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Title: A new way for the new day

Version: final draft

Please cite the original version:

Saukkonen, J., Tarasanski, P., Browne, R. (2019). A new way for the new day. In D. Remenyi (Ed.), 5th Teaching Innovation & Entrepreneurship Excellence Awards 2019. An Anthology of Case Histories, 50–63.

A New Way For The New Day

The creation of an innovative new study track from previously -divergent paths gives students the tools they need to succeed in the business environment of tomorrow

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1. Key objectives

The context:

Business Schools of today face ever-growing challenges and expectations that their courses must deliver a positive impact for society and its future. This impact can be achieved by preparing a skillful, innovative workforce for growth-oriented companies; as well as by developing the next generation of entrepreneurs to implement fresh new ideas.

There is one further key challenge; this must happen in a sustainable way. The concept of ESR (ethics, sustainability, responsibility) is becoming increasingly important to students and for students. ESR is also one of the core criteria of course quality assessment, as used by EFMD (European Foundation for Management Development), for example, whose EPAS-accreditation the program hosting this case holds.

During the 2000's, Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) were the global driving force for net job creation. These SME companies have embarked on successful product and service innovation, and expanded across national borders and into global markets. In order to continue their positive growth, SME's need people who understand the environment and the processes of these fast-paced yet resource-lite companies – and the need to do so in a global context. Larger corporations are also increasingly looking for (yes, contrary to popular belief, they are still hiring!) people who can act swiftly and in an entrepreneurial way within their environment too.

At the *Business Education Jam*, a global virtual gathering of 2000+ business educators held in 2014, a game-changing statement was made: "In the future, a degree will not be a relevant proof of skill". The amount of BBA and MBA programs is already extensive and continuously expanding, and the potential reduction of a degree's importance must be compensated by meaningful content – the learning and development that occurs while earning the degree must have relevance for this new context that modern companies operate in.

These findings and insights detailed above are well-known to most if not all business schools, and not exclusively to us at JAMK. In response to this need, most universities have developed their unique curricula and processes - and as a result the world has an abundance of courses, modules, programs and models.

However, we wanted to think and do differently; and from creation and planning to implementing and orchestrating – we used and blended the existing best practices into a new, unique learning path.

The targets for the new learning path:

JAMK's BBA-program of International Business has a long track record of teaching Business Technology, as well as extensive experience of implementing applied projects and research in cooperation with SMEs. The opportunity to redesign the course offered both the faculty and the students a more coherent learning package with emphasis on the practical - from idea generation to business models to longer-term development in the area of technology- and knowledge-based business.

The targets set for the process were:

- To innovate meaningful and impactful things – in an interdisciplinary and intercultural way
- To integrate innovation into business modelling and planning
- To study the impact of strategic and operative managerial decisions on a company across multiple areas (the interplay of technology, marketing, production, finances...)
- To provide students with a toolbox that improves their position in job markets for tech driven and sustainable growth businesses – whether small or big companies

2. Infrastructure

The new learning path was designed to run intensively over 3 months, consisting of three distinct modules of which modules 2 and 3 ran parallel after the creativity spark was provided by module 1. The elements contained within the new learning experience were:

Module 1: *Invent For The Planet* (IFTP) – 48-hour sustainable innovation run 15.-17.2.2019

At this first stage, the focus was on ideating and innovating solutions for global needs – a format developed and steered by Texas A&M, USA. The students earned 3 ECTS by participating in and completing the event tasks.

· Internal JAMK resources: Main facilitator, mentors, 30+ students representing different schools and programs at JAMK, ICT-responsible for Communication platform and networks, Marketing and communications responsible (for external and internal communication).



· A network of 26 Universities across the globe (connected online to JAMK throughout the event) and the Texas A&M “Flight control” with program leader, ICT and communication teams available 24/7 throughout the event.

Module 2: Tech Business Dynamics – a specialization teaching-based course

In this module the ideas distilled during the IFTP process were taken to the core of the course, and systematic business planning and design was implemented to develop the ideas further.

