

Tampere University of Applied Sciences  
Bachelor of Business Administration degree program  
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## **Final Thesis**

Enabling new successful entrepreneurship stories in Namibia by new  
learning methods in ProLearning (case: Polytechnic of Namibia)

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## **Abstract**

In March 2009 Polytechnic of Namibia launched a new entrepreneurship honors degree program ProLearning. ProLearning is striving towards achieving Namibian's Vision 2030 by enabling the means in helping in creating more successful entrepreneurs in Namibia. ProLearning is based on the learning philosophy and learning tools used in ProAcademy Finland in Tampere University of Applied Sciences.

The learning tools used in the program requires a new approach to teaching and learning: the teachers will no longer be teaching, but coaching. Therefore it was necessary to create a handbook for coaching to ProLearning Namibia. My motivation to this is based on my experience of being a team entrepreneur in ProAcademy myself, being part of helping ProLearning to get started in Polytechnic of Namibia and the six months spent there developing the program as well as being part of training the ProLearning coaches.

The theory part consists of the philosophy and the learning concepts behind this new way of learning and also the important aspects of team learning and what is required and how to become a coach. The practical part of the thesis shows how the program works in practice by describing the learning tools used in ProLearning. The coaching handbook is ready to be taken into use and to be updated regularly by the ProLearning coaches.

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## Tiivistelmä

Polytechnic of Namibia aloitti maaliskuussa 2009 uuden yrittäjyyskoulutusohjelman nimeltä ProLearning. ProLearning pyrkii auttamaan Namibian Vision 2030 saavuttamisessa mahdollistamalla menestyneiden nuorten yrittäjien luomisen Namibiassa. ProLearning perustuu Tampereen Ammattikorkeakoulun ProAkatemian käyttämiin oppimisfilosofioihin ja oppimistyökaluihin. Tässä ohjelmassa käytetyt oppimistyökalut vaativat uutta lähestymistapaa oppimiseen ja opettamiseen: opettamisen sijasta opettajat siirtyvät valmentamaan. Tämän takia nähtiin tarpeelliseksi luoda valmennuskäsikirja ProLearning –yrittäjyyskoulutusohjelman valmentajille. Motivaationi tähän syntyi siitä, että olen itse ollut ProAkatemialla tiimyrittäjänä, ollut auttamassa ProLearning-ohjelman aloittamisessa ja kehittämisessä kuusi kuukautta Namibiassa ja ollut myös mukana kouluttamassa ProLearningin valmentajia.

Opinnäytetyön teoriaosa koostuu tämän uudenlaisen oppimistavan taustalla olevista oppimiskonsepteista ja filosofioista sekä tiimioppimisen tärkeimmistä osista sekä siitä, mitä valmentamiselta vaaditaan ja miten tulla valmentajaksi. Käytännön osuudessa kuvataan miten ProLearning käytännössä toimii esittelemällä ohjelmassa käytettävät oppimistyökalut. Valmentamisen käsikirja on valmiina ProLearning valmentajien käytettäväksi.

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

In November 2007 the Rector of the Polytechnic of Namibia, Dr. Tjama Tjivikua and the director for planning and international relations Ms. Neavera Olivier, visited Tampere University of Applied Sciences (TAMK) in Tampere, Finland. They were introduced to ProAcademy, a business unit with a focus on entrepreneurship. The program was identified as being in line with the Polytechnic's thinking in terms of innovative ways of teaching and developing entrepreneurs.

ProAcademy is a multi-disciplinary business unit for BBA students at Tampere University of Applied Sciences. ProAcademy is founded 1999 based on the ideas of Team Academy at Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences (JAMK). The activities are based on working and learning together, applying latest theoretical knowledge and generating new knowledge. The traditional teaching methods such as lectures, assignments and exams have been changed for student- and team centered learning tools such as dialogue, knowledge-creation sessions, innovation cases, learning cells, portfolios, coaching, working-life seminars, reflective essays and real-world paid-for customer projects. New students set up cooperative companies in teams of 15-20 people and all learning is integrated into developing the company, the team and the students themselves with appropriate goal orientated tools. (Siltanen 2009, 178)

Given the relevance of the model to the Polytechnic's mission, supporting business creation in Namibia and generating the skills necessary for Vision 2030, the Polytechnic of Namibia and TAMK signed a co-operation agreement to examine the feasibility of implementing the ProAcademy model into the Namibian context as part of Business degree program at the Polytechnic of Namibia. The feasibility study was made in August-September 2008 in Windhoek Namibia together with a Finnish and Namibian delegation consisting of six Namibian and four Finnish students together with Namibian and Finnish coaches and teachers. The author of this thesis was part of the delegation.

The faculty, students and stakeholders of the Polytechnic of Namibia, after an extensive study, found the model very effective and a new way of learning. It is believed that the program will complement existing programs as well as foster student responsibility and

independence, and empower students to apply what they learn, thus providing greater opportunities for their success as entrepreneurs and employers; and contributing to sustainable national development and the country's Vision 2030.

Namibian Vision 2030 provides long term alternative policy scenarios on the future course of development in Namibia at different points in time up until the target year 2030. One of the important aspects in Vision 2030 is to reduce the unemployment significantly by creating new successful entrepreneurship stories. Means to that in Vision 2030 are: to promote the effective development and operation of small and medium scale enterprises, to provide training in business development and management to both in school and out-of-school men and woman, to encourage the development of self-employment among potential job seekers and to ensure that education and training programmes address the demands in the labor market.

Success stories of Namibian entrepreneurs have been limited, because of the competition. Namibia is rich in many aspects such as natural resources, but is poor in skills: dynamic entrepreneurs who can sell new products and services to the world market. For this reason, students and faculty embraced the ProAcademy model, putting students directly into management positions with the responsibilities and challenges in the real world of work.

After the feasibility study and extensive consultations with a delegation from TAMK and the relevant stakeholders in Namibia, the department of Business Management launched the Bachelor of Entrepreneurship Honours degree - ProLearning on the 16<sup>th</sup> of March 2009. In November 2008 the becoming two ProLearning coaches (Faculty of Polytechnic of Namibia) and two co-coaches (students from the pilot team) had a two-week intensive coaching training in ProAcademy Finland.

The ProLearning Honours degree program includes three years of basic studies and two years of ProLearning entrepreneurship program.

ProLearning started with a pilot team consisting of 13 business students. These students registered an enterprise called PLEMJIVE co-operative. In February 2009 a ProAcademy student, the author of this thesis went to Polytechnic of Namibia for a

student exchange to help the program to get started and to work as a consultant for the coaches, team and the management. The exchange was six months and included e.g. consulting on the application process, the learning methods and coaching.

The pilot team PLEMJIVE co-op has been working successfully with various projects in the Namibian region and has already shown the positive results of this program by becoming examples of motivated, young, entrepreneurial minded students who are taking charge of their own careers and lives by self-employing themselves while studying on their degree.

In the beginning of the year 2010 new two coaches was selected for the programme and they attended to an intensive two-week coaching training in ProAcademy Finland in February 2010. A second ProLearning team started at Polytechnic of Namibia in March 2010.

## **1.2 Objectives**

The main objective of this thesis is to get familiar with this new way of learning and teaching, to deeper the understanding of the learning tools and methods used in this kind of program and to understand the main learning theories behind this model. One of the objectives for the thesis is to create a handbook which can be used in practice to ease the coaches in their work.

My personal learning objective is based on getting a deeper understanding of the theory behind this model; the learning theories as well as the theories behind the coaching methods. Personally I know how this program works in practise by going it through myself, but I am interested of learning the deeper story behind it because I believe it will be useful for me in future.

By being a part of building the ProLearning program in Namibia and also after being a part of the delegation holding the coaching trainings in Finland for the coaches and the co-coaches, a need for a coaching handbook for this specific program was seen. The whole program with its new way of learning philosophy and learning tools as well as

the new way of teaching by coaching methods is difficult to internalize without actually being a part of the day to day life of this kind of program.

Transforming from a teacher to a coach is challenging because the means of teaching are completely different from the traditional school system. The learning is based on a unique combination of team learning, dialogue, coaching, learning by doing and self-leadership. The class rooms are changed for the team company's offices, direct teaching is changed for self-directed learning and instead of learning theoretical information in storage the students will learn in need and then apply the information learned into practise.

Since there is not a handbook for coaching for this program and the amount of the information in English is limited, this thesis is supposed to be a solution for that problem. The thesis will make the deeper understanding of the program, the reasons behind this model and the understanding of the learning tools in practise easier. The handbook is made firstly for the new coaches who will take part in ProLearning in the future as well as for the present coaches in the program. The handbook is supposed to become a tool to ease the daily life of the coaches by providing the most important aspects and information of the program in one place. The handbook is to be updated with the existing ProLearning coaches constantly, because when the program is developing the practices and the information will also change.

This thesis will also help other interested parties to understand more about the program and the new way of learning.

### **1.3 Structure**

This is a coaching handbook.

The theory part consists of the philosophy and the learning concepts behind this new way of learning and coaching used in ProLearning, ProAcademy and Team Academy. Also the important aspects of team learning like dialogue will be introduced. Then the thesis concentrates on coaching: What is coaching? What is required from a coach?



How does the coach coach the team and the individuals? What is the coach's role in developing the community?

The practical part of the thesis (starting from the heading 7) will show how the program works in practice: What are the learning tools? How to use them? What is the coach's role in each learning tool? What is expected from the student? What is the role of the team, the team company and the individual in each learning tool?

## **2 Learning concepts**

To understand the reason behind this new way of learning one has to look into the philosophy behind it. Learning in Team Academy Jyväskylä as well as ProAcademy Finland is mainly based on the following learning concepts; constructivism, humanism and process learning and so will be ProLearning Namibia. Learning by doing is the base for all the learning in these programmes, which is why it will also be introduced as part of the learning concepts as well as Lkujiro Nonaka's and Hirakata Takeuchi's proposed model of the knowledge creation process.

