Global Launch of the Executive Diploma in Project Management (EDPM) Program – a unique offering [1]

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Introduction

This article describes the Executive Diploma in Project Management (EDPM) Program, one of the most ambitious, progressive and practical executive PM training and certification programs in the world. The EDPM program draws on key elements from many leading education and certification programs around the world, widely-accepted global best practices, and the knowledge and expertise of participating global experts. Focusing on the great need for more comprehensive knowledge about project and program management among executives in many countries, and especially in developing economies, the EDPM is not only reasonably priced but also accelerated to help participants learn faster. It has already attracted participation of executives and professionals across the globe.

We think the EDPM is best described as the next generation of executive project management training as it is aimed at preparing leaders for Industry 4.0 today. Leaders in today's complex, rapidly-changing, technologically-dynamic, project-based global economy no longer have the luxury of years-long training and certification programs. The EDPM program is intended to address that new reality.

Part 1 - The Recent Past and Present

"Knowledge that does not change behaviour is useless."
- *Dr. YN Harari, author of Homo Deus and Sapiens*

"Knowing is not enough, we must apply."
- *Goethe, Philosopher*

The above 2 quotes capture the basic purpose of education. Knowledge is scaler as it only has magnitude, but once applied it becomes a Vector with both magnitude and direction. We are educated in various fields like engineering or medical science but when practicing in changing the real world, we apply what we learnt and develop new connects (synapses) in our neural network.

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Knowledge is no doubt the first step in building a good foundation, but it is naïve to think that one has become a good professional merely by passing a knowledge-based examination that requires choosing 1 out of 4 or 5 options. Becoming a professional certainly demands that one's credential shows application of the knowledge in the real world. When we say learning, it is not just theoretical framework that we enhance and memorise but its application at work and using the feedback system to learn from the application of the knowledge. Dr. Harari's input that knowledge is useless unless it changes behaviour certainly gives credential to my writing. Though the learning may have a discrete beginning it has a continuous end. Learning never ends. Learning is the combination of new knowledge, new applications and new understanding, and this cycle continues forever.

Today the world is dominated by knowledge-based project management certifications. The pedagogy of the examination is based on generally selecting 1 option out of 4 or 5 options with an x number of questions covering different aspects of skills to be measured while assessing the correctness of the answer. The examination generally has one composite paper that is not broken up into sub-sections that must be cleared section wise by obtaining a minimum % of right answers in a given section of skill/competency assessment.

I do not have the exact number but my gut feeling is that at a global level almost 95% of the total estimated 5 Million certifications covering the different PM certification schemes awarded by various associations and specific programs in global companies, will be based on knowledge testing in multiple choice questions (MCQ). To me that is alarming and we now need to move to the next step. Having knowledge is essential before we can apply it, but acquiring knowledge should be a beginning and not an end.

Upgradation of knowledge and new ways of applying the knowledge is the key to being competitive and sustainable in today's rapidly-changing environment. It is an absolute necessity to APPLY new knowledge in new situations, and to do so quickly. Application or action holds the key for providing traction to movement. We must provide a bridge from one side of the bridge called DESCRIPTION to the other side of the bridge called ACTION (APPLICATION).

Knowledge and its Application are 2 sides of a coin and they are interdependent on each other. Knowing alphabets is necessary but a good prose/poetry or an article is the KEY. Limiting ourselves to a one-sided view of declaring a person as a project professional merely by clearing a certification exam based on MCQ is myopic and far away from the real world. The success throughout the history of the human race is based on the fact that we were effective in applying the knowledge to real world and moved ahead. All success in business and the spiritual world is because the outcome of the application was amply demonstrated.

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Part 2 - The Future - Breakthrough Executive Education in Project Management

i2P2M is a not-for-profit company revolutionising project management education by transforming learnings to competency to application at the workplace for measurable outcomes and benefits.

Over the years I have acquired many PM certifications. As the First person from India to acquire PMP from PMI in 1997, IPMA Level A in 2000 and MPD at level 6 from AIPM, Australia in 2003, I kept on debating as what would be the best way to develop competencies and ensure the effective demonstration of expected Outcome / Results. In order to deal with the future, the new learnings provided in EDPM must be applied and demonstrated by the outcome / results.

