INTENTIONAL LIFE MANAGEMENT AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT IN EVERYDAY LIVES: EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to explore recent situation in Hungary in using project man-agement approach in organizing and governing everyday life. There is no evidence that surveys related on the same or similar topic has been conducted in Europe or Hungary. There are available references in the literature but there is small number of studies about usage of PM principles in life management. Therefore, an introductory survey has been conducted to explore the extent to which concepts, methods and project management tools are applied to make it easier and improve one's possibilities to articulate needs and analyse, plan and manage their lives as if they were projects.

Based on survey conducted upon the sample of 475 usable responses from an on-line questionnaire, this study outlines position and development trends in using project man-agement approach in everyday life as feasible and useful, using following research ques-tions: (a) What is the level of knowledge about the elements, steps and toolset of PM?; (b) Do they use written plans in order to realise their target goals in private life?; (c) What are the attitudes of the participants regarding the use of PM in private life based on experi-ences as a project leader?; (d)What are the attitudes of the participants regarding the ownership and usage of applications related to PM in the sample? The variables used are Gender, Age, Education, Job position, Project team membership, and PM experience.

Mathematical-statistical methods have been used in this research in order to analyse the connections between the attitudes of participants on applicability of PM in private lives.

Key words: Project management, Life management, Project society, Project processes, Project phases, Projectisation

1. INTRODUCTION

Promoting the concept of viewing life as a set of tasks and activities which can be planned and executed in a form of project, Maylor (2010, p.3), claims that "*Life is one big project. The trick is in managing it*". According to the Association for Project Management [APM] (2012) project can be defined as *"a unique, transient endeavour undertaken to achieve planned objectives".* The Project Management Institute [PMI] (2008, p.5) uses one similar definition of a project saying that it is *"a temporary endeavour undertaken to create a unique product, service, or result".* The project management as a structured method for planning and managing complex organisational changes has been developed to satisfy needs of business community. In that sense, the concept, tools, and methodology of project management can be effectively applied to any effort or venture that meets the requirements of temporariness, and uniqueness, including also *"life projects".*

Groysberg and Abrahams (2014) consider "task oriented planning" as a positive strategy for coping with life project activities. Some recent studies consider the project management approach as a useful and empowering concept for developing "skills for life". In some countries schools are introducing project based learning (PBL) into their programmes of study. Including PBL in schools syllabuses enables the development of key life skills for "21st century", such as collaboration, communication, teamwork, problem solving, independence, goal setting, time management, negotiation, creativeity, analytical thinking, planning and organisation (Bell, 2010) from early age.

For that purpose, the Life is a Project [LIAP] programme framework was developed to introduce the concept of a project-based approach to life-task planning and achievement. A basic set of generic project management skills and techniques, as an enabling "skill for life" curriculum was developed to support and test the feasibility of the concept (Robinson, 2017). The Figure 1 below summarises the introductory LIAP workshop approach.

The programme was aimed to empower individuals through a "task-based planning" approach (Wurdinger and Rudolph, 2009). The fundamental objective of the concept was to provide participants with a new set of skills to help combat the "helplessness" aspect of coping with daily tasks and obligations.

Figure 1: The concept of LIAP programme approach

Source: Robinson C. N., (2017, p. 8)

Gaining and implementing basic project management methods cannot resolve the obstacles which one faces in executing every day's activities and ensure comfortable lifestyle, economic stability and well being (Applebyand Bathmaker, 2006). However, it can provide individuals with powerful methods and tools to organize and manage daily tasks systematically, producing a corrective influence in the sense of "helplessness" and "disorientation" (Wurdinger and Rudolph, 2009, pp. 38-39) affecting those stuck in the state of „not knowing how to proceed" phase. As "life projects" are incrementally realized, lack of self esteem, doubt and stress will be gradually replaced by self-confidence and satisfaction on a path to cross-cultural adjustment (Bell, 2010). In that respect, applying project management tools in performing personal tasks may be viewed as an active strategy of coping and confronting stressful situations requiring quick and organized response in executing a large number of tasks and obligations (Hacks, 2017; Rousmaniere, 2015).

