

PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNESHIP IN THE FIELD OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Introduction

Public Private Partnership - The “laser” of the 21st century, With its help decision-makers wanted to achieve a lot simultaneously: privatization of the public sector, the enhancement of its competitiveness, and last but not the least the rationalization of the national budget (and maybe decline – noting not without some fear). The public sector changes are easily understood, as these starting programs mean for them the opportunity to use new source, of funds in the short run. This would be all right, yet most of the participants in the market have noticed exactly the same possibility: another chance to gain money from the public sector.

Let’s make it clear at the beginning: I do not dispute that a PPP programme costs money. But I also claim that a PPP cooperation should mean much more than such working methods, whose outcome can be described with the following expression “activity done time past”, because the original aim of this cooperation was to make science understandable with the competing sector. The R&D sector is not an bottomless magician hat from that we can conjure up, on-demand the needed knowledge, newness, or even just an expert. The creation of such values to be found in this “hat” will take a long time and much cost

The private sector’s participation in this programme is very important for more than one reason:

- The private sector should also take risks in this aspect of value creation, contributing to the costs of production.
- With the help of its participation and experience the private sector should (partly) cut down the creation time of innovations-results.
- Also it could spread in the public sector modern management and project management experiences.

While working, the participants of the private sector can obtain a competitive edge while their outgoings as a result of the common work can benefit. It is very important that these advantages are achieved by means of time, work, and financial investments. At the same time the public sector can also profit from this “relationship” as its operations becomes more efficient and the utilisation of its work can be monitored in a much easier way. PPP is a long-term relationship that demands from

both partners new knowledge, abilities and investments. Nevertheless (and this is a crucial point), the roles cannot be reversed, so one should not expect:

- the participants from the public sector to enhance the abilities to take risks,
- nor change, in capabilities of financing.

After this short introduction I would like to familiarize the readers with a PPP programme and its results.

The Didakta Programme

On the program entitled “PR-III: development of an e-curriculum for higher education” from the tender put up in 2002, code no. T013, entitled “Creation of online or digitally distributed curricula and of educational auxiliary materials, to be launched through computer networks, for players in Hungarian public education, vocational training and higher education as well as the development of hardware enabling access to these services”, the bid entitled “T013-PRIII/0004 Didakta” of the consortium made up of Mimóza Kft, the Sociology and Communication Department of the Budapest University of Technology and Economy, and the Art Theory and Media Research Institute of the Eötvös Loránd University of Sciences proclaimed the winner. The consortium had used the Co-edu system of Mimóza Kft. During implementation of the program the consortium prepared a curriculum covering 24 terms, to be launched in Hungarian higher education, while during preparation of the curriculum it built up specialized e-learning know-how in the field of higher education.

The primary aim of the project was to create richly illustrated learning materials that can be widely used in higher education and that *help traditional classroom* education instead of eliminate it.

The target group of the courses created within the framework of this project is that of “screenagers”. In their case, the conditions to the needed digital literacy are given, as they have access to technical tools. Along with these technical abilities they are studying in large numbers, are mostly self-financed, though they are not necessarily high-flyers.

The created courses during the programme

- Sales skills
- Business etiquette
- Time management
- Management of change
- Awarding and promotion
- Media and press history
- History of publicity
- Quantitative social dynamics
- Basic computing skills
- Micro economy
- Macro economy

- Basic mathematics skills
- The basics of client care
- Basics for info.brokers
- Basic enterprise skills
- Conflict management
- Introduction to sociology
- Basic Physics I. – thermodynamics
- Basic Physics II. – mechanics
- Study of social communication
- Movie after the cinema, theory of the motion picture
- Cognitive psychology I. – Basic terms
- Methodology for E-learning curriculum development
- The basics of project management
- The Co-edu system

The usage of the Co-edu system requires average infrastructural conditions. See that the system focuses on industrial standards such as XML, SQL, LOM and trying for platform-independent solutions relating to the operational system, databases and the storage of documents, use of the Co-edu system needs only average infrastructural devices.

From the user's point of view there are some devices that can facilitate the learning process, which are the following:

- Highlighter
- Book mark
- Teamwork support.

On the tutor's side also there are contained some elements that support the work of the teacher, such as the sophisticated student information system, the sophisticated content and access management and the system supervisory functions.

The different materials were prepared with the assistance of a large number of contributors (authors, editors, proofreaders, operators, graphic designers) in functional groups working separately at relatively distant locations. The organization, the standardization of communications, and the support coming via teamwork was of crucial importance in the process. Cultural differences and the various levels in competency, earlier experiences, and digital skills were managed as key factors.

To be on time on budget delivery we needed very precisely defined processes.

