
Impacto del Proyecto AEi: Adultos, Empleo e Inclusión

Impact of the AEi Project: Adults, Employment and Inclusion

Javier Fombona Cadavieco y Rafael Navas Sanz (Coords.)

Edita Universidad de Oviedo



Universidad de Oviedo



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Javier Fombona Cadavieco fombona@uniovi.es

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MAIN THEME: 4. VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND ADULT EDUCATION

4.4. RESILIENCE FOR CHANGES - HOW TO DEVELOP MANAGERIAL COMPETENCES

AUTHOR

1. Ewa Listopadzka, Ignacy Mościcki University of Applied Sciences in Ciechanów, ORCID 0000-0002-4581-2163, ewa.listopadzka@puzim.edu.pl

ABSTRACT

Talking about employment and training for strengthening the competencies of an individual one should first concentrate on the most current trends on the labour markets. The adult education concentrates on both giving them the proper knowledge, skills and competences. The up-to-date researches show the importance of the surveying of the demand not only for the specific jobs but rather skills and competences that the individuals possess. Do the universities or wider – educational institutions offer the right range of training and courses? How do the managerial competences follow the changes in the modern world? We underline the necessity of resilience of the companies, their strategies, but what about the main asset that they possess - human resources.

KEYWORDS: managerial competences, VUCA reality, training, university education

1. INTRODUCTION

Variability, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity are more and more often perceived and described elements of the world around us, as well as the economic and social situation. The events of the last few decades or years, or even months and weeks encourage us to reflect on the dynamics of changes, the unpredictability of the environment, the complexity and ambiguity of the decisions made. A world overtaken by the COVID-19 pandemic, economic activity partially blocked by mandated lock-downs, and the health service burdened to the limit by fighting the "new enemy". On the other hand, the realities of everyday life - natural threats, ecological disasters, the fight against pollution, but also social inequalities, social uprisings and acts of terror. Are these phenomena really unpredictable? When searching for our way through the meanders of economic, political and social events, should we focus on any special skills of human beings that will allow us to effectively use the opportunities given to us and overcome threats? Are such traits identifiable and trainable, or are they rather innate and difficult to describe?

2. JUSTIFICATION AND INTEREST OF THE TOPIC

Great leaders, managers, people who lead small or large organizations have many things in common - some innate, some acquired: the natural, personal or formal authorities; the ability to convince others to their own views or actions. At the same time, we conduct research on the features of these special people, describe their competences and create training programs aimed at developing as many features as possible, which in the future are to result in increased effectiveness and efficiency of operation, the resilience for changes. How do the curriculums of various kinds of courses offered by educational institutions like universities or training companies match the described competences of the future?

3. THEORICAL FRAMEWORK

VUCA reality - a term already commonly used to describe the variability, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity that surrounds us, it is widely used not only in the military terminology from which it comes, but also common in business or strategic management.

VUCA is an abbreviation (acronym) first used in 1987 to refer to the leadership theory of Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus then it was used to describe the variability and complexity of the functioning world as a result of the end of the Cold War to finally be included in economic literature after the 2001 World Trade Center bombings. It is used to describe the uncertain, highly variable and complex reality in which we operate.

Apart from the military field, individual elements of the VUCA acronym describe the economic reality and problems in the field of strategic management as follows (Mack, Khare, 2016):

Volatility - determines the pace and speed of changes that the company experiences in the surrounding environment. These are, for example, rising or falling prices of products and services that may occur at unpredictable times. Such changes require quick decisions and immediate action.

Implications for managers: As a result of the speed of change, the long-term detailed plans created by managers quickly become obsolete. This is due to the fact that the conditions and assumptions on the basis of which the plan had been created, e.g. 12 months earlier, have already changed. Hence the conclusion that the more time we spend on planning, the greater the chance that the plan will be out of date at the time of its presentation.

Uncertainty - the inability to predict situations and events that may occur. It is caused by the variability of the environment or the lack of sufficient knowledge to assess the consequences of events. The key in this case is the information resources possessed, which the company must constantly expand in order to be able to create patterns that can contribute to determining the consequences of the situation.

