

4. Toolkit module: Co-creating of short time events by students

4.1. Overview

The implementation of various events (e.g. workshops, summer schools, hackathons etc.) is better suited to the needs of the participants and stakeholders when all interested stakeholders participate in the design, implementation, and summary process of the event. It should be highlighted that students are the key, however often neglected, target group of organizing these events.

4.2. Objectives

This toolkit aims to present tips and advice for organising events where students and university staff participate as organisers. The purpose of this material is to empower students as co-creators of this process.

4.3. The analysis of workshop conclusions

The following issues were discussed during the "Workshop for modular training toolkit for students engaged in ENHANCE activities" organised at the Warsaw University of Technology on 5th November 2021.

4.3.1. Encouraging students

To discuss the issue of encouraging students to co-create the events, the following questions should be addressed:

- What are potential **incentives** for a student to participate in the co-creation activities?
- How to **encourage** students to co-create university activities?
- What can **discourage** students from participating in the co-creation process?

Students participating in the co-creation of events and workshops feel that they impact the decisions made at the university, which makes them feel "powerful". This affects the overall well-being of the student community and encourages students to get involved in further activities and initiatives. Their involvement also improves the relations with other organising groups (teachers, researchers, administrative) and thanks to it the mutual exchange of knowledge and experiences is possible. This exchange of experiences results in the acquisition or improvement of skills such as communication, organization and teamwork.

As the organisation of events takes place within the university, the cooperation of students takes place in a safe environment, which significantly improves the acquisition of knowledge and creativity. This, in turn, affects the quality of the designed solutions. Another advantage for students is expanding their network of contacts with the organisers and participants of the event.

On the other hand, some factors may discourage participation in such activities. That is why such factors should be analysed in detail to prevent their occurrence or minimise their impact. The factors over which we have no direct influence are the excessive burden on students overwhelmed with other duties, which means they do not want to or cannot engage in additional responsibilities.

The underlying problem is that students do not see the benefits of participating in the co-creation process. A common situation is that the developed solution has a direct impact on the people involved. Due to lack of communication, students are not informed about the course of the event or the reflections of its participants.

On the other hand, students' fear of responsibility, being judged and negative consequences on the part of teachers can be factors that result mainly from students' lack of information. These factors are critical and should be avoided as they may ruin further attempts to encourage students to participate in collaborative activities.

It is natural that students treat a teacher as a person of excellent knowledge and experience and are afraid of making mistakes. Therefore, while working on the organisation of events, a teacher who wants to cooperate with students should treat them as partners, listening carefully to their suggestions.

Another discouraging issue may be the lack of compensation (financial or non-financial) for participation in the co-creation process.

4.3.2. The Costs and the benefits of co-creation

To address the problem of costs and benefits of the processes of co-creation of the events by students and employees, the following questions should be addressed:

- **Do we need** co-creation at a university?
- What are the **costs** (not necessarily financial) of co-creation?
- What are the **benefits** (for whom) of co-creation?

The identified benefits for the students participating in the co-creation of events are the following. Students gain experience in implementing events, which translates into a better organisation of subsequent events. They also gain practise working in an often interdisciplinary team, which affects extra-curricular benefits such as implementing the specific learning outcomes.

The micro-credentials (e.g. badges) which are agreed on and respected by all universities belonging to the consortium can be one of the benefits offered for students by the university. The official acknowledgment of students' involvement published in event materials (e.g. educational or informational) can be another benefit for students.

A natural advantage for those working on organising an event is sharing different points of view as this is the natural consequence of working in a diverse environment. Students can integrate the knowledge from various, previously completed courses, e.g. organisation management and language skills.

It has also been noticed that organising events could be a source of income (e.g. tickets, sponsorship fees) for the host institution and its organisers. This is an additional incentive for people participating in the organisation of events.

Of course, the organisation of events involves additional costs of renting a space (if it is a stationary event), hiring technical support (if it is an event using IT tools) or catering (if the event is stationary and longer lasting). The organisational costs must also be taken into account.

The time devoted to both the organisation of and participation in the event is essential. Therefore, it is crucial to ensure that the organisation and the event are time efficient and organised when students have free time.

4.3.3. The organisation of the co-creation process

When analysing the co-creation of events, the following question needs to be answered.

- How to organise the co-creation process to engage a small selection of participants and /or the whole community?

