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Managers' Training: Educational Trends and Challenges

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Managers' training, which is dynamically developing, is a highly competitive field as those who educate constantly need to improve their activity, complying with the changes of external environment and the needs of customers, represented by government, business organizations and managers themselves. Management training development directions at universities are discussed in the article, the main and additional educational programmes being their supporting evidence. Opportunities of e-learning in the process of managers' training are also studied in the article.

Keywords: managers' training at universities, variety of managers' training education programmes, managers' educational needs, e-learning opportunities in the process of managers' training.

Research area: pedagogy, economics.

Introduction

Managers' training in Russia has been one of the most dynamically developing fields in the course of the past two decades. This fact is determined by the number of factors. Firstly, these are external environment conditions that changed in the early 90s: market economy orientation, structural changes, and emergence of entrepreneurship as a legal activity raised new criteria to staff qualification in different fields of activity. This fact has greatly contributed to determination of a set of requirements for the specialists in the spheres of economics, finance, marketing and management. Developing practice, experience in management and organization of foreign business, which penetrated into Russia, made the task of renewal of the system

of knowledge, expertise and skills of various industrial organizations' leaders and forms of ownership extremely important. The relevance of managers' training is also determined by the fact that under conditions of significant structural changes in the economy people, involved in business and management, usually have no professional education in the field of management (Bukharova, Vitkovskaya, Eliyasheva 2010). Secondly, it is worth while mentioning the demand for management education, contributing to the expansion of educational services market in the field of managers' training, which is attracting new players to this field. In addition to higher educational institutions, that have been actively developing training in economics and management, corporate universities, business

schools, training companies and various training centers appeared. Nowadays they steadily occupy their niche, offering educational programmes of different levels (short-term seminars and training programmes, professional development programmes, specialized programmes and long-term programmes of additional education). Thus, under conditions of tough competition the organizations, offering educational services in the field of managers' training, should permanently develop their activity by renewing the existing programmes and offering the new ones, making them unique, using modern training technologies, developing learning and teaching methods, materials and technical resources and attract academic staff with qualitatively new characteristics.

This article features the number of the most topical issues of managers' training, specifically at universities. Universities, as a rule, carry out managers' training both in accordance with the concentration programmes (specialist's courses, and, nowadays, bachelor's and master's courses) and additional educational programmes, focused on adult education, i.e. the students who already have the experience in management and entrepreneurship under conditions of developing Russian economy.

Goals of management concentration programmes development

It should be noted that since the mid-90s, when the universities started management specialists' training, there have been significant changes in this area. They were determined by the general trends in education development and specialization of manager functions in the market economy. Concentration programmes (CP) requirements have been documented by the state educational standards. The latter, in turn, are permanently developing. Nowadays, regarding the field of economics and management,

educational institutions develop and implement bachelor's and master's CPs in accordance with the requirements of the Federal State Educational Standards of the third generation (FSES TG – 3). A distinctive feature of modern standards is that they are formed on the basis of competency building approach, which implies a clear focus on educational programmes in general, as well as separate subjects, on the graduates' competence and ability to apply knowledge and skills in practice. For the first time the standards define the specific professional activities, such as organizational and management, information analysis and entrepreneurial activity for Bachelors of Business Administration (FGOS VPO... 2010). The competencies, being a constructive result of training, are structured according to the characteristics of a professional activity (territory, objects, types, goals) and divided into general cultural competences and professional ones. It is important to note that the standard allows the students to develop their own individual educational path by taking advantage of variant and elective courses. Therefore, design of bachelor's and master's educational programmes in management provides the graduates with the necessary set of a modern manager's basic concepts and instruments, as well as specific knowledge and techniques according to the skills profile.