### **2.1 Constructivism**

When looking back the history of the learning concepts in education in general the most radical change has happened in using less and less the behavioural learning concept in teaching and more cognitive learning concept during the last decades. In the behavioural learning concept the student is seen as a passive receiver of the information, in which case the learning should happen through mechanical repetition. In this case the traditional teaching is the right solution. The cognitive learning concept emphasizes activities, where the student has the central position in the learning process in selecting, remoulding, interpreting, applying and evaluating the information. Coaching instead of traditional teaching is required when applying this learning concept into practice. (Mäki-Komsti 1999, 35.)

Constructivism is a developed end result of the cognitive learning concept. The core of constructivism is in combining, rebuilding and conceptualizing information, which in practise means constructing the information into a new ensemble. The responsibility of

the learning lies with the learner (=student), because through interpreting the information the learner provides his own value and meaning for it. (Kauppila 2003, 21-22)

Constructivism is based on the thought of the learner being the active user for the information. This emphasizes the learning instead of teaching and the learner instead of the teacher. Also the construction of information based on the earlier experiences of a person is emphasized instead of studying the ready made truths. Without the will to learn no meaningful and real learning happens and that is why the foremost responsibility of a coach is to motivate the student towards learning. (Isosuo & Särkijärvi 2008, 24)

## **2.2 Humanism**

Humanism emphasizes individuality. The aim is the personal and spiritual growth of the learner, which is achieved by expressing yourself based on your own needs and desires. Learning is based on the person's experiences and the reflection of them. According to the definition of humanism we all have already existing great features and potential. The coach should find these strengths of the students and through that motivate the students to find their core know-how and develop it further for the student to be able to achieve his top performance. (Leinonen etc. 2002, 35-36 & Mäki-Komsi 1999, 35.)

## **2.3 Process Learning**

The foundation of process learning is in drawing the attention towards the learning processes through which the learning is generated, instead of the actual learning subject. In practise it means that instead of making strict targets and subjects for the teaching occasions the coach should focus on a process, which is flexible and steered by an observing evaluation of the situation. (Kovalainen 2006, 12.)

Process learning is steered by the needs of the learner. The objectives and means are set up based on the needs of the student. The coaching of the process learning is challenging, because coach has to be able to handle and observe the individual processes and the team processes simultaneously. (Kyrö & Ripatti 2006, 119 & Kovalainen 2006, 12.)

Learning is always a long process. When the single events and insights are linked together, learning happens (Hassinen 2007).

## 2.4 The knowledge creation process by Nonaka & Takeuchi

Lkujiro Nonaka and Hirakata Takeuchi (1995) proposed a model of the knowledge creation process to understand the dynamic nature of knowledge creation and how to manage the process effectively within the organization. They proposed four steps of knowledge creation called SECI model. The SECI stands for Socialization, Externalization, Combination and Internalization. This model is used as a base for all learning in Team Academy Finland and in Proacademy Finland and will be used as well in ProLearning Namibia.

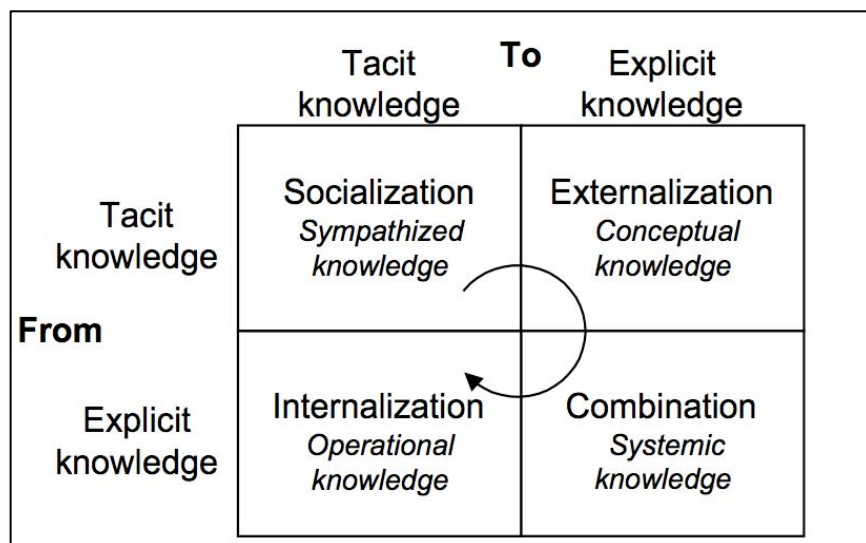


FIGURE 1. Knowledge conversion process from tacit to explicit knowledge (Nonaka & Takeuchi 1995)

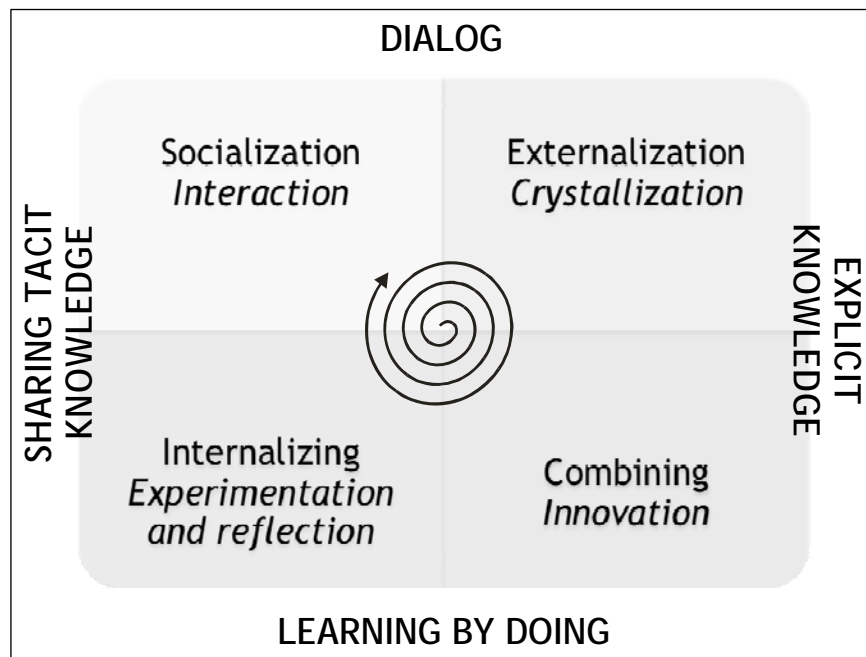


FIGURE 2. Knowledge conversion process “knowledge spiral” (Picture adapted from Nonaka & Takeuchi 1995)

There are two kinds of knowledge that accumulate in formal and informal learning processes. Tacit knowledge is internal knowledge that the learner builds from experiences, current reality and actions in a specific context. It can be difficult to formalize and communicate with others. Explicit knowledge is conceptual by nature: generated by rationing, past memories and theoretical knowledge. It can be easily expressed, captured, stored and reused but it may be difficult for the learner to apply explicit knowledge in action. (Kallioinen 2009, 179-180)

In an effective learning process, tacit and explicit knowledge must flow seamlessly by sharing and conversion: tacit knowledge can be shared with socializing with others, tacit knowledge needs to be externalized and processed so it can be presented and shared more effectively as explicit knowledge, explicit knowledge can be augmented by sharing and combining different theories and sources of information, and finally explicit knowledge needs to be converted to tacit knowledge through internalization so it becomes part of the learner’s practical skills. (Kallioinen 2009, 180)

Nonaka & Takeuchi's model emphasizes a very critical point in organizational learning: we need processes and tools supporting the motion of this cycle continuously. Students constantly gain tacit knowledge by living, working and experimenting but this represents an informal learning process, which is unpredictable and typically doesn't follow topic and scope boundaries of courses in traditional education. Tacit knowledge is often deemed subjective and unreliable thus not worth sharing or discussing. Often even the learners fail to realize that they've learned something. (Kallioinen 2009, 180)

Figure 2 shows some of the most important tools and processes that support this cycle. Socialization of tacit knowledge is supported by interaction between the learners. Once it has been established what we've learned from our experiences and tacit knowledge, we try to conceptualize or crystallize it by forming summaries and theories about generating explicit knowledge. Externalization also allows us to evaluate the subjectivity or reliability of the knowledge, as the explicit formulation should be something mutually agreed on. By combining different sources of explicit knowledge, e.g. reading books, newsfeeds and blogs, attending seminars and comparing, applying and refining own theories, new explicit knowledge is created. This knowledge needs to be tested again in real world cases and projects, bringing us back to reflection and discussions of the internalized experiences. (Kallioinen 2009, 180)

Finally, all the ongoing projects and development of the company, leadership and team organization account for the experimentation, reflection and learningby- doing part of the Nonaka & Takeuchi's cycle. It is very important to realize that this cycle is at the core of all learning at ProAcademy. It is the way people really learn in life and we need to understand and accept that learning this way takes a lot of time. Nothing is given ready-served for the students to ingest and memorize. The skills, competences and knowledge that students at ProAcademy accumulate in the 2,5 years are a result of countless dialogues, motorolas, books, innovation sessions, projects, mistakes, successes and experiments. (Kallioinen 2009, 180)

## 3 Team Learning

### 3.1 Team Learning and learning by doing

When discussing about team learning it is important to first define the team. A team is a small group of people, who has skills that complement each other, who are committed in reaching the same goal and targets, have a common way to operate and who hold themselves responsible of their actions and achievements for each other. To reach this the team need most of all trust and commitment. (Katzenbach & Smith 1993, 75)

Team learning emphasizes the meaning of the team instead of individuals. The learning happens together with others to reach a common vision. The theoretical knowledge as well as the practical skills is generated through real action and a social interaction. In a good team different individuals complement and assist the learning in the whole team using their knowledge, experiences and their views. (Isosuo & Särkijärvi 2008, 26)

The advantage in team learning is the possibility to gain valuable experience about real life working skills. Working together as a team e.g. improves the social skills, reduces the prejudices and creates more open-mindedness. It also improves the ability for collaboration, makes adaptation for new environments easier, increases productivity and teaches the importance of the targets in action. (Kauppila 2003, 28)

John Dewey has stated that all the learning should be connected to practical doing. According to him no real learning can happen without solving real problems and conflicts and finding solutions for real situations. (Puolimatka 2002, 269-270) To improve the learning results of the learners the knowledge created from school should be transformed to skills through doing. (Kvist ym. 2004, 31)

The practical work should be the most obvious part in the learning process and at the same time to be the motive for the learning and gathering information. Practical work creates ideas and visions, brakes boundaries, creates experience and makes the people the take responsibility. It also increases the self-confidence and self-development. (Kyrö ja Ripatti 2006: 164-165)

Basically all the learning in ProLearning is based on team learning and learning by doing. The best example of this are the real-life projects being also the biggest part of the ProLearning studies. The projects are done through the team companies in project teams. The team uses the different skills of the team members to achieve the best results from the project and shares information inside the team. The learning which happens individually will be shared with the whole team which also increases the learning of other members in the team and creates better end results e.g. in the projects.

