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Preparing project managers to deal with complexity – Advanced project management education

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Abstract

Interest in project management is growing significantly. Yet, projects continue to fail at an astonishing rate. At the same time, the role complexity, chaos and uncertainty play within our projects and project environments is gaining recognition in both research and practice. Hence, it is time to review our understanding of project management education and reflect about how we develop project managers to deal with the increasing level of complexity, chaos, and uncertainty in project environments.

In this paper, we discuss new perspectives and concepts for an advanced level of project management education that may help develop the abilities necessary to confidently navigate the dynamic organizational environments and complex projects facing project managers today. First, we describe the evolution of project management and project

management education. In particular, our review of the literature and of project management training programs demonstrates the focus on standardization of the field and on preparation for the professional designation of project managers. Next, we discuss the impact of taking complexity seriously on the requirements for professional development of project managers. We lay out the requirements for preparing project managers to deal with complexity and present a comprehensive model of project manager development. Finally, we discuss the characteristics of an appropriate framework of project management education that does embrace uncertainty and unknown possibilities. In particular, we examine how distance-based education in project management may help develop a learning community that collaboratively questions existing theory and practice and develops innovative approaches as well as caters to the needs of project management practitioners for extensive learning opportunities within a flexible learning environment.



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Keywords

Project management education; Project management development; Project management knowledge; Project leadership; Complexity

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