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MANAGER OF EDUCATIONAL PROJECT AND HIS COMPETENCIES

Katerina Hrazdilova Bockova

Corresponding Author: Dubnica Technological Institute, Slovakia. Email: hrazdilova@dti.sk

Daniela Mat'ovcikova

Dubnica Technological Institute, Slovakia. Email: matovcikova@dti.sk

Abstract

It is more than desirable for project-oriented activities to be conducted and managed by people with relevant knowledge and experience. At the same time, managers should have appropriate skills in order to apply knowledge and experience respectably in the context of the study field and the situation. The aim of this presented paper is to propose a competency model of educational projects which shall be primary used in the educational institutions. The contribution consists of two parts. The first part is focused on the basic terminology issues and anchor concepts such as competencies and the competency model. The second part is dedicated to the description of the specific proposal for a precise competency model and its subsequent presentation and verification.

Keywords: Project, Project Management, Project Manager, Competences, Competency Model, Educational Sector

1. Introduction

Many specialists with different abilities participate in projects particularly in special and complex projects. These people form a project team headed by a project manager. He is chosen by senior management of the company. His task is to be a leader, a planner, and an organizer, a coordinator of teamwork, a controller and a negotiator in one person.

The project manager leads (not performs) all work in the team, so one of his core competencies is to manage people who are in project realization, to oversee and monitor processes, to represent the project outward, to deliver necessary resources, to improve all communication and project team motivation and so on. In addition he can divide the work between the project personnel who are working on the problem as one team.

One particularly important ability of a project manager is to influence other team members. His capability to lead depends more on the art of motivation than jurisdiction regardless of the extent project team members are subordinate to him. As projects are very often not a routine matter, project managers are frequently forced to solve any project tasks creatively.

In the book "*Successful Project Manager*" (Newton, 2008, p.25) the project manager is considered to be a person who has responsibility for delivering all project components. It could be a full time job or just the role in the situation.

This job is suitable for someone who knows how to improvise, to make fast decisions

and can see the problem in a broader context. He can also solve most of the nonstandard or unplanned condition or influences which happened either unexpectedly or could be a result of risk factor effects and project changes. A comprehensive approach in performance of the project manager role assumes qualifications and skills of professional performance of project work, process management, relationship with people, art to motivate and encourage, analytical and synthetic knowledge needed for evaluation. The evaluation is based on comparison current status of the project against the plan and draft conclusion with regard to potential effect of risk factors. This wide range of the project manager activities requires qualification, necessary experience and a great deal of talent.

The primary objective of this paper is to present the project manager competency model of educational projects. The formation of a competency model is achieved by improvement and reformulation of personal strategy formulation of educational institutions. One of the strategic objectives of educational institutions is to create functional competency model for job positions which are going to facilitate the personnel management especially the process of personnel selection, motivation, evaluation and employee development and dealing with increased employee turnover. According to (Hrazdilová Bočková, 2012), (Hlásna, 2008) or (Geršicová, 2007) the management of educational institutions concluded that the process of personnel management does not work according to those needs of the institutions that has been originally set towards. It is one of the major priorities for the next period to proceed to functional personnel management. The resort out of this situation is to create functional competency models.

The presented competency model should assist in the effectiveness of project manager tasks throughout performance management processes carried out. Competences are going to be determined, together with their basic level and their higher level which should be reached at some point. By assessment of certain competencies which are tied to the job, we can laid the foundation for a competency model and later include also specific competencies related to the specific institutions which may be changeable once another institution is interested in using the competency model.

Why is the paper focused on presentation of the competency model formulation as an effective way of need for changes in personnel management system in educational institutions? The reason is that the usage of competencies and competency models represents still underrated tool of comprehensive and holistic way of managing people in the organization. There is the assumption that the competency model of project manager position will be of a benefit and an advantage for educational institutions in case of any future planned adjustments in personnel management.

While creating own competency model, an emphasis was put on its usability in the practice of educational institutions and its portability to other organizations if necessary.