In 2011, i2P2M successfully launched the International Executive Diploma in Project Management (IEDPM) in association with The George Washington University School of Business (GWSB), Washington D.C. Over the last 10 years, this diploma has been a runaway success. There have been lot of improvisations in the EDPM program transforming its initial 7 uniqueness to 16 uniqueness in 2021. We designed EDPM based on part-time participation over the weekends. Now in Online program, it makes no difference when you do the program. WFH is enabling individuals to go through at their own pace and on any day.

The program has 5 Modules. The 5th module of 5 days is held in GWSB, Washington DC in October every year except in 2020 when we could not hold it due to the pandemic. This module is on advanced concepts in project, program and portfolio management to be taken by the GWSB Faculty with site visits to successful organisations which included NASA in the past. Each of the other 4 Modules is of 3 days duration. In EDPM Online, it is 20 hours of learning of each module totalling to 80 hours plus additional 50 hours required for report writing and home work. EDPM provides a 360 degree exposure from knowledge to competency development to its application at workplace resulting in measurable benefits.

The 1st module builds up the knowledge base. At the start of the module we conduct a Project Management Knowledge Quotient (PMKQ) test and we find on an average 2.8 times improvement in the knowledge base at the end of the module 1. In 20 hours, the increase in knowledge framework is simply the best value for time and money. It covers the Totality of Project Management (TPM) curriculum with 8 project life cycle phases, 35 knowledge areas and 119 concepts. It leads to the ISO 17024:2012 accredited Certificate

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In Project Management (CIPM) credential. TPM/CIPM is the only knowledge based curriculum and certification at a global level that is sub divided into eight project life cycle (PLC) phases - Conceptualise, Plan, Organise, Implement, Control, Integrate, Deliver and Knowledge Leverage. The additional 3 phases covered are Organise, Integrate and Knowledge Leverage. From a project management execution point of view, Organise as a project life cycle is a MUST. It is providing a front-end to implementation phase. Often rushing from plan to implementation without organise phase is rushing and thus creating RISKS. Integration is necessary before delivery and must be shown as a distinct life cycle phase. To recognise Knowledge Leverage as a distinct phase which begins from the very start of the project's conceptualisation to its successful delivery. Learning from success and failures must be dynamic and not to be taken as static to be carried out at the very end at project closure. Learnings in a dynamic mode must be captured in a formal way from a sub-conscious to conscious state making it from an individual asset to corporate asset.

The CIPM certification exam administered by i2P2M is truly unique with negative marking of 25% of the allotted marks. The CIPM examination paper is divided into 4 sections and candidate needs to obtain both an overall score plus obtain a minimum % in each of the 4 sections. To make the CIPM exam more robust negative marking was introduced by i2P2M right from the start. Major international associations like PMI and IPMA and Axelos, UK have not opted for negative marking. In our view, a person with no knowledge can still score 25% when selecting one of 4 options which is not a robust methodology for the examination system.

We divided CIPM examination into 4 sections taking a clue from PMI's PMP exam format in 1997 when I had appeared for PMP Exam. In 1997 the PMP exam had 8 papers covering 8 knowledge areas with 5 options per question and each paper had to be independently passed by scoring minimum 70% marks. Fail in any one of the 8 papers, and you will not be able to gain PMP status. Passing rate in passing in the first attempt was rather low because of the rigour. I was lucky to get through in the 1st attempt. Today, the PMP exam is based on one paper across all the knowledge areas and project life cycle phases divided into 3 domains i.e. People, Process and Business Environment. There is no minimum cut off for any of the three domains to clear PMP exam to my knowledge. For example, a candidate may be ~~totally~~ ignorant about Business Environment but can still acquire PMP. Actual Benefits (AB) realised from business should be as close as possible to Visualised Benefits (VB) for which the projects were undertaken. VB minus AB should be minimum for project to succeed hence project team / managers must be competent in understanding business environment. The weightage provided to business environment in PMP exam is merely 8% in comparison to the other 2 domains with 92% weights. Project team is to deliver the benefits by satisfying stakeholders as close to the benefits visualised at the time of project creation.

In EDPM we allow professionals with an existing PM certification from global organisations to bypass the 1st module on TPM / CIPM and start from 2nd Module and avail a discount in the fee.