Theoretical knowledge learnt before is put into practice when working and if new information is needed, it will be searched in the situation and used in the project to create real learning. The learning is effective and useful when the information is tied to a real situation in a team company and can be used in practice. This is how the skills and the theoretical information of the student will be created.

## **3.2 Dialogue**

### **3.2.1 What is dialogue?**

William Isaacs defines dialogue in the following way: “Dialogue is conversation, which has a core of matter and in which the people don’t take sides.” The energy should be directed to something which doesn’t yet even exist instead of talking about the differences in people’s views. Dialogue lifts people up from choosing sides towards a common experience, in which the common intelligence and strength of the people involved will be used. (Isaacs 2001, 40)

An important skill in dialogue is the ability to throw oneself freely into the dialogue. Very effective learning will be achieved when the attention is directed away from the “what will I say next” –thinking to the actual interaction. (Csikszentmihalyi 1990, 304)

Dialogue directs us to listen and see more than the sum of individual opinions. Dialogue is interaction in which the people think together. Thinking together means that a person doesn’t think that his opinion is definite, but instead he thinks it is only a step towards the end result. The purpose of dialogue is to expand our thinking by coming up with new perspectives, alternative ideas and deeper understanding instead of discussion where the goal is typically to make a decision and narrow down from the ideas we have. (Isaacs 2001, 40)

The purpose of dialogue is to go beyond any one individual's understanding. "We are not trying to win in a dialogue. We all win if we do it right." Through dialogue the individuals gain insights that simply cannot be achieved individually. (Senge 1990, 241) The main elements to reach real dialogue are careful listening, respect for all thoughts, waiting for others and talking openly and straightforwardly. These skills have to be learned in order to fully understand and practise good dialogue. Using these skills in dialogue creates harmony and brings the balance, flexibility, strength and life to the conversation. If one of these elements is missing, the conversation feels empty. (Isaacs 2001, 96)

The core of dialogue is deep listening. Listening doesn't mean just hearing the words, but the ability to internalize and accept them. (Isaacs, 106) The listening in this context means e.g. that a person has to change his standpoint. He has to be able to arrest to how the things look from his own point of view and at the same time to understand how the same things look from another person's point of view. This requires more than just empathy. In dialogue a new dimension is found: the opportunity of listening together as a part of bigger complex. (Isaacs 2001, 116)

Waiting in dialogue means changing the direction, stopping, taking a step backwards and looking from a different perspective. Rock-solid comments and opinions are like rocks in a flow of dialogue which creates obstacles and prevents the conversation moving forward. Waiting means avoiding making one's opinion too soon in the process instead of making early assumptions and defending your own views and protesting against someone else's thoughts if they don't accumulate with your own thoughts. (Isaacs 2001, 145) When we respect a person we accept that we can learn something from him. (Isaacs 2001, 126)

Talking openly and straightforwardly is probably the most challenging part in dialogue and it means the ability to express oneself genuinely regardless of the other influential factors. (Isaacs 2001, 167) Straight talk requires determination. When a person understands that his words matters in the dialogue, it creates the self-confidence to share his views with others. In order to talk straight a person has to believe in himself and that his thoughts have a meaning. (Isaacs 2001, 170) Talking straight, however, has two extreme standpoints. When the ability to talk straight is undeveloped, people can be too



quiet and unable to bring forward what they are thinking. On the other hand in the situation when a person's ability to talk straight is taken too far, they tend to talk too much and take space from others in a dialogue. (Isaacs 2001, 182)

When being part of dialogue we can understand that by talking we can actually create. We are not talking because we want to present our thoughts or ourselves, we talk because we believe that together we can create something through it. (Isaacs 2001, 172)

The books and other theory sources, such like newspaper articles are supposed to work as a tool for learning and creating new thoughts. So that the learned information doesn't just stay for the single reader to use, it is important to invest in sharing the information. The information will be developed, processed and spread for others to use using dialogue. (Leinonen ym. 2002, 34)

The coach has a huge responsibility in the success of the team's dialogue. He should be able to get the team members to be willing and to be able to bring their thinking to be discussed and reviewed by others. The coach should create an environment, where hierarchy doesn't exist and where a free flow of thinking is allowed and respected. (Senge 1990, 238-248)

Learning the dialogue is one of the most difficult skills in team learning and yet it is the key of the true learning together. The role of the coach in learning how to apply, use and develop the dialogue is important and that is why the coach has to have a clear picture of what the dialogue is all about. Also the coach should understand how his role is going to develop in the process of the team's dialogue skill when the dialogue is going to develop from a normal conversation and common problem solving towards creative dialogue aka common flow of thinking. (Isaacs 2001, 256)

### 3.2.2 Coach directing the dialogue

Coach plays an important role in directing the team's dialogue e.g. in the weekly team sessions.

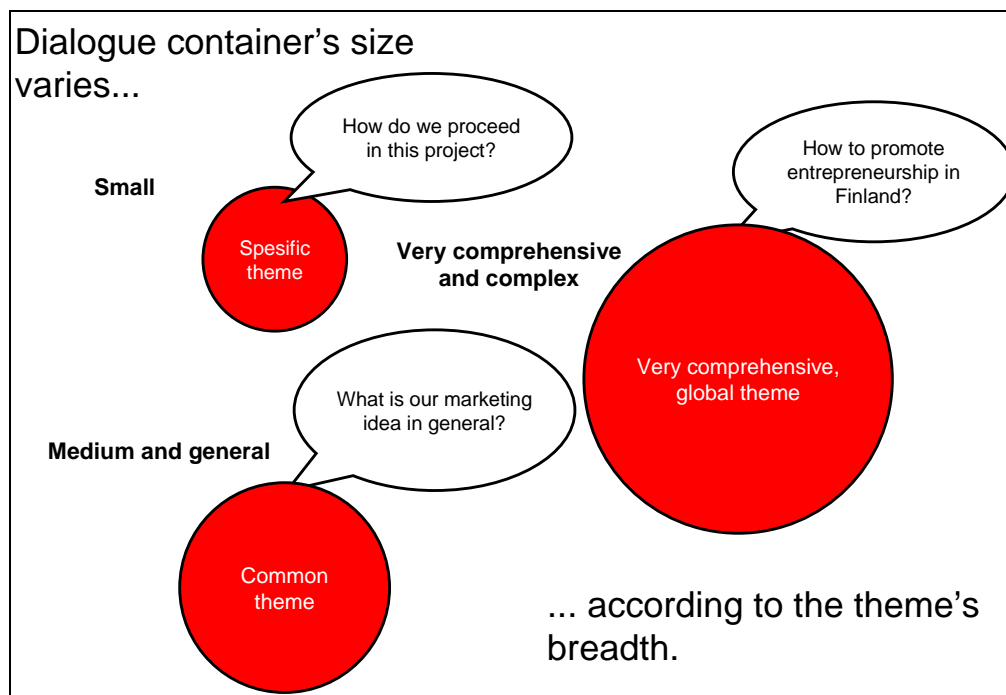


FIGURE 3. Dialogue container size variation (Team Mastery learning tools 2006. Team Academy Finland)

The conversation within the team in the team sessions varies from small subjects to very comprehensive themes. The conversation can be built around a narrow theme for example on how to develop or move forward in a certain project. On another occasion the theme might be more general for example talking about the company's business image or marketing. Sometimes the questions and conversation can go deeper discussing about global themes. The dialogue container size varies a lot but the coach should always be able to follow the conversation and if needed take it to the right direction.

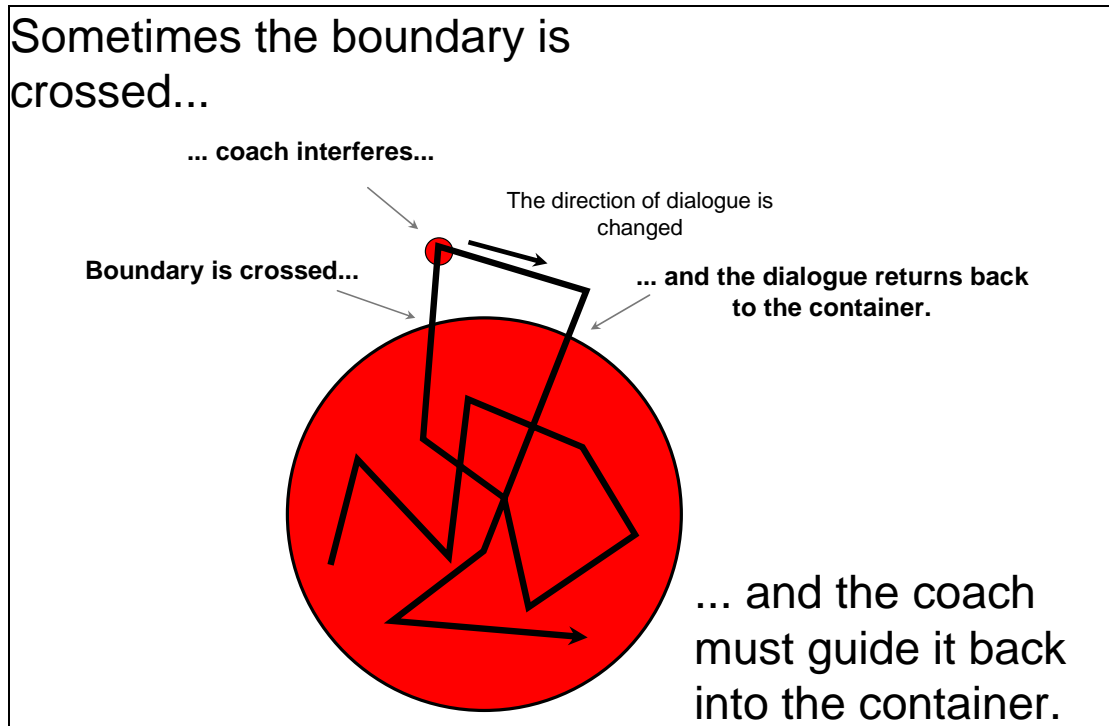


FIGURE 5. Coach guiding the dialogue (Team Mastery learning tools 2006. Team Academy Finland)

In comparison with a young and an older team, the young team usually needs more interference from the coach than the older teams. Usually in the conversation the boundaries are crossed and the dialogue changes direction. Maybe the conversation moves suddenly to another subject and the coach has to know when to interfere.