2. Overview of the Current State of the Topic

2.1. Issue of Competencies

The term competence is known and used in general, but not always in the same meaning. Competencies are perceived as an opportunity to comment on some problem or the power to make a decision for the general public (he is in the eyes of others considered as competent). Experts in the field treat a term competence more as a character, knowledge, skill, experience and quality, as "a set of certain conditions for specific activity that supports the achievement of a goal." (Veteška and Tureckiová, 2008, p.25).

Kubeš, Spillerová and Kurnický (2004, p.14-15) mention that Boyatzis already stressed the difference between a task that must be met and abilities that an employee must have in order to fulfil the task well. This division therefore distinguishes between what we do (the result of our business) and how we behave to fulfil the task perfectly.

According to Hroník (2008, p.24) distinguishing results and ways leading to these results allow us much better to manage the process and performance. If we know which competencies should be included in the functional competency model of the employee, it can

be useful for him and the whole institution because it helps in their development to improve performance.

Kubeř, Spillerová and Kurnický (2004, p.16) state that one of the ways how accommodate the term of competence is Woodruff's concept. He sees under this term the "umbrella" which covers everything that may be directly or indirectly related to work performance. He sees competencies as a set of worker behaviour which has to be used in the position to handle the tasks competently.

If we say that a worker is competent (he performs assigned tasks to good or excellent level) this implies the following three assumptions (Kubeř *et al.* 2004, p.16):

- he is internally equipped with features, capabilities, knowledge, skills and experience which conduct such essential needs,
- he is motivated to use such behaviour, he sees value in the desired behaviour and is willing to spend the necessary energy this way,
- he can use behaviour in the environment.

In the above, it is possible to work well with the first assumption because knowledge and skills can be developed. The second assumption is regarding to the motivation for position of man, his value and beliefs (belong to the stable component of human personality) which are influenced far more difficult. While the third assumption is the external condition, it significantly affects the two mentioned above.

The views and conception of the term of competence are many, experts still have different opinions on what is exactly hiding under this term but the essential fact remains that the term of competence is and will continue to be linked to the process and behaviour leading to the desired performance.

2.2. The Competency Model

A competency model expresses in varying degrees of details and factual summary combination of knowledge, skills and other personality characteristics which are needed for effective performance of assigned tasks within the organization. These combinations are subsequently structured into different sized units which can be referred to as a system, map, profiles and lists of competencies or a competency anchor. Which model of these arrangements eventually emerges, depends on the specific intentions of specific institutions (Kovács, 2009, p.49).

"Competency model is not the way of the standard creation but the way to diversity management and performance" says Hroník (2007 *et al.* p.64) which further indicates the general advantages of introducing a competency model. The most important advantage of the competency model is in its capability to create a bridge between business strategy and HR strategy. A competency model is also a connection between the values of the institution and the job description. Institutions usually have one set of values whether written or unwritten, governing. There are many job descriptions of specific positions by individual and small companies sometimes as much as employees. According to Hroník (2007 *et al.* p.68) even in this case "a competency model is a practical tool for connection".

There are many ways of competency models typology and classification and it depends mainly on the intentions of the company which competency model arises. One of the highlights is broken down by Kubeř, Spillerová and Kurnický (2004, p.60 - 62) who divide competency models into Models of core competencies, The specific competency model, and The generic (general) competency model.

There are several approaches used by institutions while creating competence models. According to Kubeř, Spillerová and Kurnický (2004, p.60 - 62) these approaches were divided by Rothwell and Lindholm to Prescriptive (borrowed) access, A combined approach, and Access tailored.

Each of these approaches has its pros and cons. Managers of HR departments should be aware that the most appropriate approach is the one that reflects their expectations and intentions the best. From the practical point of view there are two considered possibilities. Either

the institution has an interest to sum up key competencies which characterize the extraordinarily successful managers in the present state of institutional development or intends to take into account future expectations of the institution in terms of managerial behaviour while identifying competencies.

3. Conclusion and Theoretical Discussion

In the paper we use the above concept of competence by Hroník (2008, p.23 - 26). However, each of the competency concepts has a relevance leading to the formation of the present competency model.

