

Y4 TOI / HRD-model of Jyväskylä College (in curriculum)

Synopsis

Turning Point

Entrepreneurship education in Jyväskylä College

Background

In the common section of the curriculum in the Jyväskylä College, entrepreneurship is one area of emphasis together with internationality, sustainable development, technology and information technology. Entrepreneurship education is based on the regional strategy where Jyväskylä College has an important role as the largest provider of vocational education.

A significant factor behind the Turning Point was (and is) to encourage students to practice the creation of innovative business ideas and to test their profitability in practice. Learning is gained by doing in the everyday activities and backgrounds and theories are studied while doing. The learning process is guided by local entrepreneurs and professional teachers who are also encouraged to further development of new methods.

The development of Turning Point started 2004 with four students companies based on the Junior Achievement –model, which emphasises all of the sections of real business operations and the basic factors of entrepreneurship education, such as correct operations, learning within companies, risk management and utilisation, networking and creativity. Since 2004 the progress of Turning Point has been constant and through different projects we have created an entrepreneurial pathway for the students. Currently the Turning Point is still based on the JA –model but has also deepened and widened its content in order to offer entrepreneurship education to every student at least for 5 credits (out of the 120) and in order to support students achievements to become real entrepreneurs after graduation. All together Turning Point offers different courses and programs up to 39 credits.

The deeper purpose or a hidden agenda of Turning Point is to improve the preconditions of entrepreneurship by starting from the most important factor, humans. It is sure that all the students won't become entrepreneurs but they all hopefully will become an employee and entrepreneurial attitude is very valuable attribute for entrepreneurs and employees as well. Human resource development is a key word of the development of every enterprise and Jyväskylä College meets this demand by Turning Point.

Content of Turning Point

Turning Point consist out of four phases that enable students to create their own entrepreneurial pathway that meets the interests and skills of the students. To make Turning Point more interesting among students it is branded by a car racing theme.

By the pathway of Turning Point the students learn to be entrepreneurial employees but they also have an opportunity to practise entrepreneurial activities in a safe environment. While taking steps on entrepreneurial pathway students will have a realistic picture about entrepreneurship with its challenges and possibilities. Entrepreneurship is considered first as an overall needed skill or attitude in life and second as a possible future carrier. So called hard entrepreneurship with its important skills and knowhow comes along later during the pathway. The aim is that after the pathway of the Turning Point the graduated students will have a network with other already existing enterprises and public organizations, business plan, customers and most of all practical experience about entrepreneurship. This enables students to use the entrepreneurial and vocational skills learned in school in the employment process they will face after graduation.

During the first phase "Pit Stop" (5-9 credits) the focus is more in intrapreneurship. Core objectives of the Pit Stop are initiative, recognition of demands in one own improvement and developing the students professional identity. Entrepreneurship is approached from the very basic level on purpose. Methods to be used are for example teamwork, projects, camps, customer service and on the job learning.

National vocational curriculum requires that all the vocational qualifications must have at least five credits of entrepreneurship studies in their curriculum. Pit Stop is the response of Jyväskylä College to that requirement and consequently all the students have Pit Stop in their curriculum.

The objectives of the second phase "Warm Up" are developing of business plan, testing the business plan in the safe environment, finding the first real customers, developing of first commercial products and strengthening of entrepreneurial skills. All the objectives will be achieved by the student companies that are established by the students by using the Junior Achievement – program.

Student companies work with real customers and with real money which is important because the customers are the necessary and mutual thing for every enterprises regardless of the size and location. Whenever the students learn the importance of the customer they also start to understand the demands of the development in their vocational and entrepreneurial skills which can be seen in increasing motivation to learn more. And by the pedagogical point of view the most important thing is that the motivation comes from inside.

During the third phase "Race" the students join in cooperative and/or work in incubator.

Cooperative Taitola is a base for real life entrepreneur activities and for different experiments related to them. In incubator the students make their own business plan and participate in entrepreneurial coaching events. Objectives for this phase are developing of entrepreneurial identity,

practising the business activities and building up the supporting network. During this phase a lot of expertise is provided by public organizations that are specialized in entrepreneurship and the role of the school is more in guidance.

The fourth phase "Chequered Flag" is a phase for graduated students. This phase is created to enable the (self) employment right after the graduation which is often seen very difficult because moving from the safe environment of school to the very competitive outside world can be too big obstacle psychologically whenever making decision of becoming a real entrepreneur. The students can remain as a member of Taitola cooperative or they can work as sole traders using facilities of Jyväskylä College for two years after graduation. In case the graduated students use the facilities of the school they have the pay the rent for them.

Development of supporting environment

Comparing to the other subjects of school entrepreneurship is different. It is difficult to separate from other subjects and often it is quite invisible. Jyväskylä College has wanted to create an environment that makes entrepreneurship visible and tangible. This kind of environment is students' workshop called Sepän yrityspaja which connects different entrepreneurial activities and students companies. Students' workshop is run by the students under supervision of the personnel. The workshop has a shop where students' companies can sell their products and services, hairdressing and beauty salon but also learning space for entrepreneurship where several activities related to Turning Point are held. Workshop is open for personnel and students regardless of the vocational qualifications and its main purpose is to be the tangible service point for all. In order to improve the cooperation with local enterprises it is possible for them to sell their products in the shop as well. This outlet cooperation is organized and operated by the students of business and marketing.

Additional basic education as a part of Turning Point

Aside of vocational education Jyväskylä College provides also additional basic education for those who want to finish their compulsory basic education or improve the grades in order to get a study place. Turning Point has widened its content also to the additional basic education where the focus is strongly in intrapreneurship. Thus the objectives initiative, activity, self-esteem and plan for the educational path are selected carefully to support the growth of the young students. Teamwork is strongly emphasised method and students go through various practises that improve teamworking skills.

The popularity of the Turning Point is increasing and attitude towards entrepreneurship education is getting better among the students as well as among the teachers. Good example to prove this is the number of the students companies. Starting with only four companies (2004) the number of today is 75. The probable key factors behind this positive change in attitudes are following. First of all there is a strong support from the administration which can be seen as economic resources. Second thing is the integration of vocational and entrepreneurship education. The most of the courses and programs of Turning Point are directly integrated to the vocational studies. This prevents the negative assumptions that entrepreneurship education occasionally attends to arise. Therefore entrepreneurship (education) is not considered as a separate but as an easy going yet essential issue within the everyday practises of vocational studies. The third thing is that the content of the Turning Point is relevant to the students and teachers. It functions in the real world with real tasks and most of all with real customers.

Even though most of the content of the Turning Point is related to entrepreneurship its aim is not only provide future entrepreneurs but also provide important competence for the students to meet the demands of the continuously changing world. In other words Turning Point aims to make students find the potential already existing in them by supporting the growth of the self-confidence.

Without a proper qualitative and quantitative research it is difficult to measure the exact impact of the Turning Point within the region of Jyväskylä or Central Finland. However it has changed the mental environment and increased the entrepreneurial attitude among the students and teachers. This can be seen by the rising number of students and teachers involving in our program and we expect this changing attitude to spread out to the region with the graduating students.

On the national level our initiative and its results are recognized and often benchmarked by many visitors and we cooperate with other Finnish and European vocational institutes throughout different projects in for the further development of our program.