

WHAT IS A MISSION

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A 21st HW



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WHY "MISSION"?



Why do we use the word MISSION in connection with OPEN SCHOOLING and ENTREPRENEURIAL LEARNING?

Why not use words like "activity", "project" or "task"?

Because we need a new language different from the traditional approaches.

The word MISSION is borrowed from computer gaming. Good computer games take the player through different levels of challenges and tasks that must be accomplished to complete the... MISISON.

Often new levels are more complicated to accomplish than the first ones, and often you will need the resources created along the first levels to accomplish the tasks at later levels.

This means that you accumulate resources and skills along the different levels; precisely the skills and resources you will need to accomplish your mission. Therefore, you cannot simply jump to the last level, because you will not have the skills and resources to be successful at that level. And therefore, you cannot change the order or sequence of the levels, as each level will create the needed capacity to accomplish tasks at the next level.

Most young people are very familiar with this "logic"; it's in their blood. Thus, we believe that this "computer game language" is useful when working with them.

Another reference might link to scientific missions or to military missions, making you think about exploration of new areas hitherto unknown, or developing strategies and tactics to defeat your enemy.

However, the main reason for using the work MISSION is that it links strongly to the world of computer gaming.

Furthermore, and this is also true for good computer games, you can never accomplish your mission alone: you need team work; you need to work with various forms of resources and alliances along the levels.

WHAT'S THE KEY MISSION OF THE MISSION?



The most important thing in the kind of mission that we work with is to create *capacity*.

Our missions are social missions, linked to real-life engagement and real-life change. The young people need to build capacity to accomplish such missions.

Why the EU commission talks about this?

Because for young people have to learn to create their ways... They need to be able to change the situation themselves, building on own resources and capacity. Society will not do it for them...

So, the key mission of the mission is to build capacity.

The mission of the mission(s) is to create a feeling based on real experience that you are indeed able to do something for yourself and bring about change.

The truth is, in fact, that more and more young people, will need such capacity in the constantly changing and unpredictable globalized economy.

The missions are the tools with which we seek to build these capacities, since such capacity cannot be built in the classroom or through traditional empowerment approaches.

Of course, this is a chock to the traditional educational world and to the establishment of teachers, institutions and social workers. They are not at all prepared for this kind of capacity building and they will need to learn alongside the students!

WHAT CHARACTERISES A MISSION?



Many types of missions are possible and very many directions might be taken, as no manual is possible or even useful. Part of the capacity building is precisely about the ability to find your own way.

Nevertheless, and no matter how open the missions might be and how many different ways there might be to accomplish the missions, all missions should bring into play a number of key characteristics.

Why is that?

Because these principles are the ones that ensure strong capacity building, that's why!

Let's mention the most important principles in creating missions for capacity building:

✚ MISSION IMPOSSIBLE

The point is that engaging in something you are already capable of will not produce new strong capacity, as you will simply repeat what you already can do.

To be attractive and productive, the mission must be difficult, complicated and challenging – but of course within reach of strong efforts...!

✚ DEDICATION

The mission must call for strong dedication – from the team, but also from the professionals involved. The mission should be so interesting and attractive that dedication is constantly fostered along the work processes.

✚ THINK BIG, BUT

This is also why you need to think big!

If we engage the students in small, trivial and unimportant challenges, we will simply add to their feeling of being less important citizens.

The missions must be "big enough" to create respect among them.

Another reason for thinking big is that the mission must have a certain complexity, volume and duration to create immersion.

Small and punctual activities will not do the job. They will have very little impact.

Obviously, and it goes without saying, the missions should not be too big: building a spaceship flying to the moon is not a good mission.

The key point is: "big enough" to create immersion and capacity.

✚ REAL-TIME AND REAL-LIFE

The missions can go in very many directions. The "juice" of the missions is not what they wish to accomplish in the end (the results), but what kind of entrepreneurial capacities and new experience they create on the way.

