

A MULTICULTURAL EXPERIENCE BOOSTED BY SPECIALIZED EUROPEAN MASTER: A REAL APPROACH TO INTERNATIONAL PROJECT MANAGEMENT

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Abstract

When the Specialized Master in International Project Management started in Madrid in 2009, ESCP Europe, a high-level school of management with international scope, decided to reinforce the European institution and also to foster innovation sustaining a wide international partnership network. Students and executives came from around the world and the school offered them a model of Project Management which prepared them for the multicultural future where geographically dispersed projects teams must collaborate with a common goal.

Created in 1988, this Master keeps evolving and is a truly international program with international students and a real methodological revolution in Project Management education including international seminars and destinations in emerging countries: Either, India and China, or Brazil and Argentina.

This Specialized Master makes significant use of inductive teaching methods and interactive activities (project simulations, case studies, business plan development, etc.). This guarantees the skills acquisition needed to work in multidisciplinary, international and multicultural teams. The teaching methods emphasize experimentation and simulation exercises including International Consultancy Projects which requests an intensive use of Information and Communications Technologies in order to enable the international experience.

Keywords: *Education; International; Multicultural; Project Management*

Resumen

Cuando el Master Especializado en Dirección de Proyectos Internacionales se inició en Madrid en 2009, ESCP Europe, escuela de negocios de gran prestigio y alcance internacional, decidió reforzar la institución europea y también fomentar la innovación manteniendo una amplia red internacional. Los estudiantes y ejecutivos venían de todo el mundo y la escuela les ofrecía un modelo de dirección de proyectos que les preparaba para el futuro multicultural.

Creado en 1988, este programa Master sigue evolucionando y, siendo realmente internacional con estudiantes internacionales, presenta una verdadera revolución metodológica en la Formación de la Dirección de Proyectos, incluyendo seminarios

internacionales y destinos en países emergentes: o bien, la India y China, o Brasil y Argentina.

Este Master especializado hace un uso considerable de los métodos de enseñanza inductivo y actividades interactivas (simulaciones de proyectos, estudios de casos, desarrollo del plan de negocios, etc.) Esto garantiza la adquisición de las habilidades necesarias para trabajar en equipos multidisciplinarios, internacionales y multiculturales. Los métodos de enseñanza hacen hincapié en la experimentación y la simulación de los ejercicios, incluidos proyectos de Consultoría Internacional, para los cuales se requiere un uso intensivo de Tecnologías de Información y Comunicaciones a fin de posibilitar la experiencia internacional.

Palabras clave: *Formación; Internacional, Multicultural; Dirección de Proyectos*

1. Introducción

Since its inception in 1988, the Specialized Master in International Project Management has graduated 720 students who are now part of the ESCP Europe 35,000-member alumni network representing over 200 nationalities in 150 countries worldwide.

Students come from various countries and have different backgrounds: engineers, doctors, pharmacists, students of literature and law, etc. Originating from 40 nationalities, they form a group of multicultural participants, which makes exchanging and working in groups all the more enriching. International students comprise approximately one third of every graduating class; most instruction is delivered in English on different campuses. The aim of the ESCP Europe Specialized Master in International Project Management is to prepare participants for careers in international business development and project management. The programme addresses financial, economic and strategic aspects, and devotes particular attention to developing negotiation skills. It draws upon an extended network of renowned academic and professional partners in Europe and Asia.

2. Case Study

2.1 The innovative teaching architecture

The present experience explains how the programme trains participants to manage projects in an international business context and which the best practices from this outstanding higher education are.