In Hungary, no other research was conducted on this topic. Apart from the above mentioned sources, there is a very small number of references about the topic in expert literature. The usage of project outlook in everyday lives is still a rather unique approach, which can be considered as an innovation even internationally.

2. PROJECT MANAGEMENT (PM)

Project management is already a mainstream in economic life, and has proved its usefulness. Economic projects became a matter of our everyday lives. Many books, websites and software help project designers and project managers in their work, professional cliques were formed to improve work, and professional journals and education courses spread the newest results. It has been proven that in the ever-changing world of economy, and the volatile market conditions, programme creation is feasible, similarly to planning, organising processes and resources, and the relatively precise forecast of outputs and results (Lakatosné, Poór, 2017).

Related literature sources and the profession originally considered project activities to be those that plan and execute unique tasks (Packendorff, 1994: p. 22). When we

think about projects and project management, even today we think about actual instances where a project was finalised. Project management draws conclusions from abstract projects' actual finalisation, and records things to learn, standardised requirements and processes. Originally, activity systems that divided well planned, detailed, manageable partial processes, and integrated them, thereby being strictly managed and closed, were created for a specific set of tasks. In such cases, the project owner forms a project staff from its own members temporarily, or finds outside experts to implement the project. These facts are also known by the experts in traditional organisational sciences. For example, Mintzberg called them ad-hoc organisational forms.

3. PROJECTISATION OF THE ECONOMY

Gernot Grabher applied the "project-economies" name to specific sectors around the end of the 20th Century. The advertisement and construction sector have served as examples, through which he could introduce the traditional structure based on project principles (Garbher, 2004). However, the projectisation of firms went beyond the limitations of sectors. Globalisation, the fast changes of the market and the strengthening of competition created a problem for organisations wishing to create long-term forecasts, and use them to plan their activities successfully for the years to come. *"In the last decade for example, the time required for a car to reach the production line from the drawing board was reduced by 78%. Organisations learned the simultaneous designing, reshaping and re-designing of products and processes"* (Brockbank, 2004: 261).

Projects seeped into different organisations to such a level that observers talked about the "projectisation of organisations" as a fact (Midler, 1995). Jensen and colleagues report the results of a research, which states that *"an evaluation conducted with 3500 European firms showed a quick increase in the usage of project-based structures: in four years, their usage went from 13% all the way to 42%. In the next years, the trend became even stronger - projects became the definitive power above organisational work. In another [...] comparative analyses from 2004, conducted with 200 firms, also validated this trend. Nearly in a fourth of the sample, there was a portfolio containing 100 or more projects. According to the conclusion of the report, 'it is hard to imagine organisations not using projects'."* (Jensen et al., 2016: 21.). Today, professional literature divides Project-Based Organisations, Project-Supported Organisations, and Project-Network Organisations by projectisation (see: Lundin, 2016). Packendorff and Lindgren state that "The term projectisation became known when projects became a generic task organisation form in all sectors of the economy in recent decades. This can perhaps be most clearly seen in how traditional firms slowly morphed into 'project-based firms', in other words, when organisations where nearly all processes are designed in the form of projects, and where permanent structures are only applied to the function of administrative aid" (Packendorff, Lindgren, 2014: 7).

4. PROJECTISATION OF EVERYDAY LIVES - PROJECT SOCIETY

In recent years, society researchers' dealing with projects – most notably those working in Scandinavian countries – have described not only the projectisation of the economy, but also our entire lives (Packendorf, 2014; Lundin et al., 2015; Jensen et al., 2016). According to the authors, socio-economic changes shape our environments in a way that we unintentionally – or perhaps, unknowingly – adapt to changes which can only be forecasted in short-term. The shortening of the foreseeable future makes it possible to target goals only in short-term. As we cannot plan for the long-term, everyone tries to be flexible. Just as it was in the case of economic organisations, the shortening of time also causes the expansion of scope – the environment awaiting planning and organising.

