

THE ROLE OF THE COACH IN THE INTRODUCTION PROCESS OF A LEARNING BY DOING BASED EDUCATIONAL METHOD IN HUNGARY – AN EXPERIENCE BASED STUDY

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—Abstract —

Twenty years ago with the core idea of team learning, a brand new educational method, the Finnish originated educational method; the so-called Team Academy was introduced. Team-entrepreneurs – previously students – operate as independent companies in form of corporative and learn by run real-life projects.

These independent companies use also different tools as student in the traditional educational system: use dialogue as a tool to share knowledge and think together, as well as tradition frontal teaching is replaced by trainings and self-improvement is done by learning by doing. Teachers are also not called anymore teachers, instead team coaches. Being a team coach requires different competences and mentality than teaching.

In September 2012 the system was introduced at Budapest Business School Faculty of Finance and Accountancy. In this article as a form of case study we share our experiences and challenges of the first semester.

Key Words: *team coaching, learning-by-doing, team academy, introduction, higher education*

JEL Classification: A20

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Higher educational challenges in Hungary

During the last several years, the process of higher educational reform has been an important challenge for most Central and Eastern European societies. (Nagy-Darvas–Darvas, 1999) There are many and different needs which higher educational institutions face with, and these needs or expectations come directly or indirectly from the direction of the labor market:

- Absolving students need to be able to work right after the graduation within the frameworks of a live company.
- Absolving students need to be able to work in teams, or as a member of a team. And right after the graduation they might to be able realize their own role-play in a team.
- Students might have some work experiences also before graduation.
- Need of foreign language skills.

The work place of two co-author of this paper, the Faculty of Finance and Accountancy (FFA) is part of Budapest Business School (BBS), the largest business school in Hungary. Budapest Business School's vision is to play a leading role on the Hungarian higher education market and as well in the neighboring countries. The aim of Scholl's education is to prepare students for the demands of the ever-changing international labor market. Efforts of BBS were recognized and by the Higher Educational Quality Prize 2010 awarded to Budapest Business School.

The Faculty of Finance and Accountancy has always been acknowledged on the labor market and by the students as a school with outstandingly practice oriented education. BBS FFA has long-time traditions and been known as one of the academic and professional centers in the field of finance and accounting, and today more and more also in the field on management and entrepreneurship. As all higher educational institutes also BBS has to face with radical challenges in the

higher educational system of Hungary (more detailed: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2012/02/articles/hu1202021i.htm>).

Authors face many times the expectation of participating as presenters or members of the audience at business or scientific conferences, that HR specialists recruit young labor force with team work skills.

Working in a team can be different based on the experiences of the authors: it's quite simple if team participants knew each other previously; they were nearly the same age. But at workplaces people are not able to select their colleagues, they can be different from many aspects. From this point of view each team member needs several competences to be able to adapt him- or herself to an efficient cooperation with the other team members.

Also from the side of the labor market is the need of entrepreneurship or at least entrepreneurial skills obvious. But we recognize that entrepreneurial attitude stands on a very low level among Hungarian students even it could help to fight against the unemployment among youth.

These needs are known by many researchers but are also based on the results of the alumni research system of Budapest Business School. BBS has searched for results to answer these expectations, so came one possible solution into the picture: Teac Academy from Finland.

2. One solution: Team Academy

2.1. Origins

The Team Academy is a unit of the Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences, specializing in marketing and entrepreneurship. The operation started in 1993, and in 1996 the Team Academy moved to new premises, which were more suitable for the new learning methods it was developing. Since the beginning of 2001 the Team Academy has been an independent unit of the Degree Program in Business Administration at the Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences.

When students join the Team Academy, they form teams and each team establishes a business and stays together throughout their studies. The teams implement various types of projects for outside customers. A special project group, which consists of members from various teams representing the skills and knowledge required for the project, is formed for each project. Coaches tutor the work. The head of the Jyväskylä Unit is called Head Coach.

