University "St. Kliment Ohridski" – Bitola
Faculty of Education – Bitola
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INTEGRATION OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT IN LIBRARIES

Elena Stankoska
University "St. Kliment Ohridski" – Bitola,Faculty of Education – Bitola
elenastankoska@hotmail.com

Abstract

Typically, a project is conducted within a specific timeframe, with start and end dates. Projects are unique, one-time processes aimed at achieving predetermined goals. They differ from everyday routine tasks, which are repetitive in nature. The realization of planned projects requires several initial phases and factors, such as time, scope, resources, budget, etc. The second phase of project implementation involves integrating the necessary inputs required to achieve the project's objectives. If the project involves human resources, they must be well-acquainted with the goals, plans, procedures, and phases of project execution, stay updated with ongoing developments, and be well-trained and motivated to successfully carry out the project and achieve the planned objectives. Achieving project goals involves the rational connection of all resources, such as financial, human, and other resources, which is indeed a complex endeavor.

Keywords: project, project management, project governance, project manager.

Introduction

Project management involves a discipline that includes the processes of planning, organizing, and managing available resources, contributing to the successful realization of plans and the specific goals to be achieved through the execution of a particular project. Projects exist in all organizations, educational and cultural institutions, ministries, governments, military, research institutions, industrial, agricultural, educational, and other institutions, in both the private and public sectors, regardless of their focus and primary activities. Projects can be financially supported by private and public funds, foundations, the European Union, banks, pharmaceutical industries, ministries, governments, business communities, civil societies, and associations, among others. The purpose of the projects varies depending on who is creating and implementing them and for what intent, so every organization, company, educational or cultural institution, etc., has the right to engage in projects within their capacities.

Libraries in North Macedonia, as part of the educational process, have extensive experience in project work related to promoting reading. This often involves projects conducted between libraries within the country, projects funded by the respective Ministry, and international projects, contributing to the visibility of libraries and their work, promoting books and reading, and exchanging ideas, experiences, and knowledge. Through project management, that is, through the management and execution of projects, libraries become richer, and more well-known to the public, improving their operations, development, equipment, employee motivation, and experience. All of this leads to a successful library with high-quality and recognizable services.

Concept of a Project

The development and survival of modern society depend on the unique processes carried out within it, namely, projects. A project, as a singular process aimed at accomplishing specific tasks, can be defined as a temporary organization required to achieve a unique and predefined outcome or result within a predetermined timeframe using pre-established and planned resources, which typically include human, financial, and material resources. The Project Management Institute (PMI), a global organization for standardization in project management, defines a project as a temporary endeavor to create a product, service, or result. (Project Management Institute: A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge, 2017). A project can also be defined as a set of activities intended to bring about a desired change within a specific period. The discipline of project management provides a framework

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that guides an organization from its current state to the desired state, meaning that projects conclude when their objectives are met. (Thackeray, 2012). The term "project" is used to describe the activities an organization undertakes over a certain period, not daily, but rather activities that are occasional and based on need, making them unique and temporary. Projects achieve something new, provide specific results, solve problems, and offer answers and accurate information that will serve as tools for guiding new visions, plans, and measures in the future.

Every project is characterized by several features, such as a defined start and end, limited duration, clearly defined tasks, goals, and achievements with measurable results, a series of activities executed in phases during the project implementation, and often limited resources (material, time, and human). To successfully realize a project, the following are necessary:

- Clearly defined goals;
- Commitment;
- Proper division of tasks among participants and project executors;
- Planning;
- Communication;
- Flexibility;
- Adaptation;
- Control of implementation.

The necessary elements for every project include:

- Participants;
- Communication and coordination among participants;
- Their interaction;
- Institutional foundation; and
- Working under pressure.