Sometimes it is good for the team to cross the dialogue boundaries to find new ideas and solutions from places where they couldn't imagine them coming. So the coach has to know when to let the dialogue flow and when to put it back into the track. Usually in the dialogue circles with the older experienced teams the team members know how to return the conversation back into the subject by themselves. Somebody from inside the team will stop the conversation and lead it back to where it is supposed to be. This is the ideal situation.

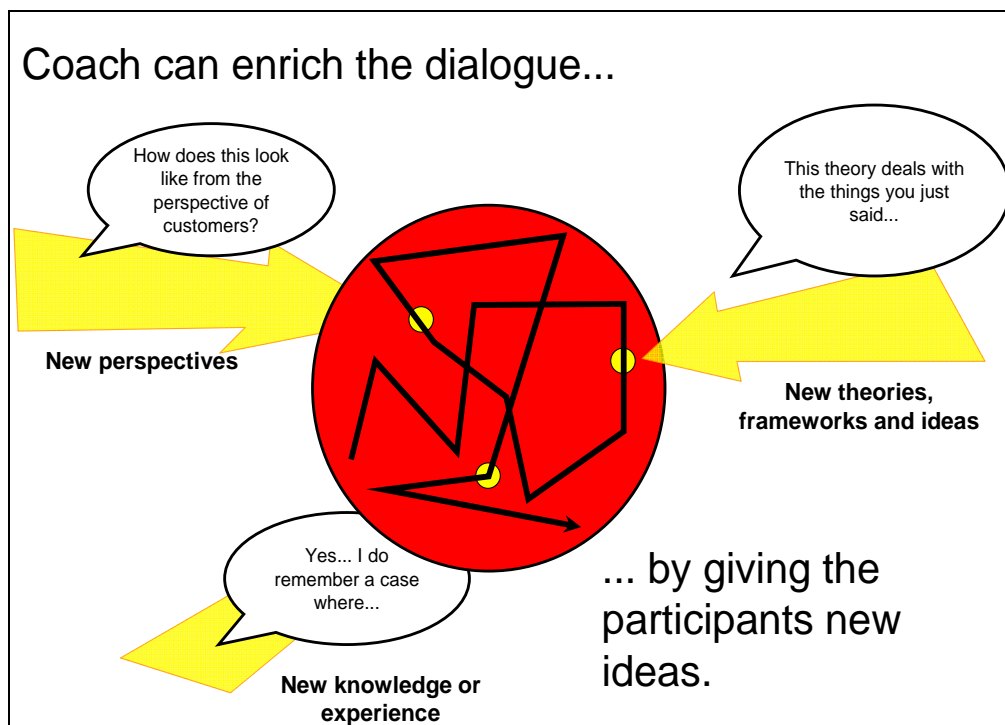
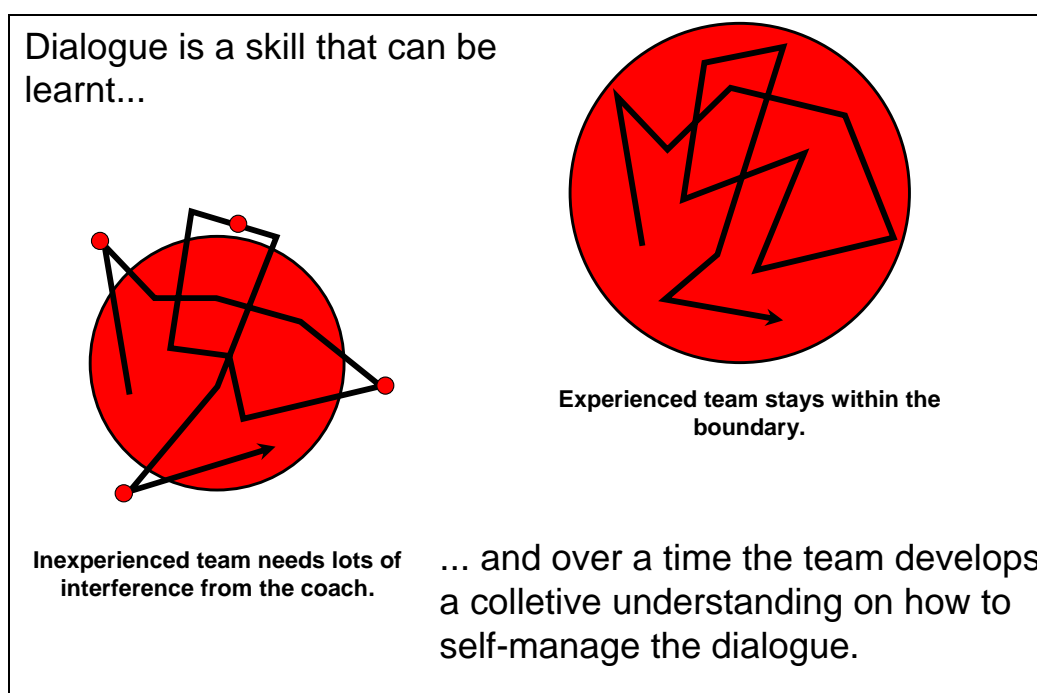


FIGURE 5. Coach enriching the dialogue (Team Mastery learning tools 2006. Team Academy Finland)

Enriching the dialogue from a coach point of view means helping in creating insights for the team members. This is done by providing new perspectives, ideas and experience to the conversation by using the coaching methods mentioned in chapter 5.1 Creating insights.



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FIGURE 6. Team self-managing the dialogue (Team Mastery learning tools 2006. Team Academy Finland)

With time the team develops a collective understanding on how to manage the dialogue themselves without the coach. Usually the team achieves this moment after 1,5 years working together. They learn how to stay inside the dialogue boundaries so that the dialogue can still flow freely and create the common flow of thinking together. This is when the team members know each other well enough to accept the way they act in dialogue. Great insights are created and a lot can be achieved when the team reaches this target.

### 3.3 The role of the Coach in Team development

The relationship between the coach and the team in the team development process:

1. The coach is the centre of the team
2. The coach has empowered a part of the team members
3. The coach is an equal member in the team
4. The coach is supporting the team from outside (“kicked out”)
5. The coach is taken back in to the team

(Leinonen & Partanen 2002,166)

In the start the role of the coach is mostly to direct the team’s actions by giving clear directions and tasks. The team members listen to the coach and usually treat the coach as they are used to treat the teachers in their previous studies without questioning anything. The first books are read and the first essays are written because the coach gave the deadlines. In the starting team sessions the coach usually talks the most of the time and many of the team members don’t yet have the courage to actively take part in the discussions. (Isaacs 2001, 314)

Gradually the team members start taking more active role in the actions, especially in the team sessions. They realize that they should learn for themselves, not for the coach. Team starts to question the things the coach brings forward and the team members start

having real conversations, sometimes also some arguments. In this phase of development the team members progress in a different speed, some members learn the new method faster while the others take more time to adapt to it. The team members start bringing up the subjects which they are interested in or e.g. the things raised up from the projects and the coach starts to move from the position of leading the conversation more towards an equal member in the team. In this phase, where the coach and the team members have achieved more balanced and equal positions, which is based on the companionship, not into controlling anymore, the learning through dialogue can be started. (Isaacs 2001, 314)

Gradually in the team development the coach should start distancing himself a little bit from the team to be more of an observer. In practice e.g. in the team sessions it means that the team is practicing dialogue and having their conversation while the coach is just listening and observing and maybe not saying a word during the session. His presence is still important and he should be able to step in when the team seems not to be going forward, they are stuck or the situation is otherwise problematic. The coach should in this case to help them realize something that they cannot see yet and help them forward. (Leinonen & Partanen 2002,166)

To achieve all the development phases mentioned before is a long process and usually it's not that logical. After the start the coach should be able to become an equal member with the team. This stage is usually possible when the team members in the team sessions are talking to the whole team and no longer are only talking to the coach. Usually in this stage most of the team members have realized their part and responsibilities in the team, while some members are still trying to find their role.

