

MAGIC IN EDUCATION: THE CASE OF THE MARKET ACADEMY

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1 Abstract

When you try to capture and explain the magic behind a success – it is illusive. What gives a project vital force? Are there some cultural elements that prepare the ground for involvement and enthusiasm? Can you describe, structure or manage this magic? Twelve years ago we launched a pedagogical experiment, the Market Academy, based upon problem-based learning, involvement and shared responsibility between tutors and students. We are both confused about what made the project spark off and tick. We have identified different “magic life stages” in the process, validated by student statements. It seems like structure; continuity and financial security could limit risk and - enthusiasm. The aim of this paper is to share some observations and ideas as a basis for a discussion of the conditions of magic – especially when launching a project in an educational context.

2 Problem and Aim

The aim of this paper is to share our observations and start a discussion on possible explanations to the magic that we have experienced through 12 years with our “revolutionary” educational program.

This effort has been guided by these general questions:

1. What are the conditions that enable magic to happen in a project?
2. Are there salient cultural elements that can be maintained or destroyed?
3. Is it possible to understand and manage magic?

3 Methodology

We try to describe our experience and observations from an educational program, being a part of that same culture - an ethnocentric problem. That could of course be problematic, but we will use the approach, which Weick (1995) has described as sensemaking:

Sensemaking is best described as a developing set of ideas with explanatory possibilities, rather than as a body of knowledge. This means that the topic exists in the form of an ongoing conversation. The sensemaking perspective is a frame of mind about frames of mind that is best treated as a set of heuristics rather than as an algorithm. (Weick, xi, xii)

This means that we are trying to make sense of what has happened during the last twelve years in a possible way and present that as a basis for further conversations. From Weick (1995:2) we take the following ideas of what makes it an instance of sensemaking:

1. Someone notices something, in an ongoing flow of events, something in the form of a surprise, a discrepant set of cues, something that does not fit.
2. The discrepant cues are spotted when someone looks back over elapsed experience. The act of looking is retrospective.
3. Plausible speculations are offered to explain the cues and their relative rarity.
4. The person making the speculations publishes them and creates an object that was not “out there” to begin with but now is out there for noticing.
5. The speculations do not generate widespread attention right away.
6. Issues of identity and reputation are involved.

To add student perspectives we have had conversations with 8 students (chosen by us as attentive, social and available) from different phases of the project: the first years, during the maturity stage and the newly started students.

The conversations were tape-recorded and lasted 1-2 hours with 1-3 students each at the business school in mid June 2003.

4 Introduction

It all started in a faculty meeting in January 1991. In the marketing colloquium the common opinion was that traditional marketing courses mainly gave the students a vocabulary in marketing but not as much understanding as we wished for. So we decided to change direction for the students majoring in marketing. The students had already done their basics in business administration and economics and probably some other courses and had 2 years of academic experience. Instead of small courses, usually running for 5 weeks, we decided that each semester (in Sweden we have 2 semesters each academic year) should be a course and that we should mix textbooks with scientific seminars.

As we saw learning as an interactive process, everything scheduled was mandatory. If a student didn't attend a lecture s/he had to do something that gave a similar insight and contributed in some way to the total knowledge in the Academy. In the beginning the Market Academy consisted of the last 3 semesters before the degree, nowadays they study at the Academy for 4 semesters and receive a Master of Science degree.

5 The Enchanting Start

The students were enthusiastic about the new educational idea. They spend an unusually amount of time in the classroom (dedicated as an agora of knowledge). They come up with ideas about how to develop the curriculum further, they had ideas of their own about how to build up extra resources, study tours, conferences etc.

Traditionally the educational system at business schools favored students who were obedient and willing to adapt to given rules, skilled at remembering book knowledge and had the next exam or presentation as their long time planning horizon. The Market Academy started as an idea in opposition to these traditional forms of teaching and learning. As an expression of this, the very first assignment with the pioneer students 1991, was to create the agora i.e. to decorate a permanent classroom – the Home Classroom.

Nothing was ready or taken for granted. Students came up with crazy and innovative ideas for new projects. We worked close to the students and had to slow down or even abort some “far out” projects, yet trying to keep the creative and chaotic spirit in the group. Very few projects were thought to be recurrent the following semesters, although some grew into a tradition, such as the study tour.

The curriculum was literally open and we invited the students to form their own curriculum, their own objectives.

“I remember when you Ola and Stig asked us during the first hour at the Market Academy to formulate our objectives with the education. We came up with something like ‘to become the best marketers in Europe within 5 years’. Then you asked us to define what we needed to study to reach the objective, and walked away. At first we just sat there, looking at each other, wondering where the teachers went. Then we started to argue, and finally began to work as a team” (Tore, pioneer)

The fundamental idea behind the Market Academy is the pedagogy. Our belief is that learning is a process, facilitated by interaction with fellow students without a top-down defined quality level. To give some ideas about the Market Academy we will give brief descriptions of what we see as major characteristics of the project. The following 12 items are interrelated and ordered randomly. They should not be regarded as single units but rather different expression of one comprehensive idea.

