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## SOME THOUGHTS ON 21ST CENTURY CHALLENGES OF MANAGEMENT EDUCATION AND PRACTICE

Effective organisations of the New Era have to build on professionals who are capable of working autonomously and are also allowed to do so. Traditional institutions face with the challenge of facilitating their efforts without losing sight of the common objectives. This article reviews some of the employee and managerial characteristics that may make the difference between success and failure.

**Az új korszak szervezetei, ha sikeresek akarnak maradni, egyre inkább az önálló munkára is képes szakemberekre támaszkodnak. A hagyományos intézményeknek ehhez változnia kell, ami jelentős kihívásokat jelent. Ez a cikk néhány olyan alkalmazotti és vezetői tulajdonságot vizsgál, amelynek megléte vagy hiánya sorsdöntő lehet a modern szervezetek további fejlődésében.**

Every morning when getting up and rubbing the sleep out of our eyes, we switch on the radio, the TV and our laptop only to find ourselves in a frighteningly fluid, dynamic, more and more hectically changing, quasi-chaotic world. We live our lives in an environment of rapid technological change, scientific development, national and international challenges, political turbulence, terrorism and wars, economic crisis, collapse of values and institutions, radical reorganisation of governmental systems as well as business markets and educational institutions, ever-growing turbulences in the philosophical, academic, professional and common cultural spheres. We are the witnesses of social restructuring at all levels and aspects.

In such an environment the National University of Public Services is to develop present and future members of the defence force, the catastrophe management organisations, the police force and those of various central and local governmental and political bodies. The political decision has been made, the merger is accomplished, the restructurization has been executed. Due to the challenges, developments and tendencies in the higher education sector, other universities and colleges will face similarly radical changes in the coming years. There is no way back – we have to collect our courage and face the future.

The question arises: has enough been done to ensure future success? Shall we be able to maintain and improve the services we offer to the nation? Will the reorganised institutions be flexible and adaptive enough not only to survive, but also to offer the education that next generations of students will require and request? How should we continue the reform so that we can offer them the knowledge, experience and skills they will need in a 21st-century Hungary, in a 21st-century world? No matter what area this or that higher-education institution is operating at, these questions are relevant for all of us. Management and organisation behaviour studies, however, give us an aiding hand to clear some of the cornerstones of this complexity of problems and, we hope, it also helps us giving some answers<sup>1</sup>. This article will try and pinpoint some of them.

The world to research, the knowledge to collect and give over, the networks to utilise for communication and success, the technologies and methods of understanding and analysis, all seem to grow in complexity hour by hour, day by day. If the aim and objective of higher education is to communicate all this (and much more) to the future generations, we shall need educators who can grow up to the task and follow, in their area of interest, the ever-growing jungle of data,

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<sup>1</sup> Research on managerial roles in a changing world go back to the 1970s and continue till today. See for example Mintzberg (1975), Kurke and Aldrich (1983), or Drucker (1993).

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information and knowledge. They may also add to it, systematise it, and certainly they'll have to make it digestible for students. Openness for new ideas, views and information, flexibility of thinking, readiness to try and use new tools, methods, tactic and technologies, quick and systematic thinking, an eager interest in novelties will be essential. The educator cannot follow the Roman way and, like Cincinnatus, return to the plough tail, and after holding their classes start acting as somebody else. If quality is to be maintained, they have to follow the day-to-day developments in their area of interest, read the new books, articles, and other publications. Due to the sheer number of pages, to be constantly in picture even in a very specialised branch of a discipline is hard work. To do so you need time, a good working knowledge of English and probably also some other language or languages, and access to the literature. None of them is readily at avail these days. Without the active cooperation of research and education teams, the professional help of "back-office" specialists and whole branches of services (secretarial and administrative staff, libraries, printers, IT specialists, technicians, just to name a few), and proper financing making information sources available no scholar, no researcher, no educator, none of the front people of the research and education industry can exist today. If we want to provide students with the most up-to-date information, as well as to teach them the tits and bits of modern research, they should be motivated to take part in this work. Not as free workforce, not as a new kind of slaves or clientèle, but as young colleagues who, given the necessary preparation, attention and mentoring, can add considerable value to the end result of the common efforts. Such groups, teams and projects may serve as the core of "schools" arising around this or that professor, consisting of their present and past disciples. A university where there are no such groups may not do their jobs right.

