Romanian-American University – Microsoft Innovation Center and RAU Dynamics Experience

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Abstract: This paper presents activities of Microsoft Innovation Center set inside of Romanian-American University (MIC-RAU) and the implementation of Dynamics Program in student activities and curricula. Romanian-American University is the most known private university from Romania, Bucharest, having more the 15 000 student, being organized in six faculties, where fifth has economic profile and one being specialized in law. In this case the challenges of Dynamics Programs implementation was to elaborate courses suitable for various groups of student with different background, but in the same time to keep the core knowledge needed to understand and operate with Microsoft Dynamics products. The learning process was completed with practice experience in internships organized in collaboration with Microsoft partners' network from Bucharest. The last stage of Dynamics implementation consists in a series of researches made by graduate students on Master program, in their Dissertations.

INTRODUCTION

To face an increasingly competitive environment, businesses continues to advance the technology at an ever-increasing rate and because of the relentless pressure and demands put on them by their consumers and competitors, having in mind new organizational structures appear with specific rules (Carutasu, Botezatu, 2006). The EU expansion, together with other markets unification, causing lifting of barriers to trade and increased globalization, generate new business opportunities, as quickly customer response, but on the other hand created new threats to existing businesses also. Information technology-related changes in organizations have always been a central issue to information systems researchers (Niculita et al. 2007). Various studies refer to ERP implementation (because is the solution with oldest history, starting with MRP and we will use the ERP to explain the problems met with all implementations and because we implement from Dynamics Program mainly Navision product), as critical success factor. Managing such change has become increasingly important with rapidly emerging social, economical and technological conditions. As emerging information technologies such as ERP and Internet-based Information Systems are becoming widespread, such technologies as enabling complex changes such as global systems integrations and virtual team working. Starting from systems theory, Zhang (Zhang 2003) propose several definition elements that define ERP: goal, components, software, business process, users and boundaries. It serves as a backbone for the enterprise and helps manage the important aspects of a business, including procurement, order tracking, materials management, product planning, manufacturing, human resources, and financial management. The problems presented in relevant literature (Panorama 2008) suggests a various set of reasons, starting with understand the purpose of ERP, lack of top management support, capturing clearly AS IS stage of enterprise, establish key performance measures, strong business process changes management, lack of data accuracy and user involvement and ending with underestimating of education and training. Having in mind the issues presented above, as higher education institution we understand to offer to our students the necessary skills and knowledge to avoid, as it possible, the failure into ERP implementation process, regardless of their position in an enterprise, as manager, IT consultant or ERP vendor. To do so, we developed tailored curricula for undergraduate and graduate programs (enlisted more clearly later in this paper) which cover the issues presented. We will present in the next section RAU – Microsoft Innovation Center and inside academic programs.

ROMANIAN AMERICAN UNIVERSITY – MICROSOFT INNOVATION CENTER AND ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

First Romanian MIC is set inside of RAU, focused on business applications, being the result of collaboration between RAU and Microsoft Romania. MIC goal is to assure the students competences in business applications domain. The MIC develops many academic programs, presented in figure 1:

- MSDN Academic Alliance, since 2004 – Access to genuine software and training materials for teachers and students,
- Dynamics Academic Alliance, since 2005 – Access to Microsoft business solutions, training materials and certifications for students,
- Live@Edu, since 2008 – Sharing resources and improve communication between teachers and students,

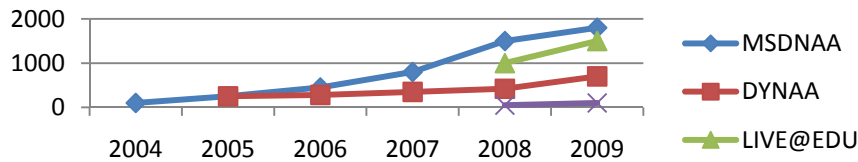- Imagine Cup, since 2008 – promote the students interest for future research.

Figure1: Number of student per academic program between years 2004-2009

DYNAMICS PROGRAM AND RAU CURRICULA

Romanian American University is part of Microsoft Dynamics Academic Alliance Agreement – EMEA, from 2005, with the course named Business Software Application having as study Dynamics products (Dynamics NAV and CRM). At this course has participated 180 in 2006, 250 in 2007 and 350. On graduate academic programs, the ERP Integrated System course is mandatory, which will use as software platform Microsoft Dynamics NAV. The same course is present in Management-Marketing Faculty and International Economic Relationship Faculty curricula, starting with 2007-2008 academic year, estimated students number being over 400. From 2009 at Faculty of Management-Marketing curricula is introduced the course dedicated to Microsoft Dynamics CRM having 150 students on course. A second activity is summer internship period. In 2008 and 2009, two such stages where experienced, dedicated to Dynamics products and to Windows 2008 network platform. In these internships, we mixed students from different faculties, with the great help of Microsoft business partners, Novensys in 2008 and Ager Solution in 2009, make an introductory course module for Navision, and visit on partners' locations. The internships have 50 participants in 2008 and 90 in 2009. In 2010, we expect to have around 150 students from three faculties. The modules of Navision used in curricula indicated in table 1.

Navision modules	Course content	Expected results
Introduction in Nav	Common internship on second undergraduate year	Understanding of business logic
Financial	Management-Marketing Faculty and International Economic Relationship Faculty First year studies	Understanding and using Navision for enterprise accounting. Possible certification
Development and Implementation	Economic Informatics and Business Management Integrated Systems programs	Understanding of implementation process. Possible certification
Any other module	Faculty of Computer Science for Business Management. Second year/graduate studies	Extending the knowledge regarding ERP implementation. Possible certification

Tab.1 Navision modules used in curricula

CONCLUSIONS

Starting from ERP implementation issues, we present our experience with Dynamics Academic Alliance. Started in 2005, with Business Software Applications course, after five years, with more than 2000 students participated on different courses described above, we have tried to prepare the future employees to understand and proper use of ERP and other BSA (e.g. CRM) on enterprise level. We appreciate DyNAA for the prompted help given on the years. About using Navision in classroom, we use several versions of Navision, starting with 5.0, 5.1 with Romanian package and 2009 and 2009 SP1 in first semester of 2009-2010 academic year. What is great in this academic program is that you have access to software and training materials. In the future, we intend extend the base of students by opening an IT Academy with the support of Microsoft Romania and their partners. The authors are managers of RAU-MIC, teachers for courses mentioned and teaching assistant.

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