



Development of a Continued Education Programme for EU-Enterprises in Kostomksha

CEPEK

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Continued Education Programme for EU Enterprises in Russia

Many EU companies have extended their operations to Russia in recent years by setting up new factories and companies or buying existing ones. Some of them serve the Russian home markets, whereas others ship their products to every corner of the world. Even if the businesses are physically located in Russia, many of them operate using the same practices, business principles and guidelines which direct the parent companies in their home countries. However, not all of these are well known in Russia. Therefore, there is a need for education in order to increase the know-how of the employees, who work in the affiliate companies. Employees have to understand the prevailing practices of the global economy, cope with the changes brought by it and participate in the continuous improvement process. As the global competition increases, the companies have to work even more efficiently also in Russia. By educating their workers the companies have better chances in achieving this goal.

Tailor-Made Solutions for European Companies in the Kostomuksha Area

The TACIS-financed CEPEK project (Development of a continued education programme for the needs of EU enterprises in Kos-tomuksha) was implemented in 2008 and 2009. The aim of the project was to establish a continued education programme in the Kostomuksha area of the Republic of Karelia, which is located close to Finland. The close location to markets in the European Union, affordable salary levels and other reasons have attracted many European enterprises to the area. However, cultural differences and the low level of knowledge of the Russian employees regarding European business practices have at times created difficulties and misunderstandings.

In the ever-increasing competition for customers and orders, companies have to boost efficiency, which also requires the active involvement of the workers. Companies will have to educate their workers not only about the technologies used in the industrial processes but also about European approaches towards production management and working culture. These topics are not taught in the educational institutes in the area; therefore, it was decided that such programme should be established. This programme would directly address the educational needs of the companies.

The educational programme in the CEPEK project was designed based on the requirements of two participating companies from the area, OOO AEK and OOO Elektrokos, both subsidiaries to the Finnish PKC Group LTD. The teachers were recruited from participating Finnish partner organizations, University of Oulu and POHTO LTD, which have long experience of carrying out continued education for business. Specialists with extensive knowledge about the topics of the programme were selected for the job.

Teachers were recruited also from the Kostomuksha Branch of PetrSU and the Karelian Regional Institute for Management, Economics and Law at PetrSU. These teachers were going to first upgrade their skills about the topics the Finnish teachers were to teach. Later on, after they had increased their know-how, they would be able to teach the same subjects by themselves.



Implementation of the Educational Programme

The first educational programme was devoted to upgrading of the skills of participating Russian teachers – through classes and interaction with Finnish teachers. At the same time it was necessary to take the education close to the main target group, the employees of the companies. Three Finnish teachers were responsible for the implementation of the first 20-day long study programme, which was organized in May 2008 – June 2009. Six Russian teachers and nine workers of the participating companies took part in the education. The Finnish teachers together with the Russian teachers implemented a second study programme for a new group of students in April – October 2009. On the second group there were 16 workers participating from the companies.





Contents of the Educational Programme

The educational programme was divided into three topics:

1. Basics of economics
2. Production management and production planning
3. Working culture and work environment.

Because the workers of the companies had various educational backgrounds, it was decided that the programme should be started with a short introductory lecture to the basics of economics. This first part of the training would ensure that all the participants would become familiar with the terminology and concepts of economy, which were to be dealt in more detail later on in the programme.





Production Management and Production Planning – from Basics to Production Philosophies

If the companies want to succeed in the global markets, then their employees have to understand better, which factors have an impact on their company. The employees have to be aware of the terminology and cost factors used in their production environment and be familiar with performance factors and their use. When these foundations are in good order, it is easier for companies to introduce new production methodologies in order to improve competitiveness.

The aim of the education was to ensure that the employees increase their understanding about the above mentioned issues and can use them in their daily work. This part of the programme was divided into six training sessions:

1. Introduction and terminology
2. Production planning simulation exercises
3. Challenges of the business environment and how to face them
4. Production philosophies
5. Solving of concrete problems in production
6. Information management

According to the feedback, which was received from the participants, the education gave them valuable information, which they can use in their daily work. With increased understanding about the production process and knowledge about new production methods and problem solving techniques, they can now deal with bottlenecks and other challenges in production.



New Approaches to Working Culture and Work Environment

To master the terms and methods of production management is only one factor, which can ensure success in business. It is very important to invest also on the abilities of the employees, especially on how they work and how they see the working environment around them. In many European companies more and more responsibility is given to individual workers, giving managers, shift masters and foremen the possibility to concentrate on more important tasks. When the worker is able to make decisions; the superior's time is used more efficiently.

The aim of the working culture and work environment education was to strengthen the abilities of individual workers to develop and to adopt new ideas. The programme was divided into three training sessions, dealing with the following topics:

1. Continuous improvement, creativity, motivation
2. Efficiency, discipline, conflict solving, labour legislation
3. Leadership in change

The education gave the students tools and ideas to develop themselves, take more responsibility and decreased their opposition to changes. New ideas and viewpoints to the work were passed on to the students who, when following them, will be able to work more independently and take charge of their own work.

■ General information about the project

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- OOO AEK and OOO Elektrokos – subsidiaries of PKC Group Ltd
- POHTO Ltd

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