Implementing Innovation Management in the librarians' education

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Abstract: In this paper we reflect on implementing innovation in Library and Information Science education in Borås, Sweden. In our role as lecturers we meet students and through them shape the presence and the future of libraries. Also we aim to match the needs of society in times of change. The main method for higher education is the courses we create and the educational methods we choose. Often the importance of this is forgotten. This paper presents a course called "Project management, development and evaluation". In this course we try to give students some new tools for managing creativity and innovation in their future librarianship.
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1. Introduction

The starting point for our reflexions on the needs of innovation is the statement made by Octavia-Luciana Porumbeanu in her article *Implementing Knowledge Management in Romanian Academic Libraries: Identifying the Elements that Characterize their Organisational Culture*, where she stresses the importance of knowledge management in countries with rapidly developing economy (Porumbeanu,2010, p. 549). Even Sweden is struggling for survival and success, even though from others' point of view it is a well doing country. One of the most important assets in creating success and continuing welfare are - and have been in the history of Sweden and Europe, new ideas and people who are creative and innovative. On a European level this shows up for instance in the Lisbon strategy, aiming at a more competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in Europe and in the Bologna process in higher education. Linked to the Bologna process are often discussions on entrepreneurship, transferable skills and lifelong learning.

The University of Borås has adopted the device "Science for the professions" thereby professing to be "a university for the professions" in the sense of

emphasizing closeness between academic and practical work. The University of Borås strives towards interaction and cooperation with the business sphere, societal actors and institutions in the community.The professions' competence needs, their development and problems should play a large part in planning courses and programmes preparing students for their working life. It means that the culture at the university is oriented towards these ambitions as a whole. Octavia-Luciana Porumbeanu Madge (Porumbeanu Madge, 2012) has also summarizing conclusions that stress the importance of these aspects when she states that

Generating new knowledge is dependent on the organizational culture and in order to improve knowledge sharing and generation an interactive context must be developed and maintained. Because only when organizational culture allows and encourages change, expression of ideas, participation, communication, and dialogue, then learning and knowledge sharing are possible. (Porumbeanu Madge, 2012 p.248)

Some implications of this thinking are discussed in this paper; entrepreneurship/ entrepreneurship should be encouraged and students can be guided and tutored by both their academic teachers and by representatives of the profession.
The Swedish school of Library and Information Science as a part of the University of Borås has a large responsibility in educating librarians in Sweden, being the largest and oldest library school in Sweden. The library school wants to work close to the library profession through field studies, study visits, guest lecturers and a mentors' programme.

2. Libraries and librarians as innovative resources
Often the image of librarians and libraries, in society and in the eyes of the public engages students in debates and writings. This is not without reason.
Even though libraries in the past decades and still have gone through enormous changes the image of librarians has not gone through any remarkable change. Unfairly, one could claim. Librarians are usually not associated with creativity or innovation, even though that could be the case. Marketer Eileen De Sáez (De Sáez, 2002, p. 188) describes the problem of image in terms of identity crisis. Libraries would gain a lot by being more associated with the creativity and innovation they actually can inspire in users. In fact, libraries are for many people stimulating places where you can find all different combinations of knowledge. Browsing around the public library for example you can find your self one moment in the world of fairy tales and figures in the children's department, then you move further and browse books of arts and so one. This is actually the essence of creativity: to combine different things in a new way and find new ideas and solutions. Too often the image of libraries is overwhelmed by routines and rules, necessary for protecting fair use of common goods. This discussion is also put by in an other way by librarian John Bednarz Jr. (Bednarz, 2008) when he claims that routines in libraries are created to reduce the ever present complexity of interaction by fixing expectations.In fact, according to him:

Innovation is not found in technology, but in the way in which, for example, librarian and patron interact.(Bednarz, 2008, p. 81)

He also argues that routines and innovation do not exclude each another in libraries, as successful introduction of innovative change depend on functioning routine.

The director of Strategic Learning Centre, Metropolitan Library, Kathryn J Deiss, (Deiss, 2004) points out that there is a connection between creativity and innovation but they are not necessarily the same thing. According to her

creativity is the act of generating new ideas and new perspectives. Innovation, on the other hand, occurs when creativity is applied and a product or service results.

Creativity (including creative thinking skills), then, is certainly critical to the practice of innovation. (Deiss, 2004, p. 18)

The students are a resource for innovation and new thinking in library work. They are young persons with a modern life style. They can still be shaped and influenced in different ways. Education is one. The period of undergraduate education is a unique change to influence the coming professionals and show that "the sky is the limit "as a well known Swedish library director once put it .

3. Didactic reflection

Our educational question was how to better integrate the dimension of innovation and creativity in shaping a course for undergraduate students in library and information science? How can we stimulate the students to be brave and believe in their capacity to find new ways and solutions. Can we perhaps even encourage them to create enterprises or to apply for funding and develop their own projects which will gain the library community and users' needs? Often the students are impregnated with expectations of being an employee serving society. That expectation is not wrong, of course not, but society can be served in many ways.

According to our experience several of our students have difficulties seeing themselves as managers or future leaders. It is perhaps one of the main characteristics of students who are oriented towards culture, literature and the arts. In fact, it can be seen as something promising: a new type of leaders not after power and high salaries only, but with a genuine willingness to contribute to a good society? Libraries need persons of all kinds and persons with drive and capacity for innovation and new ideas are in demand. We often notice that the students need encouragement and to be presented examples and role models to let go of the old images of the profession.