The name "Team Academy" can be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, it refers to the physical learning environment, and on the other hand, it refers to the people working in that environment, a community consisting of the coaches and the students. Also the customers that the Team Academy has established regular relationships with form part of the community.

2.2. Core idea : the Rocket Model

The basic idea – which was developed and refined under the first decades of Team Academy – can be represented by the Rocket Model. It describes how entrepreneurial development progresses. It is a framework for all activity in Team Academy.

The Rocket Model consists of twelve domains. These domains include Nonaka's and Takeuchi's knowledge theory application according to the theme. (More information: <http://nicosord.hubpages.com/hub/Nonaka-and-Takeuchi-knowledge-management-cycle>)

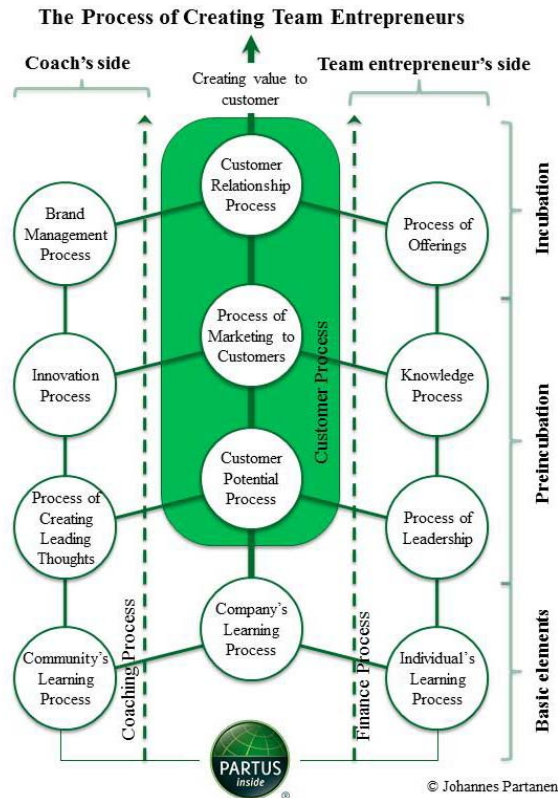
The learning path starts from the bottom of the model. During the first study phase team-entrepreneurs learn how to learn (metalearning) and the basics of entrepreneurial activity. On the next step he/she practices leadership and building customer-relationships. During the third year he/she learns how to conceptualize services and build offerings.

The cells on the left symbolize coach's main activity areas. On the right are the learner's domains. In practice these areas are (of course) overlapping.

On the centre are the customers. They are essential in entrepreneurial development - there cannot be entrepreneurs (or any kind of business) without customers.

Team Academy's professional studies are based on The Rocket Model. Each domain has been divided into two courses according to the domain's theme.

Figure-1: Partus Rocket Model

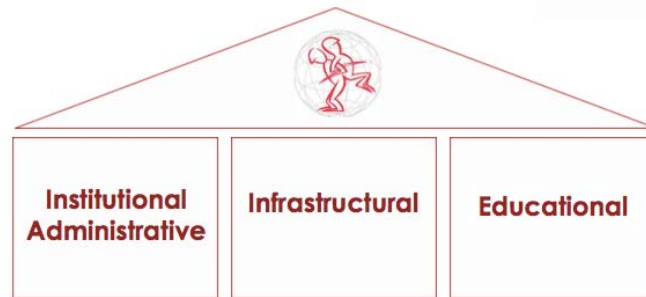


Source: Partanen: 2012:13.

3. Implementation process

Challenges in the implementation process of a new system can be divided into three groups. Furthermore in this paper the name pillars will be used for those groups. Successful adaptation and then daily routine are based on these pillars, shown on the Figure-2.

Figure-2: Pillars of implementation



Source: own edition

3.1. Institutional/administrative pillar

Basic question is: how to start a new education. Looking at Team Academy, the question was: should the whole Finnish system be implemented, and so to start brand new bachelor program for 7 semesters, or within the frameworks of the live BA business and management to start a new specialization? This second one was chosen at BBS.