One of the crucial problems related to the organisation of events is to ensure an appropriate number of people willing to cooperate. Unfortunately, it is not obvious where to find them. During the workshop, it was proposed to search for such people on social media related to the University (e.g. Facebook, Instagram) through both official (administrative support is required) and informal channels (support from administrators of these groups is needed). Besides, student clubs, groups, guilds, etc. can be contacted and encouraged to support these initiatives. As it is easier to involve student teams interested in the event's subject, it is often recommended to look for volunteers among student teams interested in the particular subjects.

The rewards (from minor to more meaningful) and remuneration in the form of food (e.g. pizza) were also considered.

4.4. Examples

The following examples of co-creating events (not necessarily carried out in the best way possible) at different universities are presented below.

4.4.1. Organisation of Design Thinking Week 2018 at WUT

Different groups of academic teachers, administrative staff and students were involved in the organisation of the Design Thinking Week 2018¹ at Warsaw University of Technology. During one of the meetings (3rd October 2018), the following scenario was implemented.

The main coordinator of the event (a person who worked as a member of administrative staff and was a PhD student at WUT) presented the agenda of the meeting. The following points of the meeting agenda concerned the specific areas such as a nationwide website of the event, patronage, promotional materials, poster design, discussion of individual workshops to be conducted, and promotion in social media.

The discussion was inclusive and conducted on an equal footing. Participants were using first names not titles when addressing each other. Not using titles is an important change in case of Poland as the Poles tend to be very formal. Each participant could engage in a discussion and express his/her opinion, which was considered on an equal basis. The discussion moderator (coordinator) organised the discussion and aimed to ensure that each area was covered. The coordinator was also responsible for making sure that the meeting's action points were followed. Minutes were sent when the meeting was over.

4.4.2. TU Berlin: Project laboratories and TU projects

What are Project Laboratories and TU projects? Project Laboratories and TU projects give students the opportunity to self dependently work on practical, interdisciplinary and innovative projects, which are related to their regular studies and expand them. The general orientation for the projects is a socially useful, environmentally friendly science and technology. The projects receive support and consulting services from the professors and the central University institutions, like kubus – the Science Shop of TU Berlin.

Learn differently: When students take over teaching Where can you find this? Studying without professors or academic assistants, only looked after by tutors; choosing the topics yourself and having the option to get the Project Laboratory or TU project credited to one's student account. All this is possible at TU Berlin - within the so-called „Project Laboratories for socially and ecologically useful thinking and acting“ and similar "TU projects". Any students who can find other interested students can realize these workshops, only having to fulfil the following conditions:

- The projects should allude a topic that is not covered by regular studies at TU Berlin.
- In didactic terms, the project should offer an alternative to regular teaching methods at TU Berlin.
- The Project Laboratory and TU projects should be ecologically and socially usable and/or interdisciplinary.

Further information:

https://www.projektwerkstaetten.tu-berlin.de/menue/english_info_project_labs/

¹ a national event promoting the use of the Design Thinking method. It lasted a week all across Poland and assumed the organization of various events in various institutions all over the country

4.5. Suggested scenario

The scenario of a **single meeting** for the organisation of the events is presented below.

4.5.1. Overview

This material provides the scenario of a single meeting for the organisation of the event. The meeting involves different stakeholders of the University (e.g. teachers, researchers, administration staff, students) and possibly other partners (e.g. industry/business/administration representatives).

4.5.2. Objectives

The objective of the meeting is to discuss the current issues of coordination of the event and distribute tasks among participants.

4.5.3. Target participants

- the coordinator of the event,
- a group of people organising the event (students, teachers, researchers, administrative staff, etc.).

4.5.4. Format

The discussion on the topics included in the agenda.

To encourage everyone to get involved in the discussion, the token method is recommended. A token is passed from one participant to another and whoever has a token should take the turn to talk.

4.5.5. Duration

Suggested duration: 30-90 minutes

4.5.6. Resources

Agenda, whiteboard, markers

4.5.7. Description

The objectives of the single meeting should focus on the following aspects:

- what is the status of work on individual issues (e.g. workshop topic, promotion, patronage)?
- who is responsible for each point? (if agreed)
- agenda of the meeting - what needs to be discussed and agreed on?

During the meeting, the coordinator starts a discussion on each of the topics on the agenda. During the debate, each meeting participant may comment on the discussed topic, regardless of his/her status. The coordinator's task and the person responsible for a given area are to consider all opinions in the discussion and decide on further work.

During each meeting, the coordinator should ask about problems in the implementation of specific issues. After the meeting, the coordinator sends the account of the session (the minutes) to the participants.