Chapter 13

Reality–Based Learning:
Preparing Students for Life – The Experience of Implementing the Model of Swedish Enterprise Education in Russia (SEED Russia)

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ABSTRACT

This chapter describes the experience of the project on the adaptation of the Swedish model of training through entrepreneurship in the north-west region of Russia. The model was developed by the Swedish Foundation for Entrepreneurship Training and has been used in Swedish schools for over 20 years. The chapter's co-author served as the project manager in Russia from the Stockholm School of Economics. In addition, the co-author participated in the development of a short course, "Understanding the Life of Business," for secondary school teachers. The chapter describes the concept, the specifics of its application in Russia, presents all stages of the project work, the results obtained, and the current situation.

INTRODUCTION

The project SEED Russia started in April 2004 as a joint project between the Swedish Foundation for Enterprise Education (SFEE) and Stockholm School of Economics Russia (SSE Russia) with support from the State Committee of Education in St Petersburg. In five seminar groups started during the project, 139 teachers and school administrators from 70 schools in St Petersburg, Leningrad Oblast, Pskov, Arkhangelsk, and Petrozavodsk was been trained in using the education model SEED (Swedish Enterprise EDucation). 1150 pupils, 360 mentor companies were involved in the project. At the end, 20 trainers-teachers were trained, who continued to work on training teachers to use the SEED model. The basic structures for teaching teachers were regional academies of postgraduate pedagogical education.

Apart from giving the participating Russian schools a jump-start to use the model, the project SEED Russia created a Russian school network for enterprise education consisting of schools, pedagogical institutions, and teachers retraining institutes. The implementation of SEED in Russian schools proved to be successful. Pupils, parents, teachers and mentor companies stated that collaboration is much easier and much more rewarding than they thought before starting working this way. The main issue that all project participants were concerned about at the beginning was the search and motivation of mentor-companies. Experience has shown that this was not a problem. The companies were found through network the parents, graduates, friends, and organizations and on a regional and local basis.

The model is now part of the regular retraining for teachers the number of teachers, schools, students and mentor companies will continue to increase. Through these networks, good practices are documented and spread.

(SEED) SWEDISH ENTERPRISE EDUCATION

The basis of the SEED model is to give pupils an opportunity to work with reality based assignments together with grownup people from real life. In the process, they become active and independent problem-solvers working with assignments that are complex and involve more than one subject. Through a series of projects together with a mentor company, they gain knowledge in subjects like Business Administration, Civics, Information Technology and their native language as well as competencies such as communication and social skills. But most important of all, the model helps the pupils train the ability to recognize opportunities and make something out of them that will be extremely valuable to them in their future private and professional life as students, employees, project leaders and entrepreneurs. As the assignments are solved in cooperation with people from the local society, the results become useful

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