The characteristics are:

Home Classroom	Small Groups	Grading
Case Studies	Scientific Seminars	Drizzles
Final Exam	Practical Application	Student Projects
The Art of Motorcycle...	Culture Transmission	Admission

5.1.1 Home Classroom

Stockholm University is a huge university and of all departments the School of Business is one of the largest with around 4000 active students. The main buildings were built in the 60ies and were children of the time. The machine metaphor is adequate as a description and the areas for students were mainly public. No permanent room for a class existed at the School of Business at the time, you just booked a seminar room and usually the students had their classes in different rooms from time to time.

We had in our mind a meeting area or agora where the students could meet and have discussions about seminars and cases and we saw those discussions as a learning tool. So we tried to sneak ourselves a home classroom for the Market Academy and eventually we succeeded. In hindsight we must say that we underestimated the impact of the room, it was more or less magic to enter the room and physically feel the vibrating discussions. You could find students in the room very late in the evenings, in the days between Christmas and New Years Eve, and even during the summer period.

“Everything started with the Home Classroom. I saw it on tape during the 10-year anniversary. Stickan stood there with a drink observing how the first group of Market Academy Student tried to organize the first project: to decorate the classroom. At this beginning you had nothing but this room that you somehow had managed to appropriate to the project... It’s an important part of the myth. Maybe the most important part, even though it’s so taken for granted, that nobody fights for it anymore” (Mary)

5.1.2 Small groups

To work close to the students means that you have to limit the group. In the beginning we admitted 30 students each semester, which we later on limited to 20. Already from the beginning we saw the students as a main resource in the learning process, and cases and projects were solved in small groups of 3 to 4 students. The idea was that quite a lot of the learning took place during the discussions in the small group. To have as much transmission of knowledge as possible we changed the small groups 3 to 4 times every semester during the first year at the academy.

At first, I planned to major in business control and calculus, but I found it most uninspired. Before I entered the university, I saw the movie "Dead Poet's Society" and was longing for that kind of learning process. The traditional mass lecturing I was confronted with, was a chock to me. I soon became master of handing in uninteresting reports on time and remembering book knowledge without reflection... I longed for an academic discussion in a small group. And I found it at the Market Academy" (Tore)

5.1.3 Grading

Here we have a collision with the Bologna-process and most of the US and European business schools, and even the grading system in Sweden. In Sweden the grades of the courses are normally: not passed, passed and passed with distinction and outside Sweden an even finer grading is common. We have had only passed as a grade in the Market Academy (if the students don't live up to expectations we have had discussions with the student in question and they have either performed up to standard or left the Academy). We are both deeply convinced that we have had far better learning processes with this system and so are most of our students.

"I really don't understand how anybody could believe it to be possible to determine fair grades. I just don't get it... (Erik)

"Grades with or without extinction? Just try to imagine a situation, where we would fight for individual distinctive grades during our Market Academy studies. That would have made hell for us. Totally destroyed everything, every case! Intrigues, envy, fierce competition instead of creativity and devoted cooperation... We would not have been the group we are today!" (Mary)

5.1.4 Case studies

When it was time to start up the Academy we (together with two colleagues) visited some US business schools for pedagogical inspiration, mainly how to run cases. Among others we visited Harvard Business School and attended some case study discussions. We were impressed by the number of students in the classroom, but felt that they used the cases in a too well prepared way. The discussion leaders had more or less a given solution in mind and steered the discussion to that solution. Of course, the discussions were excellent run, but it also limited the creativity of the solutions. So we decided to develop the pedagogy of cases in our own way.

To give you an idea about our way to use cases we give you a brief description of the "normal" schedule for cases. The students received the written case on Wednesday at noon. They worked together in groups of 3 or 4 students and they were supposed to state the problem, arrive at a solution and make a written statement together. On Friday we had a discussion in home classroom (later in a room dedicated for case-discussions) with a class consisting of 20 to 30 students and we focused quite a lot on how to state the problem and who had the problem. In the class discussions no one could hide behind the group and it was prohibited to use sentences

as “we concluded...” or “our group decided to...” every statement was supposed to be expressed by the individual student and we usually probe the statements quite a lot. We also often used cold calls, i.e. we directed a question to a specific student.

When we had arrived to a statement of the problem the discussion focused on solutions. After the discussion, which usually had a length of 2 hours, the students get together, 3 to 4 working-groups, in another room and had a discussion about the papers for another 2 hours. That meant that one group had the role as opponents to another group, who had to defend their written paper. The students also received comments on their PMs but the papers were not graded. Instead the tutor decided what paper was best in class. As guidelines to solve cases we used Geoff Easton’s text book “Learning from Case Studies” and some material that Ola put together.