We can talk about a competence when it is related to a particular task, position or function. If we know the requirements and demands for a given position, we can derive a required competencies from them and group them into the competency model of a given work position (Kubeš *et al.* 2004, p.27).

Division of competencies is according to Boyatzis in (Kubeš *et al.* 2004, p.27) very similar to a suchlike division of Prokopenko and Kubr (1996, p.25-27) into the technical competence, behavior and manners. Mostly subconsciously we automatically divide competencies into the basic skills which a worker shall "bring" in his position and the competencies related to performance, respectively behavior which leads to effective performance.

Armstrong's concept of competency division in (Kovács, 2009, p.19-20) is then beneficial for the job thanks to his typology division in which generic competencies divide figure in the universal and competencies within the institution. This division is reflected in the present intent to create a competency model to use with slight modifications in multiple organizations. In order to ensure this model will subsequently operate it is necessary to include such competencies. The development of higher performance is achieved by a worker at a given position.

The base for the creation of a competency model consists of competencies' identification. Purposefully identified and defined competencies which are needed for effective implementation of the objectives and tasks of the institution, result in several comprehensive compilation units which can be described as a group or a type of competencies and these subsequently merge into a comprehensive competency model (Veteška, 2010, p.142).

Well established competency model should be functional and can be in operation when it will have the characteristics specified in (Hroník *et al.* 2007, pp.71 -72).

4. Basic Terminology Specifications of Solved Problems

In the case of the creation of a competency model we consider a project the one of training project staff in the organization where funding was obtained from the European Union grant. This project is always unique, inimitable and has a different temporary project team so according to Němec (2002, p.11) entirely fulfils the definition of the word perception project.

The product of the project where a project manager is in charge will improve the knowledge and skills of employees and thus also subsequent performance improvement of business processes which is the reason why educational projects exist. They assist companies to improve the skills and develop the competencies of their staff that it contributes to greater work efficiency of the people development in the organization and development of society itself. The project manager must have this fact in mind for the whole duration of this project and shall try to contribute through his actions to meeting the project objectives and desired outputs. Based on subdivision of specific activities to attain a specific objective (product) we can determine competency within the competency model of this job.

An analysed project manager will focus his activities on managing his own particular project within a company, thus he addresses the implementation phase (implementation) of the project.

There are many techniques for identification of competencies but all can be simply

divided into five stages according to Kubeř, Spillerov and Kurnick (2004, p. 46). This division is a major methodological procedure of processing the presented project manager of a competency model in educational projects.

- a) **Preparatory phase:** This phase foregoes own competencies identification and is conducted through structured interviews with managers in strategic positions and accompanied by material study.
- b) **Phase retrieval:** After obtaining the outputs of the preparatory phase one could reach a decision on the concept of collecting the underlying data and methodologies used on the basis that during the preparatory phase were obtained answers the following questions:
 - "Why" (why it is necessary to create a competency model)
 - "How" (which approach we use in order to form the model)
 - "Who" (who or what is the source of information for the development of a competency model).
- c) **Phase analysis and classification of information:** At this stage the data are processed using consecutive steps defined in (Kubeř *et al.* 2004, p.55-56). These are:
 - to describe individual behaviours appropriate for the position,
 - to identify specific information that contribute to successful or unsuccessful performance (the result represents a relevant selection and selected should be only those records that can be a source of the creation and description of competencies),
 - to classify the individual statements into groups called competency topics and to analyse further a classification process in order to create a homogeneous units (competence anchors) which have subsequently form the basis of competence and their manifestations,
 - to verify acquired data on a broader sample of respondents in the last step. Individual statements which have been classified in the third step are revised by a questionnaire method. This helps to obtain information about the need for individual expression or a completed competence in a given position. This information will be important later for the final decision on competencies classification into the competency model.
- d) **Description and creation of competencies and competency model:** Within the analysis and classification of information, we can speak of a competencies'sketch that we get by clustering of related behaviour types. Therefore these were subsequently elaborated in a more accurate characterization of competence so as accurately and comprehensively describe behaviour that characterizes it. One needs to create a scale and describe the various manifestations of competence according to the level of its development. Description of each level begins usually with negative behavioural features within a given jurisdiction and continues through weakly developed level to abnormal levels indicating the high level of competence development. All grades must be mutually distinguishable.
- e) **Preliminary competency model:** The model presented here will be validated and verified through the process steps performed within the project KEGA 2014.

