

## CHAPTER C4

### Exploration of the feasibility of the Finnish 'Team Academy' approach as an innovation within a UK business education context

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#### Surrey Team Enterprise Project (STEP) Team

The four members of the project team bring together expertise and related national networks in teaching and learning, enterprise education, and business practice. Paul Tosey (left) has experience of developing an innovative Master's programme and of leading a national HE project - Learning to Learn. Graham Robinson (right) has experience of research and development in curricula at Ashridge and at the Institute of Social Studies



in the Netherlands, and in the introduction of innovative in-company management development processes within several large international organisations, both as a company director and a business development consultant. He is a director of SOL-UK. Nigel Biggs (fourth from left) has founded two companies, was Chairman of the Surrey Enterprise Hub, supporting early stage pioneering businesses and, as the University's entrepreneur-in-

residence, actively supports enterprising students. Spinder Dhaliwal leads the Entrepreneurship modules in the Faculty of Management and Law, is an active participant in BMAF, a national special interest group on entrepreneurial learning, and a former Vice President of ISBE (the Institute for Small Business and Entrepreneurship). Also present Arie de Geus (blue jacket) UK President and co-founder of the Society for Organisational Learning who provided the original idea for looking at Team Academy.

#### Summary

This SCEPTR E Fellowship project examined the feasibility of transferring and implementing learning methods developed by The Team Academy, an innovative and successful approach to entrepreneurial, knowledge-based business education pioneered by Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences, Finland, to the University of Surrey. Through the project a strong working relationship was established between Surrey, the Team Academy (Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences, Finland), and the Society for Organisational Learning (SOL-UK). Links with Mondragon University (San Sebastian, Spain), the University of Strasbourg (France), and the University of Debrecen (Hungary) were also established thanks to a grant awarded by the Higher Education Entrepreneurship Group (HEEG) to establish an international network of universities using student-run real businesses in award-bearing courses.

A team enterprise programme at Surrey based on the Team Academy model would align well with Surrey initiatives in the areas of entrepreneurship, creativity and diversity, and would place Surrey at the forefront of using student-run enterprise for award-bearing purposes in the UK. We are the first UK initiative to be given permission to use the 'Team Academy' brand. Staff, students and external stakeholders are highly enthusiastic about the Team Academy approach. In-principle approval was given by the University's Faculty of Management and Law, for a pilot credit-bearing adaptation of Team Academy, in the form of an option for the Professional Training Year in the School of Management; however, substantial resourcing needs to be in place if Surrey is to proceed with that or any other credit-bearing option. There have been spin-off benefits for existing entrepreneurship-related activities.



## The trigger

Over the summer of 2008, Graham and his wife took six months out to travel around Scandinavia and Eastern Europe in a motorhome. They happened to mention their trip to Arie de Geus, UK President and co-founder of the Society for Organisational Learning (of which Graham is a member). Arie advised them that they should visit the Finnish city of Jyväskylä where, he said, they would discover an amazing school for young entrepreneurs, which is part of the city's Technological University - the Team Academy. His co-founder of SoL, Peter Senge, has described the Team Academy as showing, "the future of management education". Graham and his wife spent a day at Team Academy and were amazed, not only by the programme that is based on teams of students who learn about business by running their own businesses, but also by their confidence, enthusiasm and maturity. On their return to the UK they have been working, with others, to see the Team Academy model adopted here in the UK. He told Paul Tosey and the two of them investigated further, and put in for a SCEPTre fellowship with Spinder and Nigel, both of whom were passionate about student entrepreneurship.

The Fellowship proposal was prepared in April 2009. The aims were:

- To establish a working relationship between Surrey, the Team Academy, and SOL-UK.
- To host an event to enable Surrey staff and students to experience the Team Academy approach.
- To film the event and disseminate the experience through video, Wiki, and a published report.
- To assess the responses of programme participants to the appropriateness and effectiveness of the learning approach employed.
- To identify opportunities for the Team Academy approach to meet Surrey's needs and strategic aims in particular whether the approach could be utilised within the University's Professional Training Year (Willis 2009)
- To engage stakeholders collaboratively in creating the next phase of this development.
- To investigate potential HEFCE and other national funding sources for applications of the approach at Surrey and within UK Higher Education.