This was the “normal” approach to the cases, but we have had a great variety around the archetype. We worked with dead cases (written statements about a company and the situation for the company) and live cases (a company introduced their real world problem to the students who had a few hours, days or weeks to solve the problem), the demand on the written solutions switched between a one-page PM and a comprehensive analysis of the case, they had to solve cases and also to write new cases for teaching purposes, they even tutored case discussions for freshmen at the basic course in marketing at the university.

5.1.5 Scientific seminars

An innovation of our own was the more or less weekly scientific seminars. The student received a research report, conference paper or research proposal on Monday at noon and were supposed to write a PM about the paper and be prepared to have a discussion with a tutor or the person who had written the paper on Wednesday. The papers were either written individually or in small groups. On Wednesday it was a discussion about the paper, both methodological aspects and conclusions were discussed.

We had a wholehearted support for this by the research staff in the School of Business. Even the more senior researchers had a good exchange of ideas during those seminars and the seminars were appreciated very much of the students.

Solveig Wikström, nowadays professor emeritus, has often said that the students at the Market Academy have contributed to many good ideas to her own research. She has also engaged Market Academy students, writing their master theses, in her own research projects.

5.1.6 Drizzles¹

Above we have discussed our case-approach and the scientific seminars, now a few words about the short exams of literature. More or less every Monday we had a short exam of the literature. It consisted of basically 4 questions from the books or articles in question and the students had 1 hour to give the answers. The questions were rather broad and were supposed to cover the main ideas in the literature. It was more of understanding than remembering. After the first hour the students were supposed to grade another students answers as either passed or non-passed (afterwards we checked both the answers and the grading, in the beginning we checked all students after a while at random). We see the grading of another student as a learning tool because if you are to grade you just have to understand the questions and the possible answers to the questions.

¹ Swedish: “Duggor”

Students who received a non-passed grade or did not attend the exam for some reason have to write a reflection on the topic, usually a 3-page PM, and mirror the ideas of the literature with other research articles.

5.1.7 Final exam

At the end of each semester we had a final examination of the students. It consisted of a case study and the students had the whole day to solve it. Furthermore they could bring all their notes and all literature to the examination rooms, but they were not allowed to discuss anything of the case with each other. It was quite a surprise for the people who administrated exams to see our students coming with a lot of books and notes to the examination room. In the first of the examinations of this kind, one administrator whispered to Stig G Johansson. "But they have all the books with them" and he whispered back: "Yes, and how long time do you think it takes to read through 5 000 pages".

To prepare for the final exam we had an individual case to solve, which we called the mid-term case (hemmacase) and the students solved it at home during one week.

5.1.8 Practical application of theory

We have during the years had a balance act between academic and practical perspectives. If we becomes too academic, that means that we are sitting in the academic Ivory Tower, we loose touch with the reality that real worlds managers live in and we cannot contribute with any knowledge of importance to the trade as such. If we become too practical we will loose the critical and creative thinking, which is, in our opinion, at the center of the academic approach.

We have had the idea to educate the students so they don't take anything for granted, something close to Schöns reflective practioner. They should not rely on statements of practioners as something True at a first glance, but they should neither rely on theories and models as True descriptions of reality in a general way. That means that they should be familiar with both single- and double loop learning and also learn how to learn and use that knowledge in practical situations.

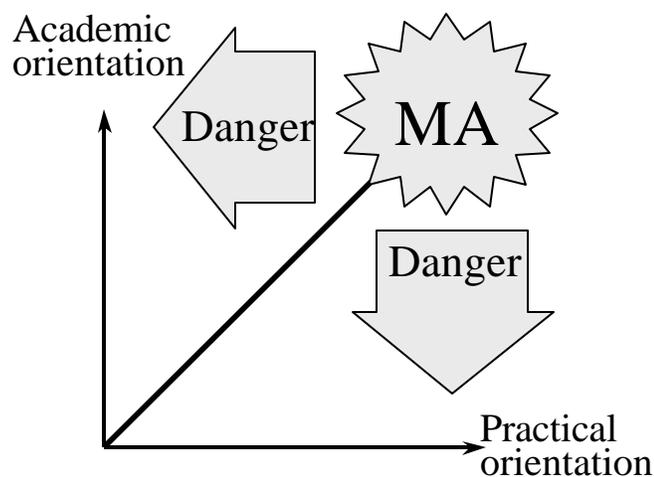


Figure 1. The balance between academic and practical thinking

Actually our learning model does not aim at memorizing, but to understand and be able to use theories and models. And, as most of us work, to be able to use the sources at your disposal.