After this development phase follows one of the most difficult time period for the coach, when the team becomes independent and the team starts to rebel against the coach and shuts the coach outside from the team. In this stage the team members really start to feel they are learning for themselves and work for the team. The coach will be taken off from his authority position. "Kicking off" the coach is an important development phase regarding the team's independence and development, but when the team has gone through this the team members start seeing the importance of the coach

in supporting their individual learning. At the end the coach is taken back into the team. (Leinonen & Partanen 2002,166-167)

## **4 Coaching**

Today's business life requires professionals who are capable of self-directed and independent work. A person should be able to use his capabilities comprehensively through creativeness, thinking, personality as well as through ones networks in collaboration with other people. Our school system hasn't yet fully succeeded in addressing to this challenge. The teacher is still the centre of learning in the learning set up when instead it should be the actual client which in this set up is the learner. (Leinonen etc. 2002, 13)

Teacher-centred learning environments follow strictly determined evaluation criteria and courses. In the traditional system the teacher still has the responsibility of the learning. The objective of the education should be to educate graduates to be capable of self-directed and responsible thinking as well as lifelong learning, which requires directing the responsibility of the learning from the teachers to the students themselves. Succeeding in this objective requires from the teacher to give up his centred role and move to the side to become as a coach instead. (Leinonen etc. 2002, 13)

What is coaching all about? Shortly defined coaching is to enable and direct learning in the kind of way that the coach and the student are equal members of the learning community working towards the same objective (Leinonen etc. 2002, 16.) On the other hand coaching is about leading the learning in the level of individuals, the team and the whole community. Leading in this perspective doesn't however mean the traditional controlling and telling what to do, but creating opportunities, giving support and serving the learning of each learner. (Leinonen etc. 2002, 158.)

Miles Downey crystallizes coaching in his book *Effective Coaching* in the following way, "Coaching is the ability to facilitate and ease other people's performance, learning and development." Coaching should always aim to improving the achievements, continuous learning and personal development. (Partanen 2008.)

“We think that the deepest meaning of coaching is to release the potential in people. The job of a coach is not related to what he is doing, but what his team will achieve” (Kvist etc. 2004, 6.)

When stepping on the path of a coach it is important to realize that the awareness of your own actions, behaviour and attitudes and the genuine desire to develop oneself continuously are the vital parts of growing as a coach. (Kvist, Miekkaara, Poutanen 2004, 20.)

## **5 Responsibilities of a Coach**

The coach has a holistic view of team-entrepreneurship. Coach is not a specialist in any field (e.g. marketing, management or strategy), but an expert with a holistic view of entrepreneurship and understanding of coaching methods. Coach should –of course– have substance knowledge on one or more multiple fields, but that is only secondary. (Partanen & Heikkinen 2009, 9)



## 5.1 Creating insights

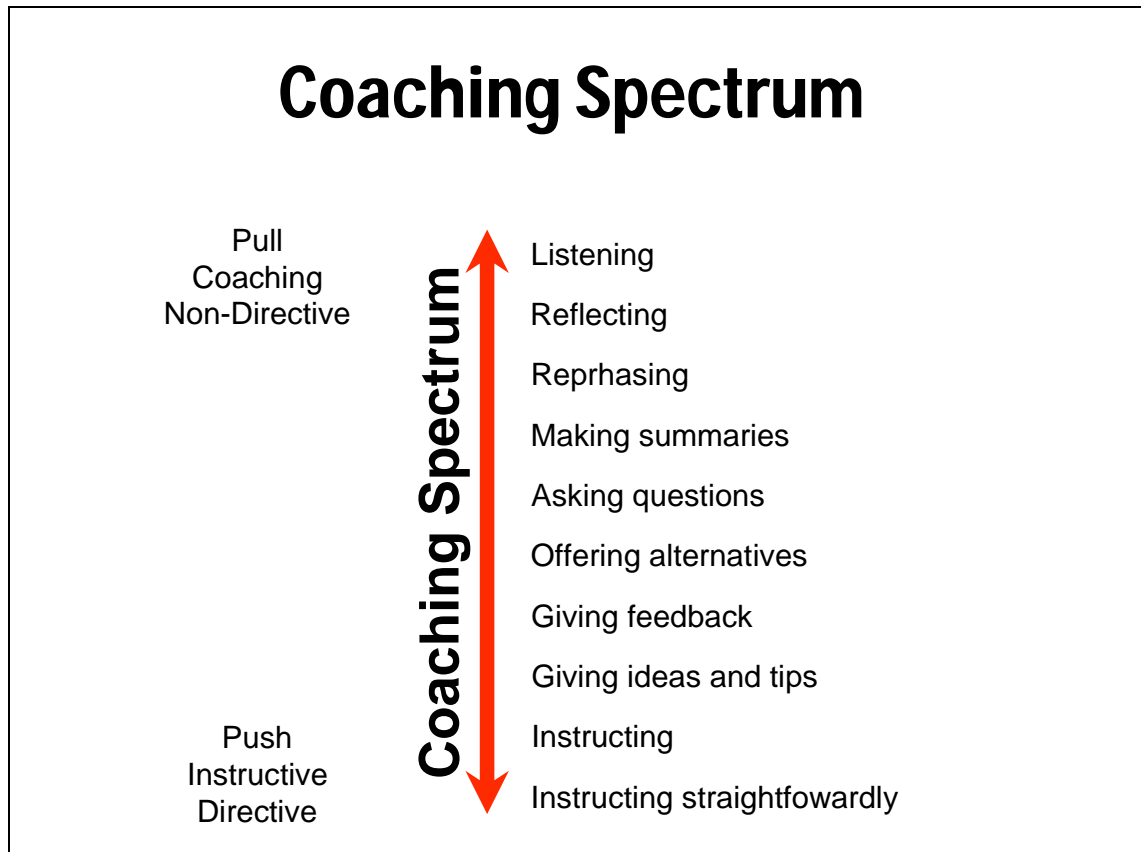


FIGURE 7. Coaching Spectrum

Creating insights means that the coach doesn't give directions of what to do, but approaches the situation with questions. The target is that the student rather realizes it himself. This way the learning is more effective and also more rewarding for the student. If the questions are placed and leaded right it is presumable that after given a little bit of time to think the student comes to the conclusion what the coach in the start wanted. Usually the questions should be open questions, because they help in generating new ideas and courage the students for independence problem solving. (Kvist ym. 2004, 24)

The figure no 7 shows how coaching should mainly concentrate on non-directive communication and creating insights within the students. Coaching happens in the "pulling" part of the spectrum consisting of deep listening and understanding, reflecting

on what has been said or what is already known, rephrasing what has been said in another form to be more understandable for others and asking questions. This is the way to create insights in the team. Sometimes a coach also faces situations, when the team might be facing a wall and cannot move forward, when the coach can use a more directive way of approaching the situation by offering alternatives or giving feedback or ideas. Instructing straightforwardly is something the coach should avoid, but sometimes the situation might acquire it also.

## 5.2 Motivator

The motivation of the student being coached can be seen in his readiness of performing tasks in achieving the learning targets. The student's motivation becomes evident when he takes responsibility of his studies, which also creates more self-orientated studying and learning. (Kauppila 2003, 43)

When the student has found his inner motivation for learning, he is ready to put all his effort in the process. In this situation the source of the motivation comes from the genuine interest towards the subject to be learned and the willingness of developing oneself and the influence of external awards doesn't exist. The learning will be self-directed. A person who has inner motivation has the courage to take the jump to his discomfort zone and this way also his readiness for the lifelong learning will be developed. (Kauppila 2003, 43-45)

Emphasising on the student's strengths is a good motivation tool for the coach to use. Each team member comes to the team with his own strengths, know-how, attitudes and self-confidence. The job of the coach is to find the potential and strengths of each team member and give positive feedback on these qualities. This is how the coach supports the individuals in their own development and growth and motivates the student for the learning. (Kyrö & Ripatti 2006, 165)

The failures are inevitable when trying new things and one part of the encouragement coming from the coach is the way he responds to this kind of situations. The coach should be able to convince the team that making mistakes or failures isn't that dangerous, but it is a "natural part of the learning process. Usually making a mistake is a

consequence of the courage to have tried something new instead of repeating the old. (Kyrö & Ripatti 2006, 168)

When creating the right kind of atmosphere the target should be in making it as open and experimental as possible. The coach should be able to remove the fears and strengthen the feeling of safety. In this way the environment courage in bold experimenting and making mistakes, which enables e.g. new innovations. (Kvist ym. 2004, 133)

World is full of great ideas and dreams but realizing them requires bold action. We do not know for sure what actions will make our dreams come true, so we must experiment sometimes succeeding, sometimes failing. Eventually we will find the way. Action gives us energy and makes everybody enthusiastic. The truest joy can be felt by doing something and seeing the results: “We did it!” (Partanen & Heikkinen 2009, 13)

### 5.3 Leading and developing the community

*“Personal mastery” is the phrase we use for the discipline of personal growth and learning. People with high levels of personal mastery are continually expanding their ability to create the results in life they truly seek. From their quest for continual learning comes the spirit of the learning organization. (Senge 2006, 131)*

Organizations learn only through individuals who learn, although individual learning does not guarantee organizational learning. Still without it no organizational learning occurs. A small number of organizational leaders are recognizing the radical rethinking of corporate philosophy which a commitment to individual learning requires. Kazuo Inamori, founder and president of Kyocera says this: “Whether it is research and development, company management, or any other aspect of business, the active force is people. And people have their own will, their own mind, and their own way of thinking. If the employees themselves are not sufficiently motivated to challenge the goals of growth and technological development there will simply be no growth, no gain in productivity, and no technical development” (Senge 2006, 129-130).

The leader of the community which this case means the ProLearning coaches, are the stewards. Their mission is to help the community to develop, realize and nurture “the deep story” and sense of purpose behind the vision and the program. This enables the team members to take every day small steps towards their shared goal and the coach must emphasize the importance of shared goal to learners. Even during difficult moments the coach should have hope and share it with the team. When a new team comes the coach must actively participate in coaching new members of the learning community to take part in nurturing the community’s and team’s goals. (Partanen & Heikkinen 2009, 13)

Team Academy is before anything a living community. A community cannot, however, be developed without different individuals. This is why Team Academy strives for supporting the individuality, dissimilarity and the unique know-how development of every student. Strong communal thinking in Team Academy doesn’t strive for educating clones with same kind of skills, but strives for creating professionals who has found their special know-how and potential, who understand that learning is not something that ends after graduation but something that carries through the life. (Leinonen & Partanen 2002, 152)

The coach plays an important role in building and developing the community. The teams come and go, but the coaches stay, so their job is to keep the community living and the information created inside ProLearning flowing to the new members of the community. Senge is emphasizing the importance of the shared goal. In a community like ProLearning it means that the coaches together with the support of the teams together should create and continuously update and improve a vision, mission and values for the community and the program. This is the only way to lead all the members of the community towards the same goal. The coaches should always remind the teams about the core values, in Senge’s words “the deep story”, behind ProLearning and help the new members to become an important part of the community.

