

ME&MYCITY PROJECT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

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Abstract

12-year-old Finnish school children get familiar with working life by coming to work for one day in the Me&MyCity learning environment. The children practice financial, employment, and entrepreneurial skills in the miniature society of the Me&MyCity project. There are eleven Me & MyCity learning environments in Finland. The following video gives an idea of Me&MyCity: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9cenCiJ3gVI>. The research object comprised 220 pupils. The schools are from Tampere and five municipalities around it. The study of this project: students' perceptions of entrepreneurship education in the Me&MyCity learning environment. The theoretical frame of reference is based on phenomenal learning, Kolb's (1984) experiential learning and the Finnish core curriculum 2016 for sixth graders. The study employs Strauss's grounded theory approach. The empirical material of the study was gathered using various information acquisition methods: interviews, questionnaires, recorded interviews, and field diaries based on observation. Conclusions: According to the research, pupils liked visiting Me&MyCity and working in the profession they had chosen.

Keywords: *National Finnish core curriculum 2016, working skills, phenomenon-based learning, entrepreneurship education.*

1. Introduction

Pirkanmaa has about 530,000 inhabitants, with the center of Tampere. It has about 250,000 inhabitants. The pupils learning environment Me&MyCity Pirkanmaa is placed in this frame of reference. Pirkanmaa needs more small and medium-sized companies and, above all, growth companies, because the high unemployment during the research period. According to the final report on entrepreneurship education, published by the European Commission (2013), Europe has not recovered from the economic downturn of 2008 in the desired time. As a medicine, the report proposes promoting and enhancing entrepreneurship education in schools and universities. At the heart of all this is European education and economic policy, which calls for the European Union to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustaining economic growth and creating new innovative jobs. (European Commission 2000.) Me&MyCity Pirkanmaa is in this frame of reference.

2. Me&MyCity Pirkanmaa

Me&MyCity is a learning entity for society, working life and entrepreneurship aimed at sixth grades of comprehensive school. The visit to Me&MyCity is preceded by a course of about 10 lessons and a complementary visit to the visual village of Me&MyCity. Me&MyCity day is led by educational material on economic issues based on the primary school curriculum. The teaching material covered the following issues: private and public services, job search, various companies, taxes, banking, financial accounting, advertising and customer service, and sustainable development. Me&MyCity operates in 13 locations and reaches 91% of sixth graders in Finland. Every school year, about 56,700 pupils visit Me&MyCity. The concept Me&MyCity is funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture, foundations, private partners, and municipalities.

The research of Me&MyCity Pirkanmaa has sixteen different business and public service premises as well as City Hall. The learner work in a mobile Me&MyCity built of cardboard elements for the day in the profession he/she has chosen.

3. Theoretical background of Me&MyCity

The research framework is based on the Finnish current primary school curricula (POPS 2016, see Figure 2). At the school level, the school principal leads curriculum work (See, Uljens et.al 2017). Curriculum work is guided by the Basic Education Act and Government Decree 422/2012. The principal in his or her own school implements the implementation of the curriculum.

Me&MyCity, on the other hand, has been studied quite a bit. Some theses about Me&MyCity have been done, for example, by Lindholm, (2017), and Ojala (2021) and Aura (2024) learning through play and storytelling supports students' role models and working life skills. Prof. Kalmi (2016) at the University of Vaasa has studied how Me&MyCity supports pupils' understanding of financial issues. According that the understanding of financial skills was significantly improved by 17% for those pupils who had participated this in Me&MyCity learning method. All t-values are statistically significant at 1% level. The result was obtained by measuring the pupils' knowledge level before and after visiting Me&MyCity learning environment.

In Finland, phenomenon learning, and its related concept multidisciplinary learning entity (See figure 2) were highlighted in the National Board of Education's curriculum in 2016. The multidisciplinary learning entity has been justified by, for example, motivation, creating a community culture and working life needs.

