

## FELICITATIONS DE PETER SENGE A TEAM ACADEMY, FINLANDE, POUR SON 15E ANNIVERSAIRE, JANVIER 2008

Hello,

It's a little bit of sadness, and a lot of good feelings and good will that I'm recording this for those of you who are gathering for the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Team Academy. The sadness is obvious, I would love to be with you, with many of my good friends, who are in the room today. But beyond that there is a big, hearty congratulations.

I have become, without anybody asking me to be, over the last 5 or 10 years I think one of your best sales people around the world. Every place I go and people ask me about management education I tell them if you really want to see the future of management education you should see Team Academy. So I want to take a couple of minutes just to share why I was thinking on all that earlier and why is it that I have such a heart felt enthusiasm to the work of Team Academy. And maybe from that standpoint a few encouraging words but maybe some stimulating ideas of what does the future look like and what might be describing for it.

First of all the obvious: Team Academy is based on learning through doing. I often think it's kind of odd we even think there is another type of learning. I don't really think there is. There is only one type of learning and it's the same learning whereby we learn to walk and talk and all the other things we learn throughout our life. We learn real changes in who we are, how we think, our sense of meaning, our sense of purpose and obviously our efficacy, what we can do. Our domains of effective action. It is a **testimate** to how far off course our educational establishment at all levels has become. Learning through doing shouldn't be seen as a radical or very different way of doing things. So whenever I talk to people about Team Academy, the first thing I always say is that picture a business school without teachers. Now of course that always gets everybody's attention, they go like WOW and you can just feel the little emotional chime ringing back there. A world without teachers. Of course all of us learnt as school kids to become obedient to the authority of teachers. And don't get me wrong, I think authority is very important. I think elders really matter and life experience is something we naturally reveal and honour in others. But to create an education system based upon that kind of authority, in which schools are traditionally done, violates the first principle of learning. The first principle of learning is: learners learn what learners want to learn and learners learn through doing, through attempting to bringing to existence or into their reality something that they really care about.

The other aspect of the Team Academy model, that I think is so integral is this shift from teachers to mentors. In this way Team Academy is going back to the oldest learning system, the original learning system, the system of education, if you prefer, that prevalent all cultures, all societies throughout almost whole human history and that is a partnership. You have something you want to learn, you find someone that knows how to do it and you go and hang out with them. I have always thought that a partnership is a foundation for almost all really important learning. Even if it's a shuttle in a sense that a child watching a walker. And being inspired of what they see. There is always this dynamic between someone who has a level of competence and someone who doesn't. But again, in the context of action and doing things that you really care about.

I often also point out to people that there is two sides of a mentorship dynamic in Team Academy and it's very important. The first side is obviously what is the benefit for learners in getting engaged in doing something they really care about, with the guidance of mentors. But the potential benefit is easier to miss. I'm sure those of you who are here, who are mentors, know exactly what I mean. The opportunity on a certain stage in my life is to share my life experience and to help guide young people in their business plans, in their marketing, in their human mentioned problems, the challenges within their team and so on. It is an extraordinary way to both: deepening my understanding as a mentor and even more importantly, in my judgement, connecting.

Because what I see Team Academy doing, is building community. Building a community between young people who want to become team entrepreneurs and adults who value that vision and have life experience for sharing and through that very simple process of helping one and another, community is built. So I see the Team Academy model as not only radical, but very sophisticated, because it simultaneously addressing multiple needs. The needs of young people who really want to become effective team entrepreneurs. But also the needs of mature managers and experienced people from the world of business or management in general, who really want to be part of teaching as well.

There is a natural life cycle we all know. In certain point in time you are not a parent, you are a grand parent. There is a certain point of time when you are desired to do it myself, build up myself, starts to be superseded by desire to help others. To be a mentor. To be someone to whom other people can really seek guidance and growth, not only in their technical, but in their personal knowledge. So to me those are the things that Team Academy model embodies, learning business, learning management by managing by creating real businesses and doing it in a way that builds up larger community.

When I think about the future, the obvious question that comes to my mind and I know that is one that many of you have wrestled with right now and what you are also very engaged of (because I meet you in other countries). How do you take this model out of the Finnish context? What is that is transportable or can it be recreated in a different culture, in a different setting? With a different network. Because Team Academy is a network concept of education. It's not just students and some higher faculty, it's the students in a relationship with that network of mentors. So I think taking the Team Academy concept into other cultures is terribly important. And like anything when you cross cultural boundaries and attempt to continue extend, it will also leave you with a deeper understanding of what is this model all about.