Project management involves overseeing projects through the efficient and rational use of employees from different sectors engaged in the implementation of the given project. By correctly establishing authority and project goals and by properly organizing the team working on the project, a project management organization and team are created, with the main goals being the full realization of the project by giving their maximum effort. Project management allows for control over time, costs, and financial resources, precisely and clearly defined goals, faster execution of objectives, clearly defined tasks, providing guidance for the project's phases, managing conflicts, and planning for risks during task execution, among other aspects.

Project management is carried out by the project management team, which involves the practice of planning, directing, executing, overseeing, controlling, and completing the activities of the project team, aiming to achieve the project's plans and goals, while meeting certain success criteria within a limited timeframe. The main challenge of project management is achieving goals within given constraints, such as time, financial, human resources, and others. Additionally, project management entails planning, organizing, monitoring, and controlling all aspects of the project, including motivating the team to more easily achieve the planned and desired goals.

Typically, the preparation phase of project execution should answer several questions regarding the need or purpose of the project's realization, the actions, methods, and activities required for its successful execution, the expected responses, the project's outcomes, priorities, etc. These and other answers are crucial for the project itself, its execution, value, and realization, as well as for the employees involved in its creation. The team must have a detailed description of the project, its goals, what needs to be achieved through it, potential failures, risks, costs, and final outcomes.

The organization in which project management is carried out, meaning where the project implementation occurs, must adapt to the project's duration, purpose, goals, complexity, and execution. There are no strict rules for a successful project, but based on analyses of global experiences, several factors have been proposed that determine a project's success:

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- Setting clear project goals;
- Directing human potential during project development;
- Establishing mutual relations, activity, and time assessment;
- Scheduling activities;
- Implementing plans;
- Determining participation and motivation of project participants;
- Internal communication among the team;
- Individual and team competency within the project team;
- Encouragement to take risks and increase creativity.

Today, in the Republic of North Macedonia, project management exists in almost all state administration bodies, local and regional self-governments, private companies, agencies, associations, public institutions, chambers, foundations, trading companies, etc. Libraries, as national institutions or part of university and school structures, are continuously and actively involved in projects that improve the quality of their services, offerings, accessibility to users, and more.

Phases of the Project

There are several fundamental phases required for the successful development of a project. These phases include initiating the project, specifying and determining the project's objectives, establishing certain priorities that need to be achieved, aligning activities and resources, developing and approving a high-quality project plan, leading the team toward achieving the set goals, monitoring and controlling activities and progress, making adjustments to the plan if necessary, and completing the project within the planned resources and budget.

The European Commission's cooperation division, EuropAid, considers that the project cycle for projects in which it financially participates comprises six phases: strategy building, identification, preparation, financing, implementation, and project evaluation. (Džuričić, 2015).

Basic Idea and Conceptualization of the Project

The first and most fundamental step in developing and executing a project is the idea. The idea represents the initial phase, which then evolves into a vision.

The vision is the starting point for analyzing and planning how the project will unfold, what needs to be done and achieved, which activities will be necessary, how much funding will be required, the human resources needed, and so on. The vision should be clear and direct. The advantages of having a clear vision relate to the goal that is intended to be achieved through the realization of the specific project, managing the project through pre-planned, organized, and controlled activities, and ensuring that the project team members are well-informed, so they understand the goal and significance of the project and maintain good communication. A clear vision also facilitates the evaluation of what has been achieved, the assessment of the importance of issues that arise during the project development, and more. Every goal should be clearly defined, understandable, realistic, reasonable, and achievable within a specific timeframe.

In defining the project, the participants must reach a consensus on several key questions, such as: What is the goal? What are the intentions? What should the results demonstrate? What are the expectations? What is the value and the success criteria? For whom and for what purpose is the project intended? Who will be the participants?

Identification

Identification refers to the justification of the study and involves analyzing stakeholders, target groups, possible solutions, and similar factors. This phase includes all the activities, measures, and resources—whether human, financial, or otherwise—that will facilitate the realization of the proposed project. It involves defining the intentions and goals that need to be achieved, identifying potential opportunities and risks that may arise, estimating the time required for project execution, determining the personnel who will work on the project, and directing and utilizing their potential effectively.

