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Original Paper

Managerial key competencies from students' point of view

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ABSTRACT

Faculty of Economics and Management of the Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra (FEM SUA) in the Slovak Republic provides the students with complex study for granting managerial – economic skills necessary for practice. The aim of the paper is to analyze key competencies of managers in practice and teachers, as managers of the teaching process, from students' point of view at FEM SUA in Nitra. For better employment of the FEM SUA graduates in practice the key competencies of managers have a huge significance, and their identification is inevitable for them to become successful managers in companies throughout Slovakia and the world in the future. A part of the paper is the questionnaire survey focused on findings of key competencies of managers and teachers as a manager of the teaching process (defined according to Belz & Siegrist) from students' point of view that are assessed as the most important within employment in practice by the FEM SUA students. From results follows that up to 72% of respondents consider ability of manager to solve problems and creativity as the most important key competence of manager. Another result of the research is that up to 82% of respondents chose the sense of justice as the most important key competence of the teacher as a manager of the teaching process.

KEYWORDS: key competencies of managers, university education, questionnaire survey

JEL CLASSIFICATION: A2, C1, J5, M1

INTRODUCTION

The Faculty of Economics and Management of the Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra (FEM SUA in Nitra) is providing quality economic and managerial education within the accredited study programs [7]. The main goal of the study program Company Management on the bachelor level of the study is to provide the students with knowledge from the managerial

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economical field of the company with aspect on domestic and international environment. Such knowledge based on the study of the subjects provide the students with the possibility to perform managerial functions on lower level and on the middle level of company management as well [12].

The graduate of the study program – future manager – after graduation at the FEM SUA in Nitra is able to solve less demanding managerial economical decision-making issues of the company. They can perform the first level, middle level managerial functions and positions in companies focused on agricultural, food, as well as economical industry [5].

According to Országhová [9] “understanding appropriate managerial competencies within the studies at the FEM SUA in Nitra is an important educational priority of the study at this faculty. The graduates of the economic faculties are professionally trained to work in the fields of economics, management, marketing, banking, finance, insurance, social services, in general, and in many other areas.”

For the university graduates with economic and managerial focus it is important to know what abilities and competencies the future employer might request. Except high quality education and vocational skills, the following key competencies in general are more and more requested:

- Ability to communicate (discuss, clarify, know how to formulate thoughts, present, process information and so forth),
- Ability and willingness to educate more, to improve own performance,
- Ability to solve problems and be responsible,
- Ability to work in team and cooperate,
- Social sensitivity, ability to motivate,
- Ability of numeric application, understanding statistical methods,
- Ability to deal with information technologies, ability to work with information,
- Understanding at least one, or better yet two foreign languages.

Findings of the recent years show that among main causes of failure of the graduates within seeking employment there are especially insufficient ability to present oneself, insufficient communicational skills, overestimating own abilities, and at the beginning of career development insufficient work productivity [8].

For present managers the important things are flexibility, ability to adjust to new conditions, as well as knowledge gained at a university or various courses and trainings within lifelong education. Companies need employees who are willing to educate themselves and develop their potential and furthermore people look for companies which offer possibility of development and education.

According to Dziekoński [3] very important are for example features related to personality (expressing confidence, self-confidence, intellectual abilities, creativity) and managerial competence (ability to assess the impact of action taken, ability to work in a team, ability to formulate goals, ability to deal with stress and ability to make decisions).

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Managers together with their abilities significantly influence competitiveness of a company. Economic results of companies are dependent on abilities of the management, and these can

be exactly expressed by competencies. There are many skills, knowledge, and abilities necessary for the managerial work. Only some of them make difference between excellent managers and average ones, these competencies must be found and defined to develop them further.

According to Prokopenko, Kubr et al. [10] competency of a manager “is his ability to perform a certain function or set of functions and reach a specific level of efficiency. Managers’ competencies are described according to division to certain components, mostly to knowledge, character features, attitudes, and abilities”. Tureckiová [13] presents four components of professional competencies of managers, i.e. vocational (technical), methodical (conceptual), social and personal competence. The basic prerequisites to perform managerial work are vocational, interpersonal, analytical, conceptual prerequisites, enterprising and specific features to organize work of other people. Prokopenko, Kubr et al. [10] divide request on managers to four groups. The first group are analytical conceptual abilities (what to do), which means that on lower level of management the managers must understand basic tools of business like accounting, financial analyses, analysis of data and general knowledge and abilities. On the higher level of management these are ability to manage individual activities like marketing, finance, production, control, human resource management. The second groups are managerial process abilities (how to do it). This group involves the art of negotiation, communication, evaluation, time management and ability to set priorities. The third group are personal features and abilities, especially ability to work hard, being punctual, self-motivation, creativity, cultural adaptability and understanding, ability to work in team, self-confidence and knowing oneself, charisma, own system of values. The last prerequisite is a field know-how, which has three images, that is set of basic knowledge about products, services, technologies, production, distribution and marketing, as well as intimate knowledge of the environment and competition and nevertheless personal relationships with people. Armstrong [1] defines mutual features of managerial competencies of a manager and divided them to five characteristic groups (Table 1).