Implications for managers: In case of uncertainty, managers have a low level of awareness and understanding of events and problems that occur. As a result, it is difficult to predict what the effect of the actions will be, which may lead to a longer planning process (to reduce uncertainty). The reduction of uncertainty can lead to the fulfilment of the managerial saying: *if you want to be 100% sure, you will be 100% late*.

Complexity - along with variability and uncertainty, there is complexity regarding the functioning of the environment. It consists of a network of information and procedures, a variety of problems that may occur and the absence of a cause-and-effect relation. Complexity can be defined as the situation where different companies may obtain different results despite using the same procedures. When it comes to making decisions, it is important to consider many factors.

Implications for Managers: Managers are in possession of some information or can predict some events, but the number and nature of the data analysed affect the decision-making process.

Ambiguity - refers to difficulties in understanding the environment and is associated with different interpretations of situations and events. Ambiguity is reflected in situations where one problem has many solutions and it is not possible to decide which solution should be chosen.

Implications for managers: Managers go beyond their comfort zone and take actions with increased risk, or refrain from making decisions, fearing risk.

How to find yourself in the world of VUCA. Certainly, traditional leadership skills are not enough. According to the claims of the futurologist Bob Johansen (Johansen, 2017) one should focus on leadership competencies that did not matter a while ago. Going in the direction of turning dilemmas that cannot be solved into possibilities, Johansen proposes a premium version of the acronym VUCA to provide a way for the leaders of the future to find a solution. He suggests redefining the words that make up VUCA to **V**ision, **U**nderstanding, **C**larity and **A**gility. How to interpret it in a relatively compressed way - leaders and organisations should have and be guided by a vision that will allow them to survive in difficult times. Understanding and good communication will facilitate the realisation of the vision. Transparent and well-organized processes will allow you to make the right decisions, and agility will allow the organization to easily adapt and carry out changes. The organization and the people who create it should build competences that enable the most effective operation even when everything is collapsing.

In his work, Johansen describes 10 competences necessary, according to him (remember that he is a futurologist from a large think-tank), to function efficiently in a changing reality. These are (ibid.):

1. maker instinct - create with commitment, infecting others with your energy,
2. clarity - clarity of goals, flexibility to change
3. dilemma flipping - dilemmas that cannot be solved should be seen as an opportunity,
4. immersive learning ability,
5. bio-empathy - learning from nature, respecting and understanding its principles,
6. constructive depolarisation - easing tensions and combining different views,
7. quiet transparency - showing openness without drawing attention to yourself,
8. rapid prototyping - quick implementation of own visions,
9. smart-mob organising - building and organizing social networks,
10. commons creating - creating common values that are valuable both economically and socially.

Today's world is a world of changes, uncertainty, and deviating from strict guidelines and rules. Neither the organization's leadership nor its strategies are spared in today's VUCA world. Experiences, dogmas and paradigms must be scrutinized; it is no longer about finding a single path or management tool: standards are giving way to individuality. The manager is responsible for the lion's share of decisions about the parameters that define the way an organisation works. The increase in volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity means that the manager and his company must seek new directions and adopt a fresh approach to management. Only then positive results can be guaranteed under changed circumstances. The world of VUCA challenges us to find your own way. Managers must understand logic and develop empathic behaviour - in short, be more concerned with people and their needs.

How does this relate to the competences of managerial staff or even middle and top management? People decide about the success of each company. This requires appropriate framework conditions in which each person can contribute in terms of skills and competences to achieve expected outcomes. It has always been important in human economic activity and becomes even more important in the days of VUCA. These

features shape the dialogue and discourse between company managers and their employees. The willingness to engage in real collaboration and to take on clear responsibilities is a fundamental prerequisite for innovation. It requires freedom, creativity, speed, flexibility and a corporate culture that connects people to the organization. This relationship becomes crucial in the light of leadership theory. In the world of VUCA, the most important thing is to anticipate the future and combine the strengthening of cooperation in companies with modern solutions. Decisions and relationships are success factors in shaping a common cause. The goal is to concentrate the energy spent into channels that lead to the most effective added value possible.

4. OUTLINED AIMS

The aim of this paper is to look through different studies and studies reports to see the model of competences that the manager should possess. It's necessary to compare it with the model of education that we, as the university teachers, offer to our managerial students. What is to be done? What elements are missing? How the students expectations vary among different generations of students?

