



New Challenges of Economic and Business Development – 2012

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DEMANDS FOR IMPROVING MANAGEMENT EDUCATION IN BELARUS

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Abstract

The article discusses the state of management education in Belarus and ways to improve it. Although a number of Belarusian universities train qualified managers and economists, management education is separated from real life because home graduates have good theoretical knowledge but poor competences in managing an economic entity. The first demand is to avoid the disbalance of the curricula of some majors which don't include the course of Management that may cause specialists' poor competences. The other demand is a need to train socially responsible employees. Social responsibility seems their essential quality as it meets the demands of socially responsible business to shorten the time and cost of professional socialization and avoid egocentrism of contemporary student youth resulted from the impact of globalization processes.

Improving management education in Belarus needs a number of steps to undertake, among them are working out new educational standards oriented to provide a union of theoretical knowledge and developed managerial competences, and perfecting the curricula of training economists and managers by including some actual courses such as Corporate Social Responsibility as it was done by Russia, Ukraine and other CIS countries etc.

Introduction

In Belarus managers have been trained since the times of the Soviet Union when the Highest Party School enrolled people who had got higher education and work experience to train them as specialists in state governance. Today a number of higher educational establishments of sovereign Belarus continue training specialists in the majors "Public administration", "Public administration and economy" with the qualification "economist-manager" and "Public administration and law" with the qualification "lawyer". The major "Economy and management at the enterprise" with the qualification "economist-manager" still remains the most numerous one. The license to train specialists in the area was obtained, alongside with Belarus State Economic University – a leading higher educational institution in economic education, by various institutions of Belarus, among them are technical institutions such as Belarus National Technical University, Belarus State Agrarian Technical University etc.



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The experience of training specialists with the qualification “manager” or “manager-economist” is not long – since late 1990s when a number of leading universities opened training of managers on the request of home business-community and state in general. The first university that in 1997 started training managers for tourism was Belarus State University; in mid-2000s it was joined by other higher educational institutions that enrolled first applicants in the major “Management”.

The realities of modern economy under an informative society actualized a demand for training managers in its other branches. Today the National Classifier of the Republic of Belarus “Majors and specializations” (NCRB 011-2009) includes 8 directions of the major 1-26 02 02 Management with specializations: 1-26 02 02-01 Management (finance and investment), 1-26 02 02-02 Management (socio-administrative), 1-26 02 02-03 Management (production), 1-26 02 02-04 Management (real estate), 1-26 02 02-06 Management (international tourism), 1-26 02 02-07 Management (information) и 1-26 02 02-08 Management (innovation), the qualification is that of “manager-economist” [1, p. 121-122].

In 2011 12 state and 2 private institutions of higher learning enrolled applicants for training specialists in various directions and specializations of the major “Management”, first degree [2]. Today more than a thousand students of the given profile study at them. Before applying to universities school leavers should pass a vocational and psychological interview that must exclude casual people from getting into the category of managers.

The list of institutions of higher learning that train specialists in management, first degree is given in Table 1.

It should be noted that managers’ retraining and qualification improvement is also performed in Belarus. In particular, the BSU Institute of Continuous Education opened retraining of the specialists in the major 1-26 04 01 “Management of innovative processes”, a number of educational establishments organized short-term courses aimed at improving qualification of the specialists in innovation management.

Besides, there is a constant interest in the MBA programs in Belarus. Today there are a lot of specialists working for the real sector of economy who have got an MBA degree resulted from their post-graduate education in foreign business-schools or the BSU Institute of Business Technologies (in English). Moreover, some home companies and banks (“Technobank” and others) define the MA (Economy) degree as a term for their employees’ promotion.

Close attention to the issues of training managers and managers-economists is understandable because management is a key chain at solving a lot of problems of social and economic development under complex conditions. Competent management makes the crisis phenomena softer, contributes to financial stabilization, serves to increase competitiveness, consciously affects the update of technologies, and motivates investments and innovations.

