

ON THE PROBLEM OF EDUCATIONAL METHODS IN LIFELONG EDUCATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ZILINA

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Abstract *The paper deals with some educational and training methods using in lifelong education at the University of Zilina in The Slovak Republic. These methods are applying in the manager training and education of the entrepreneurs' managers for the small and medium enterprises and also the employees of another institution, for example the civil servants. The methods use the educational experiences, knowledge of university teachers – professors, researchers and also the experiences, skills of the managers from industry and demonstrate the cooperation between university and praxis. The paper begins with the section that includes some principles of the lifelong educational process planning project management, three-partial system and continues about the experiences with applying these principles in TEMPUS MADECISE project orientated on the public administration and civil servants.*

Index Terms *Lifelong education, training cycle, project management, three-partial system*

The development of information society and the growth of the volume of information and knowledge together with growing demands on quality and knowledge of executives and other members of working staff have their impact on the system of education in all countries. Nowadays, educational institutions are not only places where young people are educated. It is impossible to improve achievements of institutions and work of their staff without providing them with relevant, up-to date knowledge and skills.

However, education of adult and well-qualified people needs to be concerned with structure of the education, its methods and means [1].

Defining the targets of the training, the time schedule and their implementation form a standpoint for the project of the lifelong education at the University of Zilina in The Slovak Republic.

The University of Zilina is a public university. The university was established in 1953 and was formerly dedicated to transport. Since 1960, located in Zilina, it is spreading its educational and research activities to many different areas. At present the University has links with many universities abroad. The University of Zilina

professors, research workers and students participate in international educational and research projects in co-operation with partners abroad.

The lifelong educational process planning is based on the project management principles (see Fig. 1).

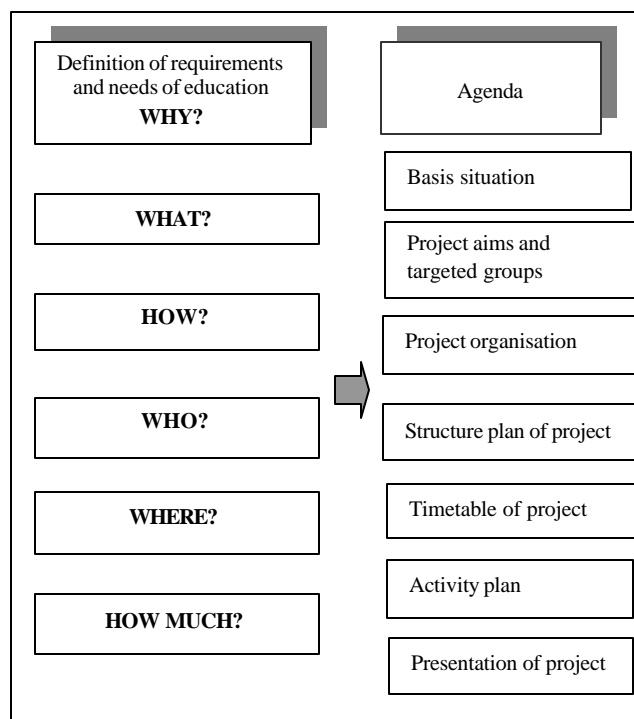


FIGURE. 1

The educational process planning includes:

- Definition of targeted groups
- Definition of goals of education, courses etc.
- Creation of curriculum content as a set of blocks (A1-A2, B1-B3, etc.) and educational means and place
- Collection of literature, creation of multimedia courses, training materials etc.
- Set of themes for solving real problem of praxis
- Feedback for evaluation and improvement of courses

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We can use also the three-partial system in the educational process planning (see Fig. 2) [3].



FIGURE. 2

The content of the fig. 3 corresponding to what is denoted as principles of application of three-partial system:

- Strategy – initiation process in lifelong education includes decisions about educational means, technology, planning process of new educational activities, courses, curriculum etc.
- Tactics –include changes of present educational methods, innovation of education etc.
- Activation represents the courses for certain institution, firm or certain group of participants.

A block of x days forms a basis for the structure (e.g., A1 is a two-day block) and several consequential blocks form a compact theme (e.g., A1– A2). The whole educational cycle includes x basic themes of training lessons, as well as place for individual consultations and discussions. The extent of the cycle is dependent on the length of the periods between separate blocks or themes. We recommend to fix the periods after consultations with the customer and with respect to training targets. It is also dependent on the customer's requirements on the location of the study centres.

Each participant obtains information material on the course content as well as the material needed for the training.

A set of assignments for solving real problems of a firm or a company is worked out in co-operation with the customer and the guarantee. At the beginning of the educational cycle each participant draws, or is given, one of the assignments which must be worked out by the end of the cycle. The results of the assignment serve to evaluate the level of knowledge gained, and higher levels of management of the firms and companies to solve different tasks can also use them.

During the training cycle, the participants have an opportunity to consult their problems with the lecturers according to a system set ahead. The graduates of the educational course obtain a certificate. A regular feedback is an integral part of the whole cycle.

In the above described form of lifelong education various means of education may be used, such as teaching and training, printed materials – correspondence form, multimedia, info-communication services – tele-learning, etc. [3].