## 6 Qualities of a Coach

### 6.1 Lifelong learning and self leadership

*People with a high level of personal mastery live in a continual learning mode. They never “arrive”. Sometimes, language, such as the term “personal mastery”, creates a misleading sense of definiteness of black and white. But personal mastery is not something you possess. It is a process. It is a lifelong discipline. People with a high level of personal mastery are acutely aware of their ignorance, their incompetence, their growth areas. And they are deeply self-confident. Paradoxical? Only for those who do not see that “the journey is the reward”. (Senge 2006, 132-133)*

According to Senge it is important to understand that a person is never ready. This also applies to the job of a coach. The coach has to keep in mind that you can learn something new every day. By realizing one’s own growth areas is easier to develop your coaching skills. Working closely with a team consisting of many different personalities in a non-class and constantly changing environment the coach should accept the fact that the situations where the coach should act are most of the time non-predictable. Mistakes happen but one has to be able to learn from them. Still the coach should stay self-confident in his role as a coach and believe in his work and be able to have trust in the process. Especially with a new starting coach the team and the coach are learning together and developing each other.

Learning is one of the cornerstones of our minds and our well-being. It is a process, where the information is created by moulding our experiences and the information learned previously. It is about the efficiency of gathering information, storing it and then applying it to practice. (Sydänmaanlakka 2006, 153.)

Continuous learning and development should be seen as one of the important targets in a coach job. The information and the surrounding world are changing and the surveys are continuously bringing new insights, so the coach has to be able to learn new and to be ready to leave behind the old ways of thinking and doing things. In order to make this a success, the coach has to have a desire for continuous development. (Sydänmaanlakka 2006, 153.)

The lifelong learning of a coach should occur in his own working organization as well as outside of the educational institution (Luukanen 2005, 187). Especially effective channel for the continuous learning are the coaching situations. In addition for the learning of the students the coach should also use these occasions as a possibility to learn and develop his skills. As well as the student the coach is allowed to experiment and make mistakes, because after all the most important thing is to learn from them. The problems should always be solved together. (Kyrö & Ripatti 2006, 168.)

## **6.2 Ability to adjust to changes**

The ability to be flexible and to adjust to different real life situations is required from the coach, because all the teams and the coaching situations differ from each other. The coach has to devote himself to situational sensitivity, making continuous reflection and improving the coaching processes. (Kyrö & Ripatti 2006, 119-120)

The ability to adjust to changes as a quality of a coach means that the coach doesn't feel helpless when facing new and fast changing situations, but rather sees them as positive challenges. A person who has the ability to adjust to changes is able to maintain the realistic optimism and his sense of humour even when being under stress and facing vicissitudes. (Kvist 2006, 145-146)

Creativity and courage is the foundation for executing personal changes. Creativity helps to change person's way of thinking and the courage enables taking it to practice in order to change the practice. Courage is also needed to take away the fear of failure, fear of failure being one of the most significant factors in resisting change. (Kvist 2006, 92-93)

## **7 The ProLearning in practice**

This is the practical part of the thesis. The practical part of the handbook explains how to apply the philosophy and the theories of this new way of learning into practise in daily activities in ProLearning. The information is based on the learning tools of Team Academy and ProAcademy but has been adapted to be applied in the Namibian context.

It has been written and collected by my knowledge of the program by going through it myself, the experiences from the time in Namibia and from my experiences of coaching. Some of the information is adapted versions of already existing materials from ProAcademy or Team Academy adapted to the ProLearning practises and some of the information is new material created especially for ProLearning use because of the differences between the programmes.

The handbook is for the coaches to be used in situations where they feel uncertain about some activities and for the new becoming coaches to get familiar with the ProLearning learning tools. This practical part consists of all the learning tools used in ProLearning and it will be updated constantly by the ProLearning coaches in order to keep it up to date when the programme is developing. For example the ProLearning Year Schedule will need updating when more and more activities are born in the community of ProLearning in time.

The practical part of the handbook also indicates what is the role of the coach in each learning tool, who is responsible of each learning tool and how they should be done.

### **7.1 Team sessions**

Most of the learning and knowledge-sharing happens in the team sessions through dialogue. The team gathers together for the team sessions twice a week for 4 hours at a time. The teams come up for the themes for these sessions together with the coach. Most of the time the subjects discussed are related to developing the business, generating new ideas for the projects, team-building or personal development. The coach has to be present in all the team sessions and his role mostly is to observe the learning process and the dialogue, to take notes, to reflect and to question when needed.

The team sessions are also the place for keeping the innovations, introductions and for example sharing the learning contracts within the team. Team sessions can also be used for sharing information and creating discussions from the books the team members have read or seminars they have attended. The team sessions are also the place for building the team. Especially with the new team in the start the team sessions are used to get to know each other, creating the team rules, planning the team company, going through the learning tools etc. Later on the team sessions are also a place for feedback circles.

The team sessions are the only part of the ProLearning studies which has a fixed time. Other time of the week the students creates their own schedules for their work and studies.

## 7.2 Literature

Reading books and writing essays is one of the keypoints of proAcademy studies. On average, a student reads 50-60 books during their studies. The main idea of the literature is to complement the learning. All that is read should be somehow related to what the student want or need to learn in that specific moment. In ProLearning the students don't study "in storage" -they should read only when they can apply the information into practise for example regarding the projects, self-development, marketing, leadership or creative thinking.

Books are chosen from a booklist-book made by Johannes Partanen, the founder of Team Academy, based on the current needs and interests of the student. The book has a list of about one thousand books and the selection varies from entrepreneurship books and business bestsellers to biographies and fiction. Every book has been credited by a certain amount of book points, usually 1-4 points based on the challenging of the book.

The learning is reflected on an essay after reading the book. An essay is a bridge between the theory and practise. In the essay the student reflects his own thinking, learning and ideas generated from reading the book. It is not a book review where the student evaluates what is written in the book or a summary whereby the student would summarize what was written in the book. The essay should be about the student's own



thinking, stating what he learned from the book and preferably stating how to apply this information into practice. The essay should be about the student's ideas, not the authors.

The essays should be written as soon as the student has read the book so that the ideas got from the book are still fresh in the mind. The student can use tables, charts and pictures to describe his thinking in the essays. The essays should be written personally, but still clearly for other people to get insights too.

Usually at the start the team members are and they should be reading all kind of books from different subjects. Later on they start focusing on specific areas and they start looking for the books that consist of information which is needed in that moment and which can be applied into practice straight away.

The coach reads all the book essays and gives comments on each essay. The coach should comment on how much he thinks that the student has got out of that certain book and what kind of insights they have got. Also how well the student has been able to show in the essay what he has learned. The essay should usually be something that can also be shared with others in ProLearning, but sometimes they are allowed to be quite personal, depending on the subject of the book.

Sometimes the team can decide or the coach can suggest to have a team session, where the team members share their insights gotten from the books they have read and discuss about them. These sessions are a good way of sharing the important information with everyone in the team. The team can also have e.g. a file where everyone puts their essays for others to read.

### **7.3 Seminars**

The team entrepreneurs should attend to seminars. The seminars can be held by someone who will be invited to ProLearning to hold a seminar, for example an entrepreneur, a specialist from a specific field or even a teacher. Also the team entrepreneurs should constantly try to seek for seminars from outside for example from newspapers and the news. The seminars for entrepreneurs or leaders for example are usually also a great opportunity to promote one's own team company, seek for potential

clients and create new contacts as well as getting new useful information from a business field.

#### **7.4 Innovation sessions**

Innovation sessions are held to create new knowledge. 1-4 students prepare this session together based on e.g. a book they have read, a seminar they have attended to or another subject they feel important sharing with the whole team. These students search for the necessary information for these sessions by using the internet, articles, interviews or anything that would be useful for the session. The preparation should be done good and professionally and usually the students use PowerPoint and handouts to illustrate their presentation, but any forms can be used. Also videos, pictures or music are a good way to keep the Innovation session interesting.

The aim for the innovation session is always to create something new. The Innovation session should also always somehow include in the other team members. Means for this can be for example giving them tasks in smaller groups, questions to discuss together, tests to fill out etc. Time for the innovation session is the whole team session, 4 hours. In this time the team has to create something new. It can either be something for the team, the team company, their self-development etc. One example would be if the innovation session would be about “professionalism in making business” and then the team would end up doing a plan or rules for their team company on how they as individuals should communicate with the clients in order to look professionals.

After every Innovation session (and also after introduction) the team should either individually or together as a team write down a Motorola about the session held. The Motorola is a tool for feedback. Motorola is an important tool which can be used when needed for example after team sessions, seminars etc. The coach should take care that the Motorola is used at least after the Innovations and Introductions. The purpose of Motorola is to help it's writer to analyze things learnt and to communicate them as short summary to coaches and peers.

## **MOTOROLA**

- 1. What went well?**
- 2. What went wrong?**
- 3. What did I / we learn?**
- 4. What will I / we put in to practise? What will I / we do differently in next time?**

## **7.5 Introductions**

Introduction is a minimized version of the Innovation. Introduction is an introduction to a certain subject. It takes usually an hour, maximum of two hours. A student can hold an introduction from for example of a good book he have read, share information of a seminar he attended to, introduce your specific know how that others are not familiar to or for example share one's experience from a work trip etc. The idea is also to have some discussion about the subject with the rest of the team, but just shortly.

After every introduction the team members individually or the team members individually should do a Motorola aswell as after the innovations.

## **7.6 The development of ProLearning**

ProLearning being a learning organization, constant development plays an important role in it's activities. The students being a part of the community are responsible of actively developing the ProLearning as well as the coaches. Means for this can be e.g. promoting ProLearning to potential students, creating marketing ideas or introducing ProLearning to outside visitors.