“Our CRM conference was a highlight. I really felt proud about what we had made. We got encouraging comments from respected researchers like Susan and others. It was a feeling of pride and flow.” (Mary)

5.1.9 Student Projects

As an example of a student project which become institutionalized and later on took a direction of its own is the study tour. It came up as a student project and they send us a proposal “We want to do a study tour during the spring (1993)”. We said it was OK for us *if* it contributed to the learning process in some way. So the students arranged a planning group and reach the conclusion that they needed to know more about the European Community. Said and done, the students arranged different groups to raise money, to schedule the visit and arrange visits to different institutions and companies in Brussels and Bruges. It was a very successful study tour (probably the best during the years of study tours). The leadership was on the students with two chosen tour leaders. They were very proper and behaved very professional during the visits and we had a lot of fun during the evenings.

The next spring the students arranged a study tour to Barcelona, and the next was to New York. The study tours were becoming farer and farer away and the focus of the students was more on cool sites than places where they could learn something new and important. We tried to go back to the original ideas of the study tour and the next one was for London with focus on communication, the year after they went to Malaysia with a focus on the Tiger economies.

Up to now the students financed the tours through projects of their own for different companies in parallel with the normal studies, but it took more and more time from the ordinary lectures and we worried about the split in focus between the studies that we planned for them and the time and energy they spent to finance the study tour. So then we at last were able to establish the Institute for the Market Academy we decided that some of the funds that we received from the companies should first substitute and later cover the traveling expenses for the students. We also tried to focus the study tour toward the student’s master thesis and told them that a study tour was a tool to make a better thesis. The next tour went to New York/Boston with focus on the new economy and the possibilities IT and Internet could provide and it was rather successful, the next and last group went to Milan with a focus on design but it didn’t made any marks in their thesis.

The next year the students demanded a certain sum for each student to go to a site expected to contribute in some way to their master dissertations, but they were not willing to split according to the expenses connected to the different sites. They demanded that the money budgeted for the tour should be split even to the students. A few groups used the money to enhance their thesis other just blow the money. That was the end of the study tour, we decided to use the funds from the institute in a better way.

“The study tour as an important Market Academy project? In a way it’s crazy. Only because we did organize a tour 1993 to Brussels to examine the conditions for a Swedish entry into EU, it already next year seemed as a matter of course that there should be a study tour. In my opinion it should be an opposite principle: ‘since we organized a study tour this year you will have to come up with something else!’. Nothing should go without saying” (Tore)

5.1.10 The art of motorcycle maintenance

Before the spring semester 1993 we asked are students to read and write a short PM about the old cult-book “Zen and the Art of Motor-cycle Maintenance” by Pirsig. Since then it has become a sort of bible for the Market Academy. Its main theme is the search for quality and

how you can recognize it. It is also about education in a wider sense than usual and it fitted so smoothly with our ideas of the Market Academy. For instance our idea of the balance above was expressed by Pirsig (1974) as:

Classical understanding is concerned with the piles and the basis for sorting and interrelating them. Romantic understanding is directed toward the handful of sand before the sorting begins. Both are valid ways of looking at the world although irreconcilable with each other. What becomes an urgent necessity is a way of looking at the world that does not violence to neither ... and unites them into one. (p76)

And our grading system was expressed like this:

The real purpose of withholding the grades was to force them to look within themselves, the only place they would ever get a really right answer. (p195)

To read a book and write a paper about it, before the semester started, puzzled a lot of the students and we have had reactions of every sort. Some were annoyed to have something to do during their winter or summer vacation. Most of them started to reflect upon the text and found something new and different in it. Many went back to the book later on to try to find out the deeper meaning in it.

“The most important factor for success in this kind of projects is the willful and somewhat controversial culture that was based on personal beliefs. The “Zen-book” gave me this platform. I read the book and internalized the ideas of my own learning. And to try to understand your own responsibility regarding quality in everything you do. After two years with MA I still can see this underlying ideology as a guiding principle especially after reading Pirsig’s chapter on quality and grades again” (Erik)

It was also a part of our conviction that you must learn what quality is by internalize it and we think that just that happened to at least some of the students,

“I felt a frustration during our presentation of a living case at Scandinavian Airlines. We wanted to do something really good, but I realized that we had only limited time and resources. It wasn’t that I wanted more grades or encouragement from SAS, I knew myself what we could have done better... I began to recognize my own quality” (Mary)

5.1.11 Culture Transmission

Due to rather harsh economic conditions in the beginning, we had two classes at the same time in some seminars and they worked with the same projects. That is, students from the first semester and the second semester joined together and become one group in some respects. An unplanned effect of that was a transmission of a rather specific and strong culture that started to grow from the beginning and become stronger and stronger during the years. In the beginning it was a sort of giving-culture. Everybody (us included) was as a big family and everybody was expected to contribute to the learning process. More comments on the change in culture below.