Despite the fact that Belarusian universities can train highly qualified managers-economists as they have got developed educational programs and teaching staff, the latest economic crisis has shown that training of specialists in managing economic entities doesn’t devoid of shortcomings. The crisis did not only substitute the economy under attack but identified the problems in training managers of a new type. The main problem is detachment of education from real life. There are a lot of examples when employers complain that graduates have good theoretical knowledge but poor competences in managing an economic entity. In particular, the chairman of Minsk Capital Union of Entrepreneurs and Employers V. Karyagin



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notes that business-education in Belarus is too far from practice. He is echoed by Zh. Grinuyk, director of the Centre of System Business Technologies who considers that the high level of training specialists rather warns than solves the problems in the short-term [3].

Table 1

List of Belarusian institutions of higher learning that train specialists in management, first degree

No	Institutions of higher learning	Major / specialization (direction)
1.	State institution “Academy of Management at the President of the Republic of Belarus” (AM)	1-26 02 02-07 Management (information)
2.	State institution “Belarus State University” (BSU) BSU Institute of Business and Technology Management BSU State Institute of Management and Social Technologies	1-26 02 02-03 Management (production) 1-26 02 02-08 Management (innovation) 1-26 02 02-07 Management (information) 1-26 02 02-01 Management (finance and investment) 1-26 02 02-02 Personnel management 1-26 02 02-04 Management (real estate)
3.	State institution “Belarus State Economic University” (BSEU)	1-26 02 02-08 Management (innovation)
4.	State institution “Belarus National Technical University” (BNTU)	1-26 02 02-08 Management (innovation)
5.	State institution “Belarus State Technological University” (BSTU)	1-26 02 02-03 01 Management in chemical industry 1-26 02 02-03 03 Management in forest complex 1-26 02 02-04 Management (real estate)
6.	State institution “Belarus State Agrarian Technical University” (BSATU)	1-26 02-02 Management
7.	State institution “Vitebsk State Technological University” (VSTU)	1-26 02-02 Management
8.	State institution “Polotsk State University” (PSU)	1-26 02-02 Management
9.	State institution “Gomel State University” (GSU)	1-26 02 02-01 Management (finance and investment) 1-26 02 02-03 06 Management in machine-building and instrument-making
10.	State institution “Belarus Trade and Economics University of Consumer Cooperatives” (BTEUCC)	1-26 02 02-02 02 Personnel management 1-26 02 02-08 Management (innovation) 1-26 02 02-07 Management (information)
11.	State institution “Grodno State University” (GrSU)	1-26 02-02 Management
12.	Institution of Belarus Trade Union Federation “International Institute of Trade and Social Relations” «IITSR»	1-26 02 02-01 Management (finance and investment) 1-26 02 02-02 02 Personnel management 1-26 02 02-03 Management (production)
13.	Private institution “Minsk Institute of Management” (MIM)	1-26 02 02-07 Management (information)
14.	Private Institute of Management and Entrepreneurship (PIME)	1-26 02 02-02 02 Personnel management



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The aim of the article is to analyze the state of management education in Belarus and discuss the ways to increase its quality.

Main Results

Education in general assumes the consistent formation of such characteristics of a specialist that both determine effectiveness and quality of his professional activities under definite conditions of development and reflect the country's cultural needs. We do not mean only knowledge and skills but culture, developed creative abilities, the potential of self-development, moral qualities and the feeling of social responsibility. In other words, education assumes the formation of the whole complex of the personality's characteristics that turn his professional activities into the public good.

There is no doubt that it is high school that makes the grounds for profession and professional mentality. First, establishments of higher learning provide system knowledge in the professional area, humanitarian preparation being not forgotten, either. Second, they do not only provide knowledge but foster a specialist's personality. Third, the time factor of 4-5 years of study triggers the effect of immersion in the whole amount of professional issues that contributes to the formation of attitudes and professional mentality of a certain type.

