Learning Hybrid Competences in Cultural Event Management

Satu Lautamäki[1]

[1]*Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences, Finland*

Abstract

This paper presents findings from a practical project case in Finland, where hybrid competences within the cultural event field were developed. Hybrid competence refers to a person's ability to apply multiple skill domains within a single professional field. In the cultural and creative sectors, the role of hybrid competence has become increasingly important, as professionals must blend, for instance, creative production with data analysis and digital technologies. The aim of this project was to strengthen professionals' ability across fields to learn and integrate cultural event management skills into their own contexts. The study explores what type of hybrid competences were found to be essential and how these were pedagogically approached. Findings from our practical project case indicate that hybrid competences support adaptability and innovation, particularly as broader changes in working life reshape the professional practices used in the cultural sector.

Keywords: hybrid competence, cultural event field, pedagogy, cross-sector collaboration.

Aprendizaje de competencias híbridas en la gestión de eventos culturales

Resumen

Este artículo presenta los resultados de un proyecto práctico realizado en Finlandia, cuyo objetivo fue desarrollar competencias híbridas en el ámbito de los eventos culturales. Se entiende por competencia híbrida la capacidad de una persona para aplicar múltiples dominios de habilidades dentro de un mismo campo profesional. En los sectores cultural y creativo, esta capacidad ha adquirido una importancia creciente, ya que los profesionales deben combinar, por ejemplo, la producción creativa con el análisis de datos y el uso de tecnologías digitales. El proyecto tuvo como propósito fortalecer la capacidad de profesionales de distintos ámbitos para aprender e integrar competencias de gestión de eventos culturales en sus propios contextos de trabajo. El estudio analiza qué tipos de competencias híbridas se consideraron esenciales y cómo fueron abordadas pedagógicamente. Los resultados del caso práctico indican que las competencias híbridas fomentan la adaptabilidad y la innovación, especialmente en un momento en que los cambios más amplios del mundo laboral están transformando las prácticas profesionales del sector cultural.

Palabras clave: competencia híbrida, sector de los eventos culturales, pedagogía, colaboración intersectorial

Introduction

Cultural event management operates at the intersection of artistic production, public value creation, and complex project delivery. Cultural events, such as festivals, performances, or exhibitions, are not only about operations, but about designing environments where cultural meanings are shaped by cultural policies, stakeholder expectations, and experiential demands. Event management can be seen to be based on a life-cycle perspective that connect antecedents, planning, experiences and outcomes of the events (Getz et al., 2010). This implies that people working within event management must apply competences that typically belong to different fields of expertise. We define this as hybrid competence: the ability to combine different fields of expertise, such as production, communication, and technology, and enact them seamlessly in practice.

Hybrid competence can be positioned as a foundational capability in cultural management, where professionals are expected to work creatively across disciplinary boundaries and integrate such knowledge into practice-relevant interpretations and solutions (cf. Griffith, 2023). Markauskaite et al. (2024, p. 216) also point out that "Interdisciplinary work often requires resourcefulness to interact productively and co-create knowledge together with people who have different expertise and who do not share the same disciplinary vocabularies, epistemic practices, and cultures". Within the cultural management field, hybrid competence is highly needed to respond to the creative sector's inherent complexity. Conversely, cultural management can also function as a learning platform through which professionals from other sectors can develop and apply hybrid competence, which constitutes the central focus of this paper.

Learning hybrid competences requires interdisciplinary cooperation, which can be based on boundary-spanning tasks and reflective practices (cf. Smith et al., 2024, p.496). In practice, collaborative projects, such as cultural events, are means by which cultural management professionals learn hybrid competences. This paper examines how we can develop hybrid competences across disciplines by using a pedagogy focused on the practices and tools of cultural event management. In this field, the practices often include multiple stakeholder and co-creational methods. These practices are often cognitively, socially, and creatively complex. This aligns most strongly with interdisciplinary learning elements.