The methods of future managers' training used in higher education have also undergone significant changes. Active and interactive teaching methods are nowadays the basic ones. They provide a better assimilation of theoretical knowledge. Besides, they also favour the development of important managerial skills such as teamwork, self-management, and a wide range of communication skills. Teaching aids, exercises, case studies, business and role-playing games and exercises for working in small groups, used in teaching process, include both foreign

and Russian teaching aids that are constantly renewed and developed. The classes are equipped with modern information technologies (virtual laboratories). Businessmen and practitioners are invited to work within the frames of concentration programmes for specialist disciplines, workshops, etc., which is especially important as the students do not have their own experience in management and their professional competences are still forming.

However, concerning the goals of concentration programmes development, the following aspect should be noted. From our point of view, there is a certain gap between the humanities and social disciplines, as well as the disciplines of mathematical and natural cycles and directly the cycle of professional management training. Whereas latest practical materials and teaching methods are used in the disciplines of specialization, the disciplines of humanities and science training cycles very often lack the specificity of management. As a result, the students do not get the necessary idea of how knowledge and expertise of these disciplines can be used in management functions' implementation. Thus, teaching general course units to meet the needs of management activities should become one of the ways to improve managers' training. This can be achieved by use of exercises that take into account the specifics of management and the necessity to study professional disciplines of management training in the course of learning activities and students' autonomous work, as well as design of educational modules, providing a combination of theoretical and practical training, and development of the students' managerial competences.

The second aspect, which, in our view, needs further improvement, is activity and practical orientation of training. Students, getting their first higher education, very often do not have any experience of practical

work in general and management experience in particular. The workload and content of practical training, planned in the curricula, can be clearly insufficient to implement the acquired knowledge and skills in practice. Active and interactive teaching methods provide the students' involvement only in practical activity simulation. It appears that this problem may be solved by mandatory inclusion of design and implementation of various real projects into the students' autonomous work. These can be social projects, entrepreneurial projects, projects related to the solution of a university's or any other real organization's problems. The projects can be both cross-disciplinary and implemented during a semester or an academic year, or allocated within one course. Introduction of such a form of autonomous work definitely requires the development of methodological support, some changes in the evaluation system of training results and it complicates the lecturer's work. However, according to our experience, the design of the students' projects and their implementation help to form the students' attitude towards their future work, increase their motivation to study and, most importantly, provides the formation of real management skills.

Thus, such challenges of management education at university as the gaps between general courses and management training courses, as well as training and practice can and should be answered by focusing the content of non-management disciplines on management needs, improving the methodological support and introducing some changes in the educational process organization to enhance practical focus and activity-oriented aspect of training.

Practical managers' training

In addition to training of managers for bachelor's and master's degrees the universities are involved in acting managers' training. Thus,

other trends and challenges have been developing in this area.

First of all, it should be noted that managers' training is a highly competitive and quite saturated market. Nowadays many companies realize that managers' training is one of the most significant resources to increase their organization's efficiency. The organizations consider the costs of staff training, and managers' training in particular, to be not the costs proper but the investment that should bring profit. An effective demand from the companies, and managers in particular, have presently created a varied offer.

Currently it is possible to identify several types of actors in the market of educational services for managers. These are universities and business schools at universities, corporate universities and companies' training centers, independent educational organizations (business schools, training and consulting companies), independent freelance coaches and foreign business schools. It should be noted that corporate universities, being actively developed by large companies, are aside from competitive relations and often act as universities', business schools' and training companies' services consumers themselves.

The range of educational programmes offered also vary in their content, duration, form of training, organization of training, type of the document upon training completion. The market faces the foreign management gurus' lectures, training workshops in different subjects, combined educational counseling programmes, Master of Business Administration (MBA) programmes and executive MBA, and even Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) programmes. According to experts, short-term specialized trainings and long-term professional development and retraining programmes are the most popular (Reiting biznes-shkol... 2013). Trainings are introduced to elaborate one of

the necessary managerial skills. As for long-term programmes, they form a systematic understanding of company management. A variety of organizational forms is also worth mentioning. These are trainings for one company's employees, mixed groups, individuals, as well as distance learning with the use of information technology. Supply and demand for blended learning in the market of business education are growing. Such educational programmes combine several methods of presentation techniques: individual lessons, group lessons, and online-learning.