Today the Belarusian institutions of higher learning that provide management education are intended to form and assert a new presentation about a manager-economist. But it is not always implemented that can be explained by a number of reasons. One of them is the "insufficient mass of professionalism" (the term was introduced by A.M. Bikineeva)¹ resulted from a set of problems in management education, and quality of the teaching staff potential is problem number one. The teaching corps is mainly made up of the university teachers who have got the experience of training specialists for planned economy and not always possessed the techniques of teaching under market competitiveness. The given problem is sharp for economic universities but it is sharper for technical universities that are licensed to train specialists in managing an economic entity. At technical universities it is manifested in the lack of teachers with economic education who are to deal economic and specialized subjects (such as Management, Marketing, Financial management, Advertising, PR-relations etc.). These subjects are often delivered by teachers with technical education who cannot but bring technical preoccupation into interpretation of economic issues, excluding humanitarian filling from economics. Besides, economic departments may be headed by candidates and doctors of technical sciences.

But this problem should be raised on a wider scale. Not a single economic university trains engineers, chemists or technologists while technical universities have been supplying the labor market with specialists of the economic profile for some years. Not diminishing the merits of technical education we should make up our minds to assess if home technical establishments

¹ It should be mentioned that the "insufficient mass of professionalism" is peculiar for management education in the Russian Federation, too. In particular, A.M. Bikineeva, professor of TISBI University of Management notes that there should be accumulated some "mass of professionalism" to trigger cardinal changes in management, i.e. there should be obtained such a unity of factors of effectiveness and management quality that causes sharp changes in development processes [4].



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can provide a qualitative training of managers that corresponds to the contemporary socio-economic realities in Belarus? The question is not idle. The point is that the Educational Standard of the Republic of Belarus of the major 1-26 02 02 Management (in directions) introduced on 12 August 2010 (as well as the 2007 one) determines a number of demands to the staff and the basic ones are those of higher education corresponding to the profile of delivered subjects and a corresponding scientific qualification (degree, title) [5, p. 57].

Creating a corps of teachers who are oriented to work under today's complex terms of functioning for home educational institutions of the economic profile is an actual issue. There are only two universities in Belarus, namely Belarus State University and Belarus State Economic University that train specialists with the qualification "teacher of economic subjects". Every year they graduate up to 70 teachers of economic subjects that is, no doubt, a scanty amount taking into consideration the fact that some of them do not necessarily start their careers as teachers. As a rule, teachers are economists who obtain economic knowledge but are not competent to translate it to the generations of future economists and managers. Learning methods of teaching economic subjects, practical skills of communication at the courses of qualification improvement as it is practiced at the BSEU does not solve the problem. The reasons for it are as follows. A young teacher, yesterday's post-graduate, should combine his further studies with his teaching activities that mean preparation for studies with students. As the teaching load of assistants is rather high – up to 900 hours a year, he is not able to attend all classes of the courses. Two lacks – those of practical experience and methods of teaching – decrease the effectiveness of classes and quality of training specialists; moreover, they result in molding students' unequal, if not to say disapproving, attitude to a young teacher who, as they think, knows as much they do. Not every young teacher possesses natural ability or charisma to carry students-maximalists with learning some boring, in their minds, subjects. The 2011 poll of future managers carried out by the BSEU Faculty of management has proved that the problem does exist.

Creation of qualitative teaching potential for management education is considered actual for another reason. It is teachers who both gain goals and objectives of professional activities and demands for the level of training of future managers which are determined by the Educational Standard of the major "Management". The given Standard developed by the experts of the Academy of Management at the President of the Republic of Belarus and Belarus State Technological University includes the curriculum due to a 4- and a 5-year educational program. The curriculum has a set of subjects in cycles elaborated both due to the national standards and with regards for credits if the Republic of Belarus should join the Bologna process². It is saved from a number of shortcomings which are characteristic of the 2008 curriculum of the major "Public administration" worked out by the Academy of Management at the President of the Republic of Belarus and considered a must for the other Belarusian universities training specialists in the area. One of the shortcomings is lack of the subject of Management creating future managers' understanding of a profession. Without basic knowledge in management students will encounter difficulties in learning other managerial subjects such as "Strategic management", "Crisis management", "Organizational management" and the like.

