

**Jasmina Starc, Ph.D.**

Visoka šola za upravljanje in poslovanje Novo mesto, Slovenija /  
School of Business and Management Novo mesto, Slovenia

**Ljupčo Kevereski, Ph.D.**

Univerzitet Sv “Kliment Ohridski” Bitola  
Pedagoski fakultet- Bitola, Macedonia

=====

## LEARNING CONTENT AREAS IN EDUCATION PROGRAMS OF MANAGEMENT TRAINING IN MACEDONIA

**Abstract:** The contemplation over the question of the universal process which is a part of each of us, will certainly lead us to the phenomenon of globalization. The first reason is that it is a global trend, the second reason is that it presents the identity of global interdependence, and the third reason is that it creates both an individual and a collective identity and influences the way people act and reason. To define globalization we use certain aspects of conceptualization given by A. Gidens, F. Jameson, D. Held, R. Robertson, J. Mittelman (Steger 2005: 10). Thus, globalization can be understood as a multidimensional dynamic sum of interdisciplinary processes which implicate international interdependence of human resources in social, economic, social – cultural, educational, ecological, and other spheres, determining at the same time the organizational, institutional, and personal identity and development. We see this global macro context as the context of our micro ambient in which the very theoretical, empiric, and methodological structure of the work is located.

The work presents a segmental research comparative study which diagnosis different aspects of the developmental educational status of the managers in R. Macedonia. The work is theoretically and empirically based on the research study already performed in R. Slovenia (J. Starc, 2008). With the objective to see the state, tendencies, aspirations in the same field in R. Macedonia, we used a questionnaire (consisting of 25 questions, J. Starc) in 5 municipalities: Ohrid, Bitola, Prilep, Veles, and Skopje.

We expected to gain a clear vision according to the research as well as to get answers to the questions such as: What is the status of the managers in companies of different fields? What direction to give the changes in education and training? What institutional problems appear? What is the social-economic surrounding? What correlation is there among the cognitive, professional, interpersonal, conceptual-strategic abilities and skills with the organizational development of the company?

What is the prognosis of the development of the institution and of the one of the individual? We have presented the results for the questions 1-8 and 16 as they imply the further context of the research. All the results of this research study present the diagnosis of the state and at the same time they open perspectives towards creating efficient strategies which lead to a qualitative progress in the Macedonian business companies and in the companies of other types. In the end, the main issue here, apart from the other issues of the study, should be an indicator towards enrichment, promotion, comparison, and innovation of the current and the future practice in the Macedonian business and in the other companies in the field of application of modern strategies for development of education and training of the Macedonian managing teams. At the same time this international cooperation – as an act of the globalization interdependence in the area of scientific research, is only a proof that the globalization has positive impulses especially in comparison, innovation, and promotion of organizational practice.

**Key words:** managers, management career, education, training, learning content.

## 1. Introduction

Market globalization and international competition tensions mainly have been evoked by the exponential increase in technological knowledge leading to innovations within organizational structures, production methods, and products, pushing companies to confront the need to react more quickly, creatively, and flexibly. At the same time, the development placed in the wider and more immediate business world with dramatic changes at the level of international politics, societal development, and ecological responsibility imposes additional demands on company leadership. Managing and forming companies within such a highly complex and turbulent systematic environment places a demand on the management system of a company to be highly qualified with specialized knowledge as well as to transfer such knowledge.

Management development is an important part of developing personnel in an organization and is based on systematic, long-term, and individual development plans in accordance with strategic directives and organizational culture. Due to continuous changes within an organization and its environment, development has to accompany managers throughout their period of employment. The level of formal education and major field of study alone are not sufficient for successful execution of

managerial tasks. At various levels of development within a manager's career, the role of the manager, length of the role, as well as tasks and factors that may be influenced, have been changing.

In-practice various systems have been developed and implemented in the area of developing management personnel. The training of such personnel demands a specific method and form. Investing in management development is a long-term investment whereby the advantages are dependent upon the adequacy and suitability of educational and training programs of management personnel. A career in management is not dependent upon the capabilities of an organization, but also upon an individual's own abilities, capabilities, motivations, ambitions, as well as determination. Of course, an individual's aspirations have to be in accordance with the needs and goals of an organization.

## **2. Learning content areas in the training and education of management**

Education and training programs are connected with the needs and goals of organizations. There are various levels and types of educational needs that result in specialized learning content for individual educational programs. Bahtijarević Šiber (1999: 741) outlines four levels of educational needs. *The first level* of need is focused on *training employees for their present job and eliminating the difference between an individual's expected and realized performance* when doing their job. *The second level* is tied to *spreading individual knowledge and skills*; this allows an individual to complete more demanding and versatile tasks. *The third level* is connected to *the development of an individual career*; employees are being prepared for promotion and pursuing more complex and responsible tasks. This usually covers a narrower group of gifted employees although contemporary career development requirements foresee the possibility for all employees to advance irrespective of their position and level of education. *The fourth level* of educational needs is connected with *the future*. These include educational and training programs that are needed for continuous adaptation to changes that will demand from employee's greater job flexibility.