5.1.12 Admission

In the first 5 years students were supposed to apply to the Market Academy and admission was granted by a lottery. That meant that everybody who applied had an equal chance to be a student at the Academy. As the Academy become more and more popular, the students were not satisfied with that admission system and we thought of ideas about how to change it.

From 1966 we had an admission system that consisted of interviews and some sort of test, usually to solve a short case in about an hour. The interviews were a sort of group interviews where usually three students and three or four staff had a discussion about the students and the

Academy. We tried to figure out how they should perform in-group work and what contributions they could do to the class in a learning process. We used the case-solutions as an indication of their capability to state and solve the problem in a creative way.

I was truly motivated to apply for the Market Academy. I was aiming at entering for many years, so when I finally was called for the interview I was extremely nervous. And I wasn't admitted. But next time I made it. Of course the problems to get in, raises the fame factor, and when you finally get in you feel a part of an exclusive group. And that gave me a kind of kick... A lottery could be considered fairer, since there is no subjectivity and nobody to blame. Still, I think interviews are good, at least better than a lottery. (Anna)

We spent quite a lot of time to evaluate the interviews and the cases and did our best to pinpoint the students that should contribute most to the process. Criteria that we used were to have a mixture of fore instance gender, earlier studies, background etc. Another focus was to avoid some kind of Apollonian group, where the students mirrored each other. We also have had different kinds of personality tests to arrange for the work in small groups.

Nowadays we are not so sure that our choice of students was any better than a random choice. May be one reason for that was a lot of grapevine about how to behave in the interviews and what kind of case-solutions that we appreciated most. As a matter of fact quite a few students were determined to study at the Market Academy and if they were not admitted the first time they choose to study something else during one semester and apply again for the next.

"I knew from the start that I wanted to study marketing, that was the reason for me to apply to the master program at Stockholm University. Soon after I was admitted I heard about the Market Academy and concentrated on getting in there. I wrote an ambitious application letter and were called to the interview, to which I came most motivated... Then, when I wasn't admitted the first time, it took me hard... But I kept my aim, took other courses for one semester, and applied again the next semester. One rumor said that you should be different to contribute to an interesting group. I remember coming to the second interview blasé and unprejudiced. And after the interview I felt 'I'm in! It went damn well' ... I just let go and got in" (Erik)

6 Money comes in

Due to the circumstances in the beginning of the 1990's, it was difficult to establish collaborative projects with companies, and almost impossible to get financial support. The public university budget was limited to about SEK 6' per student and semester; at the same time we needed computers, copy machine, and telephone and so on. Friends, contacts, co incidents and ad hoc solutions characterized the work in the beginning.

In the original vision we planned for 5 long-term sponsor companies, but as the economy were slow we only managed to get one or two temporary sponsors to smaller, projects like market research, competition analysis and such.

We also felt that to survive with the small group of students and with the accompanying tutor contact hours, we needed more resources. One (of many) challenges in this was how to wrap up and sell something like an educational project to a sponsor.

We tried to compromise, offering *priority* to being part of educational projects like living cases, *access* to a research council where research direction was discussed, thereby also influencing the bachelor and master theses. *Admittance* to all lectures and seminars at the academy including special "IMA-seminars" where selected researchers discussed contemporary issues

with business people, and of course, student conferences and other activities. Several other benefits were offered, but seldom utilized, such as information search, brain storming, experience groups etc.

During the startup phase we run into new problems of all kinds. In the university world no one had heard of an institute that connected business, research and basic education. Professor Solveig Wikström and dr Raoul Hasselgren, who both were distinguished board members in important corporate boards, encouraged the rest of the academic team to keep a positive spirit. They used their professional network to open doors and to recruit new partners. Without them this first steps would have been insurmountable.

In 1996, after years of planning and internal lobbying, we finally managed to establish an independent institute (“IMA, Market Academy Institute”) that was able to sign partner agreements with companies outside the university. During the year 1997 IMA made 11 agreements, and that fall resources begun to flow into the Market Academy. The very first signed agreement came in from the Swedish Postal service the summer –97. It gave hope for the future!

During five years 1997-2001 this support went up from 1 to 1,5 MSEK per year, distributed among up to 17 partner companies. IMA could contribute to conferences and study tours, thereby allowing for students to study and do research rather than trying to find funds. IMA paid the rent for the Home Classroom and tuned up the computer status. IMA could also pay committed tutors for the extra hours they spent with the students, and administer the publication of projects and essays on a web site supported by a newsletter.

2002 the IT-bubble broke, and we prepared for times with only few sponsors and instead aim at state financed, larger research projects together with partner companies.

7 The Maturing Institution

As resources flow in to the Market Academy, we gained a certain reputation. Students from all over Sweden applied to the Academy and we had an idea of a mixture of students with different backgrounds. From 1997 we had an image of “fame” coming closer and closer to the Academy and the “grounding fathers” became more and more like icons.