Then next question is: who will be the participants of the implementation process? On one hand, to follow – even partly – the Finnish model, participants in the educational process (now called team coaches) should have been graduated for this model. It means a special course, called Team Mastery, coached by Finnish specialist with international team members. This requirement is fulfilled – coaches were graduated at Team Mastery 4.

On other hand other participants are the applicant students. There wasn't any hard criteria taken for applicants and it caused many problems in the first 2 semesters. Students in the first 4 semesters don't need to take or pass all subjects, they have to take only the minimal credit value, so some students have also regular lessons. It means that they commute between the two buildings of BBS based in very different areas of Budapest. This is a challenge in organizing programs, for time management (both for coaches and teamsters) and in the exam period.

If a student had been already involved to Team Academy education, fulfills – sometimes doubled – requirements and takes every criteria implicit exit criteria as well, he or she is able to start his or her internship for 15 weeks, can take the final exam and can get the diploma. Most important questions to those topics related were: will the team as its own still existing with all team-entrepreneurs also for the internship period within the physical and mental framework of Team Academy, or even partly or totally teams will collapse, and teamsters again as students will take their internship at extern companies. Both ways mean logistic hardness's. If teamsters had already taken their internship, they should write their thesis. But they will graduate a very different specialization, in which they were focusing on practice and project work, so special indicative thesis topics had to been given to them. It should reflect to Team Academy learning topics and the previous activities.

3.2. Infrastructural pillar

One core idea of Team Academy philosophy is to build up creative facilities for teams, where team-entrepreneurs can work 24 hour-a-day, 7 day-a-week, so they need to have free entrance to the education's place. Note, that because of many reasons like safety or cultural differences (mentioned by Hofstede in: <http://geert-hofstede.com/dimensions.html>) this can have a very small possibility in Hungary. Team Academy Budapest had been facilitated in the cellar floor of a Musial value building, teamsters could spend their time only in the presence of one team coach – for months. It was a very hard period for teamsters and coaches as well, caused many conflicts and in some cases it had a negative influence to effective teamwork.

Contacts are very important to constant co-operation with companies. Teamsters' office has an own phone line, there is also free LAN and Wi-Fi. To help efficient team and project work there are 6 notebooks, interactive blackboard, white board, printer, fax and phone for students. What already is missing is a kitchen. The place for it is there but the budget was not enough to design it. Also air circulation should have been improved for better fresh air in the cellar floor.

A new year will start its education from September on at Team Academy again. They are called penguins within TA Learning Network. To place new teams and to use infrastructural and technical tools in an effective way needs new investments also furthermore in the future.

3.3. Educational pillar

Educational pillar means one of the most important things in Team Academy. It is the field, where maybe the largest differences can be realized comparing to traditional education. It s not the role of this paper to describe methodological background of Team Academy, so authors mention only some aspects with following figure.

Figure-3: Differences between traditional education and TA



Source: own edit (based on www.tiimiakatemia.fi)

4. CONCLUSION

Within the implementation process of a new educational model both the implementer higher educational institute and also the personnel involved have to face many challenges. It was the same at BBS as well.

Team Academy as it was already presented is an innovative form of higher education, and that is why it offers many advantages for participating students/teamsters. To really offer these advantages many premises have to be taken. To shape these premises many challenges are to be taken. Question lead to new questions, challenges lead to new challenges, and the row of questions and challenges seems to be endless.

But the new educational form just has started. Team entrepreneurs from the first year worked in many projects with marketing, sales, event marketing, IT.

Team coaches and BBS trust the future: a native Finnish team coach will join to Team Academy Budapest for the next semester so creating the new culture and approach he could play a special role.

Coaches would state as final conclusion the following: key to the success of the process is patience. To build up the whole system, to work with more teams together need time, and it is not possible without strong committed work and devotion.

All of the activities towards a successful Team Academy at Budapest Business School can be stamped with the motto by Henry Ford: "Coming together is a beginning, keeping together is progress, working together is success."

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