Background of the study

In our practical project case, executed between February 2024 and January 2026, the participants were professionals from various fields, who discussed, shared and learned how to apply cultural event management skills in their own work contexts. This project, co-funded by the European Union, aimed at strengthening the event ecosystem of the South Ostrobothnia region in Finland through training, co-creation processes and networking events (Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences, n.d.). Key pedagogical interventions in this practical project included five learning modules. In addition, networking events and digital platforms facilitated peer learning and cross-sector collaboration. Altogether, 320 persons attended project activities, of whom 95 enrolled in the five structured learning modules.

In the pedagogical plan, we identified and outlined the elements of the training programme as well as the objectives, contents, and implementation of the study modules. The planning process was guided by the principles of competence-based learning. Finally, we planned and conducted five learning modules during 2025, resulting in a total of 176 enrolments (95 individual participants, as individuals could attend more than one module). The modules included: Design of experiential services, Event production process, Event management tools, Event safety, and Technology in events. Both face-to-face and online learning methods were used across the modules.

In the next subchapter, the aim is to analyse, from the teacher's perspective, the pedagogical insights that emerged when designing and delivering the previously mentioned five learning modules. The analysis is based on interdisciplinary learning research, where integration across domains is framed as a cognitively demanding activity or as the capacity to integrate knowledge from various disciplines to achieve cognitive advancement (Boix Mansilla, 2016; Spelt et al., 2009, p.366). This definition highlights hybrid knowledge as a value-added mechanism, which is precisely what hybrid competence requires in practice.

The purpose of this study was not to measure individual participants' acquisition of hybrid competence, but to examine how pedagogical structures, contents, and learning tasks supported the development of hybrid competences. This study therefore adopts a reflective, qualitative case study approach, where the unit of analysis is the design and delivery of the five learning modules. As qualitative data, teacher reflections and pedagogical documents were analysed to understand how interdisciplinary learning was supported by pedagogical planning and implementation. In addition, participant-produced learning task results served as indirect indicators how learners integrated multiple knowledge domains.

Pedagogic insights on hybrid competence

The planning phase of the training programme proceeded from the definition of the objectives to content planning and further to implementation. We started with a needs analysis for hybrid competence development. The needs were identified by conducting a quantitative survey to a focus group of professionals from various fields involved in or interested in event management (Jaskari & Katajavirta, 2025, pp. 55–57). The questionnaire was sent to 979 respondents, of whom 88 answered. One question area focused on understanding what type of hybrid competences would be needed. Eighty-four respondents answered this question and were able to select all the optional areas in which they wished to gain additional skills.

Three competence areas stood out clearly as the most frequently selected: marketing and communication (79%), creating experiential events (55%), and acquiring and managing partnerships (45%) (Jaskari & Katajavirta, 2025, pp. 55–57). These were followed by areas of business development (37%), the event process (36%), regulatory issues (36%), and digital platforms (33%). Competence areas such as budgeting and pricing, image management, responsibility, and event safety were each selected by around 30% of respondents. Also, sustainable development, leadership skills, virtual technologies and technical production were selected by some respondents. Based on these results, it became evident that there is not only a single competence area needed,

but a wide variety of competences. Pedagogically, this supports the conclusion that cultural event management is strongly grounded in hybrid competences.

A central teaching challenge in hybrid competence development is that learners, especially those coming from different fields often do not share the same disciplinary vocabularies (Smith et al., 2024, p. 509). This created a need not only to provide new knowledge content about a specific subject, but also to plan learning tasks which help people from different sectors to build shared knowledge on the subject. To meet with this demand, the learning and assessment activities were planned so that the participants were able to apply knowledge in practice and share their insights with others. For instance, they designed customer persona profiles for their own cultural events, which were then presented to other participants and further co-created together into more specific plans for reaching these customers in practice.

Another central pedagogic insight was that hybrid competence did not arise from a single knowledge domain but emerged by connecting various topics. So, as educators, we planned how to get learners to use more than one domain in one task, in order to apply knowledge rather than to demonstrate descriptive knowledge. In the learning modules, this integration was evident, for example, when experiential design choices were connected to event production decisions or when event safety considerations were combined with technological issues. We also considered it important to recognise that differences between knowledge domains are not a problem but a resource. As Nolen and Horn (2011) point out, such differences may cause a productive friction that makes learners better able to recognise the potential limits of single-domain thinking.

