

The introduction of project management and project thinking at secondary schools

Introduction

It's not the first time when the authors of the project management curriculum are dealing with the question of when to start the young generation of instilling the principles of this subject. The current proposal has brought a team of authors under the guidance of Prof. Dr. Michael Gessler from the University of Bremen (ITB - *Institut für Bildung und Technik*). In cooperation with GPM (*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Projektmanagement*) was released a couple of support materials that are telling school leaders and teachers about how to successfully teach the subject at secondary schools.

The idea became even the stimulus for the European project, in cooperation with six Central European schools (in Germany, Switzerland, Slovakia, Poland, and Turkey). In the Czech Republic the project participation (2012-2013) signed up the Faculty of Business Administration at the University of Economics in Prague under the guidance of Prof. Ing. Ivan Nový, CSc. Faculty team, in cooperation with an expert team from the academic environment and practice issued the original teaching material and in their workshops also undergo a vocational assessment. The project was even specially applied on the two Czech secondary schools and brought a specific outputs and suggestions for the next steps (Business Academy in Kroměříž and the SKODA AUTO Academy in Mladá Boleslav).

What is new on the idea

The subject of project management we know from the professional faculties, the appropriate technical and economic high school. So far, however, this remarkable scope is penetrating now into the curriculum of secondary schools. In the curricula of secondary schools is not yet a project management reserved as a separate subject. But this was by German colleagues considered as a lack and also viewed as a unused potential.

The justification of the determination is on the one hand the fact that students are able to learn this subject in appropriate form far before than by entering high school, on the other hand, now at the entrance to college or to practice they may be ready to deal with the basics

of the project thinking and project management. Specifically, the model was designed for the higher secondary classes or vocational schools with 30 teaching hours per semester. The main content of the subject should be an introduction and a comprehensive active teaching style, which takes place in the form of the selected project beyond the individual subjects and involving compulsory optional and generally educational subjects.

What does the thinking and management project for students?

Project management is a working taxonomy introduced in professional practice. The aim of the proposal and practice proposal with students is "learning by experience". The emphasis of teaching lies on the active participation of students, particularly in planning, decision-making process and systematic work in the teams. Certainly in a given teaching is no place for passive submitting of knowledge by students. The teacher is the coordinator and a supporter in methods and approaches for dealing with the proposed project, which are solving the students themselves. Thanks to the fact that in the teaching of project management by doing we meet multiple disciplines which are necessary for the confrontation with the solution of the project. The multidisciplinary approach relates to the overall efficiency of the students and increases their practical goal orientation. In addition to work with the students has the teacher to build their feeling of responsibility, because they do not work in a project only for themselves, but also as a part of the team, which also improves the analytical, communication and cooperation capabilities of the students. Project Management program in secondary schools aims to make students met with a specific solution of project tasks already in a high school, to gain more relationship to reality, to know how to benefit from the methodological and social competence, which go beyond the standard framework of disciplines. The advantage of this training include the ability to learn in a structured manner, to act as a team, to think systematically and learn how to establish priorities, problem solving, discussion, evaluation, and time management.

Why to introduce a project management for vocational school?

The main reason is to be ready for innovative methods of teaching for practice and how to achieve a better quality education at vocational schools. Many important developmental processes today, companies and other institutions are organized in the form of projects. This systematic working position is at present more and more demanded and becomes a standard need of companies for employees. Number of institutions and some businesses without the elements of project work would be for long time faded all ready. With the need for the project and management thinking in the companies must go hand in hand a change in the training philosophy of future employees. The ability to work on projects, be part of the team to solve problems collectively and provide high-quality and reliable performance represents a significant professional competence. Project management is also directly

related to the development of the perspective thinking, creative activities, and a comprehensive understanding of tasks. Improving all of these skills in the context of project management, provides a far stronger assurance that the professional schools will leave really competent graduates with experience in team work and use of entrusted responsibility.

The additional output of Central European cooperation in this issue is several other points:

- Methodological guide relating to special access to evaluation process of students, which is far more complex in project management than in the evaluation and testing of certain learned knowledge and information.
- The necessary training of teachers of secondary and vocational schools, who themselves must first learn how to work with the prepared materials during practical training and know how to properly use by the teaching with students.
- There is also prepared one seminar about cultural background, which is for project management very important. The subject assumes a high personal responsibility of a teacher and a healthy project thinking based on personal values, belief in creative and innovative abilities of students, on respect for the personalities and his culture (in intercultural teams) and the way of thinking of the team members, the ability to predict the future development and discipline to control his thinking and acting as well as the appropriate pedagogical thinking and action leading students toward future objectives. All of the listed abilities and competences are also related to openness and critical approach, which of course is never a simple task.
- Familiarity with rich experience of German and Swiss high schools, where the teaching of project management and project thinking are running with great success for several years, and will be further developed.
- The application and use of the prepared documents for a specific Czech and Central European secondary school environment.

Summing up the entire course of the international project, we can say that the idea and its realization of a pilot part of project found positive response among the members of the Expert Commission, and between the teachers and the students in all member countries. These are sufficient reasons for its continuation.

For more information visit <http://projektmanagement.vse.cz>

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