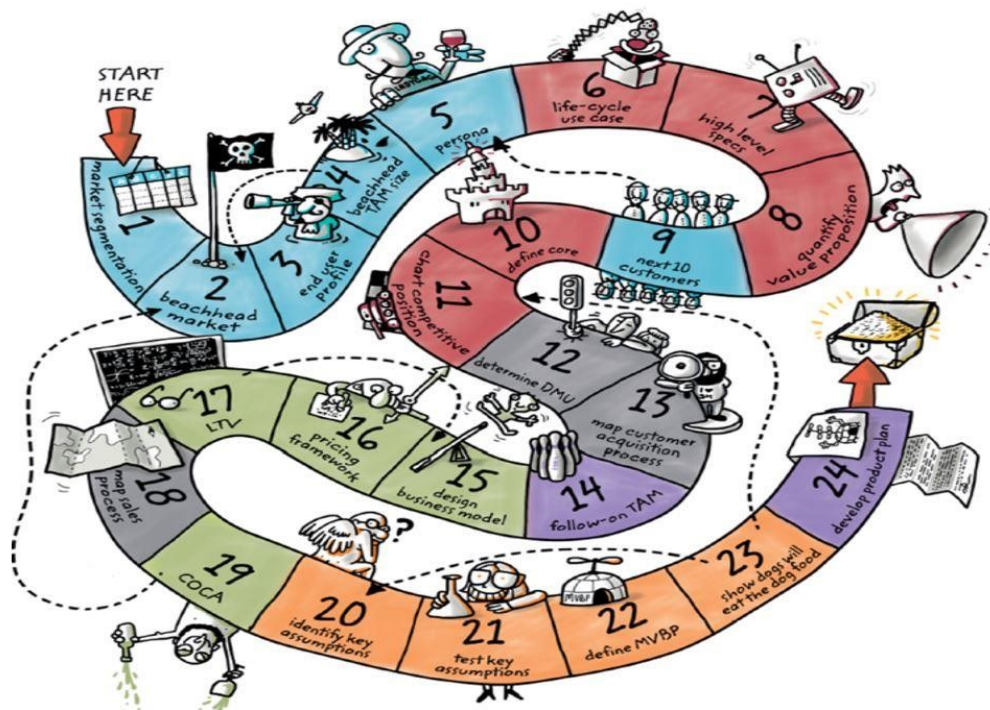
· The chosen implementation method was MIT's 'Disciplined Entrepreneurship' (DE) –model with

- a) textbook and workbook (1 copy per team) via the University Library
- b) E-books (workbook+textbook) usable via the school system
- c) teaching materials provided by the MIT team.

· All instructions, assignments, returns etc. were provided in the e-learning platform Optima

· The responsible lecturer was one of the mentors during module 1, to ensure consistency between the different stages.

The process = Big Picture of DE



Module 3: Business Simulation Game

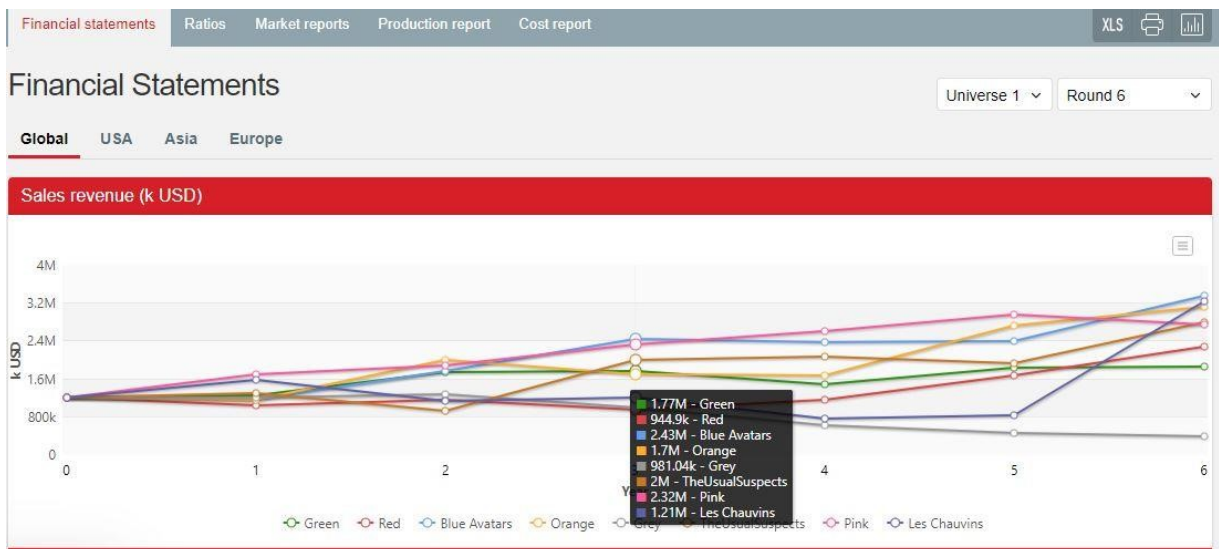
As the ideas and business models were not taken into practice at this time, the “reality check” or practical learning was provided by placing students into a business simulation game that links decisions to outcomes and impels students to create strategies, modify them, manage resources and keep a close eye on market development and competition.