A Projector, an event where the whole ProLearning as a community gathers to share knowledge, is an important part of the community events which is one way of develop ProLearning as a community. It is arranged once a month and it is a platform for the teams and coaches to share information to the whole community about e.g. their ongoing projects and other important happenings.

## 7.7 Projects

Projects are the base of the business in team companies and they are the largest part of the ProLearning studies. The students create, plan and execute projects within the team company for real customers making real profit. Projects are done in project groups led by a project manager selected from the team. The project group is usually also selected from inside the team by the person's motivation and competences for the project. The project manager selection usually happens by first finding out the candidates who want to apply for the position. Then depending on the team company's policy the team can e.g. ask for the candidates to keep a motivation speech for the applied position and then the project manager can be chosen e.g. by voting within the team members. All of these mentioned practises are just examples; all the teams have to create their own policies for choosing the people for the mentioned positions. It is also possible and recommended to create and execute projects in collaboration with other ProLearning team members.

The projects are documented with a project plan, risk-management plan and a final report. Before these documents are returned to the coach the team cannot log their project hours for the studies. The responsibility of the coach is to go through the project plan and if needed discuss about it with the project manager to give input by giving feedback about the plan using the coaching tools of e.g. questioning or giving tips how to improve or make something work better in the project. The coach should be as a support for the project manager throughout the project.

The projects are the greatest example of learning by doing through which the team's knowledge is put into practise and new experiences and knowledge are created. The team learns and grows from project feedback. It is important to ask feedback from the customers after the project as well as go through the Motorola first with the project group and then if needed with the whole team. This is especially important for the project manager to improve his work in the future but also to create learning inside the whole team.

Team Companies may create, plan, execute and sell their own projects or products. This case the idea for the project is usually created by the interests of certain team

entrepreneur themselves. However the project can as well be offered or searched straight from another company or institution, which will pay for the Team Company from their work. Usually the projects done are business-to-business projects but they can also be consumer-based.

The projects are usually service-based, but producing or inventing actual products can also be done. The projects and the business in the team companies are created by the interests of the Team Entrepreneurs. Doing projects is a learning tool, although it would be desirable to create a sustainable business out of doing them. Sometimes the team can decide to take on a non-profit project if they feel it would be useful for them in the future reason being maybe the experience they will create out of the project. This is allowed as long as there are also profitable projects going on to cover at least all the expenses of the company.

The profit generated from the projects is created for the Team Company. According to the ideology in ProAcademy as well as in Team Academy, the school nor the coach are justified for the profit. The school may, however, acquire some rent from the office space the Team Company is using when agreed about it with the Company in advance.

The team itself decides on how the profit is used. One example from proAcademy Finland is to divide the money 30/70, whereby 30 percent of the profit from the projects goes straight to cover the company's expenses and maybe even to cover some seminars for the team members if the company can afford it. 70 percent is divided within the project group itself e.g. according to the individual work hours done in the specific project. But as said this is only an example, the team has to make their own regulations for dividing the money.

## **7.8 Learning Diary**

Learning diary is a tool that follows the student during their studies. Learning diary is a simple notebook in which the students note down one's ideas, thoughts and insights of learning especially during the team sessions but also outside of team sessions. It is an individual tool and this is why there is no specific rules how to use it, the student uses it as they feel useful for themselves. The diary may include e.g. lists, drawings, mind

maps and notes. The information can be shared with the rest of the team and the coach when individuals find it important.

The team should also have a common Team Learning Diary for the team sessions to write down all the important topics, ideas, insight and decisions discussed in the team sessions. This common diary is a tool for the team to keep on track on everything that has been done in these sessions. It helps for example in time to time to go back on the subjects and decisions discussed. Also a student who hasn't been in the team session can go through the notes and that how keep updated what was done previously.

The coach should also have his own diary, where he notes down everything he feels important especially during the team sessions. This is the way the coach can keep himself updated and when needed reflect back on what has happened in the team member's individual as well as the team's development.

## **7.9 Learning cells**

Learning cell is a group of people, who learn from each other according to the cell's theme, e.g. marketing or project management. The learning cells are started from the interest of the team members, who want to gather together to get more information of a certain theme. Suitable size for learning cell is from four to six persons. These persons meet each other regularly e.g. once a month for a certain time period. The coach is not needed in these sessions. The idea is to use dialogue as a learning tool to share information and create new insights from a topic that the people in the learning cell are interested in. A learning cell is a learning group and it can consist of members from different teams. Not everyone has to be a part of any learning cell. It is to be decided by the coaches how the learning cells are to be documented (e.g. someone from the cell can write notes from the discussions of each session).

## 7.10 Learning contracts

The learning contract is a contract firstly with the student itself and secondly a contract between the individual and the coach as well as the team. The students write a learning contract once or twice a year. It is a tool for personal development and setting goals for one's learning. Learning contract is a "living document". It is regularly updated and checked by the learner, his peer learners and the coach. Learning contract is committing, personal learning plan. By using it the learner explores his learning path from the perspectives of past, current moment and future. These explorations are crafted into an action plan with goals and means to get to them.

The contracts are reviewed first with the coach in a one-on-one development discussion and then shared with the whole team. This enables that the common goal of the team is based also on the individual goals of the team members.

Sharing the learning contracts within the team also brings the team more close to each other and helps to understand and get to know each others ways to do things and their behaviour. The team sessions where the learning contracts are shared are usually very sensitive and emotional moments, because the people are sharing information which they maybe never talk with anyone else. This has to be taken into consideration and the coach should bring up a discussion about the confidentiality of the session before going through the contracts. Despite the fact that the learning contracts are shared with the whole team, the coach is the only one to read it through. The students themselves decide how much information written in the contract they feel comfortable enough sharing in the team. An important thing for the coach to understand is, that all what the student has written in his learning contract is confidential. This means that nothing that is shared in the contract should be discussed with anyone without a permission of the student. It is not e.g. a document to show to the management or outsiders of the progress of the student if it hasn't been agreed before writing them with the team.

The experience with the learning contracts shared with the pilot team PLEMJIVE was a great example of how much better the team members started to appreciate and understand each other in the team afterwards. Especially in the Namibian ProLearning context it is important for the people to be able to trust each other enough to open

themselves in the team. Sharing information about your cultural background as well as the educational and the working background in the team at first might first feel difficult, but it leads to good results in creating a better working environment and trust within the team. Especially now when the ProLearning teams are quite multicultural and the team members come from really different backgrounds.

A learning contract should also be a tool for the coach's own job and life. The coach should create and update their own personal learning contracts aswell as the students. The coach doesn't have to share it with anyone but it can be a great tool between the coaches to support their learning and help each other to develop, so it might be a good idea to share the learning contract with the other coaches in ProLearning.

Learning contract should always cover answers to the following five questions: Where have I been? Where am I now? Where am I going? How do I get where I want to go? How do I know I have reached my goals?

### **Learning contract's framework:**

#### *1. Where have I been? (learning history)*

Questions for the first learning contracts:

- My previous experiences on learning and working life?
- My cultural and social background and how does it reflect on my ways of thinking and behavior?
- My educational background?
- What kinds of experiences do I have on entrepreneurship, team-work, management and sales etc.?

Questions for the following updated learning contracts:

- What kinds of books have I read and what have I learned from them?
- What kinds of projects have I done and what have I learned from them?
- What have I done to develop my professional competency in ProLearning?
- With whom have I been working with and what have I learned from these people?



- 
- Have I reached my previous learning contract's goals?
  - How does my learning path in ProLearning look like?

2. *Where am I now? (current moment)*

- What is my motivation towards ProLearning and why do I want to be part of it?  
What potential do I see for myself in the program?
- What are my strengths and weaknesses? What kind of a person am I?
- What kinds of learning methods and styles are most effective for me to use?  
Why?
- What are my current working environment's challenges and what part do I have in solving them?
- How does my life outside work setting affect my work and learning path?
- What kind of support I need from the team and the coach to achieve what I want to achieve?
- How do I see my role in the team? Do I feel I am an important part of the team and am I doing enough for the team and the team company?
- What am I proud of when it comes to my work?

3. *Where am I going? (future, goals)*

The third part is about creating one's personal goals. In the learning contract a person should concentrate at least creating the professional goals regarding ProLearning and the future work- and business life. But the learning contract is also a great opportunity to create goals for your personal life knowing that in order for a person to stay happy and healthy all the parts should be in balance. A student can however decide not to write personal goals in the learning contract if they don't feel comfortable enough doing it.

Everyone should create at least 3 short term and 2 long term goals in each area. A time period for a short term goal can be anything from 1-6 months ahead and the long term goal anything from 1-5 years ahead. The goals can be modified and

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changed when updating the learning contracts, but the student should strive forward achieving at least the short term goals.

*Creating one's own goals:*

1. Professional environment

- What do I want to achieve in my professional life? (School, work, company)
- What kind of projects I would want to take part in?
- What do I want to learn?
- What kinds of competencies (knowledge, skills, contacts, attitudes, etc) do I want to learn?
- What kind of a job or company or position I want to have in the future?

2. Social environment

This is the part where a person should think about the social environment he is living in. One can create goals for example regarding already existing family/friend/spouse –relationships or creating new ones etc.

3. Me corporation

This is the part where a person should create goals thinking his own mind and body. For example it can be goals to make you feel better physically or mentally, goals to reduce one's stress, start a new hobby, change one's attitude, change behaviour etc.

4. *How do I get where I want to go? (means to reach goals)*

By answering this question you create your own development action plan. You should find the means to reach your targets. You can e.g. think about what kind of projects and seminars I have to take part in order to reach my goals? What kind of literature should I read which would get me closer to my plans? What kind of mentoring or support do I need from my coach and my team? What kind of people do I have to meet? Should I take some extra courses to learn more of something? No method should be excluded unless they are too expensive or inappropriate to you.

