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**INTEGRATING PROJECT MANAGEMENT TOOLS INTO THE COURSE OF  
ENGLISH FOR PROFESSIONAL PURPOSES: HANDS-ON APPROACH  
TO ACADEMIC TRAINING OF FUTURE MANAGERS**

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**Abstract.** *The article presents the results of an experimental study of implementing the framework designed to integrate project management tools into the academic training of future managers. The research addresses the gap between the academic training of project managers at universities and actual requirements set by employers accounts for a steep learning curve once an alumnus finds the first job. The goal of the research is to study the results of the framework suggested to integrate project management software into the PM training, and the value of English course in this respect. The experimental module within the course of English for Professional Purposes is studied for its efficiency in increasing the motivation of students for their further academic and professional activity. The article introduces the framework and the teaching materials used in the course of the experimental study, and singles out the project management tools that hold the most potential to provide the students with the hands-on approach to their professional training.*

**Key words:** *project management software, English for Professional Purposes, hands-on approach to academic training, interdisciplinary approach.*

**Relevance of issue.** The gap between the academic training of project managers at universities and actual requirements set by employers accounts for a steep learning curve once an alumnus finds the first job. Numerous surveys conducted with employers in Ukraine demonstrate the discrepancy between theoretical knowledge and skills necessary to be a successful manager. Therefore, integrating the most popular tools into academic training of future project managers and providing them with the hands-on experience of using them adds value to the professional training.

However, it requires a well-designed framework developed by university professors of various disciplines, including those teaching English for professional purposes.

**Analysis of recent researches and publications.** According to the research conducted by the World Bank, approximately 70% of the firms state that education system in Ukraine does not develop enough practical skills. 57% of employers believe that students do not develop the kinds of skills necessary to succeed at the work place. 56% argue that universities in Ukraine do not provide

their alumni with up-to-date knowledge, and 43% mention lack of good attitude and self-discipline of the students. Generally, over 60% of employers state that the university alumni in Ukraine do not meet the skill needs of employers. The alarming consequences of the aforementioned gap between the needs of employers and the actual training of the Ukrainian students are as follows: loss of efficiency, loss of service quality, loss of existing markets and clients, increased recruitment costs, loss of innovation opportunities etc. [8, p. 12].

The gap between theoretical and practical knowledge results in increased budget allotted by employers for internal training of the employees. A valuable insight was provided by Yaroslav Prytula on the issue of designing course content at universities. He points out that educators are driven by challenges and problems of education, rather than the challenges and problems faced by future employers. It is a paradox, since higher education should cater to the needs of the latter [6].

Dual education is one of the ways to increase the efficiency and the quality of higher education in Ukraine. The IT field demonstrates the strongest need for professionals in project management. Other industries include advertising, finances, media and others. [1, p. 3].

Modelling professional activity in the course of studies is considered by Druzhylov S.O. a prerequisite for success at the workplace [4, p. 299]. One of the ways to prepare students to their future professional activity is implementing the project management tools and software commonly used in their respective industry into the academic processes at universities [3, p. 75 – 78; 5, p. 127].

The aforementioned problem is studied at length in the aspects of competencies, skills and up-to-date

knowledge to be acquired by students. However, little research is available that provides the basis for implementing dual education in practice. The framework for implementing project management software into the academic process in order to provide students with the look and feel of their future professional activity, the theory and practice of using industry-standard tools by students are issues to be further investigated.

**Goal and objectives.** The goal of the research is to study the results of the framework suggested to integrate project management software into the PM training, and the value of English course in this respect.

For the purpose of achieving the goals, the following objectives are to be realized:

- to analyze major aspects and processes in the PM field of work;
- investigate the tools used to complete the work and select those to implement at the university level;
- develop the framework for integrating the tools into the training;
- plan the materials and activities for the English course to facilitate the integration.

**Results.** According to the research of the World Bank, among the skills required by the employers and lacked by the Ukrainian alumni, is the ability to work with project documentation (BRD, FSD, UMD, MRD), the ability to work with issue management software (JIRA or Redmine), experience in business processes modelling system (BPMN), and project management skills. [1, p. 6].

In order to single out the software and tools necessary to master for future project managers, we relied upon the expertise of Capterra – a renowned business software website that provides user reviews on various tools. The website distributes the project

management tools into several categories, which we will follow up in our research. The ones we find promising in pursuing the goals of the article are as follows: collaboration software, idea management software, resource management tools, task management software, learning management and workflow management tools.

For students to acquire hands-on experience using the aforementioned tools, there is utter need to develop a framework of project work at the university which covers several courses, including English. The projects Ukrainian students are most commonly (yet not extremely actively) engaged in are: thesis, grants, conferences, debates, extra-curriculum events, internships etc. Each of the aforementioned projects hold multiple opportunities to get students familiar with the software, gain experience using it and benefit from their academic training by gaining insight into their future professional activity.

While the core curriculum contains courses on various aspects of job-related routines, many of the tools are not available in the Ukrainian language, and many are still on the way. Therefore, students need to acquire basic knowledge of the respective terms, procedures, actions etc. in English [7]. This said, we consider the course of English for Professional Purposes to be the starting point for engaging into the vortex of project management software.

