

Practical Experiences as Part of Project Management Course

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Abstract—Practical experiences have been one of the successful criteria for the Project Management course for the art and design students. There are series of events that the students have to undergo as part of their practical exercises in the learning context for Project Management courses. These series have been divided into few mini programs that involved the whole individual in each group. Therefore, the events have been one of the bench marks for these students. Through the practical experience, the task that has been given to individual has been performed according to the needs of professional practice and ethics.

Keywords—Practical experiences, project management, art and design students, events, programs.

I. INTRODUCTION

PROJECT management course is part of the final year subject for student in Faculty of Creative Multimedia, Multimedia University, Cyberjaya. The objectives of the subject is to give students the professional practice and ethics to carry on a project in creative multimedia industry. Students were divided into groups to perform a task related to a project in creative multimedia environment. Lecturers will advise and monitor the overall running of the students' project. Some of the projects involve the organization of a media art installation, student film festival, virtual reality talk and exhibition and many more.

The students are taught on the basic project management theory, tools and techniques as well as the project evaluation. Taking into consideration the students background the subject look into how best to utilize students' talent and creativity to organize and manage the overall project in the area of creative multimedia. The paper will look into how practical experience is important and critical in project management course for creative multimedia students. This is based on the observation and the final report submitted by the student towards the end of the semester for evaluation.

In this article, the author talks about celebrating the differences of all gifted students. For creative multimedia students who are considered as creative individuals, lecturers need to recognize that the very characteristics that enable creative people to think originally may cause them to be seen as different. Lecturers need to accept and support affective and cognitive diversity in creative students, and support creative students [5].

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II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Review Stage

Traditional project management literature tends to focus on a "one size fits all" approach whereby tools and techniques can be applied across industry without modification. Koskela and Howell [4] identify three types of goals which project management should achieve: product goals which center on production; internal goals which are concerned with efficiency and adoption; and finally those which relate to the needs of the customer, for example quality, reliability and flexibility.

The latter in particular can be seen as relevant to the creative industries. Four factors were critical to the success of a project management which is communication throughout the project, clear objectives and scope, breaking the project into 'bite sized chunks' and using project plans as working documents [2]. Thus, it is recommended that a holistic approach to project management is taken, looking overall at project management and the main problems and issues associated with its use [1]. Therefore it is important to have a holistic treatment to creative multimedia project management. Whilst there were low levels of conscious awareness of project management tools and techniques are important but there were still low level of conscious awareness about it.

Organization recognized the value and benefits that project management might bring to their business operations, in particular to stakeholder and lifecycle management, the definition of success criteria and the adoption of more formal approaches to project review need to be look into in the future [3]. Artist as well as creative student are has a contribution to make across a number of elements of project management beyond problem definition and idea generation, in stakeholder engagement, in qualitative approaches to evaluation, in maintaining excellent relations, in conceptualizing, in producing imaginative and innovative solutions, in openness to change, in being prepared to take action quickly, in being flexible and in seeing the bigger picture and understanding success holistically rather than in disparate parts.

These creative students were also very customer and service oriented and very willing to be critical and reflective in self-evaluation as they deal with creative industry which is customer oriented. There is a long history of academic debate around the tension between the creative and analytical mindsets. Project management is considered an analytical discipline, in the extent to which it is concerned with order and processes. However, creative multimedia is seen as being more creative; requiring greater flexibility and an open ability to behave reactively in a fast-paced industry.

B. Conceptual Model

Since knowledge entering the higher education organization can sometimes be tacit whereby it is difficult to transfer to another person by means of writing it or verbalizing it. In this study the activity in the evaluation process for conceptual has been practical based as part of the interpretation and implementation. Thus according to [6], Fig. 1, the important phase in the evaluation process as part of the experience that the students have to undergo in the project management.

Fig. 1 shows the conceptual model for knowledge sharing that make the students' knowledge can help others to understand the information better. The model reflects that student's interpretation that generates implementation through method, technology, activities and evaluation will helps them to have a better understanding at the end of the subject. The activities part and in this case the project undergone by students in project management class helps to make the method and technology become more relevant and useful.