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In the 2nd Module, the EDPM online students go through two cutting-edge real-time computer simulation programs from Prendo, UK related to Managing Stakeholders (Pactio) and Project Leadership (Spatium). The same simulation programs are used by several top 20 business schools as well as many global companies. The simulation programs which are part of experiential learning help students to transform knowledge to application. Participants gain 4 years of experience in 2 days. One of the simulations is related to Copper mines in Venezuela with stakeholders from 8 countries. The 2nd simulation is to build a football stadium in 24 months in 50 Million pounds and to satisfy different stakeholders from chairman to CEO to Bankers etc. Team gets an opportunity from conceptualising the design to implementation and in managing uncertainties through the execution. It amounts to gaining 3 years of experience in facing many challenges and taking complex decisions.

In the 3rd Module, EDPM online covers the advanced concepts in project risk management as well as in a broader sense enterprise risk management. We invite global risk management gurus to share their experience on the 3rd day. At the start of this module we conduct a Risk Management Knowledge Quotient (RMKQ) test and we find on an average 2.7 times improvement in the knowledge base at the end of the module 3. In 20 hours, the increase in risk management knowledge framework is simply the best value for time and money. Students need to clear a written exam to qualify for the Certificate in Project Risk Management (CrtPRM) awarded by i2P2M.

Module 4 is an ultimate in Wisdom Sharing. Currently 14 thought leaders from 7 countries share their wisdom accumulated over decades of practicing project and program management.

Report writing on the learnings and how to apply them at the workplace is an important part of the diploma program. After every module, participants need to write a Module report highlighting the new ideas gained in the module as well as proposing some 'recommendations' that they can apply at their work environment based on the module learnings. After going through the entire program each participant is also required to write a Composite Final Report (CFR) with 3 to 5 recommendations for their management to accept one of them. We help participants become Internal Consultants. Management needs to accept at least one recommendation that could be implemented. The participant should be involved in implementing the accepted recommendation and demonstrate the benefit accrued. This completes the entire 360 degree transforming learning to outcome process. In case a person is enrolled on his/her own account for the EDPM Online, he/she may suggest to their management new ideas which will make their company more competitive in managing projects. It is not must in this case to have approval of 1 or 2 recommendations from the management.

i2P2M alumni are very active. Members share new ideas and the new things they were able to accomplish on a regular basis. Faculty members of the program are also i2P2M alumni members. Alumni network connected through cloud provides opportunities to explore new things on a continuous basis. We ensure that no confidential / unsuitable information is posted in this platform.

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Since 2011, 1500 participants from 152 organisations covering almost the entire gamut of business including International organisations, government, public and private sector companies from varied business segments have enrolled for the International / EDPM diploma program. Some of the i2P2M alumni members are now CEOs/Chairmen of major corporations. The feedback of the participants is 'wow' and all of them with no exception whatsoever have gone through an experience never experienced before!

In 2020, EDPM was launched as an online program from a traditional classroom program. It is a global online program that can be used by anyone at any place as per their local time. i2P2M uses its own LMS for delivering the online program. Students can view and track their performance on a continuous basis as well as compare their performance with their peers. Faculty is available to respond to questions online. We have a provision of providing interactive evening sessions with the faculty. Participants go through simulations in teams of 3 to 5 persons and learn how to take complex decisions collectively. In the EDPM Online program 298 participants from 9 countries spanning 52 organisations have participated.

EDPM Online is a next step in providing experiential learning beyond knowledge based certifications prevalent in the world. EDPM Online affirms that knowledge is of no use unless it brings an impact in the real world. ED by achieving an outcome. EDPM Online provides a complete exposure from knowledge to competency to its application at workplace resulting in measurable benefits with desired outcomes..

EDPM Online comprising of 4 modules is of 13 days with 80 hours of online learning and 50 hours of homework across about 4 weeks. EDPM is an educational program where you will go through an experience never experienced before.

In Summary

The PM profession must evolve constantly in order to seamlessly integrate with the management of uncertainties inherent in managing in the future. Project professionals need to be given appropriate credentials based on their capabilities, and how innovatively they demonstrate implementing new ideas in future space. No doubt, past success could be one of the criteria for an individual. The new skill set as defined by the World Economic Forum (WEF) for Industry 4.0 can also be viewed to provide credentials to project professionals. To some extent, we do that in EDPM Online.