What parts are idiosyncratic to Finland and the Finnish culture and what parts are more universal? I think that universal parts are the vast majority, 90 %. But that 10 % that is idiosyncratic or unique, is also important. So I know there is an experiment now to bring Team Academy to one or two other countries in Europe. And that will be very important. Again, not only for the process of establishing administratively the rhythm of a Team Academy process, but also for building that larger network. The other thing that I think is going to be very important is to keep thinking about, not only other western cultures, but also other cultures around the world.

I meet a lot of people. People who often have the best handle on development challenges in the developing world. Who will say that our greatest need is to create an entrepreneurial culture. Our greatest need is to develop a generation of people who can create enterprises. Not just take a job. But also create enterprises to have a social prospective. In China there is a quite interesting wave of social entrepreneurialism. And I know that in most developing countries there is a natural tendency for people who are building enterprises to have a little larger sense, because they can see the needs of their country. And they usually have a deeper sense on what I'm doing is for me, for my colleges, for my business (if it's a business, because it's not obviously have to be a business), for our organization. But also for our society. So I particularly hope that Team Academy will start to have a variety of serious opportunities to bring the concepts and practices, methods and theories of Team Academy to Africa, into the middle east, into South-East Asia. In places where people really have identified a fundamental development they will need for their society as creating entrepreneurialism.

And here lastly I would just like to end with a comment that I have always loved the image with the team entrepreneur. And whenever I talk about Team Academy I kind of get people to think what does it mean to be a team entrepreneur. Its a lovely jukes position of two potentially opposite images. Team in a sense that a group of people doing something together. But entrepreneurialism is usually thought as extremely individualistic, often even very egotistic. And certainly in many cases a very selfish, you know, I'm trying to make money here. And I want to build this business to make as much money for me and maybe some small group of people, as possible. There is a little confusion of means and ends and that is maybe a consequence of real entrepreneurialism, that is to say building businesses that make a lot of money.

But usually in my experience great entrepreneurs have a very different kind of impulse. I remember asking years ago C.K. Pahalak. You may know him from his writing in strategy. He was at that time just moved to California. This was in the middle of .com-boom. He wanted to be there, he wanted to live it, he wanted to see it from the inside. So he lived 2 or 3 years in California. And he was a chairman of a start up company and an advisor to many other entrepreneurs. And I asked him: C.K., if you read the press, somewhere in 97-98. If you ask people who read the normal business pages and ask what motivates entrepreneurs the answer is very obvious from the business press. They want to become fabulous and wealthy. They want to make lots of money. What motivates them is this kind of a desire, maybe even an extreme greed. And I never forget his response as I said: So do you believe that money is the prime motivator of entrepreneurs? And he said: Oh yes I do. For all the mediocre ones. He said: I have never met a great entrepreneur, in fact he used the term serial entrepreneur (someone who creates multiple enterprises over their career) who didn't have the same fundamental motivation. The motivation, he said, is to change the world. And all of them pretty much figured if they did it well they will make money and that was great and that will really help what they are doing and that wasn't like they were different. Saints that would like to give away all of their money. They weren't very different about that. But this point he was making about this impulse, this deep impulse to change the world. It is exactly what I think people in developing country context are saying, when they say we need a culture of entrepreneurialism.

I never forget years ago, when in a long term project that had been going on for over 20 years, a partnership in Uganda. In an area that was in that time one of the poorest parts

of Uganda and nowadays unarguably one of the most well off parts economically. And I never forget the founder of that organization's saying: Our first fundamental problem for development is fatalism. People do not believe they can influence their future.

This is the spirit of real entrepreneurialism. Obviously it doesn't matter if you start a business or a social enterprise, or you bring that entrepreneurialism into the government. That belief that we can shape our future is the spirit of entrepreneurialism and when you couple it with the team, it's "we shaping our future". And lastly, although I think it has always been implicit, in least amongst the Team Academy people I got to know, and we do it for a larger benefit as well as for a smaller benefit. So whether you call it team social entrepreneur, social entrepreneuring, I don't care what we call it. This idea that shifting the mindset to "We can shape the future" that is actually one of greater health and well-being, for my community, for my society, for the larger living systems of which we are all a part. This is the (I believe) the great promise of Team Academy. Congratulations!