For the purpose of studying the efficiency of implementing the professional industry-standard project management tools into the academic process at a university, we designed an experimental module that involved specialized materials in English and tasks to process the teaching materials aimed at providing the students with the professional context.

The experiment involves setting up two groups – experimental and control. The stages of the experiment are as follows: the experimental group is presented with three cases to study, with roles distributed voluntarily among the participants. After choosing the business case, the subgroups study the textual materials on various project management tools and generate the ideas on how to benefit from each of them in the course of solving a business case of their choosing. Depending on a business case, they set up the roadmap for their project, sign up for the respective tools and complete the project. Once the project is completed, they write a report on how each tool helped them to fulfil their tasks, and rate the tools in the order of their value for a specific project.

The control group is presented with the same project cases, yet they do not receive further materials on the project management tools.

The value of the knowledge acquired in the course of the module is measured in three stages and contexts: a) students and the instructor estimate the value of the PM materials in completing the project before and after the project, the motivation to use the PM tools in the future academic activity, and the readiness to use the PM materials in the future professional activity on a scale of 1 to 5 based on the students' responses. To verify the results of the experiment, it is necessary to study the experimental group at the end of their academic course to see whether the students continued to use the software for purposes other than those provided by an English instructor (for instance, for personal learning, in writing a thesis, for extra-curriculum activities etc).

The case studies are designed to reflect the mandatory course materials of the professionally oriented disciplines, in

view of the time allotted for individual study. We studied the typology of professional projects provided in the manual for Project Management by A. T. Zub [5] and industry-standard tools recommended by renowned professionals in the field of project management [2, p. 25; 3, p. 76] to develop the following cases:

'You represent a small Kyiv-based venture trying to enter the Ukrainian HoReCa market with chain motels. Generate the strategy and ways to market on the basis of your research. Come up with ideas about the target audience, competitive proposition, pricing structure and logistics, and the budget for the upcoming 5 years'.

'You are representatives of a local government committee working on developing a construction project to build a series of residence halls in Zhytomyr with competitive pricing that would provide cheaper housing for young families and jobs for citizens of the city. Study the market, the pricing, the challenges you might face, and generate a campaign within the Budget of Participation, an annual voting campaign supported by local authorities'.

'Your home remodeling and redecoration company is expanding its business in Zhytomyr. Build your marketing campaign based on your competitive advantages compared to self-employed unregistered groups providing the same services'.

Below we provide sample textual material that needs to be presented to the students, followed by suggestions on how to process it.

#### *Collaboration software*

Did you know that:

Globally, businesses lose \$37 bln every year due to bad communication and misunderstanding between employees?

Out of the average 2080 work hours a year, 570 hours are spent on emails?

65% of the day an average employee spends collaborating and communicating with others?

Approximately 20%-30% of employees leave due to poor communication and collaborative culture in their company?

Collaboration seems to be the key ingredient of success in business. After all, talents are your most valuable asset.

The need for collaboration software triggered the development of numerous tools and platforms, like Slack, Wrike, Asana, Monday etc.

They all are estimated based on the requirements of the industry, the three most important of them are communication, conferencing and coordination. In Slack, for instance, one can create a channel, a thread, a workspace for the team, where members can communicate with the entire team, one-on-one or in small groups. The threads can be created per project or assignment. The options of teleconferencing, emailing etc. keep the team synced on all major activities without wasting time on business trips and commute. In Slack you can share documents and video/audio files and collaborate with the team in real time.

Not only does this software save time and money for the company, but it serves to strengthen the group relationships, boost collaboration and simplify business processes. Give it a try today with your new project!

#### *Idea Management Software*

Many great ideas are put on the back burner, since their generators do not have the way to see them through. Innovation Cloud is the tool that will help you explore all the ideas your employees have about improving the processes in your company. It is crucial for a project

manager to hear everyone, and to help them unleash their potential to the maximum. This software solution does exactly that!

After creating an account, you can submit your idea to address a specific issue in your organization – from buying new chairs to launching a new R&D department. You can start a campaign to explore what your colleagues think about improving the organization, and co-develop the ideas together with your employees by commenting, voting and attaching necessary documents. You can recognize the generators of the most successfully implemented ideas and foster innovative thinking in your team. The magnificent software solution is free for teams under 15 people, and allows you to process up to 100 ideas.

#### *Resource management Software*

One of the challenges a project manager faces on a daily basis is lack of resources, or their inefficient exploitation. When it comes to human resources, poor planning may result in conflicts, tension and high attrition rate in your team. One person always working overtime and pushing several projects simultaneously, another person being busy gossiping over the watercooler – does that ring a bell? Not anymore. With resource management solutions you can visualize the workload distribution for every team member, and take control over the team's capacity.

One of the great free online tools is Teamweek. It is an analogue of a Gantt chart that lets a manager get an overview of the team's progress on a project, see who has his hands full, and who can fit some more activity into their working day. You can zoom your view from one week to the whole year and plan way ahead. Challenge the team with milestones, and plan your way in view of vacations and holidays.