7.1 Structure

In the beginning the scheduling of the lectures and cases was rather fluid and there was a constant claim for more structure, more feedback and the like. Once or twice every semester we had a kind of crises in the Academy and had to solve some problems. We tried to withstand the claims because we were afraid that the initiative and development originating from the students would decrease. But in retrospect we can see that slowly we scheduled more and more of the semester (even the meeting due to crisis become scheduled). And we believe that that took away some initiative from the students.

“Some students did expect to become a part of something ready-made. They want to get something already constructed, like convenience food. It’s important that the group contains a critical mass of students with a strong drive to search knowledge and that understand that they have to be active and creative in this process. To find their own way...” (Erik)

7.2 Stronger identity (and corporate culture)

As mentioned before the identity and above all the image of the Academy were growing during the years. First of all for the pedagogy we applied:

“I expected to work with a totally different kind of pedagogy, that we could leave the first two years of feeding and entering facts of less interest that I cannot remember at all after the exams. I wanted discussions, I wanted an academic dialogue. At the same time I was prepared to put everything aside and focus on my studies, I was prepared to give it all. And then we started with the Mintzberg textbook. I had it as my pillow, trying to understand and apply it. I thought that this was exactly as I wanted it to be” (Mary)

From the beginning we have tried to make the semesters “spicy” by incorporating what could be seen as odd topics in the schedule.

“I appreciate that we read “The Foundation” and did odd things that you never find in a marketing education agenda. We visited “Grafikens Hus” and scratched our copper plate that now sits on my fridge. Those things, that together with traditional marketing reading gives you a meaning...” (Inger)

The culture was also transmitted by the students already in the Academy for good or bad. For good because old students were mentors to the newcomers and it didn't took long time for them to socialize in the way we worked. Bad because the culture slowly shifted from values of give to values of have.

“When I first met with the senior students, I felt an immediate welcoming. They took care of us and formed a strong community or gang feeling at once!” (Patrik)

It is also hard to express your own ideas, beliefs and expectation when you are entering a strong culture as a newcomer.

“One of the most important aspects of the Market Academy is the united group, the team that worked together, had conflicts and made progress. The culture was always very strong. A negative aspect of the integrated semesters was all the hidden rules that were revealed now and then. The argument, ‘This is how we always have done it here’, is hard to argue with as a newcomer. But on the other hand, the collective spirit has been extremely positive and encouraging! The strong group culture gave me a sense of belonging, being seen, supported... Not just an anonymous student among thousands in a sea of lecture halls...” (Inger)

7.3 Fame.

During the years the Academy had more and more of a fame or elitist image. We become aware of that when we at one get-together trip had a ballad competition. A lot of the ballads contained sentences expressing the joy to join an elite, and nothing about the joy of shaping an elite.

“Attraction, fame and brand are tricky things. The Academy brand might become ‘annexated’ by those who succeed to muddle through the interviews. Those who are attracted by the brand are the same who slowly changes it from inside... Finally the original founders of the brand values moves on and start other projects.” (Erik)

The students also spent quite a lot of time on “image projects” as the Market Academy Party. Once students organized occasional parties for themselves, friends and sponsors, in order to build team spirit and also to raise money for a project. That has now grown into something different. It is the biggest, most famous party among business students in Stockholm. It takes a

lot of energy to organize, sell tickets and carry out. Energy that many times could be used better in academic projects. And the brand image among students contains an element of "a spectacular party producer".

"Now, the MA ball has become even fancier and formal. Both the place, cost and dress code has risen. When we had our party, it was on "Tiger", and then the places only became more and more exclusive. It's not enough with a place to have our party anymore, it has to be the most "in" place in town." (Mary)

7.4 A discrepant cue

Everything seemed to be in a perfect order. The students got more ready made problems and optional solutions. They came up with less crazy ideas, spent more time debating how to divide responsibilities for different projects, than to question established projects... As supervisors we may have given more attention towards our partners and sponsors than to guiding the students.

Up until the maturity stage the magic contained" We have an idea, can we create this together? During the year of the 10-year anniversary (2001), we became aware of a new type of group culture: "what's in it for me, what will happen next week?" "Teacher, we need new computers"; "How many instructor hours are we entitled to?"

8 A new Magic?

Due to the economy slowing down the institute had problems funding money for student projects, and shift focus to research projects, funded by the government. Some senior student says that the captain is leaving a sinking ship. But a group of newcomers decide to start something new! A student union is formed, a new focus is chosen, and a vision is created: Let's form something really new on our own!