## Why we were interested in Team Academy

Peter Senge (MIT, founder of the Society for Organisational Learning) has described The Team Academy as representing 'the future of business education and learning'. At 'Team Academy', Jyväskylä University of Applied

Sciences, Finland, undergraduate students (currently sixty per intake) gain a business degree by running real businesses, learning by doing and reflecting on action, supported by experienced coaches. This innovative model using team-based enterprise has a successful track record over seventeen years in Finland, and has



*Inside Team Academy*

been taken up elsewhere in Europe, including Mondragon University (Spain), the University of Strasbourg (France), and the University of Debrecen (Hungary).

Team Academy provides powerful, real-world professional learning and produces highly confident and capable graduates. Team Academy has an excellent fit with the Surrey ethos of learning for the professional world, with its emphasis on professional training, entrepreneurship, creativity and diversity.

Team Academy makes a net financial contribution to the Finnish economy. In the UK the recession has made increasingly difficult for students to find paid placements. A Team Academy format for the professional training year could expand Surrey's options. Team Academy provides additional benefit by meeting career aspirations of entrepreneurial students that are not normally met by corporate placements.

Team Academy has a twenty-first century pedagogy that is both rigorous and innovative. There are:

- No students but team entrepreneurs
- No classrooms but open plan office
- No teaching but learning
- No teachers but coaches
- No simulations but real business
- No control but self-organizing
- **ITS RADICALLY DIFFERENT TO TRADITIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION EXPERIENCES!**

### **Voyage of discovery: our visit to Jyväskylä**



*Nigel and Spinder approaching the former plywood factory in which Team Academy is housed*

Our first step was to experience the Team Academy's approach first hand. Paul, Spinder and Nigel, headed for the sub zero charms of Finland. They took part in a 'learning expedition' hosted by faculty and students of the Jyväskylä Team Academy. This involved a specially designed programme in which, from the outset, they were exposed to the learning methods employed by Team Academy.

Over their three day visit, in addition to experiencing the Team Academy approach. The Surrey team got to know the people, the place, and the rituals, whilst building and developing the relationships that contributed greatly to the project's later development. They even produced and performed a 'birthgiving'! – the format used by Team Academy for presenting learning to colleagues and others.



## Surrey Workshops 18-19 March 2010

The team wanted others to share this experience at a two day workshop arranged at Surrey, called 'Experience the Future of Enterprise Education: The 'Team Academy' Model' hosted by SCEPTrE and facilitated by Team Academy Finland.



*Participants in the 18<sup>th</sup> March Team Academy workshop*

On the first day, sixteen delegates (Surrey students and staff), were thrown in at the deep end. They were divided into teams and sent on a mission to come up with a business idea, gain the support of at least three prospective customers within three hours and make a convincing case for their business proposition, subjecting it to the constructive criticism of their colleagues in the other teams. The Mission was enthusiastically achieved by all three teams.



*Mission accomplished!*

On the second day, Team Academy was introduced to 21 Surrey and external stakeholders, including people from business, and Further and Higher Education. These people collaborated to identify options for practical applications of the Team Academy model. These were, again, presented constructively and enthusiastically by the workshop participants

We then evaluated both workshops to inform our feasibility study –results are summarised below.

## Developing a partnership with SOL-UK

In late 2009, SOL-UK decided, as its main programme, to put its energies and resources behind the development and implementation of the Team Academy approach in the UK, not only in Universities but in Colleges of Further Education, in-company programmes and elsewhere. For this purpose it is establishing a business organisation (a Community Interest Company or CIC) to co-operate with others, including the University of Surrey and the Team Academy in Jyväskylä. Dr Arie de Geus, President of SOL-UK, who is a pioneer in the field of organisational learning and who has close links with the Team Academy in Finland and its development globally, is strongly supporting the work of the team at Surrey and was an active participant in the March workshops.

## Feasibility of introducing Team Academy to Surrey

This section addresses the questions: *Should Surrey create a team enterprise course based on the Team Academy model?* If the answer to this question was yes then *what are the ways in which it might be adapted?* The overwhelming response to this question from staff, students and external participants involved in this project was “YES” Based on workshop evaluations, participants found the Team Academy model very engaging and immersive, and expressed the desire and commitment to maintain their involvement. A student representative from the Enterprise Society was especially supportive and continues to participate in the project. Feedback comments from students included:

‘How empowering a program like this can be, and how much more innovative and effective your results can be if you work in a team environment.’