For each of these levels we have to have different requirements towards the content, method, form of education and training. Organizations should specifically know which knowledge and skills should be developed in their employees. These are:

- *Foundational knowledge and skills* are required from all employees (mathematics, reading, listening, orthographic, writing).
- *Technical or professional skills* include knowledge, techniques, methods, procedures that employees need to successfully complete specific tasks.
- *Interpersonal skills* including interpersonal relationships, working relations, communication, management that are needed for successful operations in all areas of work, especially with managerial tasks.
- *Conceptual-strategic skills* include a broad set of interwoven strategic and operative planning skills, forming and structuring organizations, policy implementation, decision-making, and so forth. These skills are most frequently a part of educational needs of middle- and top-management, although they are becoming an increased requirement from employees at all levels (Bahtijarević Šiber 1999: 742).

There are different categories of educational needs that provide the foundation for programming and determining learning content areas for educational and training programs. These include decisions on who the participants are, determining the principle educators (within an organization or an outside contractor), which skills and knowledge need to be focused on, which level of knowledge is expected from the participants, program execution (on the job or at another location), which methods and forms are most appropriate, and so forth.

Education and training of management has to include contemporary, modern, and up-to-date educational programs, in developing foundational professional knowledge and competencies so that managers can be 'fluent' in their field of management and business. These programs are needed for managers at all levels of course differentiating the content and complexity of materials.

Various authors (Daft, 1997; Stevens, 2001; Torrington et al., 2005) present the results of their studies on the educational needs of managers. In these studies, managers extrapolate the learning contents for which they believe are the most important for their development. These are how to:

- use methods for successful planning,
- use innovations, creativity for maximum planning and establishing organizational goals,
- plan and realize activities in reaching the established goals,

- realize long term goals,
- choose appropriate employees,
- solve problems when reaching organizational goals,
- align their interests with the interests of the organization and requirements of their work,
- motivate employees,
- direct employees towards achieving established goals,
- motivate employees to be innovative, to suggest recommendations, to be independent when planning,
- praise and reward employees for a job well done,
- work in a managerial team,
- integrate needs for education that are defined by the organization with the plans for personal development of employees,
- prepare a self-development plan,
- solve problems with unmotivated managers,
- eliminate chronic fatigue and stress with managers.

Dessler (1991) outlines the following five key indicators that affect which content material will be implemented for managerial training and education:

- The relationship between owners and top management towards education and training.
- The establishment of management development strategies and policies.
- The organizational-business strategy and human resource policy of the company.
- Annual report on career advancement,
- Responsibility of managers and owners of a company on education and training.

When choosing a training and education program, it is significant that managers know how to determine within themselves those deficiencies in knowledge and skills that reveal as the greatest obstacles in reaching appropriate work results. They would learn to eliminate such impediments by attending appropriate programs that are offered by their organization or outside educational institute. Harris (1997: 308) states that managers should allot 20% of their time towards self-education and training to prevent obsolescence of already-acquired knowledge.

### 3. Methods

We conducted the study in the business sector between middle-level and top-level managers employed within Macedonia companies. The study examined the learning content areas in education management training programs that represent to the manager an important part of their professional development.

A hypothesis was: Besides the more narrow business-economic learning areas, middle- and top-level manager also are interested in areas that are connected with business, politics, as well as the social and ecological environment of the company within which they are employed.

The sample size represents top- and middle-level managers employed within the business sector of Macedonia companies. The sample of participants employed in the business sector represents 65 units. From this sample 30 were female and 35 were males (46%:54%). Most participants are older than 46 years of age (38%), which actually shows that these managers are mature persons with quite a bit of experience and employment. We can assume that the top-level and middle-level managers employed were individuals with rich experiences obtained through their employment period.

The study revealed that most of the questionnaire respondents (55%) were employed in smaller-sized business, 31% in middle-sized companies, and 14% in larger-sized companies. 43% were employed as top-level managers, 57% of the respondents were employed as middle-level managers. It is encouraging that 78% of the respondents hold an appropriate or obtained a higher level of education, which is formally required of them.