We can see transformations in all areas at the same time: in the tactics of sports, in the fight against terrorism, in choosing our significant other, in architecture and in space organisation, in pedagogy, in leading and management, in dance, in social aid, or in avoiding pandemics. However, the 'projectisation of everything' does not come from one specific institution of society's areas. Rather, it seems that areas inspire each other, and transmit the more temporary and flexible forms of organising to each other, which is sometimes called a project, sometimes something else (like one-night stand, or terrorist activity) and even those have a "projective structure". (Jensen et al., 2016: 25-26.).

The appearance of project-society, and the 'projectisation of everything' does not mean that unique and uncommon tasks are multiplying in our lives. In fact, everyone aims to reach similar goals (methods and tools can be applied), but we all want to realise the same roles a bit better than everyone else (and this requires a certain amount of creativity). *"We observe life as a series of projects, which is more valuable than that of others, if it is more different."* (Packendorf, Lindgren, 2014: 13).

For the active member of the project-society, time is the most expensive and rarest resource, and though projects are timely, we always feel that we're not completely ready, we're always in an underway process, and we always have to close in. In the project-society, experts have to manage their time, even time allocated for rest, vacation and reflexion. Organising free time is in and of itself a project: the goal is not a scary, inactive 'emptiness', but the time for us. A vacation spent in an exotic place can be matched to the training time of the family, where children can meet new cultures, or we can collect data for a new project (Jensen et al., 2016: 28).

5. REVIEW OF PM USAGE

Few instances of research aimed to look at the practical application of project management's technical toolset, and even those are relatively old. In literature sources, we can find some studies – which deal mainly with this issue – that show a very gloomy picture: *"Planning processes is mainly intended for strengthening the legitimacy of a project, and not that of the project itself"* –Packendorff comments on Christensen and Kreiner's analysis from 1991, and states that according to the

results of Higgins and Watts "new and refined planning techniques are rarely used by experts in practice" (Packendorff, 1994: 24).

Newer analyses – or at least, reports made about them – sadly, don't differentiate either: they ask based on the technical or organisational sciences-related criteria of project management. In the words of Lundin: *"few direct measurements are aimed at the frequency of projects, most of them are indirect measurements and forecasts"* (Lundin, 2016). Such indirect forecasts could be the observations of an HR expert, according to which: *"Starting entrepreneurships often hire for the front row of areas and projects instead of offering actual jobs, which is the reason that many companies turn away from jobs, and look towards assignments. Flexibility required for this is collected by the firms in the form of part-timers, one-time contracted partner's employees, or freelancers, but outsourcing is also an everyday occurrence"* (Bridges, Bridges, 2004: 284).

In that sense, by using a simplified and practical set of skills and tools derived from project management concept and methodology, individuals can be trained on how to define achievable objectives, how to break down their goals into a manageable set of interrelated tasks, how to plan and schedule these tasks, and how to manage and control their plans until they are achieved. That structured approach shows to individual or group or family how to create a plan to identify the tasks needed to accomplish the scope of work, manage time efficiently and communicate with other people effectively. It is fully applicable to all kind of tasks such as organizing family activities, managing home obligations, learning necessary skills, planning an education, starting a business, or making new friends. Such a project based approach to "life tasks" can provide the positive "task-based planning" and active coping strategy (Wurdinger, and Rudolph, 2009; Rousmaniere, 2015).

In light of all above mentioned claims, it proved necessary to conduct a research with the aim of understanding the opportunities and frequency of usage of the principles and tools of project management, and the thought governed by project outlook in our everyday lives, in order to clearly see if the active population understands and uses project management techniques and tools in their everyday lives.

The project management skills that one can utilize and perfect on a daily basis are the same skills which individuals use to live a better, more stress-free and fulfilling personal life. Simply said, project management skills are good life skills. The crucial three Project Management skills that are useful in daily life are described below:

Time Management: Project management is all about keeping important tasks on track because project budget will be affected if schedule of activities is not be monitored closely. The same applies to our personal lives. We all are busy trying to do all the tasks on time and with the same quality. Being able to effectively manage our time by using tools as to-do lists and planners enables us to maintain a healthy work-life balance.