- The CESIM Global Challenge –business simulation game – 6 rounds over 6 weeks (representing 6 years in business) competition for creating shareholder value in changing market conditions in a global technology business environment – accessible and actionable at any time over a cloud-based system.

- The game interface, in-class starting tutorials, guidebook, tutorial videos, quizzes



Example of decision making areas for each round of the game



Example of growth patterns of different teams, highlighting the learnings on the way

- Internal resources – Responsible facilitator (= Stage 1+2 teacher) + deputy
- External resources – Game developer’s 24/7 helpdesk

3. The challenges

Piloting new methodologies – especially when it involves the implementing and combining of processes developed elsewhere – are a steep learning curve for teacher-facilitators, as they must learn fast and develop as they go. On the one hand, this can be stressful and demanding, but on the other it also pushes the teacher-facilitator to internalize, personalize (by adding their own knowledge and cases), and deliver the content to the students at a fast pace.

Furthermore, module 1 was listed in the curricula as a stand-alone course, while modules 2 and 3 were tied together to another, separate course. This resulted in partial changes to the student body between stages, and therefore a small break in the link between the modules. These changes were however necessary - and even advantageous - in order to ensure that exchange students arriving at JAMK later in the semester were able to join some parts of the process at least. The changes also allowed a number of students, whose schedules were otherwise full for the term, to participate in the IFTP-competition and bring their knowledge and ideas to the pool.

The partly-unplanned, non-uniform mode of participation led to some very positive outcomes: An idea, developed in Module 1 by a team that did not participate in the whole process due to schedule demands, was adopted and taken further by a different team in stage 2, before being returned to the original team in an advanced format for further action.

This 'relay race' style of ideation and development, as practised by the students in this case, led to a good idea becoming even better - and is a much more preferable outcome than allowing a good idea go to waste.

Lastly, the workload for teachers as well as students is difficult to estimate in advance but is potentially a very significant factor as each of the modules can be time-consuming and demanding. The requirement for co-teachers and support staff should also be taken into consideration, as a good line of communication to process developers and concept owners is key if students get stuck or do not have a full grasp on how to proceed.

4. Reception, impact

Originally from Turkmenistan, Aynur Atayeva is a 2nd year student of International Business at JAMK, and she participated in all three modules of the course. She was initially attracted to the program by the opportunity to study and utilise MIT methodology and she reports being very impressed by the results.

“I have never had a course like this, which has provided me with a framework and tools that I can apply so easily to my working life.”

As part of her studies, Aynur must also undertake a work training placement - and her placement coincided with modules 2 and 3. Time and again, Aynur explains, she was able to put the knowledge she gained during the module into immediate practice at her work placement company.



Aynur also found the IFTP innovation run and the CESIM Global Challenge simulation game to be demanding and challenging - but to be hugely beneficial and rewarding too. Although she warns that the modules can be time-consuming, she has no hesitation in recommending the course and the methodology to future prospective students.

