Operating mechanisms of Process One projects

Modern brain research shows that every time people learn something, they also learn how the content is transferred and where the learning takes place.

Process One projects are complex, demanding outdoor scenarios. Among other things, they incorporate learning theories such as anchored instruction[1] and experiential learning[2].

>> We only understand things that grab us personally - and only those subjects grab us that shake us up as a challenge in our living environment.

Our "construct of meaning" is stimulated by doubt, awe, the unfamiliar, the far-away and paradox - not by the consumption of ready-made views of the world. <<

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In our learning projects, we use the neurobiologically proven effect of emotional participation through physical activity in natural, stimulating environments as a sustainable means of reinforcing learning. The projects' implicit questions and requirements are very similar in structure to processes in everyday organisational life. By this means, the experiences gained are linked to our participants' expertise and are therefore felt to be realistic, relevant and worth applying. Industry- and discipline-specific factors are not included in the settings. This prevents endless "real-life" arguments from distracting participants from the substance of the training.

In Process One projects, the participants pass through all the phases of a real company: they have to budget their time, financial and human resources, communicate effectively, make decisions and resolve goal conflicts, purchase materials, coordinate with other "departments", set milestones, possibly adjust their strategy, meet customers' wishes and finally look at the bottom line. Capturing the diversity of these relationships while at the same time keeping an overview of the project objective promotes integrated thinking and heuristic strategies for operational decisions and actions.

For example, one superordinate project goal is for the whole team to earn the highest possible profit in a set period of time under defined constraints. The implicit complexity of this initial problem is a very powerful way of motivating people to take personal responsibility and be proactive, to open up to relevant knowledge and systematically take ownership of the situation.
Autonomy generates more intensive personal experience, increases retentiveness and improves integration into the participants' personal knowledge network.

The adventure-based assignments/exercises to be completed are sometimes so mutually interdependent that it is only possible to start one task after another has been finished. The whole team will repeatedly have to divide itself up into different sub-teams in order to be able to work at different locations.

[1] "[…] learning content is anchored in useful, problem-oriented and realistic contexts […]." Important core elements are: authenticity and situated cognition (close to the participants' environment); complex initial problems (interesting and intrinsically motivating); principle of embedded data (selection of and search for information); social learning (articulation and reflection); multiple perspectives and contexts (flexible application of knowledge); narrative format (important link between context and previous knowledge)

[2] A four-step circular theory of learning by David A. Kolb. This holistic perspective combines experience, observation, conceptualisation and experimentation and is based on the assumption that knowledge is generated by the conversion of experience in four steps: concrete experience (or "DO"), reflective observation (or "OBSERVE"), abstract conceptualisation (or "THINK") and active experimentation (or "PLAN")

This leads to fresh perspectives on the problem from which participants are encouraged to verbalise their own thought processes and compare them with the ideas and conceptions articulated by their interaction partners. Moreover, when the team is on the move there will be a recurring need to assess risks and consider options, as well as observing the effects of its own actions and working out conclusions about how to act in future.

Communication routines and behaviour patterns are made visible by observation and reflection: how responsibility is handled; how decisions are brought about and how they are handled. The consultants' external perspective afterwards helps the participants to reflect on both "team performance" in relation to the development areas described above and the quality and importance of participants' personal contributions to the project's success. In the step of conscious "abstraction through reflection" participants extract the underlying general statements, structures and transferable ideas from the specifics of the situation experienced. That way, acquired strategies are not tied to the context in which they were applied but can be used in related real situations and, ideally, transferred to as yet unknown new issues.

Further reading:

Von der Hand zum Hirn und zurück (From the hand to the brain and back), Heckmair|Michl Augsburg, 2013

Innovative Ansätze konstruktiven Lernens (Innovative methods for constructive learning), Altenberger|Schettgen|Scholz Augsburg, 2003

Konstruktivistische Prinzipien der Lerntheorie und ihre didaktischen Implikationen (Constructivist principles of learning theory and their educational implications), Manfred Overmann
http://www.ph-ludwigsburg.de/html/2b-frnz-s-01/overmann/baf5/5e.htm

Geankertes Lernen (Anchored Instruction), lerno.de, 2005
http://www.lerno.de/lerno/MPX_rubrik.php@PHPSESSID=b3dcb5fa5b17632bceeb2b24000825ed&pos=0&rubrik_id=430.html