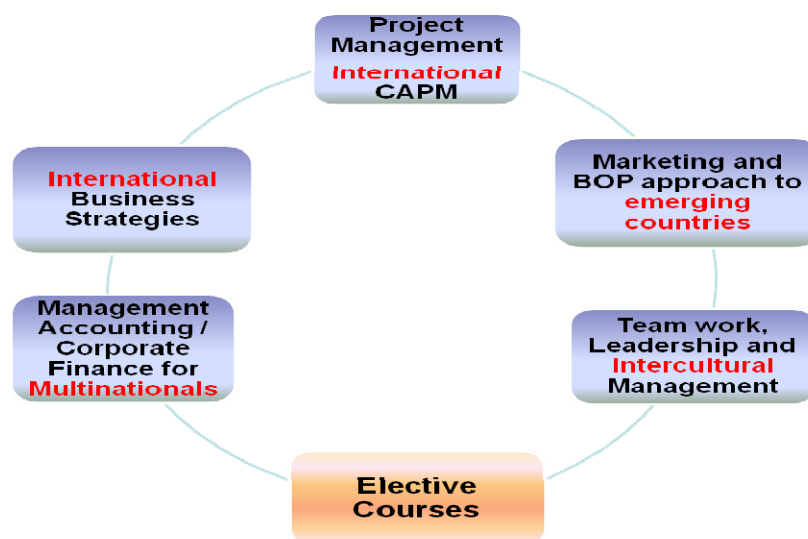
This full-time programme extends to twelve months. It starts in September each year and is organised as follows: 6 months of full-time coursework - end of September until the end of March plus a one-month seminar with the choice between two different destinations in emerging countries: Either in India, at the *Management Development Institute* in New Delhi – MDI – and in China, at *Tongji University* in Shanghai, or in Brazil, at the *Fundação de Getulio Vargas* in Rio de Janeiro – FGV – and in Argentina, at the *University of San Andres*, Buenos Aires. Additionally, a company placement of at least 4 months starting in April and a professional thesis is organized to consolidate the previous modules.

Perhaps, one of the key success indicators of this programme is the Faculty. The combination of research-active full faculty representing more than twenty nationalities across five campuses, in collaboration with affiliated faculty, visiting faculty, and emeritus faculty means over 600 contributors across 5 campuses (Scholars, Business practitioners, Researchers and Experts).

This Specialized Master programme makes significant use of inductive teaching methods and interactive activities (project simulations, case studies, business plan development, etc.). This guarantees the skills acquisition needed to work in multidisciplinary, international and multicultural teams.

The course is centred round six major themes: Project management, with an elective course leading to the Certified Associate Project Manager (CPAM) by the Project Management Institute (PMI); corporate strategy; economic and financial approaches; international marketing; managing in international contexts and human resources aspects of project management. The teaching methods emphasize experimentation and simulation exercises.

Figure 1: Program Structure including 6 areas.



2.2 International Corporate Projects

One of the most distinguished parts of this programme is the International Corporate Project (ICP). The objectives of this module are totally corporate focused; immerse in international development challenges of a company, either a European company in Asia or South America, either a South American or Asian company in Europe. The use of the following international seminar is going to enable students get primary data, information, inputs and direct access to key managers of selected companies. It means *networking* at the same time. Thus, it is possible to apply concepts and methods learned during “Project Financing Strategies”.

Students are requested to organize group work on a project mode, using concepts learned during “Project Management” module. Thanks an intensive use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), they are able to organize and coordinate using remote project management tools and practices in order to deliver the expected International Corporate Project. ICPs prepared them for the multicultural future where geographically dispersed projects teams must collaborate with a common goal.

The organization of this module is based on Groups of five participants, to be organized according seminar destinations. Groups should include participants from different campuses Madrid, Paris, etc. For instance, during the last edition there were nine groups for Asia and four groups for South America. These groups are to be launched before the international seminar departure according to the following Principle: participants organize themselves according to their preferences.

It is a set of five deliverables to be produced and the final ICP presentation delivered at end of international seminar in order to submit the ICP full report before the overall ICP evaluation, which is taken into account for a module about *Développement Stratégique et Financier International* (DFSI) and ICP credits, hence a total of 3 ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System).

2.3 The international seminar

The aims of these seminars are to allow students to be completely immersed in a new economic, social and cultural context; to take courses in our academic partners' institutions; to experience the business context of these emerging regions of the world; to reinforce their adaptation skills to any unknown environment.

The following courses are designed to enhance students understand the complexity of international environments, like for instance, Doing Business in emerging economies, Marketing in emerging economies, Social values in emerging economies, Intercultural management, Project management, Politics and economy, Social responsibility, Negotiations, Supply chain management, Risk management, etc.