² In November 2011 the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus applied the documents to join the Bologna process.



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At the same time it is mainly theory that future managers and economists study for 4-5 years. That's why, V. Karyagin, the chairman of Minsk Capital Union of Entrepreneurs and Employers, mentions that graduates are not eagerly employed by home employers because the latter have to spend too much time and efforts either to complete their study or retrain them. He suggests an argument to confirm the theoretical nature of training specialists of the economic profile: in summer 2011 a dozen students were doing their practical work at the Union headed by him. As their supervisor V. Karyagin observed that future managers did not acquire the simple communicative skills, they did not know structure of entrepreneurship and did not read the economic press etc. [3]. But he didn't name the university that had sent its students to do their practical work.

Indeed, the issues of acquiring practical managerial skills at the time of students' practical work have always been actual due to some objective and subjective factors blocking effective learning of such skills. Trying to get rid of these obstacles the republican economic universities have lately come to a closer cooperation with employers and met their practice of training specialists for their own needs. For example, opened stock companies "OMA", "Alyutech" and "Minsk Transitional Bank", foreign company "Autohaus Atlant-M" (Folkswagen) and others have created educational centers – a sort of a corporation university where best senior students are selected to study. The selection terms and requirements for studies are very tough: if a student misses 4 classes for the reason considered as not important by the staff, he/she is expelled. Within a period from 12 to 18 months students get a deeper theoretic knowledge in some specialized subjects and acquire professional competences necessary to effectively perform duties at a definite enterprise or company. After graduating they are suggested a job in the company – its headquarters or regional divisions.

The Educational Standard of the major "Management" describes precisely the specialist's qualification profile with sets of academic, professional and socio-personal competences. If the academic and professional competences are numerous being detailed due to the spheres of activities, socio-personal competences are not notable for that kind. No doubt that managers should acquire the profound up-to-dated knowledge in economics, sociology, law, psychology, they should be able to use information technologies to find the needed data in proper time and solve problems. Not less important for managers is to possess the feeling of high citizenship and patriotism, abilities to make effective interpersonal communication, criticize and be self-critical, they should lead a healthy life etc. But today's managers should also possess social responsibility – both quality and competence that enables to make decisions which reflect the interests of an individual and society. We regret to say that a typical curriculum of various directions of the major "Management" does not contain the subjects "Ethics" or "Business ethics" that can help future managers-economists to form the given competence. Some can argue that ethic issues of managing a business can be considered within the other subjects such as "Organizational management" or "Sociology of management". But the curriculum developers preferred them to the subject "Psychology of management". Moreover, the issues of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and, correspondingly, of those who manage a business are still new in Belarus: only some enthusiasts are learning and promoting the phenomenon, so it is hardly expected that the teaching corps should include the given issues into their courses. In 2010-2011 academic year Belarus State University invited an expert from Belarus State Economic University to deliver the course "Social responsibility of business" as an option for the students



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majoring in sociology. But the BSEU itself has not yet considered by now the possibility of including the given course into the curriculum of future managers and economists.

Socially responsible employees for economic sector are needed in any modern society, no matter whether its economy is under rise or recession. But under recession training specialists capable to make socially responsible decisions which may affect destinies of thousands of people and even that of the whole society is becoming as actual as it has never been. It also meets the demands of social responsibility of economic entities which is, despite being new, getting extended in the Belarusian business community. Belarusian companies and enterprises are actively developing the international market where socially responsible business is a norm; hence their practice should meet its CSR standards.

In its turn, a socially responsible company needs socially responsible personnel. There are some reasons to explain why employees' social responsibility is so much required by business nowadays. The first one is to meet the demands of socially responsible business.