Communication: Project managers communicate every day by interacting with multiple vendors and stakeholders. In that sense the success of a project is dependent on communication. In our personal life communication is also fundamental to any relationship we have.

Budgeting: A project manager's uttermost goal is client satisfaction, and in that respect, they must closely monitor timelines and resources to ensure that project costs are within budget limits. Our personal life requires the same manageable and realistic approach and behaviour related to the family budget available.

6. RESEARCH RESULTS

Although Project management discipline operates with number of tools and methods, for the purpose of this survey the skill of task planning has been explored, considering that this is one of crucial PM skills, as well as fundamental for one's life effectiveness and well being.

The survey conducted provided 475 usable responses received from online questionnaire. In the research, the mathematical-statistical methods have been used, in order to analyse the connections between the attitudes of participants on applicability of PM in private lives.

About one third of the sample (145) were male, two-thirds (330) were female. As for their age brackets, the participants were put into four categories: under 23 years old, which were 25,4% of participants, between 23 and 32 years old, which were 24,5%, between 33 and 44 years old at 27,1% of the sample, and above 44 years old for the remaining 22,9%. Of the participants who filled out the questionnaire, 23,1% worked in the government sector, 39% in the competitive sector, and 7,8% in the civilian sector. The remaining 30,2% consisted of students, retired, or unemployed participants.

At first, the research was conducted to explore the participants' knowledge in project management. Nearly half (46,2%) of males thought that the elements of PM are "well-known" to them, as well as its steps, and toolset, whereas this number for the females was less than a third (Table 1).

Table 1: Level of knowledge about the elements, steps and toolset of PM

Gender	Doesn't know	Heard about it	Knows well	Total
Male	18,6	35,2	46,2	100,0
Female	42,9	37,2	19,9	100,0
Total	**35,5**	**36,6**	**27,9**	**100,0**

Source: Authors work based on the survey data

Pearson chi-square: 0,000

The same answers divided by age brackets showed that most notably, the elder generation believes that they are knowledgeable in the technique of PM. Of the youngest ones, nobody stated that the practice of PM is "well-known" to them, and 75% said that they merely "heard about it" (Table 2).

Table 2: Level of knowledge about the elements, steps and toolset of PM

Age	Doesn't know	Heard about it	Knows well	Total
< 23	90,1	9,9	0,0	100,0
23-32	22,2	48,7	29,1	100,0
33-44	19,4	47,3	33,3	100,0
> 44	9,2	40,4	50,5	100,0
Total	**35,7**	**36,6**	**27,7**	**100,0**

Source: Authors work based on the survey data

Pearson chi-square: 0,000

The division by education also showed a very intriguing picture. The higher the participant's educational level was, the more they believed they knew project management (Table 3).

Table 3: Level of knowledge about the elements, steps and toolset of PM, considering educational level

Education	Doesn't know	Heard about it	Knows well	Total
Worker	39,1	56,5	4,3	100,0
High school	26,9	59,7	13,4	100,0
College, BSc	56,9	28,9	14,2	100,0
University, MSc	11,2	34,3	54,4	100,0
Total	**35,6**	**36,6**	**27,9**	**100,0**

Source: Authors work based on the survey data

Pearson chi-square: 0,000

However, it should be pointed out that the question – and similarly, the answers – relates to the subjective image of the participants. In that respect, almost all the participants use the word 'project' in our everyday lives, but they apply very different meanings behind the word. Therefore, they are familiar with the word itself, but there is limited number of them who also know its meaning. The definition of project management - and most notably, the technical components of PM - is used by much less people, and it is to consider that even the result of 27,9% is an overstatement. Therefore, the results of analysis of practical experience of participants in planning can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4: Using written plans in order to realise their target goals considering the age of participants

Age	Never	Sometimes	Often, always	Total
< 23	92,6	3,3	4,1	100,0
23-32	47,0	29,9	23,1	100,0
33-44	43,4	23,3	33,3	100,0
> 44	54,1	24,8	21,1	100,0
Total	**59,2**	**20,2**	**20,6**	**100,0**

Source: Authors work based on the survey data

Pearson chi-square: 0,000

The results of Table 4 show a weak connection between the planning practice and age groups. Those below 23 years of age - of whom none answered that they are "know well" the tricks of PM - never, or barely ever create written plans to concretely represent their own goals. The plans written for family members are even rarer in any of the age groups: of those below 23 years of age, no one, of those between 23 and 32 years of age, merely 7%, of those between 32 and 44 years of age, 11%, whereas of those above 44 years of age, 4,6% write down the things they wish their family members – most notably their children – would achieve. Both for family members and co-workers, the 33-44 age group is most active in supporting them with written plans.