Research on cultural festivals and event management encourages holistic frameworks that connect antecedents, planning and management, event experiences and meanings as well as outcomes and impacts (Getz, 2010, pp. 31–32). Based on our experiences with the five learning modules, we were able to support such holistic thinking. Hybrid competence is needed not only within individual domains, but especially as an integrative tool. This can be defined as strategic sensemaking, where the role of an event manager is to continuously interpret environmental signals and translate them into feasible and meaningful event designs. To conclude, hybrid competence helps integrate all important decisions into a coherent event strategy.

Conclusions

This article has examined how hybrid competence can be fostered through pedagogical practices embedded in cultural event management. Based on five learning modules implemented in a cross-sector professional training program, the findings showed that hybrid competence did not arise from separate disciplinary inputs but from a purposeful integration of conceptual, technical and co-creational skills. Cultural event management thus provides a fertile environment for interdisciplinary and practice-oriented learning.

The pedagogical analysis further indicated that hybrid competence required collaborative tasks through which shared understanding could be built. In this project, the main areas requiring coordination and joint interpretation between actors in real event settings were transformed into training activities. In addition, learning activities that intentionally bridged contents across modules were designed to encourage the participants to apply knowledge in authentic context. It should be noted that the trainings not only developed the participants' individual skills but also created a shared

language and shared operating models. These shared understandings should help professionals from various fields jointly build impactful events in the future.

Hybrid competence can therefore be seen as a strategic response to the evolving demands of working life and the increasing complexity of the event industry. Cultural event management offers a pedagogically rich platform and even a pedagogical model for the development of hybrid competence, due to its inherently interdisciplinary and co-creative character. Future research could further explore how hybrid pedagogies can be adapted to different professional contexts, particularly within creative and arts-based fields where interdisciplinarity is embedded in everyday practice.

Acknowledgements

This article was prepared as part of the *Tapahtumabisnekseen hybridiosaamista* project (English translation: *Hybrid Competence for the Event Industry*), which was co-funded by the European Union. The views and opinions expressed are however those of the author only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Commission.

AI Disclosure: The Spanish translation of the abstract was assisted by Microsoft Co-pilot.

References

Boix Mansilla, V. (2016). *Interdisciplinary learning: A cognitive-epistemological foundation*. Harvard Graduate School of Education. https://pz.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/X%20Boix%20Mansilla%20Interdisciplinary%20Learning.pdf

Getz, D., Andersson, T., & Carlsen, J. (2010). Festival management studies: Developing a framework and priorities for comparative and cross-cultural research. *International journal of event and festival management, 1*(1), 29-59. https://doi.org/10.1108/17852951011029298

Griffith, A. (2023). *The Creativity Lab: Interdisciplinary creativity in higher education*. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in Education, 12*(1), 85–108. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1391099.pdf

Jaskari, K., & Katajavirta, M. (2025). The event-industry ecosystem in South Ostrobothnia: Constructed on the basis of benchmarking and a regional stakeholder mapping, integrating best practices with local insights (in Finnish). Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences.

Markauskaite, L., Schwarz, B., Damşa, C., & Muukkonen, H. (2024). Beyond disciplinary engagement: Researching the ecologies of interdisciplinary learning. *Journal of the Learning Sciences*, *33*(2), 213–241. https://doi.org/10.1080/10508406.2024.2354151

Nolen, S., & Horn, I. (2011). Productive friction: How conflict in student teaching creates opportunities for learning at the boundary. *International Journal of Educational Research 50(1),* 14–20**.** https://doi.org/10.1016/J.IJER.2011.04.004

Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences. (n.d.). *Hybrid competence for the event industry project* (in Finnish).

Smith, P., Callagher, L. J., Hibbert, P., Krull, E., & Hosking, J. (2024). *Developing Interdisciplinary Learning: Spanning Disciplinary and Organizational Boundaries.* Journal of Management Education, *48*(3), 494-525. https://doi.org/10.1177/10525629231221540

Spelt, E. J. H., Biemans, H. J. A., Tobi, H., Luning, P. A., & Mulder, M. (2009). Teaching and learning in interdisciplinary higher education: A systematic review. *Educational Psychology Review, 21*(4), 365–378. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-009-9113-z