Second, the company can foster the personality of a needed employee within the framework of its own corporate culture. But it hires the individual who has already passed some stages of socialization, professional ones among them. Re-socialization is long and always costly that's why the process of molding the required qualities should be started much earlier.

Third, a paradoxical situation has arisen in the CIS countries. On the one hand, globalization has resulted in widening the scope of individual freedom and initiative but on the other, it has lead to disseminating individualistic attitudes. Today's crisis in the system of values was brought about by a large-scale egocentrism when a person tries to satisfy his own needs, ignoring the interests of other members in the community. Egocentrism is dangerous as it entails losing the value of social responsibility. As people are members of a certain organization, the loss of this value by its personnel cannot but entail its loss by the organization itself. The result is known: production of goods with low quality, excessive pricing, non-payments, irresponsible advertising etc.

The CIS sociologists sound the alarm that social indifference, inability or reluctance to take responsibility is peculiar for the young. Belarus is not an exception. For example, the 2010 poll carried out among leavers of Minsk lyceum 1 showed great changes in their values. The future Belarusian elite ranked personal growth, satisfaction and interpersonal communication as top-three; service to people was ranked under 14; social responsibility was not mentioned at all [6, p. 4].

The situation is peculiar for university students, too. Molding social responsibility of future specialists especially for economic sphere does not need any long explanation because very soon today's students will occupy leading positions in business, politics, education or science and their contribution to social development will be equal to their social and educational potential formed during their student years. It is the reason why the Belarusian society starts to recognize the need to train specialists who are both professionally and morally ready to fulfill their professional duties. It only means that economic educational institutions should train managers and economists with developed social responsibility as an integral quality that determines their behavior and organization of their professional activities.

The need to train specialists of a new type is proved by the data of the 2008 poll as part of the research project 4-2007Б “Formation of future employees' social responsibility in the



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context of Belarusian society's sustainable development" carried out by Belarus State Economic University among the representatives of the Belarusian economic entities. They show that Belarusian existing employers require an employee who possesses social responsibility as an obtained level of consciousness. On the one hand, social responsibility determines the employee's actions as correspondent to the norms of the society and a performed social role. On the other one, it suggests both the employee's responsibility to the society as fulfillment of the norms and rules accepted in this society and responsibility for the results and consequences of his own activities.

There are some impressive results of the poll. In particular, responsibility is seen as a must among an employee's qualities. Belarusian employers-respondents believe that an employee should possess the following types of responsibility: responsibility for assignments – 62%, as performance of norms and rules accepted in the organization – 38%, other types (legal, administrative etc) – 34%, as a moral duty to the society (performance of social norms and rules accepted in the society) – 29%. But 7% respondents consider that the staff may be required to perform the norms and rules accepted in the organization even if they differ from those accepted in the society.

We compared the data obtained in other sub-samples and revealed the level where the moral and ethic norms were broken. It's the level of middle managers who interpret the values of social responsibility set at the expert level by owners or top-managers. 12% functional and line managers consider it possible not to follow the norms and standards accepted in the society if they prevent from achieving the organizational goals [7]. The obtained data are indicative of the weak points in training managers. One of them is the decreased significance of the moral and ethic component in behavior of the managerial personnel. It may sound some alarm because such people exercise operational management of the enterprise's production divisions and units today but they may be at the head of the whole enterprise tomorrow. This is the cause to ponder over which values dominate in such companies and come back again to the curriculum of the major "Management" that has no place for ethical subjects.

Conclusions

Increasing quality of training managers and level of their competence, obtaining a harmonious unity of management education and practice are long-term objectives. Though their realization takes time, some steps to accelerate the process can be undertaken even now.

First, as the 2010 Educational Standard of the major "Management" in general does not rouse censure, however some amendments into the curricula of training economists and managers-economists should be introduced. We believe that these amendments will contribute to increase the quality of management education with regard to students' deeper understanding and up-to-dated interpretation of the actual issues in managing economic entities, forming professional and socio-personal competences etc.

