

Interpersonal competences framework and effective project management

Abstract

The idea of projects has been known since the dawn of civilization. The concept of project management has been widely popularised in Poland since we joined the European Union and a lot of projects are now financed by the EU. This has engendered a growing activity of different entities – mainly non-governmental organizations – which are interested in gaining funds in order to realize the projects. Currently, project management is one of the basic skills which everyone needs. This doctoral dissertation researches and analyses social projects which belong to a group of “soft” projects, named as such because of the manner in which the results are gained. The results are to soften consequences or to counteract social problems. This kind of projects requires from project managers high competences, especially in an interpersonal competences area – one of the most important factors which has the greatest, although hidden, influence on the effectiveness of the activity.

Interpersonal competences are also called “soft” competences because they are connected to the lifestyle and the ways of exerting an influence. They principally concern behavior, making relationships, cooperation with people and features which are needed for it. As the result of the research, the definition was formed to describe competences as a predisposition in terms of knowledge, skills and attitude which all guarantee the successful realization of tasks, the influence on subordinated people and the management of groups. This, in turn, aims at effective activity. A lot of researchers indicate the fact that the success of a project is less and less dependent on knowledge or skills, but rather on soft competences which can be influenced and changed with difficulty.

Recently, academics have conducted a lot of research whose main purpose has been to find a collection of competences characteristic of effective project managers. However, up till now, there has been no research into competences concerning a narrow and specific group of project managers – social project managers – that would be focused only on their interpersonal competences which are the most influential and important for the effectiveness of project managers.

The main purpose of this doctoral dissertation is to identify the key competences for the interpersonal competence framework of a project manager. The research has identified the most important interpersonal competences of contemporary social project managers who are successful in their tasks. On the basis of the research, an interpersonal competences framework of an effective social project manager has been built. The effectiveness of a social project manager means that the manager is successful in operating within the social project management area. The dissertation has also outlined a social – demographic profile of contemporary social project managers, their level of knowledge, skills and experience in the project management area, as well as it has identified the reasons for working in projects and explored, to some extent, the organizations' background they have in order to realize projects. Without an in-depth knowledge of social – demographic factors concerning the researched project managers, the analysis of interpersonal competences of project managers would be very difficult or even impossible. This is because there is an unquestionable relationship between these factors and the managers' interpersonal competences, which does not allow for analysing them separately.

In order to find an answer to whether there is an effective method which can improve the level of soft competences of social project managers, the tailor-made workshops were conducted as an experiment.

The issue of social project manager competences has not, so far, been a subject of broad scientific research in Poland and is now in the reconnaissance stage, undergoing initial scientific development. This doctoral dissertation may contribute to the scientific development of the project management domain from the regarding the competences which ensure activity effectiveness and are required from a social project manager.