### 5. *How do I know I have reached my goals? (measurements)*

You have to create measurements for knowing if you have been able to reach your goals, you have to know how you know when you are where you wanted to be. The measurements can be for example:

- Turnover in my team-company
- Skill profile measurements
- Customer visits (amount and results)
- Projects completed
- Time used and results gained
- “Intuitive measurements” on “feeling” (“More confident”, for example)

## **7.11 Development discussions**

The coach and the student have development discussions also known as assessment discussions twice a year. A coach should make a schedule to have time with each student from 45 minutes to an hour at a time. The first development discussions should be held with the students approximately after 1-2 months after starting the ProLearning studies, however it should be done after the students have done their first learning contracts. The first development discussions are a great way to get to know the team members better and also find out about their expectations for the programme as well as the role of the coach’s job. Most of all these assessment discussions are a place to reflect back on student’s personal learning and growth professionally as well as personally. Feedback from both sides plays an important role in these discussions. The coach should give feedback as well as ask feedback of his own work as a coach from the students to be able to develop his own coaching skills further. The atmosphere should be relaxed, so that a honest conversation can be achieved between the student and the coach.

The assessment discussions should be timed after the team members have written their learning contracts. This way the learning contract is the base for the discussion. Later on the coach should also read the student’s previous learning contract in order to have discussion and reflection on how the student has reached his goals etc.

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The assessment discussion is also a great opportunity to especially give positive feedback on the student's development, well done projects or anything that comes in mind and it should be used to boost the student's self confidence. On the other hand it is also an opportunity to bring a student back in track if e.g. he is way behind of his individual study plan. The coaches document the assessment discussions into their own coaching books.

*Each assessment discussion must cover at least the following things:*

- The student's Individual Study plan
- Possible lacks and a plan to rectify the situation (in writing)
- The student's previous own goals and how well they have been met
- The situation with the team and company (what is his role in the team? How does he feel in a team? Is there any problems?)
- Goals for the next half-year period
- Feedback on the student's work and development targets for the next half-year period
- Feedback for the coach (Does the student feel he has done a good job? What could he improve? What has gone well? Has the coach given enough support? Is there something more he could do?)
- Feedback for ProLearnings actions (has the student been actively developing the program and the community etc.)

## **7.12 Portfolio**

Portfolios are used as an external representation of the students' personality, growth and skills. They can use the portfolios e.g. in selling their work and know-how for companies during the studies in ProLearning in order to get new projects and also applying for jobs after graduation. The portfolios should be evaluated by coaches, co-coaches and external recruitment specialist(s). Everyone should receive personal feedback of their portfolios especially about the good selling points and how to develop it further. The best portfolios should be chosen and rewarded somehow every year.

*Portfolio describes:*

- Who am I?
- What have I learned during the past year at ProLearning?
- Completed projects with short descriptions
- Skills – what can I do, what am I good at (preferably with images and words)
- Resume (work experience, positions of trust, hobbies)

*It can also include for example:*

- Interesting/important parts of the learning contract
- Examples of what I want to learn during next year
- Paragraphs from the team meeting journal
- Reading carried out, inspirations from the books
- Extracts from the best essays
- Description of ProLearning and it's learning methods
- Planning and schedule of the final thesis
- Visions (e.g. how am I going to develop myself)

*Evaluation criteria:*

- Creativity and innovativeness, memorability
- Personality and ability to stand out  
(What does a portfolio tell of its writer?)
- Description of development and skills  
(Has the writer been able to describe their development, learning and skills?)
- Project descriptions  
(How has the writer described the projects carried out?)
- Employer viewpoint  
(How is the portfolio from the employer's point of view?)
- Goal oriented  
(Has the portfolio presented goals for the up-coming year / longer time span?)

### 7.13 The start-up with a new team

When a new team comes it is important to welcome them into the ProLEarning community so that they can feel part of it since the first day. The team members will be helped to get into the spirit and practices of ProLEarning community. The support of the older team and especially the co-coaches is really important in the early state. Here is a check list for the coach with a new team consisting the main things which has to be gone through with the new team.

#### *The structure of the studies*

- The learning tools
- The individual study plan
- Logging in the hours –system
- The credits

#### *Team building*

- Getting to know each other
- Creating the trust in the team
- The first learning contracts
- Development discussions
- Creating the team rules and deciding on the team roles

#### *The start up of the team company*

As soon as the team is ready they should start planning the team company. They have to find out which company option is the best for them, decide on the leading positions, come up with a company name, find out how to do the registration, register the company, start finding projects etc.

## 7.14 The Year Schedule

Abbreviations:

ProLearning community	(PL)
Younger team	(YT)
Older team	(OT)
Graduating team	(GT)
Coaches	(C)
Assistant coaches	(AC)

### *February*

- Team sessions start again (PL)
- New team starts (YT)
- Orientation (C & AC)
- 24H final exam (GT)
- Projector (PL)

### *March*

- Learning contracts and development discussions (YT and OT with C)
- ProLearning birthday party (PL)
- Projector (PL)

### *April*

- Projector (PL)

### *May*

- Study check (C)
- Going through the personal study plan of each student
- ProLearning-seminar (PL)

- Arrangements and hosting: AC & C
- Planning of the marketing campaign for the potential applicants (OT/AC with C)

### *June*

- Examination period (Some students are writing their examinations and the rest may continue with their projects or personal studies)

### *July*

- Examination period (Some students are writing their examinations and the rest may continue with their projects or personal studies)
- Starting the marketing campaign for the potential applicants (OT & C)

### *August*

- Class visits and starting of the application process (OT/AC & C)
- Portfolio-day (PL)
- Projector (PL)

### *September*

- Interviews for the applicants (C & AC)
- 12H-exam (OT)
- Projector (PL)

### *October*

- Selection of the new team members and sending the acceptance letters (C & AC)
- The first orientation day for the selected team members (C)
- Learning contracts and development discussions (OT)
- Development discussions (YT)
- Projector (PL)
- Study check (C)



- Going through the personal study plan of each student

#### *November*

- Examination period (Some students are writing their examinations and the rest may continue with their projects or personal studies)

#### *December*

- Recess

#### *January*

- Recess (Students may come to work on their projects earlier)

### **7.15 The role of the co-coaches**

Two assistant coaches are selected from the older team to assist the coaching, to develop the program and to take care of the community's daily activities together with the coaches. The assistant coaches are selected by the coaches based on the applicant's motivation for the position and the previous motivation shown to develop the community. The selection can be done through e.g. motivation letters or interviews, whatever option the coaches feel necessary in the situation. The requirements for the position as well as the application process itself are to be decided and completed by the coaches.

#### *The main responsibilities:*

- Development of the program together with the coaches
- To assist the coaches in coaching a new team especially in the team sessions (based on one's own experience got from ProLearning)
- Arrangements of the Projectors
- Take in visitors and introduce them to ProLearning

- Arrangement and the idea-generation for the ProLearning community events (e.g. The ProLearning Seminar)

## **8 Summary and conclusions**

ProLearning as a degree program is aiming to help in enabling more successful entrepreneurship stories needed in achieving Namibian's Vision 2030. ProLearning is based on new kind of learning methods, where the teachers are no longer teaching, but coaching and the responsibility of the learning is with the learner as an active part of the learning process.

The learning concepts behind this model show the importance in having the student as an active part of the learning process in order to create self-directed and responsible thinking as well as lifelong learning. This requires directing the responsibility of the learning from the teachers to the students themselves. Succeeding in this objective requires from the teacher to give up his centred role and move to the side to become as a coach instead.

Learning should also always be tied to practical doing, which is why learning by doing is one the most important parts of this new learning model. The skills and information learned is exploited in the team company, real-life projects and the team.

Team learning being the core of the model creates more effective learning and takes the learning more close to the work in real-life. Team learning as a learning method is challenging for the coach, because the situations cannot be predicted before. This is why the coach has to accept that mistakes will be done from both sides: from the students as well as the coaches.

Transforming from a teacher to a coach is challenging because the means of teaching are completely different from the traditional school system which is why becoming a coach requires motivation for the work. Most important qualities required from the coach are self-development, self-leadership, the ability to adjust to changes and the will for lifelong learning. The coach has to be as an example for the learners.

On the other hand coaching is about leading the learning in the level of individuals, the team and the whole community. Leading in this perspective doesn't however mean the traditional controlling and telling what to do, but creating opportunities, giving support and serving the learning of each learner. Motivating and helping the student finding their own strengths are important tasks for the coach.

The practical learning tools and methods used in ProLearning shows how these learning concepts, ideologies and theories behind this model are taken in to practise in daily level. The unique combination of team learning, dialogue, coaching, learning by doing and self-leadership leads to an environment where the class rooms are changed for the team company's offices, direct teaching is changed for self-directed learning and instead of learning theoretical information in storage the students will learn in need and then apply the information learned into practise.

The main objective of the thesis was to get familiar with this new way of learning and teaching, to deeper the understanding of the learning tools and methods used in this kind of program and to understand the main learning theories behind this model. I feel these objectives were achieved well by tiding the theory and practise together in the text. For me personally it was important to get more familiar with the theories and learning concepts behind the model because of my experiences of the program in practise and for future reference. I feel that that target was also reached.

I believe I was able to create a thesis which can be used in practise in ProLearning; a coaching handbook which at the same time introduces the coach to the theory behind this model as well as describes how the learning tools should be used in the Namibian context in the programme. This was also one of the objectives and I feel the thesis proves it was achieved well.

I also feel I was able to express the information used in the thesis in English clearly and quite professionally, which for me at first was a challenge because it is not my mother language.

However I failed to follow the schedule made for the thesis, which is a place for improvement. Also I feel that I could have used more time to analyze the information and show more of my own thinking by making more conclusions from the text.

Overall the thesis is what it was supposed to become. Now it is ready for the ProLearning coaches to be used to ease their work. An important part in the future is for the coaches to update the handbook regularly to make it useful also for future reference. I wish this handbook will be an important part of the coaches' work and a base for more comprehensive and detailed handbook created for ProLearning in time. I hope this thesis will also help ProLearning in training their own coaches and co-coaches and also maybe help new programmes launched in these same learning methods in different countries.

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