We share the opinion of the expects that future managers need not a simple review of the grounds of pedagogy and psychology but a deeper learning of social psychology and pedagogy in the close interrelation with the issues of human and social capital. Learning the conceptions of natural science does not only add anything to the students' knowledge in the area obtained at school but creates a false impression that such knowledge is easy to learn and perceive.



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Second, it is necessary to re-consider and organize in a new fashion the learning of two blocks of subjects: basic economic and managerial ones that are to form the conceptual grounds for a manager's activities and subjects providing general professional and specialized knowledge which are to ensure the functional training of cadres. Not once it has been said that the accent should be made on the competence approach intended to act a leading role in selecting the contents of management education. We have to say it again.

Third, if these amendments or changes take time and agreement with the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus because the mentioned subjects form the obligatory components in the curriculum, the following change is possible in the nearest future. It concerns introducing into the curriculum of future managers and economists either the subject "Social responsibility of business (SRB)" / "Corporate social responsibility (CSR)" that has been said about at various levels [8] or the subject "Sociology of management" extended at the expense of the CSR issues. Either of them may be included as a subject in charge of the University Council or an option. Such a change will correspond to the experience obtained by foreign and CIS institutions of higher learning. There are some examples from the practice of Russian Federation. First, the CSR course was long ago introduced into the master's educational programs developed by the High School of Management at St. Petersburg University. Second, since 2010 the CSR course has become a must in the curriculum of training bachelors (specialists) of the economic profile. The Russian universities have come to understanding that the CSR course is both a competitive advantage of national business education in general and management education in particular and a compliance with European and world standards. The acknowledgement is the Round table "Problems of integrating issues of social responsibility of business (CSR) and state into educational programs of training bachelors and masters in directions "Economy" and "Management" that took place on 21 October, 2011 at St. Petersburg University on the basis of the Economic faculty [9]. Over there the experts discussed the problems and perspectives of integration of the issues of social responsibility of both business and state into the educational programs of managers and economists, analyzed the experience of those Russian universities which had already introduced the given subjects into the curricula and experience of realizing the programs intended to train the CSR personnel. Among other issues they determined the directions of cooperation between universities and business-organizations aimed at training specialists in the CSR area and forming socially responsible mentality of future economists, managers, business leaders and state employees. Besides, in September 2011 at Odessa Economic University the Ukrainian university teachers were taught to work with the textbook on the course "Corporate social responsibility" because the latter was included in the 2011 curriculum of training managers and economists.

Fourth, to increase the quality of management education in Belarus the economic institutions of higher learning should toughen the requirements to the level of learning subjects by the students. Among them are to improve the control over knowledge and introduce the credits as accepted by European universities to make a well-grounded assessment of labor capacity of various subjects. Educational institutions should arrange the teaching process in such a way to guarantee that every student could cope with the obligatory part of the teaching material. At the same time they should suggest future managers a wider scope of options, especially of the subjects in narrow specialization, and arrange training of specialists on request of existing employers that are to provide students with all kinds of practical work and give them



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assignments to develop course business-projects with the data which cannot be found in the Internet but provided by the employer.

It is important that Belarusian managers-economists could get the education that is mainly aimed at forming personal qualities, professional competences and social responsibility; the education that is oriented to forming both the potential of self-development in the employee and human capital – in the society. This is the reason why such changes are most required, especially in the contents of an expected transfer to the principles of Bologna Declaration by the Belarusian high school. At the same time one can prognoses that Belarus' joining the Bologna process would result in the need to cope with the problems of two-level education development that may concern not only the major "Management" but other majors, too. At least we may state that the Ministry of Education have perceived the definite problems of management education in the republic and make attempts to solve them. A good sign is a yet debated possibility to assign the development of curriculum of training managers-economists to Belarus State Economic University – a leading institution in the system of economic education in Belarus.

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