5. Results

The first step identified clear patterns of behaviour which shows a successful project manager in his work. We proceeded from a long own experience and also from the job description anchored within the corporate documentation. These behavioural types were divided into topics in which the individual behavioural features were clustered into homogeneous units, from which all individual competencies were subsequently profiled (see Table 1).

Table 1. Competency topics

project orientation	goal orientation	successfully participates in financial management of the project can lead targeted presentation can lay out a sequence of action to achieve goals is consistent in meeting and achieving goal can correctly identify priorities follows the schedule and meets deadlines can identify actions needed to achieve goals
	project knowledge and skills	well-versed in issues of project management methodology is able to elaborate the tender documentation for the project (tender documents, declaration, takeover bids) and contract documentation can elaborate the complete project monitoring report is familiar with the problem of project finance
process orientation	active and creative approach to work	effectively organizes his work (time-management) + his subordinates is able to obtain the necessary information for his work and then use it can improvise when the planned procedures collapse
	systematic and accuracy	attends of routine administrative agenda ensures compliance with quality standards uses feedback to verify the information obtained
human resources orientation	managerial skills	successfully transmits information to members of his team and leads them managerially familiar with current employment law issues can lead meeting of the implementation team
	communication skills	can communicate with different target groups appropriately responds to the attacks of others can negotiate assertively can identify strengths and weaknesses of partner and suitable form of communication can respond to objections can use non-verbal communication can successfully argue communicates effectively with suppliers (lectures) – transmission of information to the success rate
corporate orientation	commitment	is loyal shares the company's value
	personal responsibility	can take responsibility for their own decision is stress-resistant performs sophisticatedly and adequately in each situation can be empathetic can take a positive experience from successful colleagues is independent, resourceful and diligent in performing
	proactivity (thinking in opportunities)	can choose the potential business partners is flexible and open to change has still new ideas
technical competence		knowledge of project management knowledge of specific project management from esf founding has skills of management control is willing to learn and work in other development can use office equipment (pc, fax, phone and printer) has driving licence – b and actively driving at least one foreign language communication can use effective argumentation in written form

Source: Own elaboration

Individual competencies which emerged from obtained data were again compared with the description of the job and verified if adequately correspond with requirements of a project manager position. A follow-up control confirmed them as satisfactory. Four- rating scale (inadequate level, the basic level, advanced level, high level) was used for a specific description of competencies (see Table 2). Insufficient level is no longer listed for specific competencies for the reason that the model is made for a suitable candidate of a project manager who will meet at least the basic level and could be accepted for this position.

Basic level of competence is given by the minimum required knowledge and skills which should the worker have if he ever wishes to hold the position. Another two stages are then distinguished by the behaviour of individuals in the context of the requirements for the competence, respectively given competence that can be developed from the basic level to advanced level and then at a high level of competence.

We picked this type of scale because it is very clearly stated what are the minimum requirements for admission to the position of project manager and how these skills can be developed from the basic level to high. Anything that did not reach even the basic level is insufficient. The possible employee potential would be then weighted by a recruiter in a particular company once he considers for a job position anyone with an insufficient level of competence.

6. Conclusion

Even if a quality level of project management is elaborated in detail with the use of methodologies and rules, the result fully depends on the people who make up the organizational structure of a particular project. Although it is important for the daily management to fill up individual sub-tasks which are the result of individuals or small work groups, the overall success of the project and the achievement of the set objectives are significantly dependent on the cooperation of the entire project team. The project team often accounts for a group of specialists of the company from other departments that could have previously worked temporarily on any project or not at all. Also, the uniqueness of the project in a sense of its originality without any previous imitation emphasizes the clear allocation of managerial authority and decision-making skills. The role of a project manager becomes more important in such an environment. For all these reasons, each project, as well as every other business group or its organizational structure, have their own rules of decision-making, hierarchical rules of negotiation and authorization and hierarchical system of sharing responsibility from partial results to global objectives of the project.