‘The most useful things I learnt were; (a) the importance of team work and delegating tasks when you have limited time, (b) one discovers a lot about themselves by doing things practically instead of only doing academic work because it reveals your strengths & weaknesses, (c) that multiple minds are more powerful than a single mind because you learn a lot from your teammates and they also learn from you, (d) brainstorming can lead you to realise opportunities you didn't know existed, and (e) a mixture of youth and experience can work really well because the younger guys have bright & original ideas while the more experienced/mature guys will bring a dose of reality into the team and enlighten the younger guys about potential pitfalls to avoid.’

### *Pedagogy*

Although Team Academy may appear at first sight to be informal and relatively unstructured, in fact it has a highly developed pedagogy. The advantage of this is that it is educationally robust. The potential disadvantage is that there is clearly a ‘Team Academy way’ of doing things that could at times conflict with UK and/or Surrey culture and HE practices. This staff comment from workshop evaluations was typical:

‘It was an interesting demonstration of how the principles of dialogue work in practice to engender increasing and sustained awareness, motivation and commitment’.

We concluded that any adaptation of Team Academy must embrace the essentials of its pedagogy as a whole; a diluted or compromised version of the pedagogy is unlikely to succeed. At the same time, there will need to be some cultural adaptation to the Surrey/UK higher education situation..

### *Coaching*

One vital aspect of the pedagogy is the team of coaches who support an authentic process of ‘dialogue’ (Isaacs 1993) and team working. Team Academy Finland will endorse a Surrey adaptation of Team Academy on the condition that it is appropriately resourced with coaches. A proportion of coaches – at least one person in the first instance – must be schooled in the Team Academy approach through attending the ‘Team Mastery’ programme (which costs approximately €9000 per person excluding expenses). In the medium term a dedicated ‘Team Mastery’ programme could be set up in the UK. As well as Surrey academics, practitioners from SOL-UK are keen to qualify and serve as coaches. The Community Interest Company that is being established by SOL-UK is designed to be a vehicle for the training of Team Academy Coaches in the UK and will seek funding to facilitate this.

We concluded that coaching is essential for the model to work, and for Team Academy endorsement. A suitable level of resources for a professional training year option is likely to be 0.2 FTE (a minimum of 2 coaches for 0.5 days per week each). At least one Surrey coach must attend the ‘Team Mastery’ programme. It is not yet known who this should be, or how their participation will be funded.

### *Programme management*

There is also a need for a designated person (probably a Surrey academic) to hold overall management responsibility and accountability for a Team Academy programme, whichever form it takes in practice. This could

be negotiated as part of an existing role. We note that Team Academy's longevity is probably linked to the fact that its founder, Johannes Partanen, has operated as its leader throughout, and continues to do so. The passion and singular vision of such a leader are, in our view, key success factors.

We concluded that any Surrey version of a Team Academy will need a leader who is able both to uphold its vision and working philosophy, and to be accountable to the university.

#### *Student finance*

In Finland, Team Academy students receive €400 a month from the Finnish government. In the UK, students receive no funding during their professional training year. Student comment from workshop evaluations:

'Something would need to compensate for tuition fees; students would be reluctant to pay and may not be able to pay out of their own pockets for any financial problems.'

We concluded that if students were to participate fulltime in a Team Academy they would need funding equivalent to a basic salary, in the region of £12,000 per person for one year. Income from student businesses could, and should, offset this amount, which is start-up funding rather than a baseline cost.

#### *Re-entry into Level 3*

A professional training year option would be for one year, after which students return to Level 3; new students entering the PTY would take over their businesses. Students who have started a successful business may be unwilling to relinquish it.

We concluded that students should be eligible for a share of business profits at the end of the PTY. It will be important to monitor the experiences of students returning to full-time study in Level 3.

#### *Premises*

Another significant feature of the Team Academy is that it operates in dedicated premises (i.e. the former plywood factory) that are highly flexible. The model will not work in standard classroom accommodation that is subject to a timetabling system. One possibility could be to use unoccupied premises at the Research Park, or re-purposed premises on campus.

We concluded that a Surrey version of a Team Academy would stand a better chance of success if it has dedicated, flexible premises.