Kolb's (1984) experiential learning is seen as a circular cycle and includes unconscious and conscious understanding, as well as four related topics that emphasize learning in different ways. These four groups are direct personal experience, for example, brainstorming or a learning diary and critical contemplative observation can be used as a teaching method. In the abstract conceptual phase, theories and models structure personal experience, and teaching, group work, or reading can be used as teaching methods. The active model is an experimental activity model tested model and the knowledge is applied in practice through case studies, role-plays, exercises, and on-the-job learning. The phase of active activities can also take place in the form of a project, where the material to be studied is tested outside a formal learning situation. Kolb's cyclical learning model is suitable as a model for entrepreneurship education because it highlights learning to learn, the pupil's experiences and the uncertainty of experiences (Hakkarainen, Bollström-Huttunen, Pysalo, & Lonka, 2005; Autio, 2006; Seikkula-Leino, 2007, 21)

Figure 1 shows the course of the study. First, in the class, 10 lessons are taught in economics according to the curriculum and then the things learned are practiced in a Me&MyCity.

Figure 1.

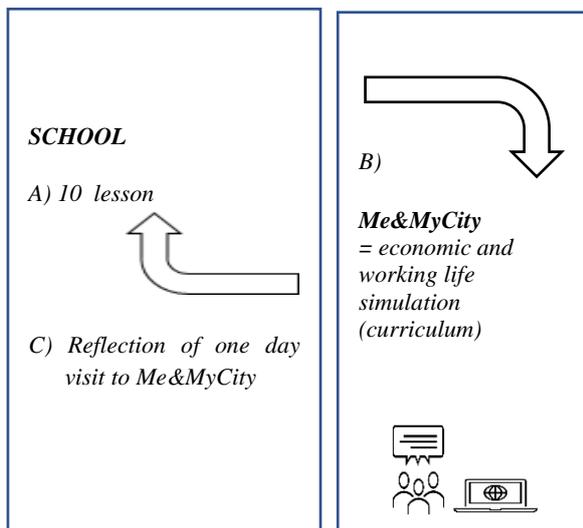
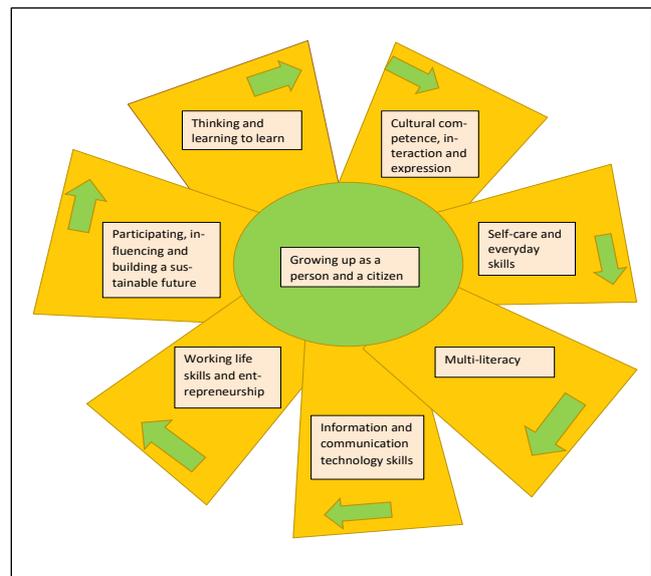


Figure 2. Extensive competence of the comprehensive school curriculum 2016 (Source adapted by Ojala 2021 based on POPS 2016, 20-24).



The curriculum is difficult to define at a general level because it depends on the perspective into seven different blocks. (Figure 2) Thinking and learning create the basis for the development of competence. A key role of the teacher is to encourage the learner to be self-confident and critical of knowledge and to guide the learner in independent knowledge acquisition and to encourage the learner to create new knowledge through play, experimental and playful practices, and teaching methods. Each learner is guided to identify their own way of learning and to develop their learning strategies so that they provide a basis for postgraduate study and lifelong learning (POPS2016).

4. Entrepreneurship education based on the pupil's need

Me&MyCity as a learning environment is understood here as a teaching method. The teaching method is the way of teaching and working. It activates and motivates the pupil. A successful teaching method depends on the level, motivation, and habits of the trainees. Increasing entrepreneurship in Europe was a key element of the Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs (2001). Increasing the number of enterprises was also a key factor in developing the European Economic Area in the Europe 2020 strategy for growth and jobs (European Commission 2010a), which continued the work of the Lisbon Strategy. To increase the number of companies, the Entrepreneurship 2020 program was launched, one of the main pillars of which was entrepreneurship education (European Commission 2016). Today, the development of entrepreneurship education has gradually shifted away from a strictly business and management-focused towards a multidisciplinary approach that brings together different study programs, towards entrepreneurial education based on learner needs, holistic learning (cf. POPS 2016).