Naturally, for co-workers, the most notable people to create written plans are probably the ones working as their superiors; therefore, we believe that this result shows a connection to the workplace status of participants. And in truth, the results of members of upper management are four times higher than those of employees. In the case of CEOs of firms and entrepreneurs however, this value is lower, compared to mid- and high-tiered management officials (Table 5).

Table 5: Using written plans in order to realise their target goals considering job positions of participants

	Never	Sometimes	Often, always	Total
Employee	65,5	25,5	9,0	100,0
Lower-mid management	39,1	31,0	29,9	100,0
Upper management	29,0	29,0	41,9	100,0
Chairman	38,0	31,0	31,0	100,0
Total	**49,4**	**28,4**	**22,2**	**100,0**

Source: Authors work based on the survey data

Pearson chi-square: 0,000

The practice of making plans may also depend on the following: do the participants take part in PM-based teams or group work, and do they gain favourable or unfavourable experiences based on the application of the technique? From the participants in the survey, if they were a part of a project team, it is more likely that they created written plans for themselves, or their family members (Table 6). This allows for the conclusion that these people intentionally plan to reach their personal goals, thereby validating their decision-making process.

Table 6: Using written plans in order to realise their target goals considering participants involvement as project team members

Project team membership	To family	To self	To co-workers	Total
Never	71,1	14,7	14,2	100,0
Once or twice	60,2	19,3	20,5	100,0
Multiple times	45,7	26,3	28,0	100,0
Total	**59,2**	**20,1**	**20,7**	**100,0**

Source: Authors work based on the survey data

Pearson chi-square: 0,000

As one outcome of the research, it is to say that a part of people who know well project management tools categorically refuses to accept the applicability of PM's logic and practice in their personal lives, whereas another part is nearly as convinced that application is entirely possible. According to the conclusions, attitudes on

applying PM in private life based on experiences as a project leader are presented in the Table 7. The more experience one had working as a project leader, the more they think about applying PM techniques in their everyday lives, whereas the ratio of those refusing applicability barely changes with the increase in practical project experience.

Table 7: Applying PM in private life based on experiences as a project leader

Was project leader	PM's steps and tools			Total
	Not applicable	Applicable to some extent	Applicable	
Never	21,8	33,6	44,6	100,0
Once or twice	25,4	26,8	47,9	100,0
Multiple times	20,0	19,2	60,8	100,0
Total	21,8	28,8	49,4	100,0

Source: Authors work based on the survey data

Pearson chi-square: 0,021

Finally, when analysing the opinions in applicability based on the participants' planning practice, it was found that the majority of those who plan for themselves state that the PM techniques can be used in everyday lives (Table 8).

Table 8: Applying PM in private life based on experiences by planning practice

	Not applicable	Applicable to some extent	Applicable	Total
Never	33,7	30,1	36,2	100,0
Sometimes	5,2	39,6	55,2	100,0
Often	4,0	14,1	81,8	100,0
Total	21,8	28,7	49,5	100,0

Source: Authors work based on the survey data

Pearson chi-square: 0,000

Nowadays, multiple applications can be used by an owner of a Smartphone who wishes to use an element of project management's toolset. Some of applications specifically useful for PM on mobile devices are presented in the Table 9.

