

Fostering leadership competences through project management course

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Abstract Our paper focuses on the issue of fostering leadership competences through enhancing and maintaining the effective project management course.

Leadership creation within an organisation, business entities or public institutions alike, represents a complex and cumbersome task. It takes lots of effort and skills and requires an enormous amount of time to accomplish and complete.

Our results demonstrate that managerial competences and (inter)personal skills are both crucial for the successful manager aiming at fostering leadership competences and developing team leadership skills in a given organisation. Moreover, we find that it seems important to evaluate the skills of project managers and teams to create development plans that enhance their successful project skills.

1 Introduction

In the era of globalization, internationalization and widely spread international communication systems the relations and exchange of experience amongst nations have become closer. Furthermore, multidimensional forms of collaboration made it necessary to improve systems of entrepreneurial and corporate cultures to better adjust to differences, and to avoid misunderstanding, though still self-identify with the specific (professional) culture.

Both personal and professional identities evolve and expand during the college years. Crucial changes in person's professional values and attitudes are developed during that phase. Higher educational institutions are no longer regarded as mere establishments for extending students' learning outcomes and ensuring graduates' employability, but rather as scenes where students persistently seek to acquire both professional and social knowledge, skills, attitudes and attributes that will further affect the way they behave in the civil society and make career progression.

Countries are getting more multicultural; hence, European HEIs are facing new challenges in training students, representing various nations and cultures as being holders of their individual ideas, customs, and social behaviour.

One of the challenges that HEIs are facing today is the change of the educational paradigm from knowledge-based to competence-based approach in training, from teacher-cantered to student-cantered learning. New generation of educational standards describes the requirements for learning outcomes. The standard characterizes the generic cultural competences (e.g. ability to think in an abstract way, to analyse, to synthesize, to resolve conflicts, and be tolerant; be socially adaptive; manage and lead professional team, etc.); along with general professional competences and profession specific competences. The most difficult part is to understand how such learning outcomes expressed in leadership and professional skills could be achieved at either basic or advanced level and later assessed.

The central leadership creation task is consistent with this dynamic conceptualization of team effectiveness (Chiniara and Bentein 2018). In this sense, team leadership includes all processes that improve team

effectiveness. Dynamic models of team leadership have two main focuses, which focus on task cycles or episodes, as well as the process of acquiring and developing team skills. The improvement of the emotional competences of project managers has a positive effect on the learning organization and the project success.

2 Project management and competences required

It is apparent that there is a close connection between the skills and competences of the project managers who are responsible for the transformation and the satisfaction of the project team members.

The competence of the transformation management had a positive effect on the company performance through market differentiation (Shao 2018). Competences of managers appear to be of a great importance, since they might help to effectively steer people and guide them in their everyday tasks.

All in all, one can see that managerial competences can be classified and split into the realms of technical and behavioural competences. The technical competences refer to competences related to the project management itself, for example: project planning, time management, etc. Behavioural competences refer to the personal skills and abilities of the project manager, such as leadership, creativity, as well as dedication.

Successful manager is seen as an active agent that aims to disseminate project management knowledge throughout the organization and to develop the necessary skills among customers to succeed in their projects. As a parameter for achieving this goal, a Project Management Competency Development Framework (PMCDF) published by the Project Management Institute (PMI) is often used. It contains detailed information about the competences a project manager should have (Marnewick et al. 2016).

The project management allows us to identify three different competence dimensions: i) knowledge, ii) personnel and iii) performance. Both knowledge and performance competences are divided into the nine knowledge areas of project management described in the Project Management Knowledge Guide. The personal competences are divided into six key areas: i) performance and action, ii) help and human service, iii) impact and influence, iv) management, v) cognitive, and vi) personal effectiveness (Udo and Koppensteiner 2004).

For the implementation of sustainability in organizations, it is crucial that skill gaps and lack of competence in some areas that the managers might yield should be closed and tackled by the prescribed routines and the standards of project management skills. It is obvious that the standards of project management skills should develop in order to prepare the project managers for their key role in achieving the sustainability of organizations. It is difficult to develop a competence assessment for the different project roles. Thence, there should be several reusable tools for project manager, project team member, project reviewer, and business analyst roles. Each tool lists the core competence requirements for each of the above project roles and includes an automated assessment to conveniently evaluate individual candidates and identify skill gaps.