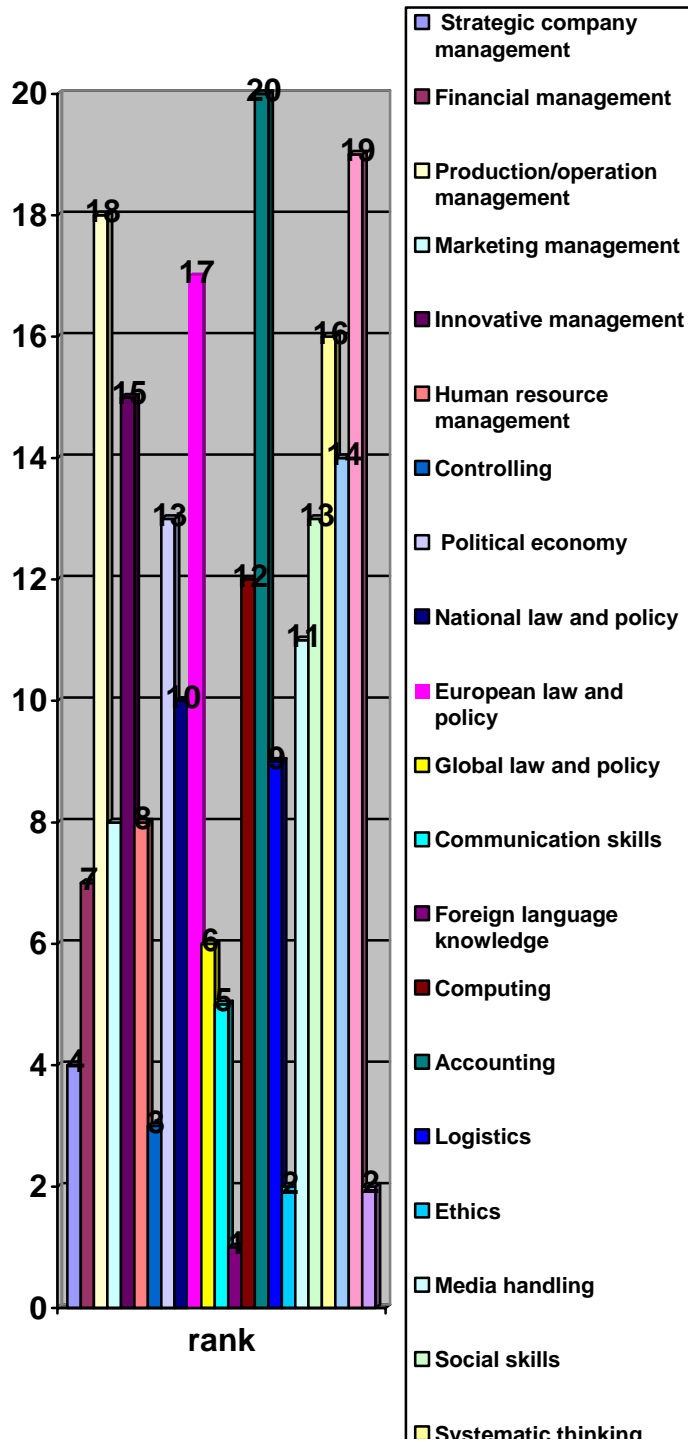
Data needed for the purpose of the study were collected through questionnaires. The statistical program SPSS 15.0 was used the process and analyze the data.

### 4. Results and interpretation

The respondents were asked to rank the importance of learning content using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 is equal to *completely unimportant*, 2 representing *somewhat important*, 3 being *neutral*, 4 meaning *important*, and 5 being equal to *extremely important*. The results are depicted in Table 1.

Table 1: Ranking learning content areas

LEARNING CONTENT	average score	rank
Strategic company management	4,64	4
Financial management	4,5076923	7
Production/operation management	3,7538461	18
Marketing management	4,4037692	8
Innovative management	4,1846153	15
Human resource management	4,4307692	8
Controlling	4,6923076	3
Political economy	4,2615384	13
National law and policy	4,4	10
European law and policy	4,0615384	17
Global law and policy	4,5846153	6
Communication skills	4,6	5
Foreign language knowledge	4,8	1
Computing	4,6923076	12
Accounting	0	20
Logistics	4,4153846	9
Ethics	4,7692307	2
Media handling	4,3692307	11
Social skills	4,2615384	13
Systematic thinking	4,076923	16
Emotional intelligence	4,2307692	14
Ecology	3,3846153	19
Reducing stress	4,7692307	2





The results show a proportionally equal importance to all content areas. As the table depicts, individual learning content areas are rated with an average score from 3,3846153 to 4,8. These scores reveal that all learning content areas are important to managers. More specifically, they are interested even in those areas that are not concretely tied to their specific business-economic area, but are relevant in understanding the economic, social, and ecological environment of the organization where managers are employed.

Based on the obtained data we found that for the participants the most important learning content areas were the following:

1. Foreign language knowledge,
2. Reducing stress and Ethics
3. Controlling
4. Strategic company management
5. Communication skills
6. Global law and policy

Average importance was rated with the areas of:

1. Financial management
2. Human resource management and Marketing management
3. Logistics
4. National law and policy
5. Media handling
6. Computing

The least important were:

1. Social skills
  2. Emotional intelligence
  3. Systematic thinking
  4. European law and policy
  5. Production/operation management
  6. Ecology
- And special category as a non-important Accounting.