"Now, when economy is slow and we have limited resources, I think we should talk about it. Give the students full information, tell us what the resources are, how many tutor hours we can budget per semester, and let's discuss how we can use it. Let's say we can only cover 20h work per week with present resources, and that we aim at 40h. Let the students take their own responsibility for the missing 20h! We can invite interesting guests, we can do our own case studies, we can lecture each other and discuss textbooks, involve senior students for joint projects etc. It's up to you. Give us this kind of information, and we will do it ourselves! Without this agreement, some students might still believe that teachers will emerge from somewhere and take care of everything as soon as we ask for help" (Anna)

We see an opportunity to redirect the Academy with the explicit goal to move in the direction of research. To involve the students in research topics of interest for students, tutors and the academic society at large. For that reason we have had a different approach to transmit (or not to transmit) the culture, the first and second semester doesn't work closely together any more for good and bad.

"The biggest change of the Market Academy was when you decided not to integrate the semesters. We were the first group that did not socialize a group of newcomers. That made us in a way more exclusive, and gave us and the new students room to form our own way of doing things. Maybe you can say that the culture now becomes stronger in the classes, and more fragmented as the Market Academy. (Erik)

We think that Erik's comment is just up to the point. That means that the new students have the opportunity to build the Academy so it matches their expectations and hopes, and that is already happening. New energy is entering.

“We found some extra time, so we organized an extra living case of our own: We examined the brand image of the Market Academy among three different groups. The media, students and companies. I took a week. Now, we will go on working with a homepage and an information booklet. So far we have learnt that everything is less easy than it looks, it’s so educational! We are putting pressure on the development of the Market Academy, who else could do it? I believe in this!” (Anna)

And maybe they are also building a new culture for the whole Academy; at least they have the ideas about it.

“For the future I think the most important project is to form a special student union that can organize integration across the 4-5 different semesters and also serve as a skeleton, a optional structure, when students feel lost and want guidance in different arrangements, e.g. a checklist for invitation to a seminar” (Anna)

9 Tentative Sensemaking for Discussion

In Weick’s terminology we started with some beliefs, which resulted in action. The actions then strengthen some beliefs and a few new beliefs grow up and that results in more action and so on. Here we will try to give our rough interpretation about the life of the Market Academy so far and how we can make sense of it. In our opinion, we have gone through 3 loops each consisting of four stages (years).

Loop number one

1:1 Our beliefs before we started:

We saw the students as a resource in the learning process, with capabilities and willingness to learn if we provided the right context. If we gave them responsibility they should behave in a responsible manner.

1:2 Our action

Provide an agora for discussions between students and students and tutors. To give the students opportunity to have their saying in the development of the curriculum.

1:3 Our interpretation of the students’ beliefs in the beginning

Astonished and puzzled of the situation. Proud and responsible in their “new” role as students. Trust in their own capability and convicted that we seriously trusted them.

1:4 The students’ actions in the beginning

Active and contributing to the discussions, helpful to other students. New ideas to the curriculum and active in inviting guest speakers.

Loop number two

2:1 Our beliefs

Our ideas were right. We had a new concept and it was running almost by itself.

2:2 Our actions

More of the same, trying to adjust the details and to develop an institute that could provide means for an even better Academy. To withdraw a little and have more tutors engaged.

2:3 Our interpretation of the students’ beliefs in maturing

The founders were withdrawing, what would happen if they do? The Institute has a lot of money that the companies are paying to have contact with us, the students. What do we receive from those funds? We are elite students for the companies and far better than all other students.

2:4 Students' actions in maturing

Long discussions about what the Institute provides and don't provide. Long discussions about the schedule, less about the curriculum. Long discussions about the distribution of benefits (laptops and mobile phones), less about how to contribute to the supplier of the benefits. Long discussions about the image of the Academy, less about the quality of their own contributions.

Loop number three

3:1 Our beliefs of that

The culture is changing – what is the reason for that? Some students applying to the Academy are more interested in the image than their own development. The Academy is not the highest in priority for all students.

3:2 Our actions after that

Stop the study tour, as it doesn't contribute to the Academy. Break the transmission of culture by senior students working together with freshmen. Change direction to become more academic

3:3 Our interpretation of student's beliefs in new magic

We have to take responsibility of our own education. What can we do to make the Academy a better place for students learning? Forget the old stuff and think in new ways

3:4 Student's actions in new magic

Organization of the students to develop the Academy. New ideas about the curriculum. Want to be an equal partner once again.

Explanatory possibilities

1. The dominant culture changes over time and it is not possible to direct the changes in the way the leaders want it to change.
2. Too much structure kills creativity and the structure will have a meaning in itself. In the absence of structure you will have ambiguity (in Weick's terminology) that starts discussions and foster creativity, but of course you can have too little of structure and that fosters chaos.
3. Too much funding kills creativity and directs the focus to the funding not the content.
4. When image becomes more important than content it is a sign of changing core values in the organization
5. It is more or less impossible to choose the "right" students from a short interview and a case solution.
6. You need to have leaders at all levels of an organization with more or less the same values and an established status.

The final question is of course: How do you handle these propositions in a "real world" organization?