Project Manager is the person responsible for the performance of all management functions in relation to one of the project elements (product, scope, etc.) or the performance of one or more management functions in relation to the entire project. The authority and responsibility of the project manager in each case is determined by the contract with the Customer/Stakeholder, however, s/he and a team are tasked with effectively managing the implementation of the project throughout the entire life cycle of the project.

The project manager is responsible for achieving the objectives of the project within the allocated budget, in accordance with the project planning deadlines and with a given level of quality which requires a great set of both professional and personal competences (Figure 1).

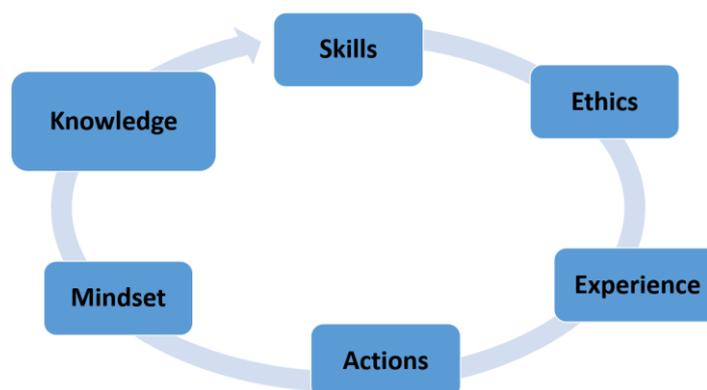


Fig. 1. Competences of a professional project manager
Source: Own results

The project manager usually performs the following functions: recruits a project team; develops a project plan (together with the team) and ensures the achievement of the required objectives; resolves interpersonal conflicts; distributes resources at all levels of the organization; negotiates; implements an integrated system for monitoring changes in the project; juggles priorities; participates in the professional evaluation, training and motivation of staff; creates a favorable atmosphere in the team.

The main functions of administrative management are planning, organizing, coordinating, controlling and motivating. Along with the traditional management functions the project manager carries out specific project managerial functions such as project initiation, resource mobilization and communication.

The implication of project initiation function (leadership) is the ability to make and adjust decisions at each stage of project implementation to achieve the objectives assumed. The initiation function also implies the ability of the project manager to constantly adjust the goals in view of the changing requirements of the macro and microenvironment. Effective initiation also implies project management in a limited resource environment. The manager should be able to see the difference between desired planned and achieved results.

The resource mobilization function implies the ability of the project manager to evaluate, search for and mobilize existing internal resources and lure external resources to ensure the smooth implementation of the project and its development (Pham and Kim 2019). The most general concept of resources is all that allows a manager to conduct mission, achieve the predefined objectives and solve project tasks, such as money, personnel, logistics, information, staff qualifications, useful business relationships, etc.

The communication function refers to the ability of the project manager to establish and maintain relations both between team members and between other parties involved and, in the ability, to use these relations to ensure effective workflow on the project (Figure 2).

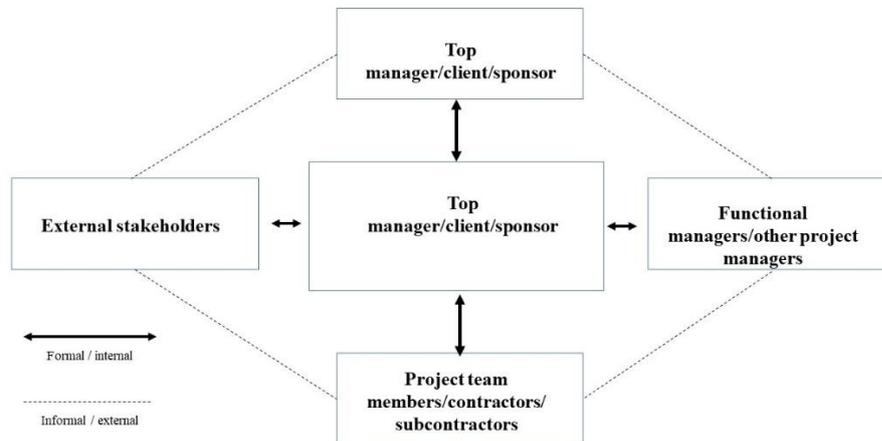


Fig. 2. Project manager communications
Source: Own results

Project managers can opt for different management styles: governance – a type of management used in hierarchical bureaucratic systems. In complex projects governance is associated with several levels of management that require a clear division of competency; or leadership – the art of influencing other people to encourage them to achieve certain goals (Ralf and Rodney 2010). Governance assumes creating and developing a social and management system in which the manager and his/her employees, who are in hierarchical relationships, achieve the goals of the project and solve problems through the use of the administrative management system.

Table 1. The abilities of project managers and leaders

Managers	Leaders
able to cope with difficulties	able to cope with changes
create order and stability	recognize the need to change the direction and implementation of the project
committed to developing effective plans and allocating tasks	interdependence thru common goals, trust, and respect
focused on structures and procedures,	guide people in a new direction
monitor results and plans, and takes essential corrective measures	motivate project teams to overcome difficulties to achieve new goals with joint efforts.

Source: Own results

Achieving goals and solving problems is achieved through the use in practice of the general functions of administrative management: planning, organizing, coordinating, motivating and controlling. While leadership is more about leading others. We can find traits of both formal leadership (for example, the appointment by a project manager of a specialist who does not have the appropriate competence), and informal leadership, for example, the situation of professional leadership (Pilkienė et al. 2018). The abilities of managers and leaders and differences in approaches to tackling difficult issues are better described in Table 1 above.

Moreover, we can easily tell the leader and the project manager as these persons will have different goals. The manager's goals are related to the implementation of the project plan within the framework of the given constraints, according to the prescribed rules and orders and within the limits of his/her own competences. Meanwhile, the goals of the true leader are related to achieving the goals of the project and obtaining the best results, even if you have to violate some rules and instructions (Wright and Quick 2011).

3 Management and fostering leadership

Everyone would probably agree that collaboration is the foundation for bringing together the knowledge, experience and skills of multiple team members in order to make a more effective contribution to the development of a new service or product than individual team members could not achieve by themselves. The process involves the commitment to one common goal and interdependence that results from what is achieved together being greater than what can be achieved individually.

Collaboration is a discipline that requires an understanding of the practices that make it successful. Human Resources (HR) departments in various organisations can help promote discussions about positive ways to work together in a group for maximum effectiveness. All of the above also means that as a leader, one must realize that the team is made up of individuals that each one has unique needs and operates on different levels of ability and self-confidence. For this reason, a leader must be flexible in leadership to develop the most appropriate overall style for the team and to adapt it to the needs of each team member.

Thence, collaboration is the prerequisite of leadership – not delegating one person to lead the team but achieving close cooperation between all team members in order to achieve the success and prosperity of the whole organisation or the business company (Tabassi et al.2016).

The success of the project management is dependent on the ability of the project manager to lead the project team. PMI PMBOK® (PM Body of knowledge) describes the following leadership characteristics: directing and uniting subordinates, motivating and inspiring. Nevertheless, the process of forming leadership abilities has not yet been studied sufficiently. However, the development of knowledge and leadership abilities is crucial, since such qualities are necessary for the successful management of large projects and large project teams. The development of leadership qualities is critical as we are witnessing the growing needs of the market for the implementation of large and complex projects.

Generally, each project manager performs three functions:

- personal performance of work (making);
- management of the work of subordinates (managing);
- leadership in the team (leading).

Depending on how big the project is, the project manager spends different amount of time on each of these three functions. For example, the head of a small project (a team of 2-3 people), might personally perform the work (making), is less loaded with managing the work of subordinates (managing), and to a lesser extent lead the team (leading). The head of a medium-sized project (a team of 10-20 people), is more occupied with work on managing subordinates (managing), to a lesser extent personally performs work (making), and to some extent leads the team (leading). The project director in charge of a large project (a team of 30-40 people or more) is obliged to lead the team (leading), to a lesser extent manages subordinates (managing) and rarely does the work personally (making).

The success of the leadership process of the project manager depends on changing the priorities between the three functions of the project manager. We can identify three events in this process:

1. preferential management of subordinates;
2. emergence of the qualities of a leader;
3. predominant leadership in the project team.

