Developing the open research and learning models in the Finnish universities of applied sciences

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Finnish Higher Education sector has lately actively developed its' competence in Open science and research. The purpose of this article is to describe the ongoing development process of openness in the Finnish universities of applied sciences (UAS). The article introduces the joint project of Finnish UAS and the work done in order to develop open research, development and innovation (RDI) and learning models and open education practices.

RDI is one of the mandated tasks of universities of applied sciences. RDI activities are practice-oriented, based on the needs of working life, focused on problem solving, and have a strong regional impact. RDI work typically takes place in close cooperation with customers, generating new knowledge, competence, products and services. Student involvement in RDI projects is essential and important to their studies. A considerable amount of research data is also produced.

According to the targets of the Ministry of Education and Culture of Finland, the universities of applied sciences are committed to promoting open RDI practices. The level of openness can be strengthened many ways, e.g. by strategic steering, creating policies and principles, supporting open processes and developing competence.

In the Finnish Higher Education sector, the level of openness has been evaluated twice (Open Science and Research Initiative 2015 & 2016). The first evaluation in 2015 showed that the openness was at that time in quite a moderate level. The second evaluation in 2016 showed that the development had proceeded well. Majority of the organisations scored to the level two (most of the universities of applied sciences) and four (most of the universities) on five steps scale. However, only one Finnish university scored to the level five.

A joint project of Finnish UAS has done diverse work to support open research and learning models in Higher Education sector. The project has been co-funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture and all the Finnish UAS are committed to it.

The project consists of five work packages:

WP1: Strengthening of the open operation culture

The objective of this WP is to strengthen the culture of the open RDI in the universities of applied sciences. This will be done by strengthening the training of the RDI staff and by

creating instructions. At the same time, the know-how of the openness is moved also to teaching and learning.

WP 2: Service network of the openness (a helpdesk model)

A service network, which offers expert help and instructions for staff and students by solving judicial, ethical and down-to-earth questions, is created in the project. The service network will be designed based on the process model of open RDI. The service network continues its operation also after the project as an established practice.

WP 3: Integrating of open RDI into education

The methods of open RDI will be merged with education into a remarkable part of the RDI work in UAS. Furthermore, the recommendations for integrating of the open RDI into education are developed so that the know-how will also move naturally into the working life with the students.

WP 4: FAIR data

This WP promotes FAIR data principles so that the various materials (e.g. data, publications, theses, teaching materials) can be widely utilized in the society. Furthermore, the project actively participates in the determination and development of the FAIR data solutions of national and international level.

WP 5: Towards open innovations

The WP promotes the better utilization of the knowledge, information and results of open RDI. Also, the conversion to the innovations and the students' role in the open RDI work is deepened. For this, the new data flows, cooperation models and interaction are needed.

As a result of this project, the openness can be widely utilised in the innovation ecosystem of the universities in the Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences.

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