Table 1 Key competencies of a manager

COMPETENCE	
BEHAVIORAL /PERSONAL COMPETENCES	Basic characteristics of a person which are naturally transferred to working activities: interpersonal skills, leadership, orientation on success, analytical skills. These competencies are used in favor of performance, within selection and development of employees.
WORK COMPETENCES	Set of competences belonging to expected performance and goals on workplace involving professional qualification.
GENERIC, BASIC, SPECIFIC COMPETENCES	Generic competences are related to managers of the same or similar working position. Basic competences are disposable for all the employees, each category of employees. Specific competences are related to specific job.
PERFORMANCE COMPETENCES	Inevitable for performing specific job.
DIFFERENTIATING COMPETENCES	Differ highly performing managers from less performing ones.

Source: [1]

Managers must be able to analyze and identify problems and decide how to solve those problems. They also need to know how to plan, organize, and control the processes in a company. Their task is to lead people as well, though, and motivate them. Managers are responsible for running companies and their nature of work differs according to the level of management. A manager must have proper knowledge and skills. Managers work via their subordinates, manage their work, they are responsible for elaboration of given tasks, motivate their subordinates in accordance with the needs of a company.

According to Slobodová & Šulík [11] typical managerial competencies are as follows:

1. Business spirit and entrepreneurial thinking.
2. Strategic thinking.
3. Ability of communication, representing and cooperation.
4. Ability to solve problems in new situations.
5. Self-control, self-motivation and internal independence.
6. Change management.
7. Leadership.

Belz & Siegrist [2] divide key competences of managers to seven characteristic groups given in the scheme below in the Figure 1.

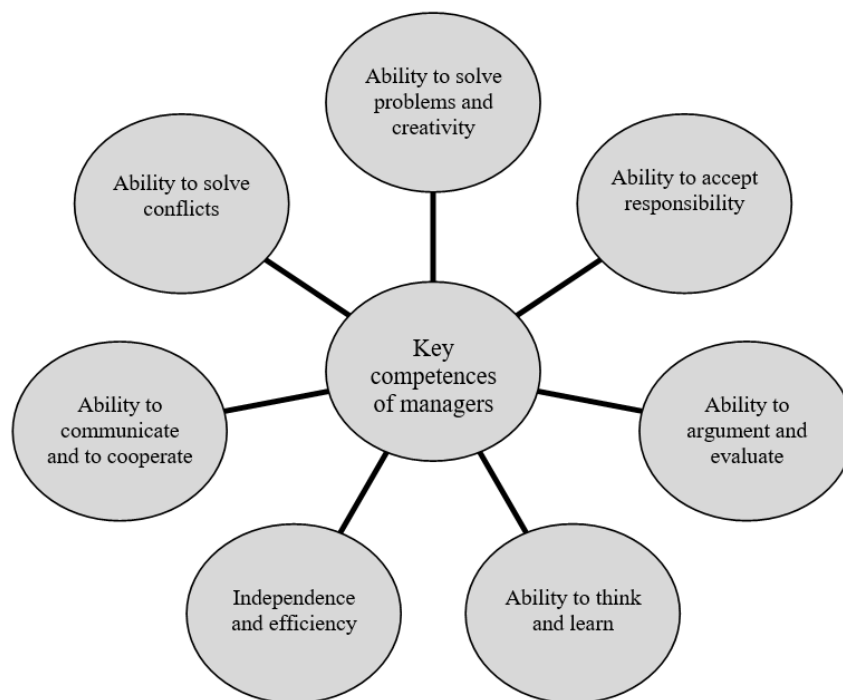


Figure 1 Key competences of managers
Source: [2]

The aim of the paper was to analyze key competencies of managers in practice and teachers, as managers of the teaching process, from students' point of view at FEM SUA in Nitra. The evaluation of the questionnaire survey was carried out using selected methods of mathematical statistics. Student's data for analysis were obtained via the questionnaire survey.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

We asked 102 FEM SUA in Nitra students of the third-year study about the given key competences of managers in practice and the teachers, as managers of the teaching process, which represents approximately 32% of the total number of students of the 3rd year study at FEM SPU in Nitra.