Researchers and educators, however, are usually not easy people. Those who have new and original ideas, those, who are able to generate thinking around themselves, those who can translate such light-hearted fantasies into practical, "profit-making" thoughts, those who can put ideas into design, or fantasies into plans, and those who know how to put all these into action and effect execution are difficult to get together in a team, and it is even more difficult to keep them together long enough to reach results. Control may demotivate them. None of the internally motivated, self-actualising professionals will easily tolerate traditional autocratic management, the reinforcement of aimless bureaucracy, or ill-used power in the hands of a mediocre, talentless individual. If we change the character of Hamlet in the Shakespearean play for Rambo, it will destroy the plot. If the commander of a penitentiary company is put at the head of a university department, he will kill all meaningful effort for development. Professional education management on the operative levels have a crucial role in the facilitation of self-motivated, aware, empowered educators. None of the real-life Lt. Mausers<sup>2</sup> can do the job – however, they can harm a lot.

In order to identify what type of leadership skills and management techniques should be adopted at a 21st century higher-educational, military, or practically any other type of institution, we have to bear in mind the effect of leadership skills to the individual. It is a well-known fact in human resources development as well as in education and pedagogy that followers' personality development and behaviour is influenced by the behaviour of the manager. The more determining, the more authoritarian, the more autocratic leadership style is exercised, the less chance employees will get to act like mature, adult, responsible individuals. Can modern institutions of the 21st century work – or even exist – if their co-workers are immature, irresponsible, and childish?

But let's give a closer look to what qualities one would expect employees to possess in the post-modern era. What does management and organisation behaviour theory say about the followers of successful organisations? Our *Table 1* summarises the most important qualities.

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2 A character in the series *Police Academy* (1984), directed by Hugh Wilson.

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Employee characteristics required for organisational success			
Characteristics:		Explanation:	Some related leadership styles and OB <sup>3</sup> solutions:
Development	ability	<i>Physical, psychological and mental capability for the job, which is further developed in the course of the theoretical and practical training of the employee. On the basis of these capacities, their relevant experience gained at a certain range of positions, the individuals may develop a professional attitude to their job, achievement-orientation, etc.</i>	directive supportive participative delegating + facilitating  HR development mentoring teamwork empowerment professional power decentralisation
	training: general professional specialised		
	experience		
	professionalism		
self-actualisation	<i>The fact that personal inquisitiveness and achievement-orientation pre-eminently defines motivation makes the individual less sensitive toward external motivation rewards. To be more exact, certain organisational rewards may lose their appeal while others become "hygiene factors" (causing dissatisfaction when missing but failing to satisfy when present).</i>	facilitating decentralisation intrinsically satisfying tasks cross-border teams  more and more borderless units and/or organisation  project organisation	
high level of internal motivation			
relative indifference toward organisation rewards			
resentment of direct managerial control and authoritative intervention	<i>Only professional supervision or monitoring and cooperation exercised by representative professional individuals and/or bodies are likely to be accepted. Also the participation in such bodies is furthered. Professional decision-making and controlling by the management is in many cases limited or even made impossible by a shortage of professional expertise or even by conceptual inability.</i>	knowledge management frequent feedback meritocracy managerially independent reward system	
higher need for space and autonomy	<i>Based on the above, employees need higher levels of privacy both physically and mentally to provide quality work. This involves not only the work environment but also the right to take decisions and the direct access to the use of necessary organisational resources.</i>	facilitation spatial distance from the manager specialist teams flexitime, flexplace self-management empowerment	
accountability	<i>Autonomy furthers the acceptance of responsibility and the readiness to decide. This also involves making use of the right to try and make mistakes, that furthers organisational opportunities to make use of employee innovativeness and creativity.</i>	self-control  innovation management creative management, managing creatives  change management	
decisiveness			
innovation creativity adaptability			
higher level of risk tolerance	<i>Internal motivation strengthened by autonomy, participation in group and/or organisational decision-making and decisiveness may result in the employees' enhanced readiness to make allowances for the sake of the organisation, accept or even welcome change, etc.</i>	organisational development  ethical management	

Table 1: Supported employee characteristics at achievement-oriented organisations

The rock-bottom foundation of organisational success in all areas is the front line. Their recruitment, selection, training, development, indoctrination of new colleagues as well as the maintenance and further development of social, societal and professional know-how of the core employees is an intrinsic part of the on-going human resources management efforts of modern organisations. The use of directive leadership styles have proven to be useful in extreme situations only: when starting the indoctrination and preparation process of completely unknown, ignorant, unknowledgeable and/or

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unmotivated people, or in case of urgency, crises, catastrophes, etc. Otherwise classical autocratic management may be ineffective, even harmful.