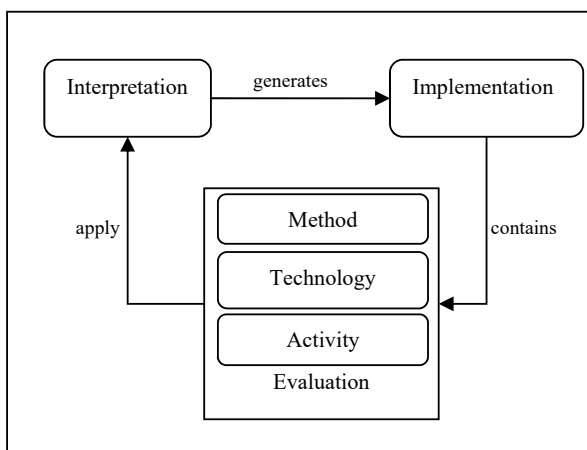


Fig. 1 Conceptual Model for Knowledge Sharing Model [6]

From the figure above, the evaluation process which consists of three elements has been determined based on the project itself. Therefore, the interpretation normally will be done by the lecturer as the concept for the event or project.

The implementation of the project normally will be executed and it always contains the evaluation of the project. After the evaluation then the project will be seen whether it has applied towards the interpretation. The circle of this conceptual model for knowledge sharing has been talked in the lecture session as part of the knowledge sharing session.

III. METHOD

Each project was designed to accommodate each student in an event through the whole semester of study. The project was assigned to third and final year design student as an individual task to maximize the practical experience in organizing event related to learning out come and increase their problem-solving and critical thinking skills.

Students were encouraged to handle and also join the

management meeting for each task given to them. During the lecture time, the theories of the project management were delivered. Lectures also include motivation factors in handling project, project planning, project implementation, project evaluation as well as closing of a project. Students took the theories learnt in their lecture class to pursue the implementation of the project.

There are steps and methods that the students adhered to make their project a successful project. Moreover, the lecturer will become the advisor of the whole event to make it smooth and successfully. The students need to record all the project activities including all meetings, all planning, all try and error and report it in a comprehensive report at the end of the trimester. We believe that this approach will give the students a better understanding in delivering a project in line with the industry needs.

IV. PROJECT BASED COURSE

Three main projects had been established throughout the semester. The entire projects were in line with the lecture for each week. The first main project is the Film Festival (national event), secondly FCM Take a Break (University Event) and the last project is Media Art Showcase (Faculty event). These are the three major projects undertook by the students for the semester. The three major events were designed to educate the students how to manage a project in a large, intermediate and small scale. The different project scale exposed the students with different experience and practical skill in handling the project. Furthermore, the projects are held annually specially for University and Faculty Event. Meanwhile for the nation event it will be based on the approaches by the university management towards certain event. Therefore, the national event normally will not be host yearly at the same university.

V. PROJECTS INVOLVED

A. Student Film Festival (FFP '11)

Fig. 2 shows the posters for the 11th Malaysian Students Film Festival (FFP '11). This is an annual event sponsored by National Film Development Corporation (FINAS) to showcase young talents from institute of higher learning in the area of animation, short film, documentary, social media, music video, advertising and experimental film. Multimedia University has been chosen to be the host for the 11th Malaysian Students Film Festival (FFP11). The students from project management class had been assigned to handle and involved in the entire event. Students were divided into few groups based on their portfolio.

Groups were divided into groups for task like invitation to institute of higher learning, advertisement of event, usherettes for the launching dinner and gala dinner and floor management for the launching dinner and gala dinner. Each portfolio had been given the guideline on the events and what they need to do. Each portfolio was assigned to a lecturer to oversee their progress and evaluate their achievement at the end of the project.

They produced a comprehensive writing report of the whole

events and their task. Evaluation was based on the report as well as their achievement during the event itself. As this is a national event the success of the event is very important to the Faculty as well as to the University. The students learnt a lot that handling a national event was not a small matter where every action was counted and there was no margin for error.

The students enjoyed themselves organizing and managing the events as well as to participate in the festival itself. It gives them an extraordinary exposure to deal with people from all the universities, colleges, community colleges from all around Malaysia. It gives them a new horizon on how other students from other university works in term of developing and implementing creative ideas in multimedia creative environment. The sharing and transferring of knowledge happened in a very conducive environment for teaching and learning of students from higher learning institute like Multimedia University.



Fig. 2 Student Film Festival (FFM '11) poster

Implications for the practical experiences on the student who involved in this event are tremendous challenge their knowledge of make it successful event. Based on the individual feedback that contains in the report, they have given the various activities that they want to explore at the event itself. The small parts of the event sometime also reflect on their mind that one of the task that they can't overlook the case. For example arrangement for the participant to be seated since the ceremony awards should be considered the winner to run on the stage. All these are some of the example of the feedback given by the students in the report.