“If a student is looking for real-life experiences, and to do the things that people are really facing in their business lives, then they must take this course because it opens so many doors. You can now everything is narrowed down from the big, big picture.”

Nikita Misbakhmetdinov is a 3rd year student of Logistics at JAMK, and was involved in modules 2 and 3 as he was unavailable for the IFTP innovation run. Despite the Business Technology Dynamics course being a departure from his usual route of study, Nikita was keen to join the course as he recognised the importance of both management and technology in his future career. He sees clear application to his future working life, and his participation is testament to the multidisciplinary nature of the course.



“When I start my own company in the future, I will definitely return to this process and apply the ideas I have learned during this course.”

Nikita was especially impressed by the CEMIS Simulation Game, which he describes as “wonderful”. The requirement to

develop a cogent business strategy, to respond to ever-changing market and business pressures, and the variety and depth of the data within the Simulation Game all provided excellent context for understanding how a technology business operates.

Furthermore, Nikita believes that competing against his peers brought an extra level of motivation to the module - another true reflection of the realities of the business environment.

“This course was very different in how it was delivered, in how it was organised, and in the exercises and the simulation game. It has given me so much knowledge that I will come back time and again in my future.”

5. Learning outcomes, measurement

Module 1 - the 'Innovate For The Planet' of the learning path was assessed with a simple Pass or Fail. The main requirement for passing this module was full participation in the 48 hour innovation 'sprint and delivery' of a solution presentation as a member of a team.

The JAMK students who participated in the IFTP module found the event to be both an educational and fun experience. They enjoyed working in teams in a facility that is suitable for entrepreneurial activity. They had the chance to meet new people, put learning into practice, leave room for creativity, and solve some very challenging problems. In their words, the skills touched by this module were:

- teamwork, communication, and presentation/pitching skills;
- understanding of an intensive design experience/innovation process;
- time management;
- research-based problem-solving;
- confidence in their own ideas

Module 2 – Tech Business Dynamics course running with the “MIT engine”, and parallel to that the business simulation.

The course grade consisted of both the evaluations:

- 1) DE approach - 45 % of the total grade - assessed via
 - 50 % from the weekly exercises in developing the business concept further
 - 50 % from the final integrative presentation of all steps of the business design process by DE method
- 2) Simulation Game (Module 3) - 55 % of the total grade - was assessed:
 - 2/3 of the course grade came from performance in the Simulation Game, which was judged by creating cumulative shareholder return across 6 rounds (“years”) in business
 - 2/3 the width and depth of the analysis and reporting (press releases, letters to the shareholder, final business presentation and learning report).

The program hosting the learning path – International Business, EPAS accredited by EFMD; at the JAMK School of Business, an AACSB program member - has for nearly 10 years implemented ILO-(Intended Learning Outcome)based planning and measurement as a quality management tool on top of the course grading principles. At the start of each course, students self-evaluate their level against the designated ILOs, and their target level. In addition they assess the level they reached at the end of the course (in all stages scaled 1 to 5).

The ILO -based learning summary for the course:

	Pre-course level	Target level	Level achieved
Knowledge and understanding skill 1: employ theoretical and conceptual knowledge to identify and analyze business problems in global contexts.	3,00	4,33	3,60
Knowledge and Understanding skill 2: identify and place into practice information-based decision making approaches to business and managerial problems.	3,17	4,33	3,80
Intellectual Skill 1: gather, analyse, and evaluate business data and information and transform empirical data into useful and actionable information	2,83	4,33	3,80
Practical Skill 1: apply proven theoretical and conceptual knowledge of global business challenges in multicultural contexts.	3,00	4,50	3,40
Practical Skill 2: operate effectively within a multicultural team environment demonstrating teambuilding and intercultural communication skills.	3,83	4,67	4,60
Transferable Skill 1: communicate effectively in English in oral, written and electronic formats using communication and information technology for business applications, and is able prepare and present reports.	4,00	4,67	4,20
Average	3,31	4,47	3,90

The self-efficacy of the students improved in all issues, yet did not reach the ambitious targets set for the course. The achievements perceived by the learners also resonate well with the course grades given by the faculty, that averaged 3,86 for all the students.

