

Chapter 7

Quality of Project Management Education and Training Programmes

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the factors that influence the quality of training and education on project management. The authors present the results of two questionnaire-based surveys. The goal of the first survey was to find what factors influence the quality of project management education, according to the perspective of trainers, professors, and training providers. The respondents included Chinese and European academics and professionals, such as project managers, software developers, financial managers and professors. The respondents were not only involved in project management training but also served as team members or team managers, thus ensuring a balanced overview of theoretical and practical issues. The goal of the second survey was to explore the definition “quality” to trainees and students. Although there were small differences of perspective, both trainers and trainees have the same approach toward a qualitative project management education.

1. INTRODUCTION

Project management has become widely known, as the main form of organization in knowledge economy (International Project Management Association, 2006). Project management isn't about quick fixes: the key to success here, as everywhere

else, lies in preparation. A good project manager knows the project management principles, methods and techniques and applies them, always looking for the best outcome of a situation. Some project managers don't need too much training to do that, but others, on the other hand, need tons of training and they never really quite figure out what's the best solution to be applied.

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Whatever the scope of the work, training and education is a key element to survive in knowledge society, as it facilitates the competences development in professional activities (Demirel, 2009), (Castells & Pekka, 2002; Markkula, 2006; Teekaput & Waiwanijchakij, 2006). Nevertheless, practice has its place in sharpening the work skills, especially in project management (Turner & Simister, 2004). Project managers make decisions which affect not only a project, but a carefully built network of contacts and a carefully promoted image (Gareis, 2007). Consequently, the following questions arise: “Where does the quality of project management education and training lie?”, “How can we define project management training and education quality?”, “Where should we establish boundaries so as to achieve effective and efficient and fit-for-purpose project management training?”, “What should we teach, in order to get a ready-to-go project manager?”, “Should the project management education be addressed as input based – provider, trainer, curriculum, or also output based – trainee, beneficiary?”. The authors of current paper aimed at finding out the answers to these questions, from two different perspectives: from the trainer and from the trainee point of view. The trainers are professors, project managers invited to take part in training courses or trainings’ organizers. The trainees are students who are enrolled in a master programme of project management. The research method used for finding out what quality in project management education is was a questionnaire-based survey.

2. TRAINING THE PROJECT MANAGER

In project management, a training session could aim at developing or improving one of the project manager competences (International Project Management Association, 2006). By developing, we mean that the competence is at its basics or is not there at all. By improving, we mean that, from the

documentation received from a candidate, we can assume that some competences exist and we can build on those. A training session could refer to one topic or more, thus having an impact on duration of the training (Kanellopoulos et al., 2006), (Lytras et al., 2008). Although it may seem that we are only approaching technical competences, a balanced percentage of theoretical and practical training, backed up by modern teaching methods (Garcia et al., 2003), could lead to the improvement of behavioral competences, as well.

Having established what training means in project management, the paper will further focus on finding out what makes a project management training to be qualitative.

3. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING ON PROJECT MANAGEMENT: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The instruments used in current research were two questionnaires. The methodology for the development of the questionnaires was based on the following aims:

1. Development of a questionnaire for assessing the general and specific traits of quality in training on project management;
2. Focusing on the practical aspects of organization and logistics, including technical platform for online education;
3. Stressing on candidate accession/enrolment in a training course / programme;
4. Finding out the needs for the inputs and resources ensured by the training providers;
5. Finding out what the trainers’ profiles should be;
6. Discovering the minimum requirements of curriculum;
7. Highlighting what the expectations for the training result are;

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