



# Project management in academic physical education system: benefits analysis

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## Abstract

**Objective of the study** was to analyze benefits of a project management technology for the modern academic physical education system.

**Methods and structure of the study.** We run, for the purposes of the study, the academic physical education system Management Survey in the Belgorod, Kursk and Lipetsk Oblasts using a questionnaire survey of the academic physical education system communities and focus group interviews. We sampled students (n=1000), faculties and researchers (n=300), and university management (n=140). The survey was designed to find attitudes of the academic physical education system communities to the academic physical education system management system and potential benefits of the modern project activity for the latter.

**Results and conclusion.** We found the project management technology being potentially beneficial for the academic physical education system, conditional on the sound institutional and technological provisions analyzed herein.

**Keywords:** *academic physical education system, project management technology, dispositions, strategies, system (project) approach, partnership, pertinency.*

**Background.** Project management may be defined as the systemic process to attain specific goals in specific missions, with their outcomes ratable on the time, cost, effectiveness and quality scales. This multisided process is applicable in the modern academic physical education system based on sound theoretical and practical provisions supported by empirical data. Reforms of the academic physical education system are mostly driven by the shareholders' policies and agendas and, hence, the management group practices and behavioral standards. The socio-technological missions of such reforms are extremely challenging for at least the following reasons: first, not every variable in the academic physical education system is controllable by the university management; second, they reforms are always limited by the communal values, priorities and standards; and, third, every social technology has its limitations.

It should be mentioned that every socio-technological approach generates a range of opportunities and solutions, and some of them are offered by the

modern project management technology that may be beneficial for the academic physical education system – viewed as the cluster of interrelated and interdependent institutions geared to ensure health protection and physical progress of the academic communities by multisided physical education and culturing services – within their natural limitations [1].

**Objective of the study** was to analyze benefits of a project management technology for the modern academic physical education system.

**Methods and structure of the study.** We used as a starting point for the study the Academic Physical Education System Management Survey (2018-2021) in the Belgorod, Kursk and Lipetsk Oblasts using the following methods: 1) questionnaire surveys of the academic physical education system communities: students (n=1000), faculties and researchers (n=300), and university management (n=140); and (2) focus group interviews of the university faculties and researchers (n=12) and university management (n=12).



**Results and discussion.** The survey found the university faculties and researchers generally happy with the existing academic physical education system management system rated by 7.6 points on a 10-point scale; although the present academic physical education system management policies and procedures were rated high by only 22.3% of the faculties and researchers; whilst 43.3% and 10.7% of the sample rated them acceptable with reservations and low, respectively [2]. Therefore, most in the key academic physical education system actors realize more or less clearly drawbacks of the existing institutional mechanisms that effectively limit the management process and give rise to the relevant specific problems classifiable by the management levels. The student community, for instance, was tested unhappy with the limited choice of sports; limited sports competitions; remote locations of the university sports facilities, etc. This means that the academic physical education system community shows an implicit demand for reforms in the system management methods. These reforms could be facilitated, among other things, by the modern project management technology.

Clear benefits of the project management for the system are due to (a) its practical focuses; (b) special provisions for the academic learning being efficiently combined with practical professional progress facilitated by the practical project activity; (c) prioritization and individualization of the physical education service; and (d) potential cooperation in the project teams with leaders from a wide range of institutions.

The respondents were found little aware of the potential benefits, logics and application mechanisms of a project approach in the academic physical education system management system, with only 52.3% of the faculties and researchers found somewhat informed about the project approach applications for the academic physical education system progress goals [3] – and may be for this reason the university management rated benefits of the project approach for the academic physical education system progress by only 6.6 points on a 10-point scale – in spite of their little awareness of its potential benefits.

Despite this relative skepticism of academic physical education system communities, we believe that benefits of the modern project management for the system are well grounded for many reasons. Great potential of the project management is due at least to the fact that it helps mobilize the passive strata in the system, with every APES actor effectively encouraged to

contribute to the management policies and practices and given a chance to advance its progress agenda in the project design and implementation process. It should be emphasized, however, that every project approach has its natural time limitations and, therefore, its strategic visioning is relatively short.

Project activity may be highly beneficial when it is designed on principles of strategic vectoring, systemic approaching, due partnership and relevance (pertinence). Thus, the strategic vectoring principle means that the academic physical education system management will be customized to the nonlinear social progress with account of the theoretically grounded progress forecasts for the nation on the whole and university in particular. The systemic approaching principle implies the efforts to interconnect the solutions in the project activity based on a comprehensive provisioning [4] so as to contribute to the progress strategies of the academic physical education system on the whole and university in particular. This means that every project will be designed to contribute to the relevant project chain/ ring, with each of them addressing a specific problem found by surveys of the academic physical education system communities.

The partnership principle implies that the university management should be open for contributions from the university community – to effectively improve the management decision-making, expand the resource base and competencies of the project team, and thereby attain the project goals more effectively. Such partnership will be managed by a public council as its key management body and a fundamental platform for the project initiation.

And the relevance/ pertinence principle means that the potential benefits of the project should be analyzed by an efficient set of progress criteria to avoid formalism in the project implementation and progress reports so as to rate the project progress and benefits on a highly objective and dependable basis.

**Conclusion.** We recommend the academic physical education system being advanced by reasonably prioritized institutional and technological solutions as follows. First, the system needs an academic physical education system progress strategy to secure healthy lifestyle building opportunities for every academic physical education system actor with a ready access to and facilitating provisions for the physical education and sports services. These solutions will be addressed by the long-term goals with the relevant efficient man-



agerial, institutional and educational tools to facilitate healthy changes in the communal preferences and behavioral standards, with every actor offered an access to the project activity on a voluntary basis.

Second, the system will cultivate fitness and ability of each actor to contribute to the project design process, with the systemic project activity increasingly ranked among the individual needs and priorities with the growth of interest, skills and experience in the practical project activity.

Third, the academic physical education system will be put on a sound management structure to effectively coordinate the project activity, with the public councils recommended as the best institutional body composed of the university managers, faculty members, researchers, students and NGO activists. Such public councils will take management decisions for academic physical education system progress to consider the system progress options, analyze the progress reports and coordinate the academic physical education system advancement activities.

And fourth, the academic physical education system progress initiatives will be evaluated by a set of efficient progress criteria to rate: benefits of the pro-

ject on the whole; project deliverables and outcomes; project progress reports; project implementation experience and practical skills; and self-reports of the project benefits by the teams.

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