children are rooted in the society, during vocational training starts the socialisation process which aims to include students into the professional community whereas higher education provides tools, which can be used for improving group membership. Through active teaching and learning methods, an innovative pedagogy framework can provide individuals with increasing possibilities to choose the collective in which they enjoy participating.

As mentioned before the innovative pedagogy approach is based on social learning and, particularly, on the concept of socio-cultural learning. According to socio-cultural learning theory, not only the social and cultural environment in which learning is executed is significant but also the background of students should be recognized in the process. Thus, awareness of cultural, social, economic and political factors as well as the diversity of environments should be visible and included in the learning process. Brazilian Paulo Freire is one of the pioneers of active learning and he published his critical pedagogical views in 1968 according to which students should be at the core of learning (Freire, 1968). Shortly, according to critical pedagogy, increased attention should be paid to students and particularly to the diversity of learners, which should be respected. Education should not only highlight views of the mainstream but equally the topics arising from the margin should be acknowledged and emphasised. (Freire, 1968; Roij, 2018.) From that point of view, innovation pedagogy follows Freire’s ideas because learners are at the core of the process and innovation pedagogy provides students much autonomy in terms of topics, views, knowledge and skills. When people are respected and they are seen and heard, that supports positive identity building and provides them better opportunities for inclusion.

Membership is meaningful to individuals and in fact, people tend to categorise not only themselves but also others through their participation (Mor Barak, 2017; Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel, 1982.) In everyday connection people often characterise others providing them rather obvious identifications such as a profession and belonging to professional communities such as micro-entrepreneurs, teachers, farmers, or students, for example. Grouping of this kind is a simple way to indicate the place or position of someone in the society although it easily provides only one dimension of people. According to Tajfel and Turner (1986), when speaking of ‘us’ or ‘them’ people express and indicate their belonging to a certain community. The first mentioned ‘us’ refers to the in-group where people experience belonging

and inclusion whereas 'them', are seen as outsiders and they are categorised into out-groups. Groups are the basis of the social identity theory (SIT) in which are groups of two kinds: in-group and out-groups. The difference between them could be concretised by thinking about experiences of inclusion and exclusion.

Henri Tajfel and John C. Turner developed SIT in the 1970s and 1980s and the concept is based on the observation that people tend to identify themselves with the social groups which have meaning for them (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel and Turner, 1979; Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel and Turner, 1985). According to SIT, the form or the size of a group is not significant but the emphasis is on the membership, which is proposed to influence both the group and individual (See Ashforth and Mael, 1989.) However, groups are not static constructions, but they are changing, and people easily shift from one group to another. Some groups are more closed, not accessible to new members, and membership depends on terms the group has set for one reason or another. One term used is the formal qualification and, in fact, it seems that education is one key factor that provides people opportunities to choose the group or change from one group to another and experience satisfied belonging. Vice versa, missing certifications or the qualification from the "wrong" field, for example, can be an obstacle to participation or prevent full membership among others and therefore the experience of belonging might stay weak. Jenkins (1996) emphasises the importance of group boundaries where interactions between groups and members take place and, thus, these are the areas in which identities are constructed. Positive or negative social identity perceptions influence the groups and members. In case individuals are not satisfied with their group identification, they start to seek a new position in other groups or they may attempt to impact within the group so that it becomes positively distinctive. (Tajfel and Turner, 1979; Tajfel, 1982.)

In case the group isolates itself, it might lead the group members to the risk of exclusion. In groups in which members are not connected to people outside their group, the group might become closed, and thus the members are not able to follow the development of the society. Interaction among group members and among groups is significant in terms of inclusion. However, in case the social distance between the variety of groups and communities is long and the interaction between group members is limited, the innovation pedagogy approach might be a tool for mitigating boundaries between people. Improving interaction between varieties of groups in society may be an opportunity for higher education to strengthen its impact on society. Inviting local communities to the learning processes could improve positive interaction in society but also boost the learning of both students and communities.

6. The Fifth Principle of Co-operatives Education

Co-operatives around the world are grounded by seven principles (Metto, Mahonge and Komba, 2020; Bee, 2014; Anania and Rwekaza, 2019). The fifth principle requires that education, training and information be provided to members, leaders, employed staff and the general public. Mwita (2019) and Bee (2014) assert that there are various ways through which Co-operative education is offered which can be short- or long-term academic training. Training can be conducted through classroom sessions for long term training, seminars, workshops, symposium and the like. However, the acquisition of knowledge and skills from these training depends much on the type of pedagogy used which clearly states not only what the learners learn but also how they learn it. Studies by Bee, (2014); Hu, (2019); and Mwita, (2019) show that there is a gap in the provision of Co-operative education particularly on how the content is delivered to foster the acquisition of innovative skills and competencies. The traditional banking approach of teaching which uses a direct flow of information from teacher to students is prominent. This approach does not foster creativity and independent learning in students. In addition, there are limited empirical studies on co-operative education and training. This paper proposes the use of the FinTan model in trying to fill this gap.