Individual executives, companies of various industries and forms of ownership, and government agencies, implementing entrepreneurship development programmes, act as customers of the educational programmes for managers. In spite of the fact that in the open market training companies and small business schools outdo universities due to their greater mobility, universities have sustainable competitive advantages while working with government projects.

Until recently, one of the universities' competitive advantages in the market of additional education was the so-called state-recognized degrees, which compensated the university programmes' excessive theorization and their isolation from the living practice.

Under present-day conditions it is necessary to ensure competitiveness primarily due to the value of the results of participation in the programmes for the students and their organizations. Educational programmes should take into account the existing actual needs of students and their organizations. For example, in the process of the Presidential Programme implementation (the Presidential Programme on Training Managers), which has been implemented in higher educational institutions of the Russian Federation since 1997 and has nowadays become the leader of educational management training

programmes with state participation, universities necessarily diagnose the students' expectations in the beginning and evaluate training effectiveness. According to the results of years-long research the following results of participation in training are the most important for the executives (Otsenka effektivnosti... 2007-2012).

Firstly, their own practice improvement, raising activity efficiency, and organization development. Acting managers have a clear focus on the applicability of the studied approaches, experiences and techniques in practice. Only a small number of the participants are ready to study theories and conceptions thoroughly in case they do not understand how they can use the obtained knowledge and skills to solve tactical and strategic management problems.

Secondly, getting new knowledge and systematization of the existing one in the fields of management, marketing, and finance. Most participants of the Presidential programme don't have management or economic education, and even in the process of self-education they often have difficulty in choosing specialized literature and information sources for their studies.

Thirdly, interpretation of their own experience and sharing it with other students. Managers experience a shortage of communication on relevant topics with professionally competent interlocutors. They emphasize such an important factor as an opportunity to discuss the situations managers face, problems, as well as positive and negative experiences with their colleagues and lecturers.

In our opinion this requires quite serious changes in the content, methods and organization of programmes for managers from the university administrators, developers and teachers. One of the approaches to the managers' training development may be the creation of the system of advanced specialized programmes in addition

to long-term professional retraining programmes. At that, basic programmes form a general system of management knowledge and skills and give the students an opportunity to identify their education deficits and create areas for further professional development. Specialized programmes will also help to focus on specific areas of management activity. More practitioners should be involved in the programmes implementation; it is rational to include creative groups with both university professors and practitioners in the courses development. To determine the most popular subjects, duration and forms of training, as well as to promote the programmes it is necessary to make an active use of the channels and resources of university graduates' associations, business communities, public and self-regulatory organizations.

Online distance learning opportunities in managers' training

One of the most significant recent trends is the development of distance learning based on information technologies. Modern distance learning involves interaction between a teacher and the students at a distance, which reflects all the typical components of the educational process that are implemented using Internet technologies or other means to provide interactivity. The share of distance learning in universities' and business schools' programmes varies considerably, but in most cases they include practical training, communication with tutors, tests and examinations.

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) as online courses with a massive interactive participation and open access should be mentioned separately. This training system is available to anyone without the initial knowledge level analysis and is one of the brand new trends in the world education development. In addition to traditional educational materials

of a discipline, such as video lectures, reading and homework assignments, MOOCs give a possibility to use interactive users' forums that help to create and maintain students' and teachers' communities.

Projects related to MOOCs design and popularization are currently being actively developed in the United States, Europe, China, Africa, India and other countries. In Russia the examples of open distance learning development are UniverTV.ru and Lectorium, an academic education project developing two areas – Multimedia Library and Massive Online Open Course. Universarium, one of the most recent projects, offers full-featured free courses developed according to MOOCs technology educational standards, which include video lectures (as a basic element of course introduction and knowledge representation), autonomous work, homework assignments, tests, group work, and final certification.