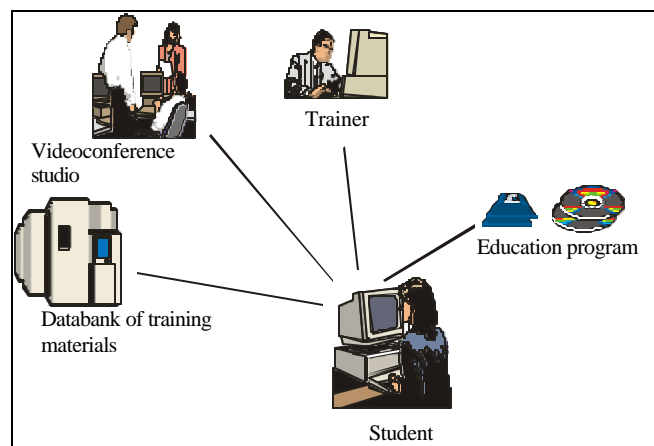


FIGURE. 3

Another problem is a position of a lecturer/a teacher/a trainer. The university staff is on a good theoretical level and they have an access to university knowledge data base. External lecturers who work for real firms can also act in the lifelong education as well as the course participants who are experts in their field (Fig. 4).

The above-described educational procedure was applied within the TEMPUS MADECISE project (co-ordinated and contracted by the University of Žilina) aimed at the implementation of the European principles in the public administration in The Slovak Republic [2]. The role of the public sector is to enhance the quality of life of citizens. The future efforts of the public sector are aimed at the

improvement of internal effectiveness as well as at the development of direct public relations.

Public services in The Slovak Republic, in the pre-integration, period are influenced by the lack of managers who would be able to find balance between political and economic goals, among various sources, and cope with administrative barriers that are integral part of the public sector environment.

In the project, three groups of partners were involved:

- Partners from EU countries, i.e.; HTW Dresden, Deutsche Telecom, AG – Institut für Bildung und Hochschulkooperation Dieburg, Fontys Eindhoven, Citta di Motta di Livenza
- Three Slovak universities – The University of Žilina, Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica and The Technical University in Zvolen
- Partners from 26 institutions, i.e.; 2 regional and 24 district offices.

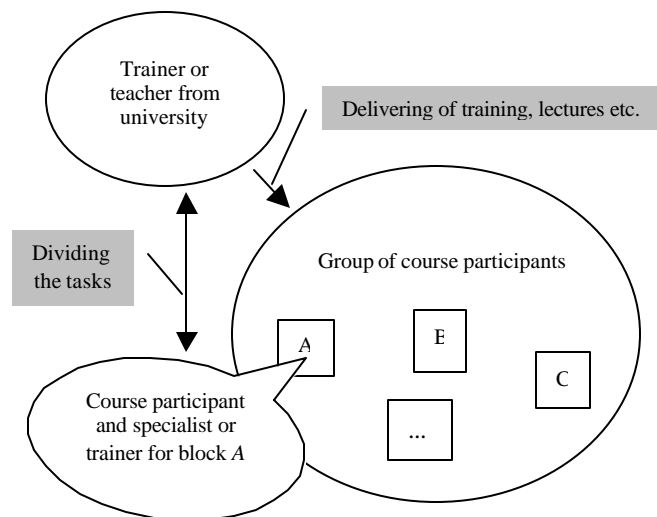


FIGURE. 4

The main target of the project was to create a system of education focused on various aspects of the European law, the fiscal and monetary policies, and the strategy of public relations in public administrative institutions. Within the framework of the educational system the courses that consist of several modules and provide participants with the essential knowledge and skills related to the whole range of problems in the public administration are run.

The content of the courses arises from the requirements stated by the institutional project partners and from the confrontation of the present and future levels of public administration. The objectives of individual courses are:

- to provide an overall view on various aspects of the European law related to public administration,

international economic and monetary relationships as a part of business environment and social development;

- to understand the importance and the synergy of the European economic integration;
- to acquire essential managerial skills in communication with the public and in the process of changes in public administration.

The courses are intended for workers in public administration who work for regional or district institutions, or in general state administration, or in specialised networks.

Major knowledge are focused on:

- getting the participants acquainted with the essential and real problems of present integration processes in the European territory, including understanding the present position of The Slovak Republic in European integration process and its approximation to the EU;
- gaining the efficiency and skills from the area of public management, with orientation on public relations and development of skills for the optimum and effective management of changes, together with training the most important situations and types of managerial communication (negotiation, solving communication conflicts, persuasion, etc.) applied on conditions and requirements of the public administration.

The courses and modules are conducted in the form of lectures including solving case studies and simulations, and team and individual training of model situations.

The case studies are the result of work of the partners from the EU. The team training is performed by a group of trainers chosen from regional and district office staff; lectures and simulations are performed by the University staff. All of the forms support effective coping with the subject problems in particular modules.

Lifelong education has become an integral part of the system of education at the University of Žilina and it contributes to the traditional university role – providing education. Its main characteristics are the emphasis on active forms of providing the knowledge and the link between experience and knowledge of the university and other institutions – economic, public, research, etc.

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