The students also gave both numerical feedback of the course contents and arrangements as well as verbal feedback on teaching successes and challenges.

The assessment by the students ranked the teaching experienced as follows:

1. The objectives of the course were clear	4,38
2. The assessment criteria were clear	3,96
3. The course contents and materials supported my learning well	4,38
4. The teaching methods supported my learning well	4,59
5. I received guidance and/or feedback supporting my learning when I needed it	4,38
6. I worked actively to reach the objectives	3,96
7. I reached the objectives	3,96
Average	4,23

The students liked how the course concentrated on both big and startup technology businesses, and how they operate differently in the market. The continuum of IFTP ideas to the course was a good idea, and the simulation game was engaging - as it drove motivation to compete against other students.

The required improvements reported by students were primarily coping with the workload: They felt the amount of the work for this course clearly exceeded 5 credits. Due to the new method used (DE), there were also struggles with the startup process assignments. The idea seemed clear during lectures, but it wasn't quite as easy to use in practice.

6. Plans to further develop the initiative

During the pilot, a number of developmental requirements and ideas have become apparent.

In an effort to ease the demands on administration and to also ensure a unified learning and teaching experience, the path should be “marketed” to students and exchange partners as one solid unit.

Previously students were choosing the elements as separate voluntary courses – that led to non-uniform learning experiences. Furthermore, teachers were unable to fully build upon the process and success of Module 1 at the start of Module 2, as some of the participants had dropped out and others had joined.

The more detailed ideas for improvements by the faculty are:

Module 1 (Innovation Run)

- Internal marketing must be started earlier, especially at schools and programs outside the event homebase school, to ensure full-scale cross-discipline participation
- The recruitment of mentors and sponsors from the local business ecosystem would deliver a wider and more diverse range of views and real-life feedback on innovations, and also create networking opportunities both to the university and the students
- Engaging and informing the institution’s key foreign partners would raise the profile and awareness of the innovation event process
- Students who participated in the module in the Spring term of 2019 proposed the following improvements: More mentors and judges to be added, as well as more diversity in student backgrounds in terms of field of study.

Module 2 (Business Planning):

- Create stronger ties to the incubators and accelerators on-campus and in the business ecosystem, so that the teams truly hot for their topic can move smoothly and swiftly from business design to implementation

Module 3 (Simulation Game):

- Create a network of mentors to facilitate the simulation – all from the angle of their specific issue area of specialization (marketing, financial management, corporate communication), as the game’s success and good reporting require multiple skills
- Students should be able to develop their own ideas - generated during module 1 - during modules 2 and 3, as they may have more motivation to further their own idea than that of another group

The planning for academic year 2019-2020 has already started, with dates set for modules and initial plans on resourcing and communication.

BUSINESSES AND STUDENTS ARE ENTERING A NEW DAY, SO WE NEED TO FIND NEW WAYS - AND THIS IS ONE OF THEM.

Authors:



Juha Saukkonen holds a position of a Senior lecturer of Management in the School of Business at JAMK University of Applied Sciences in Jyväskylä, Finland. Saukkonen has published both individually and as part of multinational research teams in journals and conferences on topics of Foresight, Knowledge Management Anticipation and Entrepreneurial Learning and Education. He is also a guest writer and lecturer on these topics in various universities and organizations abroad.



Pavlos Tarasanski is the Education Export Officer for the School of Business at JAMK University of Applied Sciences, Finland. In the past two years, he has successfully expanded JAMK's operations in Egypt, Russia, Kazakhstan, Russia, India, and Turkey. He also facilitates entrepreneurial courses with the aim of enhancing the entrepreneurial mind-set of students.



Ronan Browne is a journalist, documentary filmmaker and adjunct lecturer at JAMK. He is also the owner of Full Focus Media, a video production company located in Tampere, Finland. He writes and produces audio and visual content for Yle, Finland's public service broadcaster, and his documentaries have been broadcast on television in both Ireland and Finland.