#### *Ownership*

A professional training year model at Surrey would probably necessitate ownership of businesses by the university, for the purposes of risk management. This is a departure from Team Academy practice and inevitably affects the degree of psychological as well as financial ownership felt by students. The potential advantage of university ownership is that it could make it easier to manage the transfer of businesses to new students at the start of each PTY cycle.

We concluded that a Surrey version of a Team Academy would enable students to own their own businesses, as in Finland. However, this seems unlikely to be possible.

### **Options and opportunities**

Our feasibility study considered that the main options for implementing Team Academy were:

*1 A professional training site within the structure and requirements of the professional training year*  
Subject to resourcing, this could be advertised to students in January 2011 to commence in 2011/12.

## *2 A full degree programme*

A full degree programme, as at the University of Jyväskylä in Finland and at Mondragon University in Spain, seems unlikely to happen in the short term unless through the sponsorship of a champion in UK Higher Education.

## *3 Erasmus exchange*

We have identified, and are working towards formalising, opportunities for student secondments to Jyväskylä, Mondragon and elsewhere through the Erasmus programme and staff exchanges with Jyväskylä, Mondragon and elsewhere through bilateral agreements.

## *4 Non—award bearing activity*

Team Academy principles can be supported by the university, and are being implemented, through a range of enterprise activities involving RES and the student society 'Surrey Entrepreneurs', including:

- The Enterprise Academy
- Enterprise summer school
- The 'Santander sand-pit'

The Surrey Lifewide Learning Award Framework allows for recognition to students who have undertaken enterprise (and other) activity outside their formal degree programmes. This is a benefit for any students who may engage in enterprise on their own initiative. A Certificate could be devised specifically for students engaging in a collaborative enterprise like a Team Academy.

## *5 Modifications to existing programmes*

Existing entrepreneurship-related modules can be adapted to incorporate Team Academy principles. For example, Spinder Dhaliwal plans to enhance the School of Management's Level 3 module 'Entrepreneurship and Business Planning' in 2010/11.

## *6 Options outside of HE*

The STEP 1 initiative has explored applications of the Team Academy model and processes at the undergraduate level. During the course of the project, however, team members have noted their applicability at postgraduate level within HE, and the learning opportunities that they might offer in the fields of vocational education and FE. Equally, obstacles to implementing Team Academy in HE might be more easily overcome in FE or outside formal education. We believe there is scope for further exploration in these areas, particularly in the context of the present, difficult economic climate. As reported, SOL-UK is initiating a Community Interest Company to support such developments, in which Surrey staff and students are likely to be involved.

## **Achievement**

In May 2010 the School of Management's Board of Studies gave in-principle approval for a Professional Training Year option (full approval is subject to confirmation that the relevant resources are in place). The proposal is for a one-year 'Surrey Team Enterprise' programme that runs in parallel with, and is a direct alternative to, the Professional Training Year. It will:

- Give students the opportunity to meet the full learning outcomes for the PTY.
- Be managed through the existing SoM PTY processes.
- Be assessed through the existing SoM format of a PTY report (adapted as appropriate for student-run enterprise instead of corporate employment) plus tutor and workplace assessments.

The pilot will be supported by continuing links with Jyväskylä, for example through networking and training Surrey Team Enterprise coaches in Team Academy methods. One issue is the transition back into an undergraduate programme for the final year. Students will need to hand over businesses to those in the subsequent professional training year. Following a successful pilot, Surrey Team Enterprise would in principle become open to enterprising students from any Faculty.

## **Conclusions and Action Plan**

The STEP1 project has been the trigger for interest and action in applying Team Academy principles to the entrepreneurship education talents at the university. Based on our investigations we recommend that Surrey should take the opportunity to create a team enterprise programme based on the Team Academy model, which aligns well with Surrey initiatives in the areas of entrepreneurship, creativity and diversity.

In order to achieve this The STEP1 team have identified the following priority actions:

- Lobby for high-level university support and formal approval for the Professional Training Year model.
- Continue to seek funding opportunities (including HE sources and corporate sponsorship).
- Ensure Surrey involvement in the SOL-UK CIC
- Maintain relationships with Team Academy, Finland and its international network.
- Apply Team Academy principles through Surrey entrepreneurship activities as outlined above.

While all members of the STEP1 team remain passionately committed to Team Academy, we note that there is no dedicated source of funding to support continued efforts by any member of the team beyond the life of the SCEPTRe Fellowship project.

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