Our students have chosen the programme of librarianship. Deiss discusses the connection between strategy and innovation in libraries (Deiss, 2004). She mentions that it is important to have in mind that libraries are mature organisations; libraries have been successful in organizing information largely; the profession is expert based and service oriented (Deiss, p.24-26). This is a reason why the culture is more "performance oriented" than being amenable to "practising" in real time with real customers as Deiss puts it (Deiss, 2004, p. 25).Deiss claims that libraries, as mature, expert based organizations are not risk

taking organizations. She argues in a convincing way and supports our thinking about the importance to start with the students – to give them some knowledge gained in practising idea generation and trying to present to somebody outside their own comfort zone.

As course coordinators we saw an opportunity to meet needs. Our guide lines in shaping this course were the following points:

- Students are important, they shall become moveable, employable, competitive
- Creativity is needed in order to produce innovations
- Creativity must be stimulated and challenged
- Innovation can be found in practising and experiencing

4. A trial with *Project leading, development and evaluation*

The possibility to develop our thinking appeared in coordinating the course called "Project leading, development and evaluation". The aim of this course is that the student should be able to:

- explain basic concepts of project work and evaluation
- motivate projects as working form in order to develop the activities performed
- clarify the role and meaning of leadership
- present a project plan and thereby demonstrate awareness of the different aspect of project working

The educational methods earlier used in this course are the traditionally academic: seminars, lecturing and written assignments. But are these good ways to promote innovation and ideas among young students? Aren't the repetitive teaching methods like a lullaby for students, giving them a false feeling of security. The body does not gain the knowledge of the real life?

A new interpretation of the course syllabus generated all the above questions.

Our conclusion was that we shall try to change the conditions around the students. We wanted them to go "out of the box" and feel the tasks more "under their skin"as the aspect of intelligence called emotional intelligence. They should take charge of their own product and "feel" the process.

5. A new partnership

During the course revision work we came into contact with project leader Lotta Lehikoinen at Drivhuset, Borås. Drivhuset is a non-profit foundation first set up, by students for students, in 1992. Drivhuset (Swedish for hothouse)works to bring about a change in attitude and culture amongst students regarding entrepreneurship. Drivhuset wants to inspire creative thinking and get students to believe in their own project/business ideas through lectures, workshops and campaigns. They want to encourage young peopleto be bold enough to "do their thing", whether that be as self-employed, entrepreneur or as an employee within a company – entrepreneur.[1]

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[1]Drivhuset, seefurther http://www.drivhuset.se/

This was a scenario we wanted our students to take part of during this course. The aspect of being an entrepreneur in their own organization is for many of them a new way of looking at the initiatives that they, as employees, can take. We want to describe an entrepreneur as a person who sees a need for improvement, acts there on to find a solution, often in form of a project, then creates a frame for needed resources and time and desired effects.

Can entrepreneurship then be taught? Reading a paper by colleagues at University West, Sweden, (Berndtsson&Sorbring, 2010) put us on the track of Jonathan Levie, researcher at Hunter Centre for Entrepreneurship in Glasgow. In 2006 he visited Stockholm and gave a lecture to representatives of Swedish business (Levie, 2006). Levie claims that entrepreneurship cannot be taught but it can be learnt. It is learnt mostly through experiential learning and different educational environments can support that in varying degrees. He found the settings where the teachers also had own experience in entrepreneurial work the most helpful for students. Similar thoughts had earlier led to the development of a course in political science where teachers of the department, librarians of the university library and different societal bodies and EU networks were engaged in the teaching of a course in EU knowledge at the Library of Economics at Gothenburg University (Spehar&Omstedt, 2011). That course became very much appreciated by students and was awarded the Gothenburg University pedagogical prize in 2010, showing that also non-traditional courses can be successful.

In the present LIS course we wanted the students to, although still hypothetically, get the feeling of going through the whole chain of questions, decisions and choices involved in working on a project aiming for change of some kind. We also asked of them to work out a project plan idea from scratch to presenting as if doing it for a financier. We want to encourage students to make persuasive and well prepared presentations as we agree with Berndtsson&Sorbring:

entrepreneurial acts often take place in an environment
where immediate acceptance and understanding cannot be
taken for granted (Berndtsson&Sorbring, 2010, p.10, our translation).

6. Course design

Teaching methods in this course varied a bit. Traditional lectures presented central ideas around project work and evaluation. In a lecture/workshop students were presented different project ideas and asked to work in groups to find out what information they needed to start working out a project**.** Early in the course the class was invited to Drivhuset for a creativity seminar where they were encouraged in different ways to explore their own interests and potentials, creating their personal "possibilities map". Three guest lecturers with experience in the library/information field were invited to share their experienced learning from project management and work. Student groups could also book an occasion with Drivhuset's project leaders for feedback on their library project ideas.

In the choice of course literature we wanted to show both the aspects of established, conventional, often repeated know-how and the research based critical interpretation of the role of projects in organizations. The students were also expected to search widely for relevant literature.

The main assignment in this course was to develop and present a plan for a project of their own. Working in groups of four or five students they were asked to find a library/information problem they wanted to solve, develop a plan for how to do this in a project and to present this at a conference we arranged together with Drivhuset. The presentation should be as for a potential financier, as mentioned above.

7. Innovative products of the course

The creativity of the students led to innovative products within the frame of the course. The presented projects were of many kinds, such as: A library in the park, A SUMMON-day for university librarians, A student conference in LIS, Improving communication between librarians and teachers, Creating silent zones, among many other ideas.

8. Some concluding remarks

Libraries can and should be looked upon as creative and innovative forces in society. This can be highlighted in many ways. To draw attention to the dimension of innovation is a task for LIS education too.

During the process of re-shaping a course in project management we as lecturers also had to move outside our comfort zone. As a result we became more and more curious. We wonder how other schools in library and information science introduce and practice creativity and innovation. What kinds of tools are given to the students to find an idea, shape it, believe in it and to understand how to frame it in order to make reality of it.

It is a question worth strategy discussions for sharing experiences and finding methods together.

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