

Promising practice

University: Corvinus University of Budapest (CUB) and Corvinus Business School (CBS)

Academic discipline: Organizational Behaviour

Course title: HR and OD Skills Development (Human Resource and Organizational Development Skills Development)

Course description:

Context:

The 'HR and OD skills development' course is closing the Human Resource and Organizational Development Specialization in the Management Master programme at CBS. It is a compulsory course in the final (4th) semester of the programme.

Aim of the course and key elements:

The course aims to facilitate the transition process from being a student to becoming a young professional. Therefore skill development is facilitated in multiple ways:

- self-awareness raising (work on personal development goals);
- experiencing diverse personal and group development methods and schools (e.g. Transactional Analysis, NLP and Gestalt) with guest trainers and coaches (explore which fits their professional motivations and passion, and how these can be utilized to work on their personal development goals); and
- career interviews with HR and OD professionals (reflecting on their beliefs, hopes and fears related to the desired profession).

Teaching and learning process:

The course consists of 8 workshops and 7 intervision group meetings.

Students are working on their personal skills by selecting a relevant and substantial personal developmental goal at the beginning of the course, phrasing it as concretely as possible (e.g. improving time management, self-confidence, etc.), thinking about how to measure their achievements (what indicators can capture the steps ahead) and formulating a personal development contract to be signed by the students and the tutors/coaches. Students are taking steps themselves, working toward the goals in workshops, the intervision groups, small and large group exercises, coaching events and interviews with professionals. Personal skill development takes place by experiential learning – experimenting with developmental methods (subject matter of the course).

Workshops: The first two workshops are dedicated to teambuilding and personal development contract formulation, while the last workshop is closing the personal, intervision and large group processes. The other five workshops are organized around the different personal and organizational developmental methods and schools (Psychodrama, Transactional Analysis, NLP, Gestalt and Solution focused coaching). Each workshop is a mix of large group work, introduction of theory and reflection, work in smaller groups, practical application and live individual, group or team coaching.

Intervision group meetings: In between the 8 workshops intervision group meetings are organized. The intervision groups consist of 4-5 students facilitated by an experienced coach. Goals of the intervision groups are to discuss the theory, reflect on the desired career transition related questions of the participants, and get coaching on personal development goals.

Learning outcomes:

- Increased self and career awareness;
- Experiential knowledge on different developmental techniques;
- Flexibility and competence when dealing with a wide range of personal development and career transition situations;
- Raised ethical and group process awareness;
- Increased capacity for reflection.

How students' learning is assessed:

Students are evaluated along their workshop activity and two self-reflection papers. The papers are structured around personal development goal realization through the use of learned techniques and reflection on career interviews. In the first paper they have to formulate the dimensions along which they can measure their goal realization, and they have to evaluate their own performance along them. A set of questions are provided in order to promote structured reflection and inspire in-depth critical thinking, and these actually include the selected RRI keys and dimensions. The course tutors act as supervisors by providing developmental and not evaluative feedback to help participants in the formulation of a realistic self-evaluation. In the second paper reflection on the whole process and personal achievements shall be described by the students. Both students and tutors evaluate the workshop activity of students.

How students learn with civil society organisations through this course:

Some of the participants' desired careers involve working for CSOs, therefore they interview professionals working for CSOs and share their experiences and learnings during the intervisions/in the large group. When interviewing CSO professionals students explore their possibilities, check the validity of their hopes and fears related to this career. There are 1-3 CSO based interviewees per semester in the course. Another way to channel civil activities (but not CSOs or CSO professionals) into the course is bringing in the volunteering of business professionals. HR and OD consultancy companies are involved in the course – their recognized experts facilitate some of the methodological workshops (e.g. NLP, Gestalt and Solution focused coaching). Some of them are volunteering as intervision group coaches during the course

How students learn about dimensions of RRI through this course:

The course integrates the following RRI keys explicitly: science education, ethics, sustainability. Gender and diversity is included in an implicit, indirect way. Most of these keys – as well as the RRI dimensions in the later section – are captured at the personal, individual level. The strong introspective nature, personal development character of the course drives the key and dimension to a very personal level, with external, system-wide reflections taking place to a limited extent.