B. FCM Take A Break Day

Fig. 3 shows the FCM Take a Break event held by Faculty of Creative Multimedia for Multimedia University students and staff. The one week event consists of activities like Yard sale, Art market, RAW exhibition, Virtual Reality Game Day, FCM Showcase and MMU Chill Run. Students from project management class were given the task to run FCM take A break week with multiple groups handling one project.

The students were then divided into groups to handle each and every activity. Each group of students was assigned to a lecturer for consultancy as well as reports the progress of the project. The students learnt to do invitations for participations in each activity as they need to ensure that full participation in all activities. Chill Run opens participation not only to

students and staff of MMU but to the Cyberjaya communities as well. Students will have to think how to advertise the event to reach the target audience. Virtual Reality Game Day was given to Virtual Reality students to give them the real exposure on how to handle virtual reality type of events.

Overall the students managed to overcome all the challenges in managing the FCM take a break week. Based on the overall overview from the lecturers the students had done a good job in making sure that the event follow it schedule and works accordingly. The students reports on their overall performance and they learnt a lot in term of communication skills and marketing skills. Knowledge transfer and sharing happened during the event when they need to communicate with different authority in MMU and Cyberjaya society.



Fig. 3 FCM Take A Break poster

Implication for these events, most of the students who run the project is based on their interest, or example the Art Market, RAW exhibition and Chill Run. Moreover, they have gain more knowledge since it based on their interest on doing this. Chill Run has been selected as the best project for the FCM Take A Break since it has involved not only MMU community but also the neighborhoods community such as Cyberjaya and Putrajaya, Malaysia.

C. Media Art Exhibition

Fig. 4 shows the media art showcase as one of the event runs by project management students. This event showcases the final year students' project for Media Art students. The students from project management class in Media art specialization were assigned to handle the showcase from planning, invitation, facilities and the overall running of the event. The event was held at Blackbox, Publika and the rental was sponsored by MMU. The students were exposed to task like setting the site for the showcase where they have to decide what facilities needed for each of the project showcasing at Blackbox, Publika at Damansara, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.



Fig. 4 New on Media Art Exhibition

They were exposed to experience of the handling the overall event from start to finish. Teaching and learning comes in when they plan the event, prepare for the event and closing of the events as they need to implement the overall theory of project management in this project since they were in charge of the overall project. Explicit knowledge from the project management class together with the tacit knowledge they learnt through the implementation of the project gave a significant impact to the real life experience for creative multimedia students in MMU. This will make them a better student with good hands on experience in handling a project related to creative multimedia industry.

The implication of this event is more towards for those in the final year project. Here is the platform for them to exhibition and expose their talent to the industry. The project members have gathered these activities to lift up their name in the creative industry. Another feedback they give in the report is the event has become the trend of finding the new idea in the exhibition center. It also leap frog for those who want to start up their own business towards the industry. Meanwhile other also said that this is the best way to tell what they have learned in MMU before they went to the real life of industry.

VI. CONCLUSION

Generally speaking, students engaged in these projects have decided to do not only as part of the course but also their choice in deciding what they will work on. They even plan their own project and participate in most of the whole event to oversee the whole idea of organizing the event or big project. In order to solve problems they encounter while working on their project, the lecturers in faculty also give a hand to make the events going smoothly for example booking a place for Media Art students and also for Film Festival.

Based on the feedback given by these students as part of their individual report, we can foresee that the event either handled by the other party or themselves, the interest of handling the event must reflect on the task given to them. Most of them the task is not directly given but was ask if they preferred that task and they can always change it before the event meeting started.

The project-based learning approach gives a huge impact especially for final year students. They have been acquired the knowledge of creative and also they can construct their attitude towards the event which involved in big scale.

Students showed their interest in handling such projects. It showed that teaching and learning with more practical environment were appropriate for creative multimedia students. They enjoyed learning in a real project as they learnt how planning and implementation could vary and what it takes to overcome challenges in creative multimedia project.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that the students' abilities in using what they learned incorporate with the project have great potential to stimulate the creativity and also practical based in learning the project management course. Thus, this project management course will be handled as practical based course since it will spearhead the needs of practical in project management in the industry.

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