5. METHOD

In recent years, new studies are being conducted - reports on which professions will be in demand in a few years, which will disappear, what competences will be necessary on the labour market. Focusing on the most serious of the projections, it is worth noting their common features, that some of the professions that will be popular in the decades to come do not yet exist, and that the competences that employers will expect from our children differ significantly from what we know now. One thing is certain - the package of competences expected from future managers will be based primarily on the ability to make decisions in a rapidly changing reality, situations that a few years ago would have been called extreme. The next elements are the ability to work with a team consisting of units often extremely different, not necessarily having any contact with each other. Working in virtual teams has become a fact. We have allowed on-line work in virtually every area of our life, and it looks like we can handle it. The problem here is not so much technical or organizational possibilities, but more and more frequently encountered problems of a psychological nature - lack of contact with people. The research, the elements and conclusions of which are presented below, relate to the pre-pandemic period, hence some conclusions regarding, for example, remote work and the possibility of engaging an employee in a situation of working "from home" will require verification in the near future.

Starting with the **Adecco report** - Competences of the Future - the fourth industrial revolution in Eastern Europe (Adecco Group, 2018). This report is an analysis of the labour market and the training market in Central and Eastern Europe until 2018. The report indicates that the current model of education in Eastern Europe is not adapted to the needs of the labour market. Its framework is too rigid, while more flexibility is needed to educate a modern, skilled workforce.

The report covers the entire labour market, with particular emphasis on the professions in which employees are most in demand. IT-related professions are on the top of the list. Managerial positions are to be found in virtually each of the analysed industries. The features which, according to the authors of the report, are particularly sought after in the labour market are divided into hard and soft competences and are

presented in Table 1. These competences, which the researchers emphasize, are placed in a random order. Looking at them in terms of the desired managerial traits, it seems that we should pay special attention to soft skills supplementing them with analytical skills (especially in the field of finance).

Table 1. Key competences sought in the labour market in Central and Eastern Europe, according to the Adecco report.

Key hard competences in Eastern Europe	Key soft skills in Eastern Europe
Strategic management in IT	Creativity
Mechanical engineering	Leadership and crisis management
Forklift operation	Perseverance and resilience
Marketing and advertising	Flexible problem solving
Aerospace Engineering	Mutual cultural understanding
Search engine positioning (SEO)	Entrepreneurship
Cybersecurity	Ability to analyse data
Data analysis	Agility and quick learning
Financial analysis	

Source: (Adecco Group, 2018)

Additionally, the report lists the skills of the currently employed senior managers. These are:

- Sales management
- Business planning
- Marketing in social media (social media marketing)
- Start-ups creation and management
- Internet Marketing
- Entrepreneurship
- Product development
- Management consulting
- Online Advertising
- Business Analysing

The skill list above is a great complement to the guidelines for potential managers. According to the definition - it is a list of skills - tools that managers use and will continue to use. Necessary instruments. However, having only these resources is not enough to create a good manager. This is a necessary but not sufficient condition. It will be necessary to supplement the list of skills with a number of social competences related to both teamwork, organization of own work and, finally, flexibility. Maybe it is time to return to the long-established trend of agile management.

The authors of the report put forward a thesis that the educational market is currently not adjusted to the rapidly changing needs of the labour market. They make a series of recommendations targeting four categories of audiences: governments and lawmakers; universities and educational institutions, businesses and organizations, and young people. When compiling a list of recommendations for universities, the authors of the report suggest increasing the link between the funding of the University and specific fields of study and the results in the form of employment (employability) of students after their graduation. It seems that this postulate is aimed at the wrong audience. After all,

universities have been analysing their offer for a long time in terms of the expectations of the labour market and adjust it whenever possible. They collect data on the labour market and the fate of graduates, which are the basis for further analyses. When it comes to financing linked to the results on the labour market, this is a demand for lawmakers rather than for the institutions themselves implementing the mission of educating younger and older adults. Another recommendation indicates that universities should focus on the quality of education that will increase the employability of a student in the modern labour market. Fill the skill gap by inspiring students, based on an assessment of their personality and interests, to improve themselves based on social values.

