Leadership and Management in a Workshop-Based Educational Project:
A Case Study of an Environmental Sustainability Project

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INTRODUCTION

Currently project management literature seldom put the focus on education projects. Books about project management (e.g., Gido & Clements, 2015; Lock, 2007) exclude education from the list of possible project. It is often a misunderstanding that educators should be responsible for the knowledge construction of educational project management; however, in fact educators, especially the younger generation, often lack this kind of training, and they have very limited experience in management. Although it seems possible to transfer the existing knowledge of project management to the context of education, there is a need to highlight the uniqueness and concerns in managing educational project.

In the management of educational project, the most important is the achievements made by the project participants or students and the recognition of stakeholders who may be participants' parents and teachers (Siu, 2010). Similar to project management in other contexts, every activity and event in an educational project should possess the same values and aim at some particular goals, and thus the management approach used is inevitably strategic. The strategic management and leadership affect learning and teaching effectiveness, students' performance and improvement. Its aim is to plan the activities in an organized way, solve problems encountered during project implementation, and make sure that all activities are held successfully. Yet, sometimes the management task is not as easy as it seems, and some specific kinds of educational projects involve elements which make the management tasks more difficult.

Among many kinds of educational projects, workshop-based project is one of the most complicated ones, as there are many considerations that the project manager has to take into account. This kind of project is primarily based on hands-on activities in one or more workshops, and perhaps aided with other kinds of activities to add value to the workshops. Students have to acquire the knowledge and skills through achieving targets and attainments (e.g., designing and making an artifact) by using the techniques and skills taught by the facilitators in the workshops. The students have to think, design and make by their own hands so that they can learn through the workshop experience. At the same time, the project manager and the organizer have to satisfy the demand of different parties involving the project. Therefore, effective management is exceptional important, as the process involves numbers of operations which require high consistency and compatibility.

In this chapter, a case study of an environmental sustainability project is used to discuss the concerns of effective management in planning and organizing such project. Through understanding the uniqueness of workshop-based educational project, the chapter suggests that the major concerns that a project manager has to consider, and the roles he/she has to play in order to maintain consistency and compatibility

of the entire project. The aims of the chapter are to define what workshop-based educational project and its uniqueness is, examine the concerns in such workshop and analyze possible roles of project manager through the case study of the environmental sustainability project. It is hoped that the discussion in this chapter is able to give references for educators or administrators who plan to hold projects which involve hands-on workshops as the core of educational activities.

BACKGROUND

What Is Workshop-Based Educational Project?

According to the Oxford Dictionaries (Oxford University Press, 2015), "workshop" refers to "a meeting at which a group of people engage in intensive discussion and activity on a particular subject or project". It is interesting to note that the word "project" is used in the explanation for "workshop". It can be argued that "workshop" may be closely related to "project". On the other hand, "project" refers to "an individual or collaborative enterprise that is carefully planned to achieve a particular aim" (Oxford University Press, 2015). Munns and Bjeirmi (1996) suggested that project is "the achievement of a specific objective, which involves a series of activities and tasks which consume resources" (p. 81). A set of specification and definite start and end dates are necessary in project. Gido and Clements (2015) suggested several attributes which defines project. They are objectives, interdependent activities, resources, specific time frame, unique endeavor, sponsor, and degree of uncertainty.

Based on these explanations, it can be concluded that workshop-based educational project may refer to the individual or collaborative enterprise that is carefully planned to achieve a particular educational aim through engaging the participants in a series of interdependent discussions and activities which consume resources in a period of time. In this chapter, workshop primarily refers to the activities where hands-on tasks are involved. Other features of workshop-based educational project can be identified as:

1. It is under carefully planning.
2. The interdependent discussion and/or activity are the core of the project.
3. It is sponsored by a funder/party.
4. It possesses a degree of uncertainty.
5. It may be new and have never been done before.

The practice of workshop-based project is not a new learning and teaching approach in education. It is very popular among the contexts where hands-on is the key element. For example, a workshop-based educational project can aim at promoting the use of organic cleaning products by teaching participants how to make organic soap or detergent. The hands-on sections should give the participants the greatest influence about the habit of using organic products and encourage them sustaining the habit in their living style in the future. In addition, workshop-based educational project can be carried out in various disciplines. It is up to the project organizer, manager or workshop facilitators to decide in what ways the contents are incorporated into the workshops and other activities of the project.

It is noted that the workshop-based project in this chapter is not equivalent to project-based learning in education, despite the similarities observed in the two terms. In project-based learning, students often form groups to accomplish a project based on their choice and preference or teachers' instruction. They are situated in a real life problem and learn through collecting, synthesizing and evaluating useful

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