Examining the model and efficiency of the synergies of the teacher-student organisation

The organisational context of acquiring knowledge and the model of positive psychology

Supervisor: Dr. György Fábri, CSc
habilitated university associate professor

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Within my dissertation I have examined the development of a learning organisation from an organisation-psychological standpoint, which itself carries out trainings, approaching its development based on experience pedagogy, positive psychology and flow-experience. With regards to the organisation management and educational work of OTP Fáy András Foundation and the OK Centre it operates, the organisation-psychological approach of my dissertation introduces strategy creation and formal organisational renewal into education science, as well as positive psychological research (Cyert, March, 1992).

In the case of a training organisation the primary challenge is naturally posed by change of education. Amongst these, the consequences of information communication explosion is being identified by the literature (Tomorrow’s, 1991), when not only the technology but the way of sharing information is changing as well (Based on Castells’ general “knowledge-society” concept, Jan van Dijk Dutch sociologist writes about a network society, led by the media [Dijk, 2006]). For the OK Centre, as a training organisation, the use of mobile phones by the students means a challenge as it leads to the increase of knowledge-base; the collapse of geographical and time constraints; as well as the dominance of experiencing (OpenEducationEuropa, 2012, December).
I. Organisational adaptability and organisational learning in the case of training organisations

Educational organisations and such policies, in general, come up against this situation, to which they react with changes on a strategic level (Robinson, 2013). They not only transform the methods, but the educational goals themselves, too (Mitra, 2016). This is how the creation of a critical way of thinking becomes as a priority (Paul, Elder, 2012). While there is agreement in that the screening of information definitely requires this (BECTA, 2008), the fossilised school practice (Robinson, 2013) is an obstacle to this skill being accepted as one of the main competencies of the 21st century (Paul, 2007).

The primary change in organisations dealing with training is the transformation in the role of teachers and students. This defined the development of the OK Centre’s strategy as well.

In his lecture on the future of pedagogy, Sagata Mitra – speaking at the London Bettshow in January 2016 – said: one of the keys to the change in education strategy is how the role of teachers and educators changes. In his view, the role of the teacher becomes that of a friend, this replaces the role of leader or mentor. Personal outreach, mainly encouragement, takes over the advisory role. The Hungarian experience also proves this: research carried out in 2014 by the Education Research and Development Institute indicated that 94% of the participating students said that accessibility, availability and confidence in a teacher were significant considerations in how the teacher was evaluated (Nikitscher, 2016).

An important framework of notions linked to organised learning ability is the absorption (transformation, digestion) ability of the organisation (Steensen, 2013). The absorption capability qualifies the learning capability of the organisation (OLC) and its means. It refers to how and to what degree the organisation can “digest”, that is utilise the knowledge acquired from outside. Technically, the absorption ability follows and transforms the new information for the organisation in a form that can thus be utilised.

The traditional knowledge management model can, in the connection of organisation innovation, be complemented with the appearance of organisational learning capability (OLC) (Diagram 1).
According to Mintzberg’s 5P model (1994), the bases for the strategic planning of organisations are the following: Plan, written strategy; Ploy (manoeuvring); the harmony between learning and planning; Patter (scheme), the daily practice and organisation routines; Position (positioning), adaptation to the environment; Perspective (worldview, outlook), the common denominator between the members of the organisation (Mintzberg, 1994).

Based on these, the OK Centre is also identified as a learning organisation by its practice, whereby it has, since its launch, continuously measured the satisfaction of students taking part in the education, evaluating the whole of the training and the trainer as well through several questions. Alongside measuring satisfaction, the pedagogical and organisation-renewing approach are simultaneously present during the training as well as in the personnel policy as revealed during the research. One of the major educational-professional decisions of organisational renewal was to attain that the qualifications of the instructors be different, as to not only hire pedagogues. The aim of this was to have differing professions and branches of science represented in the internal trainings and the continuous development of the curricula. This is how the inter-disciplinary professional operation, which is the basis of the approach applied in financial affairs and the economy, can be realised. Accordingly, the trainers taking part in the research included psychologists, teachers, remedial teachers, economists and communication experts as well.

The result of the above was reflected by our research. The characteristics formulated by the students during the survey are therefore the end results of a conscious education-design and operation, which the OK Centre strived to attain during its organisational-development activity.
In the course of a specific investigation, during a focus group survey carried out in the OK Centre, the word cloud of expressions characteristically described by participants indicates that the words used with the highest frequency were: development, developing, youthful, innovative, education team, trendy, inspirational.

In conclusion, we were able to see, in the context of the Hungarian educational institutions, specifically related to the work of OK Centre, the organisational culture, organisational transformation and the characteristics of pupil-trainer organisations. We also saw that the specificity of the educational activity carried out in the organisation have effects on the characteristics of the organisational culture and vice versa. The below diagram summarizes the review of the literature set out above and the dynamics of organisational strategy, transformation and learning institution, while at the same time leading to the analysis of the internal, pedagogical characteristic of the OK Centre, as a learning institution that also carries out training.

![Diagram 2: Organisation-psychology, organised learning – summary](Source: own diagram)
II. The pedagogical-theoretical incorporation of the OK Centre’s trainings

Within a teaching institution the pedagogical understanding is especially important from the point of view of organisational learning. The training principles I examined in the OK Centre organically fit into the approach of pedagogical tendencies that differ from the customary school education, therefore their presentation had been fitted to these. Detailing the elements of experience-pedagogy, game-pedagogy, the Montessori-pedagogy in turn leads us to the interpretation of the flow-experience especially examined during our empirical research.

Motivation is of decisive importance in organisational learning. In the case of educators in the OK Centre this was best characterised by the motivator-hygienic theory of Herzberg (Klein, 2012). Accordingly, the workplace hygienic factors (for instance, working conditions, management style) and the motivational factors aimed at the employees (for instance, career path, recognitions, etc.) can be separated from one another in a way that the management of the organisation strives to attain the maximum goal in both segments. Apart from the basic-motivators (salary, working conditions, security, challenges, etc.) the three main elements of this also appear:

1. Providing greater responsibility and freedom for trainers when explaining the individual exercises, as well as the responsibility of which set of tasks he/she uses when educating the given group (standard or lighter tasks).
2. Expanding the job role by not merely present the curricula, but developing it as well.
3. Changing the job descriptions, which in this case implies the opportunity of selecting from the 37 educational modules. It can thus happen that the trainer, who taught children in the 7-8 age group will then take part in the training of 17-18-year-old students as well.

The training solutions of the OK Project that form the object of examination in my thesis were compiled from the experiences of those pedagogical currents that attach considerable importance to experience. Naturally, the experience itself (which we can attain with diverse methods), the pairing of the experience with school life or to education outside of school have always been organic parts of the education process.
My thesis attaches particular importance to edutainment and its characteristics as this word is what best characterises the operation of the OK Education Centre, both from the organisational and the educational scientific aspect. One of the latest tendencies of this is GBL (Game-Based Learning), in other words, education based on games that were created through the approaches of IT technology, pedagogy and psychology. From the pedagogical aspect, this is in a sense the further development of experience pedagogy, game pedagogy and edutainment in which education focuses on games and playfulness. (Paras, Bizzocchi, 2005)

In the pedagogical-methodology approach, the Montessori school is the closes to OK Project with respect to the comparison of methods that offer experience-based education to students.

**III. Positive psychology: experience and education**

The positive psychological education are obviously given from the definition of happiness by Martin Seligman (2002). In his view, the three basic elements of happiness are: positive feelings, deepening (which Csikszentmihályi calls flow condition) and the meaning of life.

One hypothesis of my own research is that an educational strategy created with the approach of positive psychology is able to create a flow-experience within the education of new generations, even if earlier there was no, or only limited, connection between the teaching organisation and the students.

As it is known, the balance between challenges and skills, as well as the existence of goals and feedback were defined as the conditions of flow. Experiencing the subjective flow experience is accompanied by the following characteristics: focused concentration, outstanding activity and attention, the loss of self-awareness, control, a distortion of sense of time, experiencing intrinsic motivation (Csikszentmihályi, 2002). An additional characteristic is that conscience and consciousness, attention span and alertness are connected and the individual grasps only a small slice from the information overload. The concepts which mean the attainment of flow:
Based on the works of Csikszentmihályi, the relationship between education and flow can be approached from two directions:

1. Why is it good for the student to reach the flow condition? According to Csikszentmihályi because, on the one hand the student avoids stress in the challenge/ability approach (in this case the challenges are much higher than the capabilities of the individual). On the other hand, boredom is avoided (does not get bored during class) than when the capabilities are higher than the challenge.
2. Learning while under the flow experience is much more effective because of the happy, joyous feelings that characterise it, the profound involvement (the complete loss of time-consciousness), and the target-oriented, high-level concentration.

The research results presented below were also examined based on the flow scale.

IV. Experiencing flow, learning efficiency and psychological characteristics among the students of the OK Centre

The data collection carried out on a large sample of students through questionnaires was supplemented with in-depth interviews and participant interviews. (The questionnaire is available in the appendix of the thesis.) Data collection took place between April 12 and June 12, 2016, in possession of professional experience spanning some three and a half years after the Education Centre was opened. The selection of students taking part was random. Replying to the questions took 20-30 minutes before which students took part in an intensive training. The test-package included several measured sets of questions.

The data collection through questionnaires was held amongst those school-aged students (age 14-19) who had participated in a 4-hour-long financial economic-
management training who replied to questions examining the efficiency of the training and its experience-nature by filling out a paper-based questionnaire, as well as replying to questions about the characteristics of the participants. The questionnaire was filled out by a total 1,376 participants.

Our research is suited to reconstruct the flow-experience of students in a more limited aspect. The positive replies do not in any way mean that the OK Centre is itself an implemented flow-centre, but it is suitable to explore the scope of personality types, experience effects related to flow. When continuing the research, we will strive to concentrate precisely on the added value of flow.

**Flow factors**

Of the 20 statements measuring the flow-condition, 11 forms the “challenge-ability balance” factor, and nine the “fusion with the task” factor.

The “challenge-ability balance” factor refers to tasks and activities, covering the areas of control and clear goals. When the challenge-ability balance exists, the respondent most probably goes through the flow-experience (Magyaródi et al., 2013).

“The ‘merger with the task' factor refers to experiencing the adventure – about involvement, quality of the experience and the accompanying factors of the experience” (Magyaródi et al., 31. 2013). By adding up the cohesive items we receive two indices: the theoretic maximum of the challenge-flow index is 55, its theoretic minimum is 11.

In the case of merged-flow index the theoretic minimum is 9, the theoretic maximum is 45 points. In the case of both factors, the high points imply that students experienced the challenge, and the merged flow-experience. The aggregate flow-experience factor comes about as the sum of the two indices, its theoretic minimum is 20, the theoretic maximum is 100 points.

The average values of the challenge-ability and the merge factor are also higher during the training, participants reported going through the flow condition in a greater degree, with the challenge-ability factor reaching the theoretic maximum during the training.

The minimum values in the case of the two sub-scales and the aggregate flow scale are also lower than the school flow. The merge factors do not reach the theoretical
maximum in either cases, and the average of training and schools for this factor achieve less as well. Thus the participating students rather experience the flow arising from the balance between the challenge and their abilities, both during training and is school.

The challenge-ability balance's flow values showed the largest spread during the trainings, ranging between 37 and 43 points. In the case of school this, on average, moves between 29 and 35 points. The experience of flow during merger with the task stood at 26-33 points, as against 19-25 points in school.

All in all, greater flow during training was experienced by those who were interested in financial affairs, had preliminary knowledge about those, and those who attend secondary schools or college. Those student who like to attend school also shared in a higher-intensity flow experience.
Psychological characteristics of those taking part in the research

The point values of the individual learning style sub-scales were received by adding up the given points for statements that belong to the same scale, thus the theoretic minim of the individual sub-scales is 6, the theoretical maximum is 30.

The three main strategies (profound, reproductive, organised) are created as the sum total of the number of points on the sub-scales related to them: the profound learning style unites the profound, the holistic and the intrinsic strategies. The reproductive learning style summarises the reproducing, serial and failure-avoiding strategies. The organised learning style is compiled from the organised, success-oriented and conscientious strategies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning strategy (sub-scale)</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Spread</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Holistic</td>
<td>1151</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>22,4292</td>
<td>3,94153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profound</td>
<td>1112</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20,1151</td>
<td>4,14208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientious</td>
<td>1180</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>19,8576</td>
<td>4,39254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serialist</td>
<td>1133</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>19,5605</td>
<td>3,45965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>1175</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>19,4009</td>
<td>3,73142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organised</td>
<td>1154</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>19,0728</td>
<td>4,00908</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failure-avoiding</td>
<td>1162</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>18,2238</td>
<td>4,70360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic</td>
<td>1121</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>17,8956</td>
<td>4,77931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success oriented</td>
<td>1170</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>17,8231</td>
<td>4,11515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reproducing</td>
<td>1146</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>17,5846</td>
<td>3,69897</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Distribution of learning strategy sub-scales in the sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning strategy (main scale)</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Spread</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Profound</td>
<td>1007</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>60,546</td>
<td>10,299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organised</td>
<td>1090</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>56,748</td>
<td>10,123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reproducing</td>
<td>1050</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>55,474</td>
<td>8,861</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Distribution of main strategic point numbers in the sample
Based on the tables the students taking part in the current research mostly learn through the holistic and profound methods, while the reproducing learning strategy is the least specific.

**Summary of the empiric research results**

My thesis set up three hypotheses in order to place the flow experience in a multi-disciplinary approach in education. In light of the empirical material analysed above, we now evaluate the hypotheses as follows:

1. Our first hypothesis examined the quantitative investigation’s results in an *organisation-psychological* approach: "Inasmuch as the instructing institution is able to act as a learning organisation, then that significantly supports the quality of education and is also able to positively influence the students as well."

Our hypothesis was, for the greater part, proven as the students practically listed most of the characteristics of a learning organisation. However, in the course of interviews, it became clear that the majority of them were not able to interpret individual phenomena they experienced in a profound manner, to "see beyond the issues". Thus, in some of the interviews, we saw that students are not able to link the phenomena, their emotions and the results in all cases, therefore such connections that we were expecting from them were not described in a concrete manner. For instance, what sort of positive feelings and thoughts did the consciously designed educational environment induce in them?

2. Our second hypothesis further examined the results of the quantitative survey from a *positive psychological* approach. What we wanted to know is how the flow-experience was manifested within the education? How is an educating, learnings institution able to take children with unknown personalities and abilities to the flow experience in the framework of a four-hour-long education session? Our concrete hypothesis: “An educational strategy created with a positive psychological approach is able to bring about the flow experience in the education of new generations, even if the prior relation between the teaching organisation and the pupils was minimal or non-existent.”

This hypothesis was reconfirmed both based on a quantitative and qualitative examination, in spite of the surprising phenomenon that for the children not only
the circumstances of the education and the methodology were new, but their classmates as well. The majority did not know the behaviour and abilities of those classmates they were with and it was also an experience that they could work in groups.

3. Our third hypothesis was created with an education-scientific approach: “By using inspirational means based on experience and entertaining (edutainment) tasks/knowledge contents, financial consciousness can successfully be taught with inspirational means for secondary school students – which might be challenging even for adults.”

The educational challenge of this kind has several elements: in the case of generations socialised by an experience-based society, the teaching of financial, economic and management skills are, in the first instance, compared by children to mathematics from which the majority is afraid of and handles these with a negative preconception, partly because of family experiences as well. In the majority of the cases, the trainers met the children they were teaching for the first time only during the lessons. The non-frontal education and being familiarised with the new rules of the training - for instance, the principle of regulated freedom – were novel elements.

The hypothesis was also proven in this system of conditions as it unanimously became clear from the quantitative research that the overwhelming majority of children taking part in the education - in their own words - did learn new things during the training. The validity of this statement is indicated by the fact that they provided relevant replies even in a stratified manner: it provided knowledge that can be used/utilised as adult: 62%, made them able to handle their financial affairs on their own: 37%, made them able to advise their parents: 11%.

Discussing the pedagogical method, the children who took part in the qualitative research said that for them, the most important circumstances in the training were the following: team work, interactivity, playful nature.
V. Summary of the lessons of the thesis

The research proved that one of the components of the achieved flow experience was playfulness, Game-Based Learning. However, the educational elements in themselves were not games, the students themselves were not playing, but were rather solving playful tasks. However, the playful tasks help their more profound involvement in the learning process, hold their attention and they have the possibility to try out their own creativity or that of their fellow pupils.

We now summarise the flow-presence explored through empirical examinations in the trainings of the OK Centre with the below diagram:

Diagram 6: Flow in education

Source: own diagram
VI. Bibliography used in the thesis brochure:


https://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_how_to_escape_education_s_death_valley?language=hu