7. The Use of FinTan Model in Teaching and Learning Co-operative Education

Co-operative Education institutions are the central social-economic development of any country. However, studies by El-Jardali *et al.* (2018); Ahmad, (2016) and Nganga, (2014), just to mention a few, observed that HEIs including Co-operative Education institutions produce half-baked graduates who are incompetent with an academic performance that does not match with their practical skills. In addition to that, stakeholders and society in general blame HEIs for not properly addressing their diverse needs and fulfilling society expectations. It is well known that HEIs' biggest role is to generate, transmit, apply and preserve knowledge. In the current rapidly changing world, this is not good enough, there is a need for HEIs to align themselves in addressing diverse community needs, shape the future of the nation and add value to society. This can be attained if teaching and learning are properly done through appropriate pedagogy.

Teaching in HEIs is dominated by the banking system, where teachers are depositors and students are depositories (Surya, 2016). This method kills creativity, innovation and student autonomy in learning. Philosophers like Mwalimu Nyerere and Paulo Freire, just to mention a few, advocate student-centred learning. These two philosophers wanted education to be a means of liberating people from poverty and all other forms of oppression. This can be achieved through active innovation pedagogy in HEIs which will lead to the production of multi-skilled, competent, innovative graduates capable of working effectively and efficiently in any work environment. Unfortunately, most HEIs in Africa and other developing countries are far away from achieving this dream. In trying to fill this gap, the FinTan model was developed with practical elements for African and other developing countries (Ntulo and Rajala, 2020). The model is a medley of elements adopted from the Finnish and Tanzania innovative teaching and learning approaches. The model consists of two major elements; the Academic environment and the community. The academic environment encompasses a teaching and learning environment and on the other side, there is the community/society from which the needs to be solved by HEIs arises. The model generally advocates learner-centred active teaching and learning methods. It focuses on innovation pedagogy where HEI, students and the community work together in finding solutions to various challenges facing the community. Through innovation pedagogy, students are given real-life assignments to work on. In the course of doing their assignments, students learn multiple skills like teamwork, critical thinking and problem-solving skills, networking, creativity and collaboration (Kivunja, 2014; Bee, 2014; Hu, 2019). Co-operative Education institutions prepare students who will be working with the community including Co-operative societies. The FinTan pedagogy approach is suitable in implementing the fifth principle of Co-operative which advocates the provision of education, training and information to members of Co-operatives and in this case teachers and students from HEIs too. The FinTan model will enhance the acquisition of co-operative values like self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity, ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others.

8. Conclusion

This paper proposes that the FinTan Pedagogy model may provide an adaptable framework for co-operative education in HEIs. Innovation Pedagogy as such is a flexible approach to learning and it has been successfully implemented into HEIs not only in Finland but also in the context of Tanzania. Currently, innovation capability is a critical factor in societies and the concept of innovation has been used in several contexts. FinTan Innovation Pedagogy is based on reverse innovation thinking according to which an innovation is a locally produced new or updated service or product that responds to the local needs. Thus, solutions to local issues are developed locally and not by others. However, reverse innovation does not differ from “other innovations” but it utilises creativity to manage complex processes and it is close to the concept of grassroots innovation. In terms of learning innovation, pedagogy is based on active learning which is a learner-centred approach to learning. When students are on the focus of the learning process they are seen as active doers of the process instead of passive listeners. Learners in the active learning process create new knowledge and they adapt the knowledge through action and working together in serious assignments along with working life.

In general, innovation pedagogy and also the FinTan Innovation Pedagogy Model emphasise the participation of local communities in the learning in action. The question is about innovation which benefits diversity but in addition through a common learning process, all communities are developed. This improves not only students and HEIs but also local communities and the inclusion of society members. Distinctive social identity refers to inclusion; meaning that people want to be members of groups and communities. Learning and particularly learning together is a process that can support participation but moreover, learning can mitigate the borders between different social groups and support positive identity building among communities. Co-operatives are communities which could benefit from the active learning process along with HEIs. As mentioned above, FinTan provides a suitable frame for HEIs and co-operatives to promote lifelong learning.

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