How did it happen?

At the beginning, a distinguished colleague said: “If you manage to run this kind of intensive pedagogy for more than two years I would be surprised”. He realized that as soon as you leave the lectures-and-exam model, and get to know students at a personal level, the work would become more demanding and time consuming. Of course it took a lot of time and effort, far beyond the ordinary workload, but it was fun! (Why was it fun, why were we carried away?). Soon both students and colleagues stated, “It’s a success!”. When we celebrated our ten-year anniversary, we felt that the praise from alumni and active students was univocal. But we could not explain how it happened. Maybe we just let us be a part of the flow that came to be?

Magic is sometimes defined as some secret skill used to create astonishing results. That kind of magic should be possible to teach and transfer. But the kind of magic that we have experience in the Market Academy is beyond that. If magic is defined as the answer when there is no other explanation to some phenomenon, then we have experienced true magic! The only way we can think of, if we would try to launch a similar project again, is – try it, do something. See how it works and let it happen. To let things happen as they happen. You will recognize magic when it happens, but you can never plan it beforehand, nor explain it afterwards. That’s the beauty!

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11 Appendices

11.1 What is the meaning of magic?

Regardie, Israel (1964), *The Meaning of Magic*. Sangreal Series No. 1, Helios Book Service. From The Art and Meaning of Magic

(<http://www.afn.org/~davidb/regardie/Art&MeaningofMagic.html>, 2003-07-28):

“A definition of Magic presents a rather more difficult task. A short definition, which will really explain its nature and describe the field of its operation, seems practically impossible. One dictionary defines it as "the art of applying natural causes to produce surprising effects." Havelock Ellis has ventured the suggestion that a magical act is a name which may well be given to cover every conceivable act in the whole of life's span. It is Aleister Crowley's suggestion that "Magic is the science and art of causing changes to occur in conformity with will." Dion Fortune slightly modified this by adding a couple of words– "changes in consciousness." The anonymous mediaeval author of *The Goetia, or Lesser Key of King Solomon* has written a proem to that book where occurs the passage that "Magic is the highest, most absolute, and most divine knowledge of Natural philosophy . . .”

Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary (1985). Springfield, Mass: Merriam-Webster:

magi *pl of* MAGUS

Maḡiḡān... n (1578):MAGUS

¹**magi** *n* ...fr. magos *magus*, sorcerer, of Iranian origin; akin to old Persian *magush* sorcerer...**1 a**: the use of means (as charms or spells) believed to have supernatural power over natural forces **b**: magic rites or incantations **2 a**: an extraordinary power or influence seemingly from a supernatural source **b**: something that seems to cast a spell: ENCHANTMENT² **3**: the art of producing illusions by sleight of hand

²**magi** *adj*... **1**: of or relating to magic **2 a**: having seemingly supernatural qualities or powers **b**: giving a feeling of enchantment...

³**magi** *vt magi* **icked**, **magi** **ick** **ing** (1906): to produce, remove, or influence by magic

maḡiḡician... n... **1**: one skilled in magic; *esp*: SORCERER³ **2**: one who performs tricks of illusion and sleight of hand⁴

maḡus... n, pl ma-gi... **1 a**: a member of a hereditary priestly class among the ancient Medes and Persians⁵ **b**: *often cap*: one of the traditionally three wise men from the East paying homage to the infant Jesus **2**: MAGICIAN, SORCERER

² Swedish: Enchantment *förtrollning*

³ Swedish: Sorcerer *trollkarl*, *häxmästare*. Sorceress *trollkvinna*

⁴ Swedish: Sleight of hand *fingerfärdighet*, *taskspeleri*

⁵ Swedish: Magi *persiskt prästerskap*.

11.2 Guide to student conversations

1. Image:

Describe your first image of the Market Academy.

How did you hear about it?

What was the attraction? Expectations? (on the pedagogy?)

2. Experiences:

And when you entered...

Comments on admission, selection, grades, financing etc?

Your experience of significant teaching/learning style?

3. Reflections:

In hindsight... Best/worst? Important learning?

MA characteristics?

Suggestions for the future MA?

Students conversing:

2003-06-11

Tore (1992)

Patrik (2001)

Erik (2001)

2003-0612

Inger (2001)

Mary (2001)

2003-06-30

Anna (2003)

2003-07-01

Lisa (2003)

11.3 The Layout of the Market Academy Program

General Business studies

The first two years:

Basic studies in business, economics, statistics etc

The traditional Market Academy (majoring in marketing)

The following two years:

Fall semester	Strategic marketing (1 st and 2 nd semester integrated)
Spring semester	Tactical marketing (1 st and 2 nd semester integrated)
3 rd semester	Choice of courses together with tutor (at home or abroad)
4 th semester	Research literature, free course, master thesis

A typical week during the first year at the academy:

