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TEACHING PROJECT MANAGEMENT TO MANAGERS WITH REFERENCE TO INTERNATIONAL PROJECT MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION PROJECT EXCELLENCE AWARD

This paper deals with PM training efficient and profitable for all stakeholders. The inspiration to write it was the author's rich experience as a trainer and an IPMA Project Excellence Award Assessor. There are three reasons for writing the paper: to encourage managers to better prepare such training (formulation of needs and expectations by them), to indicate the main points of content and the method of training for inexperienced trainers and to promote the PE Award. The methodology used consisted in observation, interviewing and inquiring. Basic results are: showing managers the weight of needs and expectations formulation, the content and methods of training and PE Award promotion. Conclusions – training more profitable for companies and interesting for participants and trainers. The PE Award is more recognized worldwide.

Key words: *project management, Project Excellence Award, training*

INTRODUCTION – CONTEXT, AIM, GROUPS OF INTEREST, METHODOLOGY

There are two main factors which contributed to writing this paper. The first one is the profession of the author: an academic teacher, a researcher, a trainer and a consultant for 37 years, the last 15 in the PM area exclusively (an IPMA – SPMP certificated PM trainer), and an Assessor of IPMA Project Excellence Award for 4 years. The second one is related to the first: the author's experience shows that more than often curricula proposed, as well as their content, trainers and methods used in the PM area of education are inadequate neither to the target group content nor to its expectations.

The aim of this paper is triple. The first consists in showing managers how important appropriate training is for their future projects success and – in consequence – the right formulation of their needs and expectations before it. The second one is to indicate to young PM trainers the content and methods of training, corresponding to the

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IPMA Project Excellence Award philosophy. And, finally, some kind of Project Excellence Award promotion.

So, in a natural way, **we have two target groups** – trainers and managers, interested in very high IPMA standards of project management in their companies. The **methodology used** consisted in observation, interviewing and inquiring.

1. TEACHING VS. TRAINING

Teaching – operational definitions: ‘The action of a person who teaches; the profession of a teacher’, [5].

‘Teaching is imparting knowledge or skill’, [6].

Teaching - Descriptive Definitions:

‘Teaching is that which results in learning’, [7].

There are drawbacks with this form of definition:

- Learning is the responsibility of the teacher!;
- If students do not learn, it is the fault of the teacher.

This is the process - product approach:

- students are a product of the system;
- confuses teaching (a task) with learning (an objective).

By this definition, an external observer cannot tell whether or not a teacher is actually teaching; e.g., cannot observe a teacher to see if teaching is actually occurring.

Teaching as Intentional Activity:

‘Teaching is undertaking certain tasks or activities, the intention of which is to induce learning’, [5, 7]. A teacher can anticipate that certain activities will result in learning, but not guarantee it. In short, successful teaching cannot be reduced to a set of general rules, or a prescribed pattern of behavior.

Teaching as Normative Activity:

‘Normative teaching requires that the activities of teaching conform to certain ethical conditions’, [6, 7]:

- conditioning (stimulus-obeying behavior);
- indoctrinating (uniformed belief);
- brainwashing (conditioned behavior/uninformed belief);
- informing (information with explanations or evidence, no experience provided);
- training (rule-obeying behavior);
- instructing (training and informing);
- teaching (processes of verification, concern for what student thinks, preparing them for independent action).

Scientific Definition of Teaching:

‘Teaching is the process of carrying out those activities that experience has shown to be effective in getting students to learn’ [5, 6].

A major problem is that there is very little research that agrees systematically on anything. Craft wisdom is frequently good, but sometimes is in error. And, finally, a scientific definition is probably not possible given student autonomy.

A Working Definition of Teaching:

‘Teaching is undertaking certain ethical tasks or activities, the intention of which is to induce learning’, [5].

In a natural way, we should ask about the relation between teaching and learning. If teaching is what teachers do and learning is what students do, the question is: ‘Does a relationship between good teaching and student learning exist?’ To some degree, but how they are related and to what extent is unclear. Some students can and will learn in spite of bad teaching, and some students will not learn even with the best teaching.

Training definitions:

‘Organized activity aimed at imparting information and/or instructions to improve the recipient's performance or to help him or her attain a required level of knowledge or skill’, [5].

‘Training is defined as learning that is provided in order to improve performance of the present job (Nadler, 1984)’, [7].

The first observation is that the ‘teaching’ notion is much more known and met in sources than this of ‘training’. Conclusion? Teaching is very classic, and training is relatively new. That is why, this last one needs much more interest in order to develop, taking into account the managers and enterprises interests.

The second one deals with the difference between ‘teaching’ and ‘training’. In order to summarize, I will go to Descartes three famous saying: ‘Tell me, and I will forget’, ‘Show me, and I will understand’, ‘Let me try, and I will be able to use it’. The first one – approximately – means ‘teaching’. The second one is ‘intermediate stage’. And, finally, the last one means ‘training’. There is no better explanation of the difference between these two notions.

2. TEACHING PM

The title of this chapter is one of the three activities of the author. Two others are research and training – both in the PM area. Let’s go to teaching PM.

In Poland now teaching Project Management [3] is done within the last (third) year of first cycle university studies. It means that we have as students very young people, 22 years old, mostly without any professional experience. With serious consequences also. These students, very clever, motivated (Poland is one the most economically dynamic countries in EU) and ambitious, are too young and inexperienced to teach them PM according to Descartes last indication (train them). Moreover, taking into account the lack of teachers’ practical attitude and experience, teaching PM at Polish universities is very classic (too much classic) in comparison with the extremely progressive content and perspectives of this management domain. Lectures without any (almost) practical applications. In the author’s opinion, this is the typical case not only of Polish universities. In this situation, the most appropriate definition of teaching is this descriptive one, with all negative consequences mentioned above.

3. TRAINING PM TO MANAGERS – SURVEY

Training Project Management means improving performance of the present job – the job of Manager (generally), or Project Manager (particularly), [2].

Nowadays, we are witnesses of massive PM training demand among managers. Recent years are probably the crucial period of manager's awareness reaching the level of PM importance understanding. Understanding also the absolute necessity of training in this – relatively new – and complex – domain. So, we should ask several questions and answer them:

1. Demands of training participants – how are they identified? Who is responsible for this process?
2. Demands – in which extension identified demands are consistent with the real ones of training participants?
3. In which extension the interests of all parties involved in the training (participants, their enterprise, trainers and training company) are taken into account and balanced?
4. In which manner is the training company chosen?
5. How is the trainer selected?
6. How is the training level evaluated by the participants?
7. How about the training time and place?
8. How is the training evaluation planned and realized by training organizers, and training results exploited *ex post* by the participants (lessons learned)?
9. In what degree could the company use the training results?
10. Which PM subjects cause most of the problems for the participants in their project management reality?

The answer to these basic questions will be given essentially due to the author's professional experiences and based on the studies concerning over 100 training sessions (about 1200 participants) in the years from 1999 to 2010, J. Betta (2010).

Re Q1. They are four possible sources of such identification. The lecturer can find below their frequency:

- Enterprise: 30%
- Training office: 15%
- Trainer himself: 45%
- Beneficiaries/participants: 10%

Re Q2. The results are as follows:

- Full consistence: 30%
- Partial consistence: 35%
- Any consistence: 35%

Re Q3. At medium level. Generally, some attempts are made to find some consensus between all stakeholders expectations and interests. Attempts not always efficient.

Re Q4. They are three essential possibilities:

- Personal connections: 35%

- Internet research: 45%
- References: 10%

Re Q5. They are three essential possibilities:

- Personal connections: 30%
- Internet research: 20%
- References: 50%

Re Q6: Rather high, which is contradictory with p. 2 and 4.

Re Q7: They are several main criteria of such choice. The results:

- Time:
 - 1 day – 25%
 - 2 days – 35%
 - 3 days – 35%
 - More than 3 days – 5%
- Place:
 - Trained Company – 65%
 - Out – 35%

Re Q8: Typical actions are:

- Plan and realization:
 - Reporting to training company only: 30%
 - Reporting to the trained company only: 10%
 - Reporting to both 55%
 - Any reporting: 5%
- Lessons learned:
 - Any: 80%
 - Some: 20%
 - All: 0%

Re Q9:

- No such data (feedback) from the trained company: 85%
- Some applications are realized: 15%

Re Q10: They are four areas of PM, causing more problems than others (in % of trained person, before training several answers possible):

- Project results management: identification of stakeholders, their needs and interests, project objectives formulation, realization, checking and adaptation: 65%
- Project processes management: identification, checking and changing the processes within the project: 60%
- Customers management after the project: feedback from the customer, care and support during and after the project, reputation: 45%

- Results and performances management after the project: project's achievements in comparison with its intended project results: 50%

Summarizing:

1. In the majority of cases, enterprises are not able to formulate their demands/needs in PM trainings. Their level of consistence with real needs of concerned people is very low.
2. The choice of the training company is rather casual. The choice of the trainer is much better prepared and justified.
3. High evaluation of training by the participants, comparing with point 2 means some lack of their 'PM' consciousness.
4. Training sessions are generally too short. Training sessions inside the trained company is a bad solution – there are too many perturbations, affecting participants' attention.
5. There are almost inexistent lessons learned by training participants. They use – in practice – neither knowledge nor skills delivered during the training.
6. Trained companies probably do not know how to use the results of their employees training in practice.
7. A strong majority of the managerial body has real problems with the most crucial aspects of project management.

4. TRAINING PM TO MANAGERS – NECESSARY CONTENT IN CURRICULA

This is the central paragraph of the paper. We will concentrate on the answers to Question 10 above. **We admit that the four PM areas mentioned in these answers as causing most problems to the majority of trainees are, in fact, the main source of project success or, respectively, defeat.** The proof of this hypothesis validity will be given two steps.

The first one is easy and results directly from literature overview (study). Practically, all authors e.g. [1, 3, 4] agree that the crucial phases, when the errors occurred affect more than others the whole project, are its initialization and planning. R. Darnall [4] writes, 'You spend your time on planning or on problems solving'. This is just the stage, within which, among other things:

- Project stakeholders are identified with their needs and expectations, and the project objectives are defined, taking into account the stakeholders analysis. There is no better method to create an environment, favorable for the project, contributing also to the project success. We recognize one part of the first answer to Question 10.
- All the main processes within the project are identified within the planning phase. This is one part of the second answer.

Another important element of PM is:

- In order to ensure the realization, conform to the plan, but also react flexibly to the environment changes, checking and adaptation are necessary. This is also a common point of view of PM specialists. We can see here the convergence with answers No 1 and 2 again.

- Finally, according to most of the authors, lessons learned and – more generally – knowledge management [1, 4] are essential factors for the future project successes of the company and, finally, for its competitive advantage. We find here answers No 3 and 4 to Question 10 from the previous paragraph.

In conclusion, the four first PM fields, causing the biggest problems to a strong majority of 1200 training participants, are confirmed by numerous authors in bibliography and recognized as the main responsibility.

The second step of our hypothesis confirmation is no so evident, much more specialized and based on the idea of the IPMA Project Excellence Award, and the author's 5 years of experience – as an Assessor – in this Award. Let's start with a short presentation of this Award, [2, 8].

The IPMA Project Excellence Award is annually awarded to the most successful project teams in the world. The award identifies examples of excellent project management and acknowledges innovative projects. It supports professional project management in achieving high performance in projects and motivates project teams to identify and optimize the use of their strengths. The Award was presented for the first time at the IPMA World Congress in Berlin in 2002.

The PE Award is a unique form of benchmarking for project work. All award applicants receive an individual, detailed written benchmark report from a team of qualified and experienced project experts. A benchmark report shows not only the strengths in project management but also indicates in which areas the project work can be improved, which leads to better project results in the future. The benchmark report includes also the comparison of the best project teams' performance. The IPMA Project Excellence Award offers a considerable gain of prestige. Award Finalists, Prize Winners and Award Winners are published and the logo of the IPMA Project Excellence Award is available for company documents and publications. This enables the team to show that it is one of the most successful and internationally recognized project teams.

The structure is offered by the IPMA - Project Excellence Model. The Model is a benchmarking tool which helps project teams to reflect on their own strengths and potential improvement areas. The model is an adaptable and open concept. It allows many different project approaches to be used and should gain major benefits for future projects. The model elements are based on the fundamental insights, concepts and experiences of Total Quality Management (TQM). Of course, this experience – and therefore the IPMA Project Excellence Model – shows only the status quo of current management quality. However, the model is being developed continually based on the experience of outstanding organizations and project teams.

The target for the PE Award applicants is to collect 1000 points. The IPMA Project Excellence Model divides 9 assessment criteria into two sections, each of 500 Points:

Project Management:

- What is the project like?
- How is it managed?

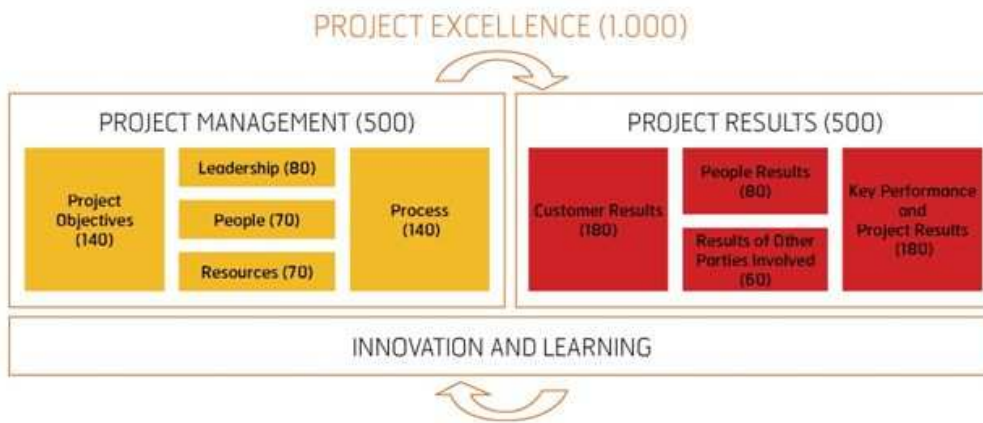


Fig. 1. Project Excellence Award Model

Source: [8]

Project Results:

- What does the project achieve?
- What comes out of it?

Analyzing the above model we can easily find again:

- The first answer (65% of questioned) to Question No 10 above ‘Project results management’, corresponding strictly to ‘Project objectives’ (140/1000 to win according to the model);
- The second answer (65%) ‘Project processes management’ corresponding to ‘Process’ (140/100);
- The third answer (45%) ‘Customers management after the project’ corresponding to ‘Customers results’ (180/1000);
- Finally, the last answer (50%) ‘Results and performances management after the project’ is nothing else than ‘Key performance and project results’ (180/1000).

To sum up, the four PM areas, generating, according to training participants, the majority of problems, are evaluated in the IPMA Project Excellence Award Model extremely highly – they cover 640/1000 in total. This fact confirms the validity of our hypothesis. So, as the main factors they are responsible for project success and should constitute absolutely the core part of a good PM curriculum, detailed in accordance with corresponding sub-criteria of the Project Excellence Award Model, [8]. A recommended training methodology is a case study and the best one would be PE Award finalists case studies, but it needs IPMA and finalists acceptance.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Let us remember the three aims of this paper:

- Show to managers the importance for their future project success of appropriate training and the right formulation of their needs and expectations before it. This aim is achieved by the **results** shown in paragraphs 4 and 5.

- Indicate to young PM trainers the content and methods of training, corresponding to the IPMA Project Excellence Award philosophy. This is accomplished in two previous paragraphs also (summarizing), being the **second result** of the paper.
- IPMA Project Excellence Award promotion. This aim is achieved in paragraph 5 (**third result**).

In consequence of these three achievements, we can expect:

- PM training sessions much more profitable for managers and their enterprises. Such training sessions can also encourage them to manage projects according to the IPMA PE Award, and to apply for the award;
- PM training sessions more satisfactory for trainers, who can see efficiency and concrete results of their job;
- The Project Excellence Award making one step towards worldwide recognition as PM standard.

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UCZENIE ZARZĄDZANIA PROJEKTAMI MENEDŻERÓW W ODNIESIENIU DO IPMA PROJECT EXCELLENCE AWARD

Streszczenie

Praca dotyczy szkoleń z zarządzania projektami, skutecznych i użytecznych dla przedsiębiorstw, instytucji i organizacji. Inspiracją do jej napisania było bogate doświadczenie Autora jako trenera PM oraz asesora konkursu INTERNATIONAL PROJECT MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION Project Excellence Award. Są trzy powody uzasadniające napisanie tego artykułu.

Zachęcenie menedżerów do lepszego przygotowania szkoleń z zakresu PM (sformułowania potrzeb i oczekiwań), podpowiedzenie niedoświadczonym trenerom głównych treści i metod szkolenia oraz promowanie idei PE Award. Zastosowana metodyka polegała na obserwacji, wywiadzie i ankietyzacji. Zasadniczymi wynikami są: ukazanie menedżerom wagi właściwego formułowania potrzeb i oczekiwań, treści i metody szkoleń oraz promocja dobrych praktyk w postaci PE Award. Wnioski – szkolenia z PM są korzystne dla przedsiębiorstw/organizacji i ciekawsze dla uczestników oraz trenerów. Ponadto, konkurs PE Award jeszcze bardziej rozpoznawalny w świecie.

Słowa kluczowe: zarządzanie projektami, Project Excellence Award, szkolenia

Artykuł recenzował: płk dr hab. Wojciech HORYŃ, prof. nadzw. WSOWL