

EQUIPE PROJECT

Case study

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The reciprocal impact of the business education: a case on Consortium MBA

Introduction

Competitive companies emphasise training of employees as an important element of the success on the market. For employees training is often closely linked with possibilities for promotion within an organization and this is particularly true when it comes to the development and training of managers. Companies develop partnership with universities in order to influence their educational programs to better meet the specific training needs of employees. Many universities are responding by developing management training programs which are closely connected with the needs of companies (Milkovich, Boudreau, 1994).

In my case I will present a special type of the MBA programme which was developed by the Faculty of Economics University of Ljubljana as a result of the needs of some Slovenian firms. This is a Consortium MBA.

The Consortium MBA is a new type of study in Slovenia. Its main feature is that four successful Slovene companies – Kolektor, Cimos, Iskra Avtoelektrika and Domel – have entered into a partnership with the Faculty of Economics, formed a consortium and each delegated their group of promising employees as students of the two-year master's programme: 10 from Kolektor, 7 from Cimos, 5 from Avtoelektrika, and 4 from Domel. The four companies from the metal processing industry will intensively learn from one another in the following two years of study. The study is sponsored by the companies and is adjusted to the firms' requirements in terms of contents and organization considering the rules of certificated post study programmes. The contents take into account the needs of companies and individuals. Regarding the organization, the programme is delivered in 6 modules comprising 16 courses. The study is run at various locations in Slovenia, with one module organized in all member firms; that is, in Idrija, Koper, Nova Gorica and Železniki. In comparison to similar types of study, less time is spent on lectures and interactive study methods, and more on project work, team work and individual study. In doing so, the Faculty of Economics facilitates to the three key roles undertaken by students: their job, study and family. The Consortium MBA study is managed by the Centre for Management Development and Training (CISEF) at the Faculty of Economics in Ljubljana.

The study aims to enable member companies and individuals to gain and share up-to-date managerial knowledge, thereby enhancing core competencies and contributing to the successful implementation of strategic business and personal goals.

"The partnership between the Faculty and member firms of the consortium is a guarantee that the programme will offer relevant knowledge to the firms and individuals, enabling the companies to strengthen their competitive edge. The study is based on continuous matching of theory to

practice through case studies and assessment of one's own business experience. We uphold the belief that both the participants and the teachers know a lot, but can learn even more from one another. This is made possible in a team of excellent individuals characterised by cooperation, knowledge sharing, trust and friendship" said the Programme Director Dr. Nada Zupan.

The main key features of the Consortium MBA are:

- Designed for one organization or a consortium of member organizations
- Offered as a modular programme adjusted to corporate requirements
- Programme schedule fixed together with member organizations
- Study based on dialogue and cooperation
- Practical orientation and academic rigour
- Well-supported individual and team study
- Intensive study schedule and friendly atmosphere
- Flexibility and interaction
- Excellent Slovene and international teachers
- Individualized approach to supporting students
- High quality service of studies
- Modern teaching approach
- Awarding of the academic title of Master of Business Administration
- Small student groups

The Consortium Formation

The consortium is formed by selected companies that may be in a similar or different line of business. However, the most important element is their common interest to gain and share the knowledge. Member companies formally enter a strategic partnership with the Faculty of Economics, University of Ljubljana.

The consortium comprises no fewer than four and no more than six companies. A group of students coming from a particular company has a minimum of four students.

Programme Overview

The programme consists of six theme modules comprising core and elective courses. Elective courses are determined by the Consortium and Programme Director.

The two-year programme begins with an induction module in the form of a two-day workshop intended to introduce the programme, the participants, the faculty and the programme procedure. The induction module introduces the students to the selected managerial techniques and skills required in team work, presentations and stress management, thereby laying the foundation for successful studies.

Each module lasts two to three months. One third of course time comprises team or individual work, and the remaining course time is delivered in the form of lectures, discussions and presentations.

Within each course schedule there are two to three meetings with the student group on Fridays and Saturdays (10–12 hours of interactive work). There are at most two meetings per month. Courses run by international faculty may be delivered in block form (from Thursday to Monday).

The faculty team is composed of distinguished professors from the Faculty of Economics in Ljubljana as well as visiting professors from renowned business schools from abroad.

Specific course design and assessment (including exams, assignments, project work) are determined by the Faculty before the start of the course delivery.

The venue of the programme is determined together with member firms. The options may range from the company locations to other selected locations or the Faculty of Economics in Ljubljana.

The students are sent course materials in printed or electronic form one month before the start of each course.

The programme is delivered in Slovene and English.

Programme structure

Induction Module (September)

Presentations of Firms, Team work, Stress, Presentations

Module 1 (October, November)

Business Environment
Managerial Accounting

Module 2 (January, March)

Managerial Economics
Organization Theory

Module 3 (May, June)

Operations Management
Human Resource Management

Module 4 (September, October, November)

Business Finance
Marketing
Organization Analysis and Design

Preparing a Proposal for the MBA Thesis (December)

Module 5 (January, February, March)

Strategic Management
Planning and Control
International Management

Module 6 (April, May, June, July)

Organization Behaviour
Elective Course
Elective Course
Elective Course

MBA Thesis Preparation (August, September, October, November)

MBA Thesis Defence (December)

Admission

The Consortium MBA is a 'closed' type of programme, with students from consortium member firms only. Individuals may suggest their firm's management to join consortia and thus enable their employees to be enrolled in the programme.

The programme is aimed towards managers and professionals meeting the following requirements:

- A bachelor's degree
- At least three years of experience
- Proficiency in English

Candidates are selected by top management and HR departments of member firms in line with their personnel development strategy. They select perspective employees that could benefit from in-depth knowledge of business and economics and are motivated to undertake such a programme.

Financial Information

The Consortium MBA fee is € 7923 (VAT not included) and is payable in two instalments, at the beginning of the first and second year. The fee covers the delivery of the programme including programme development and design, implementation, assessment and evaluation, tutorial support, defending the MBA dissertation, course materials and organization of studies.

Conclusion

There was a reciprocal impact on business education. Companies helped the University to prepare adequate management development programme, on the other hand, the University helps companies to meet their expectations and to solve their business problems.

In September 2003 the second group of Consortium MBA from the four new companies will begin to study. The vision of the Consortium MBA is to expand it to the firms outside the Slovenia. This would bring an additional international dimension to the Consortium MBA.

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Consortium MBA: www.ef.uni-lj.si

Milkovich, G., Boudreau, J.: »Human Resource Management«, Irwin, Burr Ridge, Illinois, Boston, Massachusetts, 1994