The main advantages of online distance learning for students are the following:

- Availability of training. One can study from almost anywhere in the world where there is Internet access. From the organizational point of view this makes the learning process more available and simpler than the traditional training. It is possible to choose and study several courses in different universities from different countries at the same time. In addition, distance learning is more accessible for physically challenged people.
- Individualization of learning as a result of freedom and flexibility provision. Distance learning is more personalized due to the fact that a student him/herself determines the speed of learning and can study separate topics and tasks for several times.

- Cost. As a rule, distance learning is cheaper than full-time education due to reducing the educational institution's costs. In addition, there are a lot of free open public educational programmes in various fields.

However, we should also mention drawbacks and restraints (Dostoinstva i nedostatki... 2010) of distance learning that are especially important in managers' training. These are the following ones:

- Lack of technical equipment and qualification. Technical capabilities as well as the learner's ability and willingness to use distance learning facilities are necessary for effective distance learning.
- Low degree of emotional investment. Lack of full-time direct communication between students and teachers reduce the emotional component which is particularly important in managers' training. Even with adequate technical solutions it is difficult to organize teamwork and create a creative atmosphere in the group of students.
- Psychological characteristics. Effective learning in distance learning system requires a number of individual psychological characteristics. These are a student's tough self-discipline, self-determination and self-consciousness. Participants of distance learning programmes very often lack practical training, motivation and feedbacks from the teacher.
- Level of the English language proficiency. This is a significant constraint factor for the Russian managers to use MOOC programmes for training. Most of the open distance learning courses in management assume fluency in English

to watch lectures, communicate with teachers and the group, and do homework assignments.

Development of distance learning by use of modern Internet technologies and multimedia tools, and especially MOOCs development, raise a number of questions at universities both in the fields of bachelor's and master's training in management and in adult education programmes:

- To what extent should universities develop their own e-learning programmes in the fields of business, management, marketing, economics and finance?
- How to use existing and available resources effectively to improve the quality of managers' training both according to CP and programmes for further education?

From our point of view, specific features of managers' training determine the fact that online distance learning, even implemented with the use of modern facilities to provide a student's interaction with teachers and other members of the group alone, cannot provide a complete formation of necessary management skills. At the same time e-learning can be included as a part of individual courses in managers' training according to the programmes of basic and further education to provide the students with basic and additional educational materials, accomplish some types of work and, in some degree, to control the result of training. Accordingly, further development of informative educational materials and interactive video lectures, self-study assignments, test banks, case studies and exercises for self-control and knowledge control

is essential. In this case it seems necessary to conduct content analysis of open materials available in the existing educational portals and their inclusion in the methodological basis of the training courses. Appropriate combination of electronic tools and classroom group work with use of modern teaching methods can help to improve the quality of education as well as to attract new participants, especially in the field of adult managers' training.

Resume

Thus, nowadays the development of managers' training at university is observed in the following trends. Regarding concentration programmes for bachelors and masters, it is provision of interrelation between non-management and management disciplines, i.e. enrichment of the content of theoretical subjects as well as the subjects, developing instrumental competences, with real-life examples from management practices and, on the contrary, mandatory use of the studied theories and methods in the disciplines of specialization. Another trend is in extensive use of project methods, focused on practical orientation and effective development of management skills. In the field of further management education the university competitiveness increase in the educational services market can be achieved by creation of modern specialized programmes, complementing and improving professional retraining programmes, as well as by reinforcement of cooperation with the business community. In general, managers' training can be modernized on the basis of proper balanced use of e-learning tools.

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Подготовка менеджеров: образовательные тренды и вызовы

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Динамично развивающееся управленческое образование является высококонкурентной сферой, где тем, кто оказывает образовательные услуги, необходимо постоянно совершенствовать свою деятельность, соответствуя изменениям внешней среды и потребностям заказчиков в лице государства, деловых организаций, самих менеджеров. В статье обсуждаются направления развития управленческой подготовки в университетах на примере основных и дополнительных образовательных программ, а также возможности использования электронного обучения при подготовке менеджеров.

Ключевые слова: управленческое образование в университетах, разнообразие образовательных программ подготовки менеджеров, образовательные потребности менеджеров, возможности электронного обучения при подготовке менеджеров.

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