However, the missions need to engage in things that take place here and now in the communities (physical or virtual), or in emerging initiatives bringing about new things. They must be real-time oriented and link to what is happening here and now.

✚ LONG TIME

Serious challenges, missions that call for respect, dedication and immersion – and in particular capacity building – need a certain amount of *time*.

Changing mentality, experience and building new competences in real-life does not happen in a few days.

It is not possible, of course, to indicate such a thing as the perfect duration of a mission, as missions, resources and engagement levels can be very different.

However, strong missions will typically need to be carried out in months, not days or weeks, such as for example 4 months, and in some cases more if possible. It is possible to create strong engagement if the young teams are engaged in the mission 1 or 2 full days a week along a certain number of months. Less will not do the job, and the more they are engaged the better.

✚ WHO SHOULD BE MISSION FACILITATORS?

Who are the professionals to support the young teams in their missions? In our project, teachers, partners, chambers BUT, these professionals will need to struggle their way out of their academic world and bring about a lot of changed mind-sets.

✚ COMPLICATED

The mission must be complicated, just like good computer games. Not complicated in the academic sense, but complicated because many activities are needed, collaboration with many people is needed and because only a clever step-by-step strategy will allow moving from one level (activity) to the next.

✚ ENTREPRENEURIAL INSPIRATION

Capacity building and missions – are of course closely linked to the re-interpretation of what entrepreneurship means.

Unlike in the old days where entrepreneurship was about creating a small business, today entrepreneurship has received a much broader interpretation: entrepreneurial mentality and behaviour has now been made independent of the end result (a small business) and is defined by the entrepreneurial process: taking action, trying out, experimenting, linking to real-life challenges, creating something new – and creating capacity to work through all the phases of entrepreneurial action.

The end result can still be a small business, but also a service, an organisation, a club, a community initiative and much more...

The juice is the process, not the result.

✚ STEP BY STEP

The key method in our missions is precisely inspired by good and immersive computer games: the mission is complicated and we cannot simply make a big jump and accomplish this mission. Not possible. What, then?

We need to proceed as the good computer games: step by step, level by level. We need to build up the capacity to accomplish the mission.

The art of missioning is precisely to take the right steps in the right order and slowly build up the needed resources, alliances and power to accomplish the mission.

This often includes very many steps, along which we must learn, explore, build alliances, create plans, demonstrate our project, create economy, negotiate and struggle our way towards making the mission impossible possible.

Each successful step represents new resources and new alliances and new opportunities, allowing us to take the next step.

To some extent the needed steps can be planned, but in many cases the stepwise progression will need to be adjusted to what really happens along the first steps.

✚ LEARNING ON THE FLIGHT

Such capacity building is not about education or training. You cannot learn these things in the classroom.

That does not mean that no learning will take place. A lot of learning will take place in most missions, but this learning is another kind of learning than in the classroom:

- it will take place when it is needed to solve problems at the different levels (situated learning)

- it will take place when the learning makes sense and is important (learning when needed and on demand)

- it will take place closely linked to real-life activities and challenges (relevance)

- it will take place when frustration arises along the mission process (motivation)

So, the missions turn educational didactics upside down:

→ in traditional education you learn in theory for 20 years and then start approaching practice and real-life

→ in mission-based learning you work in real-life and insert learning elements as needed

What is NOT a mission, then?

Let us close this small description of what a mission is and should be by indicating what cannot be considered missions (because such activities do not create entrepreneurial capacity):

- any punctual or short-term activity is not a mission
- activities prepared over some time but still simple activities without further perspectives are not missions
- engagement in already existing initiatives is not a mission
- involvement in practical activities in the institution or in the community is not a mission
- simple activities easy to accomplish are not missions

In short: activities that do not create the entrepreneurial capacity are not missions.

Does this mean that such non-mission activities are “bad” or “useless”?

Not at all. It simply means that such activities are not missions in our context, as they do not create the needed capacity among the young people.



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