Science education

Latest knowledge within the different methodological fields are applied during the workshops, and through experiential learning their meaning and personal use is explored, and thus creating deeper understanding and possible new links between different fields of knowledge. Linking practice, personal experience and theory in new ways characterizes the course.

Ethics

This is at the core of the course: tutors, guest trainers, coaches and participants are continuously invited to reflect on the ethical dilemmas of their professional practice, and to consciously incorporate this in their professional identity and career development.

Sustainability

The course focuses on individuals and their career transition, and by increasing their personal and career awareness contributes to a sustainable individual career on the one hand, and a more sustainable human resource market on the other. Becoming prepared for transitions (lay-offs, major shifts in the career) makes students more resilient to changes, that might be noticeable on the macro level as well.

Gender and diversity

Students reflect on their different social identities and its possible influences on personal and career development. The challenge of combining motherhood and career is an issue raised in almost all the groups. Other aspects of the social identity of students reflected upon beyond sex and gender are:

- geographic, geo-political, geo-social division - coming from the countryside or Budapest (capital city);
- ethnic/minority background – Roma student hiding her roots in university/course, but launching a Roma/civil development career afterwards (single case).

Anticipation

Students learn how to formulate their personal development goals fitting their motivations, passion and career aims, and learn how to work on personal development realization by the use of different developmental techniques.

Students understand the origins and motivations of their career expectations – are they rooted in them or do they stem from the expectations of others/external sources (e.g. fashion/trend; organization/boss; family background, etc.?) On the other hand they experience certain fundamental values (credibility, authenticity, ethicality, awareness, autonomy) and the drive to become a professional characterized by these values. All this could be part of reflexivity. It is described here because there is an expectation/suggestion that developmental professionals with these values and attitudes will have strong force shaping their environment.

Reflexivity

Students explicitly expected to reflect on their personal development process. They practice reflection at three different levels – (1) self-reflection (personal development goal related internal changes); (2) their role in the intervision/large group (linking it with personal development goal) and (3) group processes and its effect on their role and self-development. Reflection is written up in papers (2 reports over the course), exercised in e.g. psychodrama, discussed when being coached. Direct reflection on personal skills and improvements as well as a more abstract way of reflection is taking place on e.g. how marginalization processes are befalling in their groups, how confidentiality of and exclusion from information is happening among the members of the student groups.

Inclusion

Reflection on the elitist nature of university education at a leading local business school is constantly taking place. Losing e.g. high school relationships with those who do not attend higher education comes as an important recognition many times during the course. Thus, the lack of inclusion and its problems appear in the course. (This has actually lead to the development of a new course on reintegration of people with disabilities and reduced working capabilities).

Responsiveness

Workshops are built around participants developmental goals and knowledge. Live coaching and supervision sessions aim to provide access to emerging knowledge.

RRI keys integrated in the course:

Gender and diversity; Ethics; Science education and outreach from higher education; Sustainability;

RRI process requirements integrated in the course:

Anticipation ; Reflexivity; Inclusion; Responsiveness

Summary:

What makes this course a promising practice in a business school context and/or in general:

- This course provides a great 'moment' of focusing on the self, promoting reflection. Students are going to be trainers and coaches themselves, thus the potential leverage effect of the course is immense.
- The course builds on experiential learning, in a similar way to Decision Techniques, another promising practice by CUB. One of the important differences is: here the methods experienced are directly aiming at skills development, the subject matter of the course is not only the techniques but the personal experience as well. In the Decision Techniques course subject and experience are a bit more loosely or indirectly connected. Both of them are very interesting and promising practice in this sense helps us recognize the difference, the potential of diversity in this regard.
- Intended learning outcomes and evaluation captures many of the RRI keys and RRI dimensions explicitly and directly, even though these are understood on the level of the individual without the wider context.
- CSO involvement is not structured, it happens based on students' interest. Nevertheless, the course mobilizes a substantial external professional body of knowledge and practical contribution, and connects this (including CSO experience) directly to the needs of the students.

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