

IPMA Education and Training Series¹

Project management education in Central and Eastern Europe

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1. Background

A number of studies indicate that project management is not one of the most common disciplines in highly ranked universities and is seldom taught, neither in undergraduate nor in graduate programmes.

Recent work by Antonio Nieto-Rodriguez (Nieto-Rodriguez, 2014) provides some thought-provoking results from a number of the top business schools.

According to his research that included the top 100 business schools as per the Financial Times ranking, the vast majority of them do not have project management related subjects.

To be more precise - none of the top 25 of them have project management as a core subject, and only two of them have it as an elective. Only two schools among the top 100 MBA programmes teach project management as a compulsory subject:

- Cranfield Schools of Management (ranked 26th in the world)
- University of Iowa's Tippie College of Business (ranked 64th in the world).

Nieto-Rodriguez's research offers two opinions as to why this may be the case:

- MBAs did not change substantially during the years.
- Top management gurus do not foster project management as a discipline.

Even though project management has emerged as an important discipline, there is no clear evidence of its value for the contemporary business environment. However, the author clearly stated that he believes that the majority of the MBA programmes would have project management as a compulsory subject in the future.

It is surprising that leading MBAs do not recognize project management as a key course in an executive education. Hence, research was conducted to determine the extent to which the discipline is present in Central and Eastern European Countries.

¹ This series of articles is by members of the IPMA Education and Training (E&T) Board or other IPMA leaders on the subject of project management education, training, careers and related topics. More information about the IPMA E&T can be found at <http://ipma.ch/education>.

2. Research methodology

The research was conducted based on Academic Ranking of World Universities, also known as the *Shanghai list*. The Ranking is conducted by the Centre for World-Class Universities of Shanghai Jiao Tong University based on their methodology and ranks the 500 best universities in the world.

The first 100 have explicit rank, while later ranks are given in domains, i.e. 100-151, 151-200, 201-300 etc.

Using the Shanghai list, the universities from Central and Eastern European countries (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Austria, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Slovenia, Croatia, Albania, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, FYR Macedonia, Greece, Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine and Russia) were selected.

Since there is no gathered data on project management disciplines in this area, it was very difficult to obtain all relevant information. Websites of the selected universities were examined and all available programmes were analysed in detail.

Language barriers presented additional obstacle in the research. However, courses in the broader sense of project management were checked i.e. project management, program management, IT project management, project management in healthcare etc.

The research did not examine particular syllabi in order to determine the extent/depth to which project management is offered. Presence of project and programme management related courses were identified at both undergraduate and graduate studies.

3. Findings

Results of the research are rather interesting and even surprising. Findings are given in Table 1.

Table 1. *Presence of project and program management related courses at best universities of Central and Eastern Europe according to Academic Ranking of World Universities*

University	Rank	Country	Under-graduate	Graduate
University of Vienna	151-200	Austria	C	C
Medical University of Vienna	201-300	Austria	X	X
University of Innsbruck	201-300	Austria	C	C
Medical University of Graz	401-500	Austria	X	X
University of Graz	401-501	Austria	X	X
Vienna University of Technology	401-500	Austria	C	C
Charles University in Prague	201-300	Czech	X	C

		Republic		
Eotvos Lorand University	301-400	Hungary	X	X
University of Szeged	401-500	Hungary	C	C
Jagiellonian University	301-400	Poland	X	C
University of Warsaw	301-400	Poland	C	C
Moscow State University	84	Russia	C	C
Saint Petersburg State University	301-400	Russia	C	C
University of Belgrade	401-500	Serbia	C	C
University of Ljubljana	401-500	Slovenia	C	C
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens	301-400	Greece	X	C
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki	401-500	Greece	C	C

C – compulsory X – not present

The findings show significantly different results to those presented in the research undertaken on top MBA programmes. Most of Table 1 Universities have compulsory project management subjects on either undergraduate or graduate studies.

Interestingly 10 out of 17 or approximately 59% of the universities teach project management on both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

Only 4 universities or around 24% do not have the PM subject on either level. If we take into account that 2 of them are medical universities, we may even say that they might not be relevant for this research.

Finally, it is worth reinforcing the finding that, 76% of universities have project and program related courses in their curriculums.

4. Conclusions

The research clearly shows that leading universities, in Central and Eastern Europe at least, in a great majority of cases, teach project management as a core course on either undergraduate or postgraduate level of studies. This implies that the importance of this discipline is recognized and growing in both the private and public sectors.

Whether you need project management as a core competence or as additional value in your competence portfolio, these European universities are ready to provide you with adequate courses. Considering the everyday changes and challenges of our business environment it is difficult to imagine a future career that would not need project management skills and knowledge of some sort.

Hopefully, this article has provided some food for thought on the status of the project management education in CEE. However, further research is required in order to obtain a more detailed picture:

- All levels of education should be explored in particular doctoral studies;

- Curriculums and syllabi should be examined in more detail in order to find out what areas are thought and to seek for the connections with other areas, i.e. strategy, human resources, finance, etc.;
- Project and program management programmes ought to be identified and analysed in addition to courses;
- Other regions should be included in the research in order to obtain more confident and reliable results.

A clearer picture of the status and trends in project management education could have multiple implications on universities, educators and trainers in general, as well for the companies and future students.

² **Remark from Professor John-Paris Pantouvakis, E&T Board Chair**

The Shanghai list is only one measure of Academic performance which has been criticized by some in the European Union (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academic_Ranking_of_World_Universities for details). We should perhaps be cautious when using published indices on Academic performance, or, at least use alternative indices before arriving at conclusions. The QS World University Rankings (<http://www.topuniversities.com/>) may perhaps be such an alternative. So, I fully support Vladimir's proposal for further study in the subject.

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