The aim of the questionnaire survey was to find out which of the above mentioned seven competencies of managers (according to Belz & Siegrist, [2]) they consider as the most important within application in practice. The students had a possibility to select various answers. The most, 72% respondents answered that ability to solve problems and creativity were the most important key competence of managers, then the respondents selected independence and efficiency (68% of respondents), then ability to argument and evaluate (56% of respondents), followed by ability to communicate and cooperate (54%), then ability to accept responsibility (50%), then ability to think and learn (48%) and last ability to solve conflicts (45%). The evaluation of the survey is shown in the Figure 2.



Figure 2 Evaluation of the survey about the key competences of managers from students' point of view
Source: authors

Figure 3 shows the students' answers to the question about the personality characteristics of the teacher as a manager of the teaching process. The students had a possibility to select various answers. The most, 82% respondents answered that ability to communicate and cooperate were the most important key competence of teacher as a manager of the teaching process, then the respondents selected ability to argument and evaluate (74% of respondents), then ability to solve problems and creativity (61% of respondents), followed by ability to solve conflicts (60%), then ability to accept responsibility (57 %), then ability to think and learn (51%) and last independence and efficiency (47%).

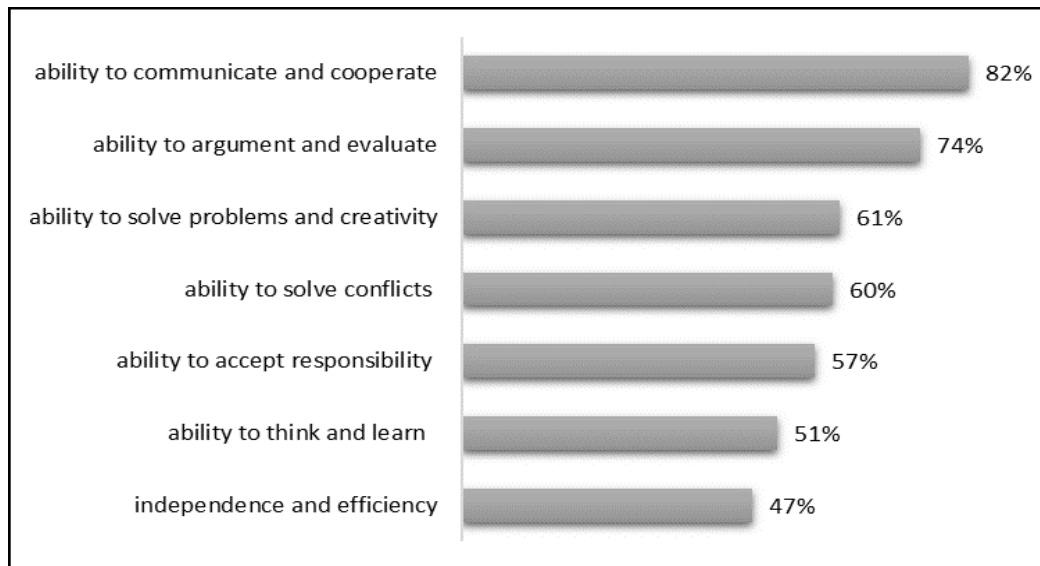


Figure 3 Evaluation of the survey about the key competences of teachers as a manager of the teaching process from students' point of view
Source: authors

CONCLUSIONS

Identification and characteristic of key competences of managers is, for the FEM SUA students, a part of complex studies for gaining managerial economic skills for practice of the graduates of FEM SUA in Nitra. It is important to realize that key competences may differ according to company because each company has their own key competences. According to Goliński et al. [4] “it is also important the attention to the necessity of precise and up to date describing of entrepreneurs needs for specific competencies and skills and possibility to declare acquired skills by people seeking employment”.

From the economic point of view key competences contribute to effectiveness of given plans, management of company and its employees. For each company it is important to identify key competences inevitable for performance of given tasks. “From a professional manager a right level of management knowledge is required. In this case, both the practical and theoretical knowledge are needed. Just theoretical knowledge may be insufficient. Given the scope of management competences which are related to entire enterprises, the ability to structure knowledge and its practical application are necessary” [6].

The aim of the paper was to analyze and define key competences of managers in the context of education at the FEM SUA in Nitra which give good basis to graduates of the FEM SUA in Nitra within application in practice. Lifelong education and practice provide managers with appropriate knowledge, skills and experience to make successful managers in companies throughout Slovakia, and in the world as well, out of them in the future. A part of the paper was the questionnaire survey aimed at finding which one of the presented seven managers' key competences students of the FEM SUA in Nitra consider as the most important key competence within application in practice. From the results given we can see that up to 72% of respondents consider ability of manager to solve problems and creativity as the most important key competence of manager. Another result of the research is that up to

82% of respondents chose the sense of justice as the most important key competence of the teacher as a manager of the teaching process.

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