Looking at the Adecco recommendations regarding the activities of educational units from the perspective of an academic lecturer, it is impossible to resist the statement that many of them have already been implemented in recent years and our further activities aimed at the best possible implementation of the introduced teaching programs and methods, links with practice and the market should lead to clear effects. The described research by Adecco is a mine of data and analyses regarding the labour market in EU countries (not only in Eastern Europe). It clearly shows the growing demand for knowledge of management techniques, planning management systems in the company, or interdisciplinary knowledge.

However, do the next generations of managers educated by us have a chance for employment? Market oversaturation in this respect may occur in individual industries or regions, however, the data collected by the research company (Table 2) clearly show that the managerial profession is still among those with a shortage of supply. Still, the number of educated and capable people to lead the company, or parts of it, is insufficient.

Table 2. Mismatches on the labour market in Poland by occupations

Staff shortages	Surplus of employees
ICT specialist	Foresters and fishermen
Health protection specialist	Food processing workers
Manager	Craftsmen
Scientists and engineers	Social workers
Skilled manual workers	Cultural workers
Lecturers / trainers	

Source: (Adecco Group, 2018)

Another report - this time the **World Economic Forum** is called Upskilling for Shared Prosperity.

Survey respondents believe that by 2022 more than half of employees will have to significantly improve their qualifications or retrain. If so - it is worth taking a look at the competences in which it is worth investing:

1. Analytical and innovative thinking
2. Learning strategies and active learning
3. Creativity, originality and initiative
4. Critical thinking and analysis
5. Solving complex problems
6. Leadership and the ability to influence others
7. Emotional intelligence
8. Reasoning, problem solving and building concepts (ideas)
9. System analysis and drawing conclusions

The clearly emerging tendency to expect employees to be highly independent in shaping their competences profile as well as their own opinions and analyses applies to many disciplines and professions. Focusing on the problem of managerial competencies, it should be emphasized that the specificity of this profession requires managers to be much more interdisciplinary than in the case of others, to follow changing trends and be able to assess the employee team for which they are responsible. All the above mentioned competences may relate to various aspects of management (planning, organizing, motivating, control) and have a synergistic effect on the efficiency of the manager's work.

A comprehensive study of the **Infute hatalsa foresight institute** research under the name "Employee of the future" (Infute hatalsa foresight institute, 2019) prompts for further considerations. By conducting a series of studies and interviews with experts, specialists and employees, the Institute's analysts identified 32 factors of change that will have a significant impact on employees and the labour market in the future. The combination of selected change factors and identifying their mutual influence gave the basis for the creation of 5 scenarios for the future. They were called: *Jobs are for robots*, *Hollywood work model*, *Always under control*, *Social workers for planet and nature*, *Eternal employee*. For each of the forecast possible scenarios, the factors of change that may affect the fulfillment of the scenario, the desired competences that will be required on the labour market and the main motive for taking up employment by an employee of the future were identified. These scenarios are not mutually exclusive - it is allowed to implement several of them at the same time. In each of the 5 cases, examples of employee profiles and a potential job advertisement in a given model are also presented. This highly futurological simulation is an interesting proposal to illustrate possible scenarios for the development of the labour market and the employee depending, among others, on the development of technology, the work system or phenomena from the natural environment.

Searching for features and competences that will help humans maintain an advantage over robots (one of the goals of this research is to deal with fears related to the development of artificial intelligence), it was found that it is primarily soft skills that distinguish us from robots. Among them, first of all, attention was paid to:

- ✓the ability to learn actively (including the ability to appreciate the impact of new information on current knowledge and skills),
- ✓creativity (not only in artistic fields, but also as the ability to think abstractly and combine knowledge and experience from various fields),
- ✓the ability to share knowledge with others,
- ✓ability to cooperate,
- ✓problem-solving attitude.

Among further research and interviews in research groups, attention was again drawn to three categories: creativity, group work and self-presentation (which was often understood as the ability to properly "sell" one's opinion, experiences and merits).

Based on the conclusions of researchers, on the basis of quantitative and qualitative data obtained from employees and specialists related to the labour market, it can be forecast that the key competences of the future will include, in addition to the indicated skills in the area of exact sciences, the so-called STEM (*science, technology, engineering, math*), also: the ability to actively learn, creativity, the ability to share knowledge, cooperate with others, focus on problem solving, critical thinking and negotiation skills. At the same time, it should be emphasized that due to the fact that soft

skills are typically human and will not be automated (or at least it will not happen quickly), they will become the most important for employees of the future.

Coming back to the topic of managerial competences expected from future generations of executives, taking into account the constantly developing share of artificial intelligence in the huge number of daily operations - both complicated and routine - managers will certainly have to demonstrate features that cannot be programmed. The above-mentioned soft skills, with a strong emphasis on the ability to use ICT, for example to supplement specialist knowledge to the extent needed at a given moment, will be an indispensable element of managerial education. The demand for the development of specific skills and competences varies and will vary depending on what the manager has expectations of his employment, what are the goals he is striving for. You can clearly see the difference between successive generations of employees. As in many other areas of life, the division between the representatives of the next generations of employees is clearly visible. The list of the desired competences of the future according to the assessment of various generations of employees is presented in Table 3. These are the results of the Infute hataalsa foresight institute study.

Table 3. Competences of the future in the opinion of individual generations

Generation Z - under 22 years old	Millennials - 23-34 years	Xenials 35-43 years old	Generation X - 44-53 years old
Digital skills - 20%	Active learning - 18%	cognitive flexibility- the ability to look at a given issue from different points of view 14%	STEM skills in the field of science - 31%
Critical thinking - 12%	Cooperation with others - 13%	ability to share knowledge - 15%	Problem solving - 27%
		digital skills - 14%	ability to share knowledge - 25%

Source: (Infute hataalsa foresight institute, 2019)

6. RESULTS

A manager - a leader in a company is an individual to whom it is difficult to assign a set of competences necessary for effective and efficient fulfilment of his role. Management systems, motivators for our actions and priorities are changing. Each generation has its own vision of perfect work. With this background, the profile of the manager evolves - from an authoritarian leader to a partner-coach, from a distant person in the hierarchy of institutions to a close element of the process. Regardless of the chosen management system, culture or religion of a given country, certain features will remain the same. There is no doubt that a good manager should both have interdisciplinary knowledge (not necessarily specialist in a given field), analytical skills - primarily the interpretation of ready-made analyses, but also a whole package of soft skills. Numerous analyses trying to look into the future, and extensive scenarios indicate one thing - soft

skills are an element that distinguishes people with managerial potential. Some of them are inborn, some can be supplemented with education, and some simply have to be learned.

Without undermining the claim about the importance of soft skills (especially in the aspect of comparison with artificial intelligence), we should still consider how to understand this concept. Over the years, this phrase has certainly evolved and the enigmatic statement about the need to train our students in soft skills - although still true, it may have a completely different meaning yesterday, today and tomorrow.

7. DISCUSSION

When thinking about educating managers of the future, we should not limit ourselves to talking about the art of negotiation, interpersonal communication or assertiveness. Presenting them with elements of non-verbal communication or methods of conducting negotiations is necessary, but certainly not sufficient. When making consecutive reviews of curricula - both at the academic and training level, it is worth referring to maybe futuristic but very inspiring research results - for example those presented above. Training in active learning, creativity, and the ability to share knowledge with others are elements that are rarely found in curricula. You can try to lead them in an attractive form - stimulating the hidden potential in the audience - social skills that, if directed in a skilful way and educated, will become a valuable competence of the future manager. We are already starting to shape other expected competences, such as the ability to work in a group, taking responsibility for our own decisions or sharing duties (in a more or less effective way) at the school level. These are skills that we equip younger generations with - once unavailable at this level.

8. CONCLUSIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Can it be said that teaching at the university level prepares future managers for their functions? Are they being thrown into a deep water of theory with no practice? It all depends on the approach (both lecturers / trainers and students / learners themselves) of individual people. The same issue can be presented in many extremely different ways, but also being in the same classes, you can reach completely different effect. One thing is certain - in the changing world, science and training have no choice but to constantly chase the changing realities of socio-economic life, but also to try to shape it by influencing the human factor that creates and modifies it. Curricula have never been set "forever" and are constantly modified - now we should simply do it more often while being aware that there will always be place for further improvement. This is what continuous improvement is about - not only the entire organization, but also each of its elements separately.

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