



The Södertörn Summer Academy

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Background

Description of possible formation of a Summer Academy

(abbreviated version of the contents of original Swedish paper)

The situation among students from underprivileged backgrounds is a growing problem in Sweden. They tend to disregard possibilities for advanced studies and, consequently, for more advanced professions. This might be due to their social and/ or cultural background. On different levels performance in studies is quickly deteriorating regarding marks and test results.

Thus we can see that there are several reasons for finding innovative routes to learning and to stimulate students to achieve better and make them more motivated for advanced studies.

A method that so far is never tried in Sweden and the Stockholm area is running summer academies in collaboration between the secondary schoolsystem and the university in order to reach these goals.

In my report on the S@S I write about the Scottish way to solve problems of the said kind and the routes to innovative learning:

” The project is a fourteen days long summer academy which has existed since 1998.

Its object is to give young people, mainly from areas with low motivation for further studies, an introduction into academic studies and to stimulate their will to develop socially and educationally as well as motivating students to go on to advanced studies. A specific purpose is thus to widen the recruitment base and increase interest in higher education.

Mentors at the summer academy are university students who do this as a summer job. Many people apply for these situations and about 70 people are chosen after massive interview sessions. The Mentors are decidedly positive and stimulating people who are able to transform enthusiasm for their academic subjects to the young students of the S@S ”

”... In western Scotland as in many areas in Europe and there are a number of students, who during their secondary school period, especially if they come from areas with grave socio- economic problems, have difficulties in motivating themselves for studies and get depressingly low results in national tests. These failures in tests and national evaluations inform the students that they are not likely to succeed in entering high-schools or later on, universities. In many cases the students lacked knowledge of the requirements on higher levels as well as the will and ambition to apply for colleges or universities- as well as that they often claimed that young people from their socio economic backgrounds in many ways are automatically excluded from studies on higher levels .Ironically enough this opinion was widespread at a time when Scottish academic institutions showed a great interest in widening their recruitment base.

...” a good indicator of the success of the S@S is its longevity and that it has included so many students ...7000 students have been involved and during the summer of 2008 an additional group of 1000 students will take part...

...during the period 2002-06 77 % confirmed that they had a better attitude towards school work and working more diligently...participants in the Summer Academy perform well over average in the national tests and often twice as well as their peers who haven't taken part in the S@S ...in the group of 2006 68% specifically confirmed that the experiences from the S@S had helped them achieving higher test results...73% had also by the strong impact of the program been inspired to apply for studies on a higher level...thus bettering their professional potential”

” The collected data regarding student attitudes and students results are extremely positive. They show that our strategy for intervention in the learning process makes a big difference. It can be used to deal with learning and motivation problems and it leads to visibly better results in important test situations. It creates enthusiasm and encourages young people to apply for advanced studies.”

My personal opinion on the Summer Academy is definitely positive and rightly so.

It introduces and implies a great number of interesting educational methods and view-points. The creative interaction between the students and their mentors seems to create new educational angles and the mentors are also, among a lot of other things, positive persons with an ability to awaken enthusiasm for their respective academic subjects.

I am convinced that we in Sweden can, should and must learn from this program and presently start a wider cooperation with Scotland and also venture a similar project in the Stockholm area and in other areas as well.

In addition the University of Strathclyde are very positive towards sharing their expertise and can send officials to Sweden in this matter as well as welcoming study groups to visit both the university and the Summer Academy in years to follow

So far, during the summers 2010-2015, we have organized summer academies at Södertörns högskola for young people from Järfälla, Södertälje and Huddinge, neighbor councils to Stockholm. Our inspiration has been “Summer at Strathclyde”, and we are very thankful for all the help received during the years leading up to this, the first summer academy in Sweden. Especially we wish to express our gratitude to the advice and cooperation from Iain Mitchell and Christine Percival, MBE of Strathclyde University.

This year’s program consists of different challenges and vocational advice, excursions and outdoor activities.

The challenge themes this year, presented like this to young student, will be:

Entrepreneurship

What will you do? Together with you group mates you will invent a product or a service, possible to market. You decide the marketing process and economic planning, to make it work.

Games design

What will you do? Together with you group mates you will manufacture computer based games. Designers, graphic artist and programmers cooperate and test your skills together.

Conspiracy theories

What will you do? Together with you group mates you will look at how conspiracy theories flourish in society and how people decide to accept them or not. Critical analysis and comparison of sources will be your tools.

”Let’s do it in English”

What will you do? Together with you group mates you will develop you written and spoken skills in the most used language on earth-English. This year we will

cooperate with Strathclyde university and students from them will lead projects where you use drama, film music etc. drama. You will practice to understand different expressions and dialects in spoken English.

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