Chapter 2
Project Managers’ Competence Identification

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this article is to help align higher education of future project managers to the contemporary requirements of global project business. The perspective is project managers’ competencies in knowledge intensive industry, such as in IT branch. In this paper, it is considered that a holistic view of competence self-evaluation helps to assess the current intentional change. The system introduced supports decision making by measuring and capturing the actual drivers designed specifically for the role of project manager. Generalizing the competence identification process appears to be more constructive than detailing about competence content itself. This study brings valuable and novel empirical data using a sample of students acting as project managers in Spain and a sample of experienced project managers from Finland. A number of possible future studies using the same experimental set up are apparent.

INTRODUCTION

Competences and consequently competence evaluation has gradually become a strategic issue in areas of academic research, business and education. Despite the conceptual ambiguity the competence approach is widely adopted. The competence framework literature provides an integrative system for human resource management. For example, competences are often conceptualized as the underlying characteristics of the individual, and as a combination of skills, knowledge and at-
titudes. In this paper competences refer to traits, knowledge, skills, experience and values that an individual needs to accomplish his or her tasks. Competence assessment becomes a significant instrument for predicting work-role performance, and accordingly a core element for human resource management practices.

Competences are linked to individual and organizational performance, or in a more specific level as it is the training outcome. McClelland (1987) suggested that competence ought to become the basis for more effectively predicting individual performance in organizations. The awareness of the enduring capabilities and dispositions and identify the core component that interacts with the ideal self. This ideal self becomes the driver of intentional change.

However, competences are subject to dynamic change as a result of motivation, intervention, tacit and/or explicit education and learning in a given time frame. Both at individual and organizational level learning plans represent a formal tool in competence development. The power of a learning plan enhances the ability to get results through a greater understanding of ones’ own and others’ competences and emotions. Moreover the Intentional Change model (Boyatzis & Akrivou, 2006) can help people to engage in personal transformation successfully.

Another field experimenting major transformations is Higher Education, one of the main pillars of any national/regional innovation system and one of the major suppliers of professionals working in the business field. Building a strong strategic bridge between academia and business is in the interest of any nation and universities are main actors in the convergence of Europe towards the knowledge economy (Commission of the European Communities, 2003).

Although competences seem to be linked primordially to business environments, universities in their way towards the Bologna process want to align to competence development. The Bologna process started in 1998 when the education ministers of Germany, France, Italy and the United Kingdom signed the Sorbonne Declaration concerning the harmonization of European higher education degree systems. The object of the Bologna Declaration is to create a common European Higher Education Area by 2010 with a view to improving the competitiveness and attraction of European higher education in relation to other continents (The Bologna Declaration, 1999). The modern educational system complements traditional teaching/learning models with competence development. However, the competence topic in universities is still in its infancy compared to the business sector. Its incipient nature is given by the fact that most higher education institutions have undergone the following phases: definition, diffusion on their importance and creating awareness among the different communities -students, educators, managers-, linking subjects and competences, among others. One major challenge is competence evaluation and development as well as an in-depth integration of competences among the existing educational models (Bikfalvi, Pagès, Kantola, Marqués, Gou, & Mancebo Fernández, 2007).

Professional profile of technical competencies such as management of requirements, design, construction, testing, maintenance, configuration, quality, engineering and processes in software engineering projects has been introduced (Colomo-Palacois, Tovar-Caro, Carsía-Crespo, & Goméz-Berbís, 2010). To accomplish project managers’ competence profile this article introduces analysis of human aspects such as self-knowledge, self-control, cognitive capability, motivating oneself, empathy and social skills (Bikfalvi, Mancebo, & Aramo-Immonen, 2009; Liikamaa, 2006; Spencer & Spencer, 1993; Zwell, 2000; Boyatzis, 1982; Goleman, 1998). Even though Software-based Project Management (e.g., SPMM; Salahelding et al., 2010) methodologies provide support for project management processes in organization, there is always the human intention behind the success. Competences are highly context-dependent. Opt-
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