2.4 The PMI Certification

According to the global approach to the Project Management Institute (PMI), Project Management is the discipline of planning, organizing, and managing resources to bring about the successful completion of specific project goals and objectives.

Based on Henry Gantt's (1913) project planning and control techniques, instead of Henry Fayol's (1949) management functions, the PMI Certification is clearly an added value for every single Project Manager who is facing an international career on Project Management. Hence an international certification has been selected in order to reinforce the Programme total value.

Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK) understands project management as a process which has inputs, activity and outputs. In order to explain the process of project management, PMBOK groups the processes into five families, or primary processes that it calls process groups: Initiating, Planning, Executing, Controlling and Closing. These five primary process groups are what PMBOK refers to as the Project Management Life Cycle. PMBOK sees these five primary processes as consistent in every project, irrespective of the content of the project or what the product of the project is (PMBOK. 2009).

In each of these five primary process groups are defined by knowledge areas. Each knowledge area contains the detail of a particular area of knowledge or skill that the primary processes need to function. The knowledge area often contains skills, tools and techniques that cover more than one process. There are nine knowledge areas:

Table 1. PMBOK Chapters

Project Integration Management
Project Scope Management
Project Time Management
Project Cost Management
Project Quality Management
Project Human Resource Management
Project Communications Management
Project Risk Management
Project Procurement Management

When all of the knowledge areas are examined and described, the full meaning of each of the primary processes appears. In fact, each knowledge area is defined as a set of processes (with inputs, tools, techniques and outputs) and, by being defined this way, gives the complete scope of each of the processes in the process group (PMBOK, 2009).

2.5 Updating the professional mission

From mid-April to December, students must complete an in-company internship of at least 4 months (though often lasting for seven up to eight months). ESCP Europe assists students in locating internship opportunities and networking with companies. It is to the students' choice to undertake this mission either inland or abroad. The internship is an opportunity for practical application of the theoretical concepts learned from courses, with an eye to establishing a career. In many cases, corporate employers consider the internship as a trial period for a permanent position.

The Company Relations Department of ESCP Europe is, among other things, dedicated to gather placement offers from many companies. The department also organises a series of fairs involving firms, giving Specialized Master students many opportunities to make contact. Hence meeting Companies, which takes place every year in October, is intended for Specialized Masters and third year Master in Management students: over 100 companies are involved, including international banks and audit and consulting firms. Also Conference cycles 'One hour/One job' and 'One hour/One sector', allow students to fully grasp the reality of different professional functions within companies from various sectors.

Finally the January ESCP Europe Forum brings together around 120 international companies to present their job offers.

2.6 Ending with a professional thesis

Starting in mid-April, students must draft a professional thesis in consultation with an ESCP Europe Professor. This individual applied research project is an essential part of the programme since it leads to in-depth analysis. The topic chosen is approved beforehand by an academic advisor and students are taught research methods. The thesis is defended orally to a committee between early November and mid-December.

The thesis marks the culmination of the Specialized Master. It represents 30 of the total of 75 ECTS credits earned over the year.