The key is the process of moving a potential leader from event (2) to event (3). This process is a process of forming the individual qualities of a leader. Event (3) should occur before the project manager is appointed a leader of a large project (Quick and Wright 2011). This role is intended for the project director who has successfully completed the leadership building process and is able to demonstrate highly effective results in managing teams of large complex projects.

Both Management and Leadership functions increase on the way from event (2) to event (3) and further to event (4). However, the Leadership function is growing faster than the Management function. Due to this fact, the leading function becomes equivalent to the control function when the event (3) is reached and significantly exceeds the control function when the event (4) is reached (Contractor et al.2012).

Figure 3 demonstrates the balance of leadership and management functions of the project manager. Upon reaching event (2), the PM mainly controls and to a lesser extent leads in the project team (i.e. $OE < OF$). Upon reaching event (3), the PM equally manages and leads (i.e., $OA = OB$). Upon reaching event (4), the PM largely leads the team and, to a lesser extent manages (i.e., $OC > OD$).

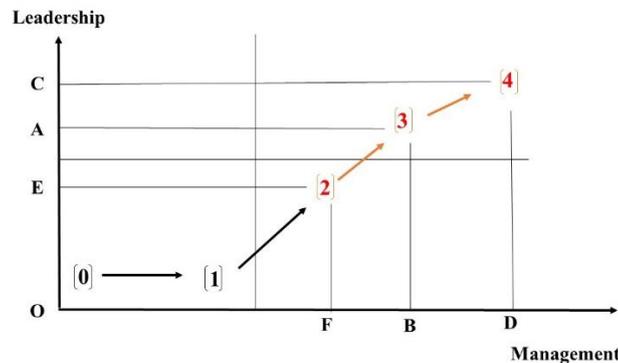


Fig. 3. The balance of leadership and management functions of a project manager
Source: Own results

What should be the recommendations for achieving success in the process of building leadership for a project manager? In other words, how to ensure a consistent process of changing priorities between management and leadership functions (Table 2)? The success of this process depends on such factors as: the right balance in the team and support, individual work with each subordinate, building an effective teamwork, motivating subordinates (Dansereau et al. 2013; Cetin and Kinik 2015).

Only a highly effective PM can become a leader. A critical factor in the success of this process is the speed of developing leadership qualities. If the pace is not fast enough, say, does not exceed the growth rate of the control function, then event (3) becomes unreachable for the PM. Such a PM will remain an effective manager but will never become a leader.

Table 2. Change of priorities between management and leadership functions of a project manager

Event	Balance of functions	Status of a project manager
2	management > leadership	Potential leader
3	management = leadership	Real leader
4	management < leadership	Mature leader

Source: Own results

The development process from the potential to the mature leader requires:

- personal input and enthusiasm;
- creative thinking;
- setting clear goals and objectives.

These qualities ensure the emergence and necessary growth of the ability of the PM to lead with the result of predominant leadership in the project team when an event (3) is achieved. At this point, the PM becomes the recognized leader of the project team. According to Kerzner (2013), the following competencies of the leader should be demonstrated at this stage: flexibility, innovative thinking, as well as initiative and charisma. All in all, it seems that the process of further development of leadership qualities assumes teamwork organization, mentoring, strategic thinking, and delegating tasks and responsibilities.

4 Conclusion and discussions

Overall, it is apparent that leadership competences can be fostered through reasonable and well-prepared project management course. Project management course can help develop emotional intelligence, the ability to identify

sources of conflict situations in intercultural communication, and to identify and eliminate the causes of miscommunications in specific situations.

A new models of leadership behaviour can be developed with the methodically right organization of the educational process. Case studies, serious games, and practice-oriented techniques should become a core of the educational process. The mission of a university “to educate” students, introduce them to the modern culture, broaden their horizon becomes transparent when university teachers and administrators employ in the educational process a variety of modern theories of leadership, assessment matrices and core competences of leaders.

The course on project management should also teach students how to tell leadership from management. Being an outstanding manager does not imply that you are an effective leader. Project management course can develop leadership skills to become effective leaders. Modern organizations today require that successful project managers be effective leaders, as well. By conceptualizing the differences between project management and leadership, and taking the direction to become effective leaders, future project managers can exploit their innovative and creative skills to help them expand leadership skills that will clinch their project management capacities.

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