

Proakatemia Operating Principles

Timo Nevalainen (timo.nevalainen@tuni.fi)

Mikael Lindell (mikael.lindell@tuni.fi)

Ville Parkkila (ville.parkkila@tuni.fi)

This revised English version is based on the Finnish language original approved for use by the Vice Principal of Education in Tampere University of Applied Sciences on June 1st, 2021.

Learning in Proakatemia takes place through active participation and collaboration. In Proakatemia, the student is a *Team Entrepreneur*: An active and responsible agent and owner of activities who builds responsible and sustainable business together with others. *Leadership, management and processes in Proakatemia are based on continuously developing knowledge base on learning organization (for example, Nonaka & Takeuchi's model of knowledge creating company (1995) and Senge's theory of learning organization (2006)), as well as experience gained in practice and knowledge gained through research.* Team Entrepreneurs have a central role in developing Proakatemia structures, in strategic leadership and in managing the community.

In the heart of pedagogy and curriculum in Proakatemia is the *Path to Entrepreneurship*, originally developed in 2007:

1. Trust,
2. Courage,
3. Doing,
4. Learning and
5. Success

The values on the path are seen in connection with team entrepreneurship and the Proakatemia community. A strong team and Proakatemia community provide the best means for educating individuals and supporting the development of their unique personal strengths and capabilities.

The core ways of relating to others in Proakatemia are what can be called recognitional attitudes (Honneth, 1996; Laitinen, 2012):

Respect, which means acknowledging the other as a uniquely valuable person who has the right to autonomy and worthwhile goals that can intertwine with our own goals – becoming our shared goals. To achieve autonomy, individuals need support from others, the community and the team. *Respect as a recognitional attitude is a necessary condition for the development of self-respect in individuals.*

Love, which here means loving care for others and their best potential. Love as a recognitional attitude means that we wish to see others as their best possible selves and that we are also ready to work towards that end. *Love as a recognitional attitude is a necessary condition for the development of confidence in individuals.*

Esteem, which means taking a respectful attitude towards the achievements of others and their work for the common good. *Esteem as a recognitional attitude is a necessary condition for the development of self-esteem and professional identities in individuals.*

Recognitional attitudes are necessary for developing individual identities (including, for example, entrepreneurial and professional identities) and active agency. In Proakatemia, the task of a Team Coach is to act as an example of these recognitional attitudes and, at the same time, actively facilitate them in the Team Entrepreneurs' relationships with each other.

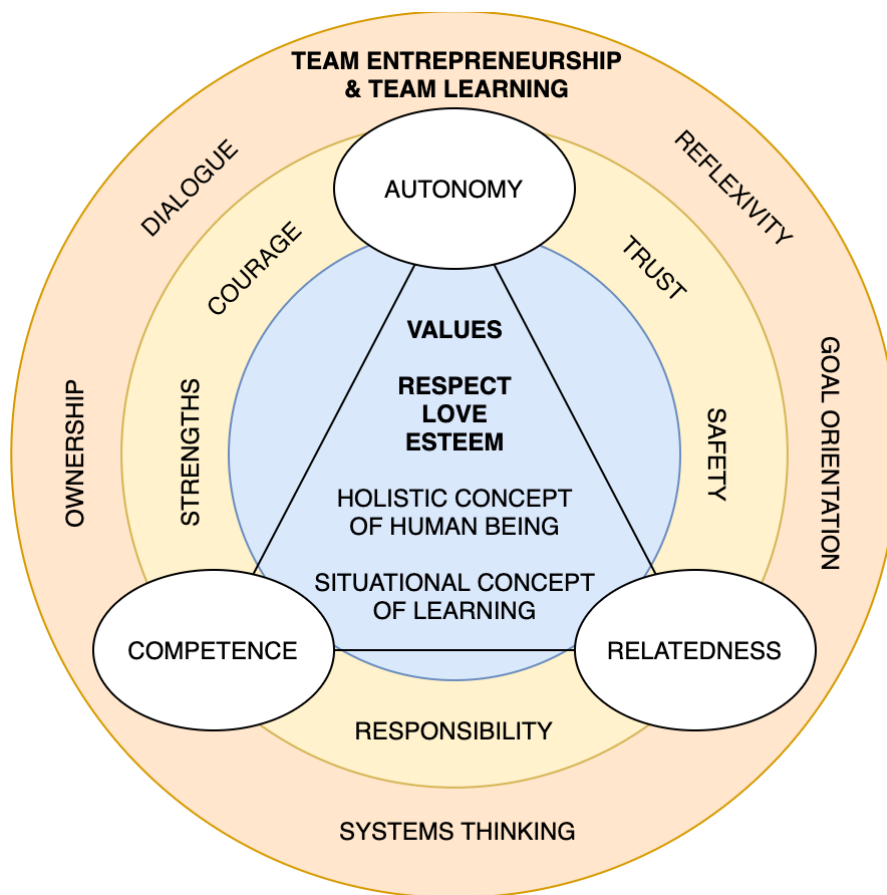


Figure 1. The dynamic model of Proakatemia operating principles.

The figure above illustrates the philosophical, psychological and practical principles in the core of Proakatemia operating principles. The innermost blue circle illustrates the philosophical principles related to the worldview in Proakatemia. It includes the shared values that support sustainable entrepreneurial learning and agency, recognitional attitudes that define the relationships between people in Proakatemia, a holistic concept of human being, as well as the situational concept of learning which emphasizes the connection between learning and life situations where we are and participate as active agents and where we shape our world together with others (Anttila et al., 2017).

The yellow circle illustrates the psychological operating principles of Proakatemia, which include the central motivational factors in the self-determination theory of motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2020), experiences of *autonomy*, *competence* and *relatedness*. These psychological motivational factors and trust and courage are connected with recognitional attitudes as the basis for the individual and collective agency.

The outermost orange circle illustrates the action principles in Proakatemia, where the primary ones are *team entrepreneurship* and *team learning*. In practical activities, it is also essential to leave enough room for reflection and dialogue. In Proakatemia, the individual and collective reflection is supported by the following team learning practices:

- Coaching conversations
- Reading and writing essays
- Project feedback (checkpoints, retrospectives)
- Training sessions and dialogue
- Cabin-In-The-Woods sessions
- Board of Leaders for the team and Proakatemia community
- Proakatemia Days

The impact of reflection and dialogue is repeatedly tested in practical collaboration in customer projects, various team challenges (Team Deal, Sales Days, 24H, Final Camp project), leading the team, and developing its business activities. *Actions and, especially, joint actions speak more loudly about the team's reality than mere words.*

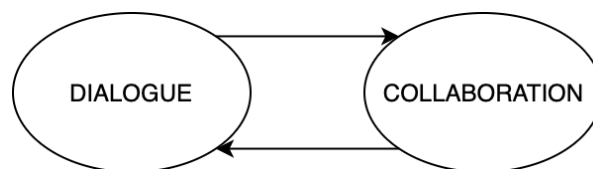


Figure 2. The cycle of dialogue and collaboration.

Continuous dialogue and collaboration (working together) in customer projects, team challenges, and leading the team form a cycle of developing understanding and interpretation that leads to transformative learning and growth. Celebrating the successes in diverse challenges and completing processes together is essential for developing professional identities and the spirit of the whole community.

Team entrepreneurship

In Proakatemia, studies are pursued in a team. Students in Proakatemia commit themselves to work as Team Entrepreneurs in teams formed by Team Coaches that consist of 10 – 20 students each. Committing to a team for the duration of studies in Proakatemia is a crucial part of the learning process, which includes working in a professional and responsible manner even in the middle of tensions inherent in teamwork. It is important for Team Entrepreneurs to learn how to connect their personal goals with those of the whole team and to support, help and encourage others in working towards the shared goals. *Studying in Proakatemia is possible only as a member of a team.*

Team learning

Team learning is a collective capability of a team, acquired through continuous disciplined and reflective practice, which helps the team succeed – to achieve the valuable goals that the team has set for its activities (Senge, 2006). Besides their own learning process, the Team Entrepreneurs are responsible for supporting and encouraging each other's learning and professional and entrepreneurial growth. The end result of team learning depends on how committed the Team Entrepreneurs are to the activities of the team and the community and their continuous development.

Proakatemia follows the degree regulations of Tampere University of Applied Sciences and other regulations and guidelines set by the university of applied sciences. The objectives of degree studies in Proakatemia are based on the levels 6 (for bachelor level studies) and 7 (for master level studies) in Finnish National Qualification Framework (FiNQF), which is based on the European Qualification Framework (EQF) (Finnish National Agency for Education).

Besides professional knowledge, skills and competencies, team entrepreneurship and team learning develop the capacity of individuals to lead complex professional projects and other activities and make decisions concerning themselves and others in changing work environments. During their studies, Team Entrepreneurs take responsibility for supporting other team members' professional development alongside developing their own professional competencies. In addition to developing their own capabilities of lifelong learning, the Team Entrepreneurs build the capacity of their whole work community to support lifelong learning.

The role of a Team Coach in Proakatemia

Teaching staff in Proakatemia work as Team Coaches (Partanen, 2012). The primary task of a Team Coach is to help Proakatemia and the team develop as learning organizations and support the Team Entrepreneurs' professional and personal growth as members of the team. For Team Entrepreneurs, the team enterprise with its processes and tensions is the main framework of learning and a supportive community. A strong team is a requirement for individual learning and growth in Proakatemia.

The Team Coaches' task is, in all their activities, to be an example of following Proakatemia's values and of directing attention towards that which has value, to maintain a safe atmosphere conducive to learning together, and to challenge and encourage the team and the Team Entrepreneurs to train and use their best potential. The Team Coach opens and gives the Team Entrepreneurs space to be visible and to act courageously to create value for the community and the team.

In addition, the Team Coaches need to fulfil all the teaching-related and administrative responsibilities that the university has set for the teaching staff.

Further reading

Anttila, E., Pohjola, H., Löytönen, T., & Kauppila, H. (2017). Ihmis- ja oppimiskäsitykset taideopetuksessa. 10138/185061. <https://taju.uniarts.fi/handle/10024/7086>

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The "What" and "Why" of Goal Pursuits: Human Needs and the Self-Determination of Behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11(4), 227–268.

https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327965PLI1104_01

Honneth, A. (1996). *The struggle for recognition: The moral grammar of social conflicts*. MIT Press.

Laitinen, A. (2012). Social bases of self-esteem: Rawls, Honneth and beyond. *Nordicum-Mediterraneum*, 7(2). <https://doi.org/10.33112/nm.7.2.2>

Nonaka, I., & Takeuchi, H. (1995). *The Knowledge-Creating Company: How Japanese Companies Create the Dynamics of Innovation*. Oxford University Press.

Opetushallitus. *Tutkintojen viitekehykset*. Luettu 11.5.2021. <https://www.oph.fi/fi/koulutus-ja-tutkinnot/tutkintojen-viitekehykset>

Partanen, J. (2012). *Tiimivalmentajan parhaat työkalut*. Partus.

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2020). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation from a self-determination theory perspective: Definitions, theory, practices, and future directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 101860. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2020.101860>

Senge, P. M. (2006). *The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of The Learning Organization* (Revised & Updated edition). Doubleday.

Tampereen korkeakouluyhteisö. TAMKin tutkintosääntö. Luettu 11.5.2021.

<https://www.tuni.fi/opiskelijanopas/kasikirja/tamk?page=2264>