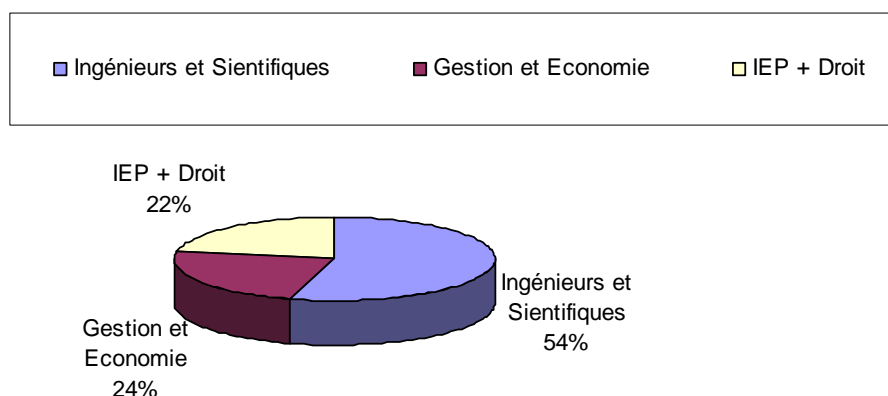
2.7 The selected requirements

Eligible applicants must hold a master degree (research or professional) in fine arts, architecture, engineering, management, public administration, political science, humanities or in any other field. This requirement may be waived for applicants with non-traditional backgrounds and those who demonstrate exceptional qualities and skills. In accordance with standards set by the French "Conférence des Grandes Ecoles", such applicants must not exceed 30% of admitted students per year.

The following degrees are required for eligibility (in fields such as engineering, management, medicine, architecture, humanities, etc):

- A "Grande Ecole" degree
- A Master degree (five years of study)
- A Post-graduate degree (over five years)
- A Bachelor degree with three years of work experience
- Other degree equivalent to the above

Figure 2: Promotion Profile MSP09.



3. Results

The Project Management skills have been consolidated by implementing Team Work and Leadership, Marketing and Intercultural Management modules, the above mentioned, Group Works, Learning by Doing, and finally, by Individual Coaching. It is exactly a strong focus on "*Learning by Doing*" which enables students to develop the following professional skills:

- Learning to work in team under pressure
- Learning to cope with diversity (students with different backgrounds)
- Learning to cope with cultural diversity in India, China or South America
- Improving from feedbacks

A deep analysis of the professional output is, probably, the most important contribution of this programme to the added value that every student gathers according to their planned output. Hence, it is possible to analyze those success indicators which impact on a professional career path is more evident.

For instance, the following tables show the length of job search, average salaries and company profiles of recruiters.

Table 2. Length of Job Search

Job Search	Rate (%)
Before the end of the programme	50
Within 2 months	33
In less than six months	12
Six months and over	5

The average salaries that have been analyzed during last cohorts are as follows:

- Average salary at the end of the programme: 38,000€ p.a.
- Average salary one year after graduation: 42,500€ p.a.

Table 3. Recruiting companies

Recruiting companies	Rate (%)
work as consultants	32%
work in marketing: trade marketing, product manager	26%
work as chargé d'affaires	19%
different functions: auditor, R&A, project developer	23%

Those different back-grounds that have enriched the programme show such a convergence when the professional out-put is analyzed. The most expected jobs that have been recruited are: Project manager, Account Manager, Area sales manager (business development), International procurement manager, Consultant, Project financing, Credit Analyst, Business analyst, Business process manager and Risk Manager.

4. Conclusions

In order to conclude, perhaps, the main strengths highlighted by the Survey of 2007's Cohort are worth to be explained. The faculty, due to the skills they show and the diversity. The skills focused on the global business management, which are one of the most important challenges that a professional should nowadays face. The network support and ESCP Europe resources applied in the employability. The different study seminars developed in Asia and South America. Finally, the close supervision implemented by the Scientific Direction of the Master Programme.

Students feed-back are also recognized by international rankings. Thus, considering International Management programmes other than MBA, the Specialized Master in International Project Management wins a second position in EU (SMBG. 2010).

Table 4. SMBG 2010 Best Masters Rating.

★★★★	1. ESSEC	MS Strategy and Management of International Business
★★★★	2. ESCP Europe	MS Management des Projets Internationaux
★★★★	3. ESCP Europe	MEB
★★★★	4. Audencia Nantes	EMP - European management programme

The presented innovation in the field of Project Management is probably a good success story to be explained. The combination of multiculturalism, international exposure, remote project management itself, etc, is going to integrating students between different Campuses through joint seminars, projects and IT infrastructure. It means another way of leveraging a distributed organizational model.

Thus, innovating in higher education presents a real contribution to the Bologna Process, when it is explained that *"up to 2020 European higher education has a vital contribution to make in realising a Europe of knowledge that is highly creative and innovative. Europe can only succeed in this endeavour if it maximises the talents and capacities of all its citizens and fully engages in lifelong learning as well as in widening participation in higher education."* (CEMRHE, 2009).

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