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DOI: 10.20544/teacher.28.10

Preparation for Project Development

Preparation for the development of the proposed project involves creating project plans, plans for available resources, and scheduling the project's execution. This phase includes all necessary activities that must be undertaken, such as:

- **Communication** with team members and all external factors that will affect the project's development. This includes engaging with companies and enterprises for tasks that the team members are not equipped to handle, such as computer programming, technical work, or printing.
- **Coordination** with construction companies, printing houses, and other relevant institutions.
- **Collaboration** with other state institutions, private companies, and individuals, both domestic and international, if the project is international in scope.
- **Meetings** and communication with various organizations, associations, and stakeholders as relevant to the project's type and content.
- **Completion** of forms, templates, and other project documentation.

These preparatory activities ensure that all aspects of the project are addressed and that the necessary resources and cooperation are in place for successful project execution.

Project Financing

In the initial phase, particularly during the ideation and visioning of the project, significant attention must be given to the financial aspect. Finance is crucial for the project's realization. Project analyses and plans should include a detailed financial proposal, outlining the total amount of funding required. The team working on the project should be aware that the requested funds may not be fully approved or disbursed, and they need to be prepared to adjust the project to fit a potentially reduced budget.

Typically, institutions in the education and cultural sectors, such as libraries, receive financial support through the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of North Macedonia. These institutions apply for annual grants published by the Ministry, submitting a financial report detailing the cost of the proposed project. Subsequently, the Ministry's committees decide whether to approve the project.

If a project undertaken by a library is approved by the Ministry of Culture, the next phases involve the allocation and disbursement of the necessary funds for project execution. The procedure is similar for private or other project sponsors, where funds must be planned to carry out the project.

Recently, projects funded by the European Union, various foreign embassies, UNDP, the Erasmus program for international student exchanges, and others have become quite prominent. These projects benefit not only the project sponsors but also institutions, other employees, service users, citizens, tourists, and the general public, contributing to the popularization of institutions, municipalities, and the country as a whole.

Implementation

The achievement of set goals and plans, the work involved, and all necessary activities contribute to the project's implementation. Adhering to deadlines and rules, taking care of team members, ensuring their constant awareness and motivation, resolving conflicts, maintaining professionalism with external factors, taking risks, and working under pressure are all crucial activities and events for successful project implementation. Through the implementation phase, the planned objectives are met, the work done is evaluated and assessed, and the clear purpose and need for the project become evident. This phase concludes with the project reaching the stage where its lifespan diminishes, and the application of the plans comes to an end.

Project Evaluation

Project evaluation is the final phase, occurring after the project has been completed and achieved. Once a project is finished, evaluations and assessments can be made to measure its goals and needs, identify its strengths and weaknesses, and determine its overall value. The evaluation will

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influence the future need for a similar project or a revised and improved version, and it will address any questions and analyses that were posed.

During the evaluation, project results and their performance are presented, results are delivered within the planned timeframe, recommendations for future research are gathered, feedback among project team members is collected, final results are compiled, project results are presented, and the project is officially declared complete. It is important to note that each project is unique and is executed under different circumstances, times, organizations, and people. Every project requires varying levels of attention, financial resources, and time for its execution. Nonetheless, what remains crucial for every project is its final evaluation and overall value.

Project Team

Successful project execution relies heavily on teamwork. Just as people form the backbone of an organization, they are equally crucial to the success of a project. The human factor, or team collaboration, is a fundamental requirement for achieving project goals. Building an effective project team involves leveraging human potential to ensure the successful realization of objectives. This includes a blend of knowledge, creativity, motivation, integration, risk-taking, and conflict resolution.

Typically, a single individual is designated as the project lead, but to execute the project, this person needs a team of others who will work on the project's completion. Thus, the project lead faces the challenging task of assembling the team, aligning tasks, motivating and guiding team members, keeping them informed, and steering them toward the ultimate goals. Additionally, the project lead must address emerging risks and resolve conflicts as they arise.