Experiential learning must be encouraged. Learning in various modules encompassing the project and program management discipline should lead to its application at the workplace and the outcome should become one of the parameters for the assessment. A doctor dealing with life does not become a doctor in easy steps. One has to go through the rigor of hard and smart work. Though the MCQ based credentials for project professionals could be the first step like getting a driving license or pilot going through the fundamentals of aerodynamics and to familiarise with the cockpit configuration. It is the application / experience based on tough decisions which are taken making persons like doctors, lawyers, formula1 drivers, scientists, engineers, entrepreneurs, leaders and

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project professionals competent to MAKE A DIFFERENCE. That is what counts and EDPM Online is a step in this direction.

EDPM Online is a major step forward in helping participants take 100's of decisions/ lessons learnt during the entire program and then implement a few in the real world.

To learn more about the EDPM program, choose:

www.i2p2m.com or register at www.edpmonline.com

Happy Projects!

Views expressed by the author are of his own and not that of the i2P2M or WPMF.

About the Author

Adesh Jain

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Adesh Jain is the Chairman of International Institute of Projects and Program Management (i2P2M), a not-for-profit company. In 2019, he founded the World Project Management Forum (WPMF) which was endorsed by 37 thought leaders from all the continents. Adesh is a former President and Chair of the Council of Delegates for the International Project Management Association (IPMA). Till date, he also happenes to be the only non-European to be President of IPMA in its history of 56 years. Adesh's career includes 50+ years of project-oriented work, including projects for Litton Industries and Control Data Corporation in Canada from 1967 to 1973 in the field of artificial intelligence and supercomputing. In 1973, Adesh returned to India with the mission of making India strong in computing technology being primitive at that time. He held No. 2 position in one of the largest steel plants in India in IT and project management.

In 1975, Adesh was asked by Bharat Heavy Electrical Limited, the largest Indian Government engineering undertaking, to head their IT and Project Management services, and was the youngest CEO ever to head a division there. In 1979, under his

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leadership, a complete network of mainframe computers was established in the manufacturing units of BHEL with the corporate office. He became Chairman of the Heavy Engineering Computing Group of 22 major companies in 1982. In 1991, the President of India honored him with a Fellowship award for laying a strong foundation for the IT industry in India. He has since been conferred with 6 major awards in India, including the 'Gem of India' award.

Adesh started the Centre for Excellence in Project Management in 1992, and founded Project Management Associates (PMA), India - a-not-for-profit registered society in 1993. He was elected to the steering committee for the Global PM Forum in 1996 and received a Distinguished Contribution Award from the Project Management Institute (PMI®) in the USA in 1997. In January 1999, Adesh became the first non-European to be elected a Vice President of IPMA, serving three terms through 2004. He was elected President of IPMA for 2005 and IPMA Chair for two years beginning January 2007. In 2010, Government of Turkey released a postal stamp in his honor for his contribution in strengthening project management at a global level.

Adesh has addressed or trained over 100,000 people worldwide, has made over 40 keynote presentations, is author of the book "New Dimensions in Project Management" (1992) and Assorted Thoughts of Project Management (2014), and has authored over 50 articles on project management. In 2017, a book 'Building a Project Oriented Society' was released which covered his efforts since 1992 in nurturing a project mindset. Since 1999, Adesh has contributed significantly to modern PM in China where he has trained over 20,000 professionals. He is Honorary Chairman of the China Project Management Committee (CPMC). In 2001, he was invited to give a keynote presentation in the Great Hall of China at a UNIDO conference. Adesh has been a keynote speaker at major conferences in Abu Dhabi, China, Sweden, Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia, Norway, Denmark and Turkey. For the last thirty years, he has organized and managed the Global Symposiums on PM in New Delhi, and he was the organizer and project manager of the 19th IPMA World Congress held in New Delhi in November 2005, the first IPMA congress outside of Europe and the largest IPMA congress ever held.

Adesh Jain has a BS in Mathematics and BS in Electrical Engineering from the most prestigious Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, and a MS in Control Systems from Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada. Adesh received the IPMA Honorary Fellowship award in October 2006. He received the Honorary Fellowship of Australian Institute of Project Management (AIPM) in 2011. In 2014, he received the Life Time Achievement Award for his contribution to project management for over 4 decades. Ge is often referred to as Bhishma Pitamah (the wise with authority) of Project Management as called by the former Petroleum Minister of Government of India.

Adesh lives in New Delhi, India but divides his time between Asia, India, Europe and the USA. He is married with 2 grown children. He is an avid golfer. He can be contacted at chairman@i2p2m.com.