## **5. Conclusion**

Bearing in mind the theoretical grounds of the observations in this work as well as the results of this segmental study, we consider ours to be in correlation with the results of the research of the other authors in this field.

The analysis of the result of the answers to question 16 of this research study which refers to the priority of the fields significant for the education and training of managers highlights several orientations to be distinguished with Macedonian managers. When we talk about their preferences regarding the fields significant for the manager training, the results lead to three groups of field preferences ranked as follows: 1. *Foreign language knowledge, Reducing stress and Ethics, Controlling, Strategic company management, Communication skills, Global law and policy* 2. *Financial management, Human resource management and Marketing management, Logistics, National law and policy, Media handling, Computing* 3. *Social skills, Emotional intelligence, Systematic thinking, European law and policy, Production/operation management, Ecology.*

The first group refers to the technical and professional skills, the second refers to conceptual-strategic skill, and the third one refers to interpersonal abilities and skills.

The first item in the first group ranking implies that significance has been given to the technical and professional skills first and then the social and communicative skills follow with a high level of significance.

The second and the third group also have variable design of the fields significant for the training and education of managers.

In our opinion we shall be able to give solid conclusion and support the same with a higher level of probability only after the completion and processing of the results of the study which would enable us to design the future projection of development of the process of education and training of Macedonian managers.

#### REFERENCES:

1. Armstrong, M. (2001). A handbook of human resource management practice. London: Kogan Page.
2. Bahtijarević-Šiber, F. (1999). Management ljudskih potencijala. Zagreb: Golden marketing.
3. Cimerman, M. (2003). Menedžer, prvi med enakimi. Ljubljana: GV Založba.
4. Daft, L.R. (1997). Management. Fort Worth, TX: Dryden Press.
5. Dessler, G. (1991). Personnel/Human Resource Management. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

6. Effron, M., Gandossy, R., Goldsmith, M. (2003). *Human Resources in the 21st Century*. New Jersey: John Wiley&Sons, Inc.
7. Harris, M. (1997). *Human Resource Management*. Dryden: Forth Worth, TX.
8. Harrison, F. (2004). *The leader of the future*. New York: Jossey-Bass.
9. Merkač Skok, M. (2005). *Osnove managementa zaposlenih*. Koper: Fakulteta za management.
10. Možina, S. et al. (2002). *Management: nova znanja za uspeh*. Radovljica: Didakta.
11. Mullins, L.J. (2002). *Management and Organisational Behaviour*. London: Prentice Hall.
12. Noe, R.A. (1994). *Human Resource Management*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
13. Robbins, S.P. (2003). *Organizational Behavior*. London: Prentice Hall.
14. Singer, M.G. (1990). *Human Resource Management*. Boston: PWS – Kent Publishing Company.
15. Steger, M. (2005). *Globalizacija*, Sarajevo, TKD Sahinpasic,
16. Somerville, M.; McConell, A. (2004). *Applying the Learning Organisation Concept in a Resource Squeezed Service Organisation*. Bradford: *Journal of Workplace Learning*.
17. Stevens, M. (2001). *Skills for New Managers*. London: McGraw-Hill.
18. Torrington, D.; Hall, L.; Taylor, S. (2005). *Human Resource Management*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
19. Vicara, A.A. (1994). *Executive Development in Mayor Corporations*. New York: American Management Association.
20. Vroom, V.H. (1985). *Leadership and Decision Making*. Pittsburg: Pittsburg Press.

### Biographical note

**Dr Jasmina Starc** (1968) is the dean of the College of Business and Management, Novo Mesto, Slovenia. She obtained her Master and Ph degree in personnel management from the Faculty of Organizational Sciences in Kranj. She teaches at the first, second and third level of university studies. She is an author of scientific papers and a co-author of a monograph in the field of personnel and education management. She has participated in conferences as an invited speaker and a member of program – organizational boards. She has been a member of editor boards in professional journals and a peer-reviewer in foreign journals.

**Prof Dr Ljupco Kevereski** (1959) obtained two master degrees: one in personnel management in Skopje in 1994 and another in psychology from the Philosophical Faculty in Belgrade. He received a doctorate from the University of Novi Sad in 2004. He is a visiting professor at several

universities in Macedonia and Republic of Slovenia. He has participated in a number of international conferences in the field of giftedness. He is a (co)researcher in several international projects, a coauthor of two international monographs and a part-time professor of psychology at the Pedagogical Faculty in Bitolj. He received a reward of Kliment from the town of Ohrid in the field of education in 2004.