The primary aim of the paper was to create a competency model and the target has been reached. The competency model might be usable in educational institutions. Its creation shall assist in more efficient management of the staff as competencies will more accurately reflect their corporate activities. It will help to improve the selection of new employees, to find a more suitable method of their evaluation (followed by development opportunities and professional growth) and thus to set also more suitable incentive system. At the same time however, this model will be widely used also by any other institution engaged in project management of educational projects.

Table 2. Scale of competencies

COMPETENCY	RATING SCALE
goal orientation	<p>basic: tries to do his job well and fulfils the objectives of the project</p> <p>advanced: tries to find actively a way to achieve his goals better, faster and more efficiently</p> <p>high: sets challenging objectives and deliberately works on achieving them, seeking opportunities to improve results, considers the benefits and risks of the newly proposed solutions</p>
project knowledge and skills	<p>basic: the basic information from the knowledge of project management and ability to apply knowledge</p> <p>advanced: he can find his way in project issue very well, has considerable experience which can be used for maximum efficiency of his business</p> <p>high: has in-depth knowledge of project issue, his experience is shared with colleagues and uses the knowledge and skills in order to prevent any problems</p>
active and creative approach to work	<p>basic: he can obtain the necessary information for his work and then use it in order to pursue its stated objectives met within the time limit, in an unexpected situation carefully thinks over other options on how to proceed</p> <p>advanced: works with information efficiently and flexibly, can improvise when the planned procedures collapses, he proactively manages his time in order to work on his tasks and tries to meet its targets well before stated time, can come with new ideas</p> <p>high: always tries to be one step ahead as with the use of information and new ideas and opportunities to improve his business, his thoughts and ideas actively acquires his peers</p>
systemacy and accuracy	<p>basic: recognizes the importance of quality is rigorous, is interested in the tasks completions.</p> <p>advanced: check his work and the accuracy of the information, tries to avoid errors. often compared to own work with the required standards.</p> <p>high: thoroughly ensures the quality of his work and the work of others after each check or control. performs, evaluate and discovers weaknesses or missing information and identifies areas for improvement, he achieves high quality standards.</p>
managerial skills	<p>basic: handles routine management activities at a basic level if necessary, consult with other colleagues.</p> <p>advanced: decides and manages independently, maintains communication in the team and works on his further development</p> <p>high: has extensive experience in leading teams, can handle all situations, has a natural authority and his team is working without problems</p>
communication skills	<p>basic: is able to receive and actively share relevant information with colleagues, internal and external partners/clients</p> <p>advanced: takes the initiative in communication. encourages others to communicate. actively encourages communication in meetings, communication tends to maintain positive relationships.</p> <p>high: the maximum use of formal and informal channels of communication. actively taking steps to minimize the communication.</p>
commitment	<p>basic: is loyal to his business and corporate culture.</p> <p>advanced: shares corporate values with positive internal beliefs and shares his information with others. is willing and able to serve performance beyond the standard.</p> <p>high: is an embattled initiator sharing corporate values, actively persuades others into fellowship with the company and its values.</p>
personal responsibility	<p>basic: is independent within the assigned tasks and able to take responsibility for his decisions. is friendly to the ideas of his skills development.</p> <p>advanced: works independently, very well stress-resistant and manages challenging situations, empathetic, has commitment to his personal development.</p> <p>high: works independently and his good experience shares with others less experienced colleagues, uses all his personal property for the benefit of business, locates opportunities and resources for his development and the development of others.</p>
proactivity (thinking of opportunities)	<p>basic: perception of a situation or a problem that needs to be urgently addressed. tries to resolve the situation himself or informs others about steps needed to be taken.</p> <p>advanced: detects any opportunity, uses them or turns the attention of others so that they can be used. he thinks about the certainty that the problem is not repeated or look for how to utilise the opportunity.</p> <p>high: seeks opportunities in advance or estimates them, takes steps to make them work. anticipates and prepares for possible problems that are not obvious to others and makes every effort to avoid them in advance.</p>

Source: Own elaboration

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