Nobody is overlooked. Everything is

done in time and in style!

#### *Task management software*

Multitasking is no longer a bad habit – it is a must for a project manager. Whether you are developing a new product, designing a campaign or writing a web application, any project can be broken down into multiple tasks that need to be tracked, estimated and assigned to different people on your team.

For each item on your to-do list you create a card and assign value to it depending on how big or complicated it is. If you work in IT, for example, a three months long project is called an epic, which is further broken down into user stories and tasks. There are separate labels for bugs, technical questions or enhancements. You can customize the labels and create fields to specify the type of the task.

The cards are moved to a board designed the way that fits your company – a backlog, a sprint log, or a to-do list. You can create boards for specific members of your team, for you personally, for a project or for a quarter, the tool is highly customizable.

On the board you create columns: To do, In progress, Testing, Revision, Ready for acceptance, Done etc. When someone picks up the task to be done, they move it from 'To do' column to 'In progress', until the task ends up in the 'Done column'. You may assign as many people as you wish to a task, and track their progress just glancing at the board.

The workflow above is presented for a worldwide known software called Trello, which is free for small teams.

Try it today and increase your productivity the way you never imagined!

#### *Learning Management Tools*

If the company knew everything that its employees know, it would increase its profit at no cost at all. Many organizations invest in their employees by training,

mentoring, coaching and learning on the job. Even if not, by performing their own functions over and over again, employees derive insights that are valuable and worthy of sharing. However, without the proper culture of knowledge sharing within the company, the knowledge gained by individual employees provides no advantage to a company per se.

Knowledge sharing is a smart way to increase productivity, to overcome difficulties, to give and receive feedback, to generate new ideas, to foster cooperation between departments and functions, and to encourage employees to work better and study more eagerly.

One of the greatest award-winning tools on the market for knowledge sharing within a company is Easygenerator – an online authoring tool that provides a highly customizable platform for creating courses.

You don't need to conduct long trainings and waste numerous billing hours to teach the same material to newcomers over and over again – design a course, set up the mastery score, and you will be able to track all the data: who took the course, who completed it, and what the results are. It is a way out for administrative trainings on the corporate policies and procedures that are not so fast to change, and that should be made available for every employee.

In Easygenerator, you can provide teaching materials and test the knowledge right away with intuitively designed tests – multiple choice, fill in the blanks, single choice image, hot spot, scenario, drag and drop text, matching etc.

It is easy and rewarding to share your knowledge and see how the business benefits from your expertise!

Based on the results of the experiment held with 21 students of experimental group and 24 students of

the control group, use of project management tools increased the engagement of every student. In the experimental group, everyone's progress was tracked by other members of the group, while in the control group, traditionally, individual students generated ideas and completed the project, while others joined at the final stage to present the results. Trello was claimed by students from the experimental group to be the most valuable tool in their activity (100% of respondents). 80% of students of the experimental group demonstrated the motivation to use the project management software in their future academic and professional activities. The next stage of the experiment is to study whether this figure corresponds to the actual use of the software and is to be conducted at the end of the academic year. Compared to the control group, the students of the experimental group demonstrated a more sustainable pace of work on a project, more structured approach to its completion, more responsibility in meeting the deadlines, more accuracy and detail in breaking down the work to be fulfilled, and better distribution of roles within the subgroup.

**Conclusion.** Based on the results of our research, we claim that task management software (e.g. Trello) holds great potential in organizing and improving the academic activity of students while providing them with the skills necessary for their future profession. The framework of implementing project management tools through interdisciplinary approach proved to be efficient in terms of increasing the motivation for academic and professional activity, and structuring the academic process at the university. For future research it is recommended to develop teaching materials through more

structured selection of project management tools depending on the

specialization of students: management in IT, management in FMCG etc.

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**ІНТЕГРАЦІЯ ІНСТРУМЕНТІВ УПРАВЛІННЯ ПРОЕКТАМИ В КУРС  
АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ ПРОФЕСІЙНОГО ВЖИТКУ: ПРАКТИЧНИЙ ПІДХІД ДО  
ПІДГОТОВКИ МАЙБУТНІХ МЕНЕДЖЕРІВ  
О. В. Свисюк, Н. В. Лихошвед**

**Анотація.** У статті викладені результати експериментального дослідження впровадження моделі, розробленої з метою інтеграції інструментів управління проектами до курсу професійної підготовки майбутніх менеджерів. Метою дослідження є вивчення результатів впровадження моделі інтеграції програмного забезпечення управління проектами в навчальний процес, а також цінність курсу англійської мови в такому контексті. Розроблено

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*експериментальний модуль, впроваджений у курсі англійської мови професійного вжитку, вивчено ефективність курсу в підвищенні мотивації студентів до майбутньої академічної та професійної діяльності.*

**Ключові слова:** програмне забезпечення для управління проектами, англійська мова професійного вжитку, практичний підхід до підготовки менеджерів, міждисциплінарний підхід.