Required Skills for Effective Project Management

To effectively manage project management and projects in general, it is essential to possess certain skills and knowledge that should be continuously updated to be successfully implemented in projects that require new skills and knowledge. These skills and knowledge entail transforming acquired knowledge into abilities, behaviors, and activities that can be technical, interpersonal, strategic, communication-based, motivational, analytical, and more.

Some of these skills result from education, some from experience, and others depend on the personal traits of the project manager. Globally recognized and esteemed skills that a project manager should possess include the ability to use power effectively and responsibly, the ability to understand others, the ability to inspire, and the capability to create a conducive working atmosphere for action and motivation.

In addition to the above, there are other skills that the project leader should possess, including:

- **Technical or Specialized Knowledge**: This involves specialized knowledge in a specific field, domain, or discipline, applying specific models, techniques, and procedures for solving complex problems.
- **Social Knowledge**: This pertains to knowledge and application of good behavior with the environment, which means the project manager's ability to communicate, motivate, guide, and direct team members, build good collaborative relationships, and create a supportive and secure environment.

Project leaders, just like in management, need to possess several characteristics such as:

- **Vision**: Ability to define and communicate a clear vision for the project.
- **Responsibility**: Taking responsibility for the success or failure of the project.
- **Knowledge**: Having the necessary expertise and understanding related to the project.
- **Authority**: Building respect and authority among team members.
- **Ability to Motivate and Lead**: Ability to work with and motivate others, guide them, take risks, direct team members, and continuously inform them about the status, plans, etc.

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Methods, Techniques, and Tools in Project Management

To thrive in today's turbulent environment, management within an institution needs not only relevant knowledge and experience in project work but also the ability to select appropriate methods, techniques, and tools that significantly contribute to the success of a project. Without certain knowledge and experience, it is difficult to choose suitable quality methods, techniques, and tools for project management. It is a fact that there is a broad range of techniques, methods, and tools, and their appropriate use and application can enhance the chances of project success.

These methods, techniques, and tools serve as support for the project manager in making decisions related to the project.

Various methods of project management exist, and these methods depend on the phases of the project lifecycle. (Majstorović, 2015). The methods can be categorized as follows:

- **Selection Methods**: In the initial phase of the project, qualitative and quantitative models of selection are used.
- **Planning Methods**: During the planning phase, network planning methods and cost estimation methods related to the project are outlined.
- **Risk Analysis**: In the execution phase, risk analysis is conducted.
- **Control Methods**: In the final phase, or the project control phase, several control methods are employed, which are often divided into simple (traditional) and complex (modern) techniques of project control.

In public institutions, the models used for project development are typically traditional, extreme, and adaptive models.

- **Traditional Model**: This model focuses on planning techniques, forecasting, and monitoring all activities to ensure the project is completed within the specified timeframe.
- **Extreme Model**: This model aims to achieve a balance between flexibility and stability.
- **Adaptive Model**: This model emerged as a compromise between the aforementioned models. The adaptive approach is based on the plan, with time and costs defined at the beginning of the project. (Špundak, 2006).

Conclusion

Project management is a complex process with a defined beginning and end. Projects are undertaken to achieve predetermined goals and missions. Each project is unique, differing from others, and must be completed within a set timeframe and under constraints such as financial and human resources. Projects in the cultural sector are specific and address complex systemic goals, such as the preservation of movable and immovable cultural heritage, the production of books, reports, and other scientific endeavors that significantly contribute to culture.

Project management involves balancing project goals with risks, changes, and constraints. It requires the application of knowledge, skills, abilities, tools, methods, and techniques with the singular aim of successful project execution. Each project undergoes several phases: idea and vision, identification, preparation, financing, execution, and final evaluation. The project management process entails planning and assessing work activities, finances, and internal and external conditions, as well as communication and collaboration both within and outside the project team.

Effective project management demands adaptability and resourcefulness in dealing with changes, risks, problems, and deviations from the plan.

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