The whole logic of human resources development builds on a process where managers are unavoidably enforced to use various leadership styles – in each and every situation that one which matches the needs and expectations of the subordinate. *Any other influencing factor* (organisational culture, managerial self-definition, task characteristics, etc.) *is but secondary*. Those organisations who forget about this rule will sooner or later may have to face a situation where knowledge workers (and also knowledgeable ones) will leave them. As in each and every organisation, irrespective of the sector in which they operate, it is such people who should form the hard core, we can imagine what may result from such a development. If we take it in the extreme, we shall be fantasizing about, for example, universities where certain middle managers cannot properly read and write, where new textbooks copy the contents of old ones, where middle management has no idea about employee rights, where educators cannot use modern tools of communication, where educational support services will be unable to effectively execute their functions, where modern knowledge, new information and research opportunities are shut off from students and teachers alike, where bureaucracy is growing, no one is actually expected to do their real job, where heads do not think, where people are enforced to limit their communications to those within the command line, etc. Such an absurd situation, of course, can only be a mental model, it cannot come to existence in reality – if it would, it should abort. No society has the resources to maintain truly meaningless and unreasonable inefficiency, especially not under the circumstances of scarcity that so powerfully characterise – even determine! – our age.

The employee qualities of modern, successful organisations are, of course, no absolute values but relative ones. They are influenced by a number of other factors as well, such as the types of organisational culture and structure, sector specialities, or activity types. Evidently the management of a military organisation or that of a hospital will always be more autocratic than that of a creative agency or a university. Also, the more risky the execution of an action is, the more autocratic its management can be. On the whole, however, no mid-20th century-styled employee or organisation can easily survive in the new era. Contemporary trained workers such as turners or millers are, compared to their mid-20th-century counterparts, highly trained specialists – we could say they are the knowledge workers<sup>4</sup> of their industry. The same transition is taking place in each and every sphere. No modern and effective agriculture is possible without the peasant's turning into an agricultural engineer and entrepreneur; no modern army can build on the sheer mass of its soldiers on the 21st century battlefields, therefore also the soldier will have to become a multi-functional, highly-trained specialist; administrative staffs have to acquire office skills that have yet been non-existent a hundred years ago.

Also educators have to learn new skills, human as well as technological. The rapidity of technological change as well as the ever-so-fast aggregation of newer and newer information and knowledge of whatever discipline we teach, not to mention the restructurisation of the content of literacy new generations of students enter our institutions with, or the widening gap between the value patterns of generation cultures of the educators and the educated request us to continually improve ourselves not only in our own territories of knowledge but also in things we are practically illiterate at. *Docendo discimus*<sup>5</sup>, we ourselves learn new things and re-learn old ones as we are teaching, and the teachers of the educator are in some cases the students. Such an interaction in the classroom would have been hardly imaginable a century ago, but now, in the second decade of the 21st century, no modern degree programme can exist without it. Those educators, who cannot manage their classes so that they can make the most of the new dynamics of teaching

4 About the importance of highly trained workers in industry, see e.g.: Sayer, N. J. and Williams, B. *Lean for Dummies* (Wiley, 2007) and other books on lean management.

5 "By teaching we learn." Seneca, L. A. *Epistulae morales* I, 7, 8

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most probably fail to give the best possible support for their students to develop. No wonder that quality-oriented universities seek to give proper help for their educators to acquire the necessary skills and know-how.

Whatever the type of our 21st century organisation, whatever it does, one of its responsibilities is to get its employees through certain phases of personal *and* professional development to ensure they are able and willing to do their work autonomously. Managers – officers, unit and department heads, whatever title they have – have to be trained to further this development. Management development, an integral part of human resources management, may offer useful advice how to build people and organisations that support these processes. It is not the aim of this article to give an overview of modern techniques to build, develop and maintain the necessary employee and management skills and know-how – for our purposes it is enough right now to emphasise that any organisational development process that does not pay attention to such processes will necessarily lead to risking organisational effectiveness.

The third column of our *Table 1* lists some of the organisational behaviour theories and models that provide managers with the necessary knowledge about such responsibilities of theirs and a managerial toolkit to make use of. None of these theories and models may miss from modern management education, public administration programmes or military officer trainings. Organisational behaviour units of universities and colleges are not only responsible for including them in their educational programme, but also to offer educational management of their institutions advice and support in their effort for building professional organisations ready and capable of facing 21st-century challenges. No military officer, no educational leader, no public officer of any kind can successfully operate without having sufficient theoretical and practical education in matters of modern team management, change management, organisational theory and development, knowledge management, risk and crisis management, or ethical management. Cultural barriers hindering the application of the concepts and tools involved have to be systematically brought down so that we may go on in this direction. If we do not succeed, we will have no chance to build a modern economy, public administration system or national defence.

*Keywords: management, organisation, change, autonomy, professionalism, human resources development, management development*

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