Table 9: Ownership and usage of applications related to PM in the sample, by age (how many have them / how many use them)

IT project-tools	< 23	23-32	33-44	> 44
Project Planning Pro	23/5	9/2	18/9	20/5
Mind Vector – Mind Mapping	24/1	6/5	17/7	19/1
Plan Next	20/1	5/2	16/4	24/9
Project Manager Software	20/3	10/6	18/7	24/9
Gantt Pro	27/1	6/3	19/5	14/9

Source: Author's work based on the survey data

Furthermore, more than 95% of the participants have Internet access, Facebook profile, and an e-mail address, and nearly all of them use these, but only few of them downloaded onto their PCs (the first number in the cells) applications useful for PM. Even less use these applications (the second number in the cells). Another interesting point is that the applications in question – unlike most of the programmes in common use – are most notably downloaded and used by the older generation.

7. CONCLUSION

According to the international analyses of educational systems, one of the most notable differences between the European and the American education is the problem-centric and practice-oriented thought. A huge extra brought by project-based perspective is that our thought processes are more practical, or in other words, we are educated to be oriented towards practice, determining problems, and the exactness of problem solving (Hmelo-Silver, 2004; Lakatosné, Poór, 2017).

Many open questions can therefore be solved by spreading the steps and tricks of project management (as a field of expertise) in our daily lives, and the common usage of project-based perspective in everyday practice. Examples found in everyday lives help us understand the questions of project management, while they show the effectiveness and applicability of project management's practice in everyday life, which was before exclusive to the economy (Lakatosné, Poór, 2017).

The results of the analysis convincingly prove that use of project management approach in everyday life is feasible, useful, and participants would also happily grab this opportunity. However, major shares of the sample - most notably younger ones - don't know the steps and tools of PM.

The survey indicates that all 475 respondents in the questionnaire stated that they find it applicable, and rational to apply project management tools and techniques in practice. According to the results of the survey, it is advised to spread the logic, steps and toolset related knowledge of project management on a wider scale - even in compulsory education.

The survey results showed that project-based life management and life planning can be considered as feasible and useful by the majority of people. Using project approach in our everyday lives and educating society to be 'aware' could become the basis of a paradigm shift in pedagogy.

SVRHOVITO UPRAVLJANJE ŽIVOTOM I UPRAVLJANJE PROJEKTIMA U SVAKODNEVNOM ŽIVOTU: EMPIRIJSKO ISTRAŽIVANJE

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SAŽETAK

Svrha ovog rada jest istražiti trenutnu situaciju u Mađarskoj u korištenju projektnog pristupa u organizaciji i upravljanju svakodnevnog života. Nema dokaza da se istraživanja vezana uz istu ili sličnu temu provode u Europi ili u Mađarskoj. Postoje reference o tome u dostupnoj literaturi, ali o upotrebi PM načela u upravljanju procesima i aktivnostima u pri-vatnom životu postoji malen broj empirijskih istraživanja. Stoga je provedeno istraživanje kako bi se utvrdilo u kojoj se mjeri primjenjuju koncepti, metode i alati za upravljanje pro-jektima u svrhu olakšavanja artikuliranja potreba te analiziranja, planiranja i upravljanja životima kao projektima.

Na temelju istraživanja provedenog na uzorku od 475 korisnih odgovora na online upitni-ku, ova studija ukazuje na položaj i razvojne trendove u korištenju pristupa upravljanju pro-jektima u svakodnevnom životu izvedivim i korisnim, koristeći sljedeća istraživačka pitanja: (a) Koja je razina znanja o principima, elementima i alatima PM-a?; (b) Koriste li pisane planove kako bi ostvarili ciljeve u privatnom životu?; (c) Kakvi su stavovi sudionika o korištenju PM-a u privatnom životu na temelju iskustava kao voditelja projekta?; (d) Kakvi su stavovi sudionika u vezi s vlasništvom i korištenjem prijava vezanih uz PM u uzorku? Rabljene su varijable kao što su spol, dob, obrazovanje, radno mjesto, članstvo u projektnim timovima i iskustvo u PM-u.

U istraživanju su korištene matematičko-statističke metode kako bi se analizirale veze me-đu stavovima sudionika o primjenjivosti PM-a u privatnom životu.

Ključne riječi: *upravljanje projektima, upravljanje životom, projektno društvo, projektni procesi, faze projekta, projektizacija*

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