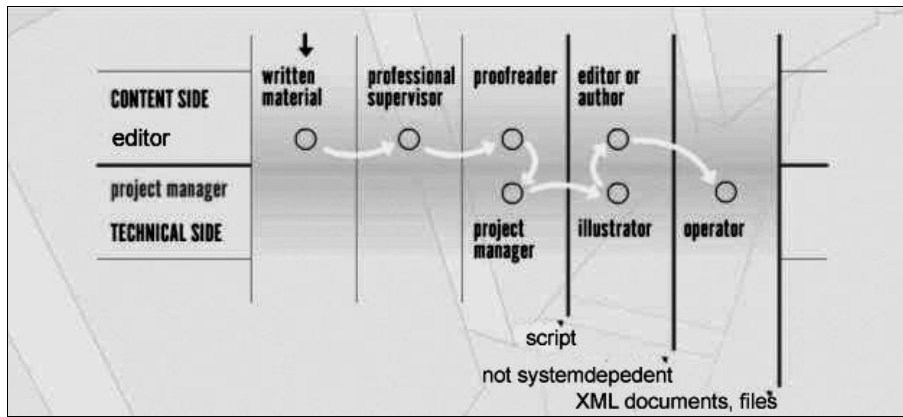


Figure 1: A detail of the process plan

The first pilot projects involved freshmen majoring in Communication. They left high school with good computer and Internet skills and were now socializing in a new information environment. Summarizing their reactions during the pilot project, we found dictates that can be considered quite typical amongst older computer users: no motivation, linear learning, the missing socializing function of school and “we shouldn’t use it for things it is not meant to be used for”. Altogether these attitudes defined *e-learning as a supplement*. On the other hand, in support of e-learning people liked very much the links, the material for use as a guide to information on the web, being able to avoid tedious searching, bridging the authority of books, and the non-authority of the internet. People positively defined e-learning as a “structured network of knowledge”. Our pilot project manager stated that the main observations were the following:

- e-learning opens the “book” towards the web -it is a path on the web
- education itself sees new technology as an opportunity in education, while students see the web as something given to which education has to react
- a change of generation involves a needed change of mind as regards education

It was an enormous task to make the e-learning methodology have a focus as the almost 20 people involved in compiling it came from very different angles, e.g. from practising e-learning tutor to brain activity researcher; and persons had to work together to have an in-depth methodology that covered the following topics:

- e-learning and lifelong learning,
- learning and teaching – a systematic approach,
- the methodology of e-learning environments,
- methodology of e-learning materials,
- requirements for e-learners,
- the requirements for e-learning supporters.

Experiences

We found that, here the solution can be called “blended learning”. This means that technology without a appropriate background, such as a teacher is not worth much; thus only a combination of the two elements can lead to success.

From this, we can say the following:

- The answer is constructivist pedagogy
- The application of IT devices can be decided only by practical experience
- A negative attitude can be „healed” via collective work
- The results of this project are capitalized upon and also improved by two other projects: the Co-edu partner programme for higher education institutions; and the Common EU programme for assessment and usage of the methodology in Central-Eastern European countries.
- The aim of this programme is to give non-profit organisations an opportunity gain experience of the Co-edu system. After drawing up the contract with these non-profit organisations they have one year to use the system, to make learning courses with it etc. After this one year the chance is given to these contracting organisations to extend the contract. Approximately 30 universities and colleges have inquired about the Co-edu Partner Programme so far.

PPP criteria

The Public private partnership (PPP) covers different forms of cooperation drawn-up between legal entities and public authorities. They aim at financing, designing, implementing and operating Public Sector facilities and services. Public Private Partnerships thus cover all current legal/economic forms that make it possible for private funds to invest in public infrastructure and services. This type of partnership is based on a contract between a public body (the conceding authority) and a private company (the concessionaire).

In addition, the Treaty of Rome’s role cannot be underestimated. The enlarged European market is based on removing legal, technical and economic barriers and the progressive relinquishing of national monopolies and the prohibition of the creation of new ones. PPPs are becoming especially relevant at the European level in respect of *trans-European networks* for all the reasons above (a lack of public funds a need to mobilise funds, private sector know-how, etc.).

The creation of common terminology

- The participants have to speak a common language even though the learning of this language will take time.

The use of devices

- Participants should be *able to* learn from each other and *want to* learn from each other

The setting out of clear competences (i.e. who does what)

- A certain task should have a clearly identified leader (even on shared tasks)

Finance

- Financial aspects also should be present in the planning period of the project.

Proprietary rights – objectives

- In connection with the goods that are produced during the project, there should exist a utilization plan
- Within the framework the cooperation between the public and the private sector, there are different things that they can take advantage of. The public sector is good at delivering the learning material, security and degree while the private sector is good as delivering agility, a project approach and adaptability.

There are some reasons why it is worth stepping in this way, direction which are the following: R&D becomes more cost-effective through as allocation of resources devices and as exchanging of experiences; and this form of cooperation can give partners a competitive edge by enhancing the speed of technical and knowledge adaptations, through the reputation and a widely based „competence centre”. Above all, this form of cooperation helps one realize that only one market exists, i.e. via experiencing both sellers and buyers’ perspectives when competing one’s tasks.