5. Research object

The research target is Me&MyCity Pirkanmaa, a total of 220 pupils are involved in the research. Five of the schools are in the vicinity of Tampere: Orivesi, Nokia, Ylöjärvi, Kangasala, Vesilahti and Pirkkala. The neighboring municipalities have been included because in Tampere the curriculum is made regionally and Me&MyCity Pirkanmaa includes schools in the neighboring municipalities. The research material was collected in 2013–2016 and the additional material in 2019-24. The additional material from 70 pupils has been collected immediately after the visit in Me&MyCity. In this way, the students' immediate experiences of visiting Me&MyCity were revealed.

5.1. Research task

How do students perceive Me&MyCity as a teaching method?

5.2. Research analyses

The present research is based on the work of Glaser and Strauss (1967) and is based on the Straussian orientation. The Straussian school enables the study problem to be studied existing bringing ready-made categories derived from theory into the analysis process (See Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The study first modifies qualitative data through meaningful, empirical indicators. This is called open coding. Glaser and Strauss (1967, 101– 102) call this a test of assumption. Axial coding his step can be called coding of pre-selected categories. Selective coding means the core categories are selected as a key phenomenon to which other categories can be associated. These core categories are, Me&MyCity as a teaching method and pupils' experiences of Me&MyCity. Theoretical sampling provides a continuous direction for research, as previous research and literature on the subject can be used in research. The relation of other categories to the core category is done through a paradigm: circumstances, context, strategies, and consequences (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 124).

6. Pupils' experiences of Me&MyCity and conclusions

Pupils are growing up in a world where they are more concerned with knowledge. The work is based on working together and working in networks. This is precisely the wide-ranging competence that the primary school curriculum (2016) emphasizes. In the interview, the pupils first described the work. They got a real feel for working life in practice, e.g.,

“The computer equipment did not work at times”.

Everyone would like to visit again Me&MyCity and most would choose the same profession. Here Me&MyCity serves as a model for active and experimental activities. The model is tested, and the information is applied in practice through case studies, role-plays, exercises, and on-the-job learning. The active phase can also take place, for example, in the form of Me&MyCity learning environment, where the subject is tested outside the formal learning situation and the learned skills are practiced in practice. Pupils

wanted to go again to Me&MyCity and choose still the same profession. (Kolb1984) This deepens their learning experience.

“Nice taste of working life.”

This also supports Kalmi’s research, according to which learned financial matters practically closely, earned to save money even though virtual money did not work outside. They learned financial matters practically closely, earned to save money even though virtual money did not work outside. *“The virtual card was hard for it when I didn’t know how much money was in the account.”* (See Kalmi, 2016; Kolb, 1984,1998, 9-11; Hakkarainen, Bollström-Huttunen, Pyysalo, & Lonka, 2005; Hakkarainen, 2009; Autio, 2006; Lehtonen and Lehtonen, 2006, Leppilampi & Piekkari 1998, 9-11; Ojala, 2021).

7. Validity of the study

In this study, the study validity refers to the accuracy of scientific findings, which means the extent to which the conclusions are reliable and correspond to reality. Additional material (2019, and additional material whole Finland 2024) confirms the research results as well as an earlier parallel article (Kalmi 2016, Ojala 2021)The internal validity of the study is considered in relation to the study results. Internal validity can be improved by interviewing enough and for a sufficient period. This provides enough information about the phenomenon under study. The additional material (2019) was collected by a parallel researcher. The problem of conceptual validity can be reduced by the researcher’s prior knowledge (more than 30 years of experience) of the context. (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, 280; Karila, 1997, 155) emphasize good knowledge of the research subject. There are few studies in the area (Kalmi, 2016). Instead, the researcher has more than 30 years of experience as a subject teacher. However, it should be noted that Me&MyCity learning environment is based on Finnish national curricula. This must be considered when considering the transfer-ability of Me&MyCity learning environment.

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