

IMPORTANCE OF ECONOMIC EDUCATION FOR JOB MOBILITY OF GRADUATES FROM NON-ECONOMIC FACULTIES

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Abstract

The aim of the paper is to establish the perceived needs of graduates from non-economic study programmes concerning the option of extending their economics knowledge and business skills. The topic discussed in the paper is a response to a major economic and social problem (not only in the Slovak Republic) of unemployment of graduates from higher education institutions. A theoretical part of the paper deals with the explanation of basic concepts and relations in the areas of managing change in education, job mobility and career and education, while paying attention mainly to job mobility, which is viewed as one of the types of labour mobility (job mobility and geographical mobility). The development of economic education and business skills of graduates from non-economic study programmes facilitates employability and job mobility; at the same time, it is a tool of economic growth and rise in employment. The core of the paper is the analysis of opinions of the graduates from non-economic study programmes who have been employed (for five years at least) in individual areas of the economy, which would enable their lifelong employability. In the conclusions of the paper, the authors focus on the identification of decisive topics in business and economics (including management), which would be suitable for a selected sample of graduates from non-economic study programmes in the Slovak Republic. The present paper is a partial result of the second stage of the research carried out under the research project KEGA 006EU-4/2013 – “Methods and principles applied in the preparation of structure and content of the subject disciplines supporting the development of economics knowledge and business skills in students of non-economic study programmes of the second cycle of higher education”.

Keywords: career, change in education, human resources management (HRM), job mobility, employability, non-economic education

Introduction

When designing an educational programme, every management of educational institution needs to consider what it is that makes the educational programme successful. To achieve that the following conditions need to be fulfilled: firstly, a quality design and its implementation, secondly, a good marketing strategy of launching the educational programme onto the market. Consequently, the strategy contains the target market analysis, i.e. characteristics of the entity that designs the programme, size of programme, the nature of its structure, and to what extent people will find the educational programme attractive. Next parts of this strategy are reflections and later also the decision on what kind of new educational programme needs to be developed for the market, or possibly, how to enhance an existing programme. Several factors have to be considered, namely how and when the educational programme is to be introduced with respect to competitive offers, so that it is not only well-designed in terms of its content, but also the educational institution has basic resources for its implementation. Next requirements are the right timing of its launching in relation to recruitment of participants of education and needs of applying graduates' knowledge and skills on the labour market.

The process of designing an educational programme as a product of an educational institution should be a team project, since only a high performing team is able to master a wide range of factors and carefully transform them into the educational programme. Members of this team need to be specialists from several fields/disciplines, as the graduates are expected to be multi-professional, to be able to perform several activities be highly flexible and adaptable. These features can be achieved on condition, the graduate has an adequate broad educational profile and is able to select from an offer of supplementary educational activities either in the form of formal or further educational activities according to their personal capabilities, abilities and preferences in the course of their lifelong careers.

To identify the efficiency of multi-professional preparation is one of the objectives of our research project KEGA 006EU-4/2013 – “Methods and principles applied in the preparation of structure and content of the subject disciplines supporting the development of economics knowledge and business skills in students of non-economic study programmes of the second cycle of higher education” (No. 006EU-4/2013).

The focus of our research is on the analysis of a selected sample of study programmes offered by non-economic higher education institutions, in accordance with aims set forth in the first stage of the project. In the next analysis, we shall deal with graduate profiles and requirements of practice and our focus on the formulation of our ideas about the possibilities of extending the teaching of economics courses in non-economic study programmes, either within formal education or continuous education.

An educational institution can never see its role as a mere designer of educational products and provider of educational services. It has to realise that it acquires applicants interested in education because it offers services that are attractive to clients who, in turn, are willing to spend their time and finance for these educational activities, and perceive them as means of their self-realisation.

1. Factors of change in education

The preparation of educational programmes starts with a thorough strategic analysis, which is the basis of strategic management. Strategic analysis focuses on external and internal environment of a participant of education. According to theory, there are numerous causes of strategic changes in the business sector. In the education sector, there are many common causes but also other, specific causes arise, which are related to specific feature of the educational service provided, and they have to be considered in the design of an educational product.

External factors include the environment, including, e.g. economic and political and changes, i.e. government interferences in favour of some industries or against them (tax policy, subsidy policy, requirement of certificates, creating various types of institutions in terms of ownership, and the like); competition, which is increasing as a result of entry of new entities into the market; societal factors, e.g. a new hierarchy of values, changes in social structure, new behaviour patterns, in relation to material and intellectual demands of inhabitants).

Globalisation trends make educational institutions react to a strong pressure of foreign educational institutions, which offer education to citizens of Slovakia. Developments of technology and techniques should also be projected in education, as they exert pressure on the adjustment of work processes and technology-related jobs.

Organisational factors occur if an organisation structure of an educational institution contains few organisational levels, or if management is unwilling to decentralise decision making.

Technology change factors are in particular new technologies in education and innovations in the content of courses as a reaction to the development of technologies. Financial change factors result from undercapitalisation of public school facilities.

Marketing factors of change are connected with a low focus on customers, low rate of individualisation of the offer (the offer is not adequately designed as tailor-made), poor quality and unreliable services, underrating the customer, problems with acquiring customers under conditions of low demand for educational courses, or vice versa, dealing with the demand that exceeds the institution's capacities.

Another important factor of change in education is a demographic profile of population, as it affects target groups in education, e.g. the rise of client senior groups necessitates specific educational programmes. Clients constitute a changing group; their demands are increasing and they are not willing to accept poor or inadequate quality and incomplete services. To remain competitive in the educational market means to react fast to changing needs of direct participants of education, as well as the indirect ones, i.e. who employ human resources developed in this process.

Change factors inside institutions may be divided into those related to processes and those related to people. Process factors include decision making, communication and interpersonal relations. Human factors of changes are connected with work morale, fluctuation, absence, and an overall degree of employee satisfaction.

Personnel factors may arise if, e.g. managerial posts are filled by individuals who abuse their authority against the interests of an educational institution; if key positions are filled by people who do not meet the qualification requirements or lack the knowledge and skills required for the key position concerned; other cause include poor participants' communicative skills, and the lack of interest on the part of managers in the development of their subordinates.

Searching for and evaluating the factors of change enable us to predict further changes. There are very few educational programmes that do not pass through various cycles without the need for change. On the contrary, most educational programmes pass through the stages of launching, growth, maturity, and decline. (Matulcikova, 2013)

2. Job Mobility and its Options in Supporting Employability

Job mobility is discussed in professional literature in the context of employability (The Erasmus Impact Study, 2014), competences (Veteská and Tureckiova, 2008a, 2008b), career experience (Glenys and Cooper, 2011), success at work (Feldman and Thomas, 2007).

Labour mobility is a mobility of persons within a geographically limited territory or in one's job. It may be further subdivided into job and geographical mobility. Job mobility characterises the possibilities (conditions, barriers, constraints, simplicity, and obstacles) of passing from one type of employment to another type. Geographical (spatial) mobility called migration, refers to the changes in geographical position when searching for new job opportunities. A large mobility of human resources between job positions (job mobility) and mobility within countries (geographical mobility) significantly contribute to economic and social growth, supporting a higher level of employment and leads to continuous development.

There are two aspects of job mobility: those related to society and those related to individuals. The former is the result of technical, social and economic conditions; it is a process of re-orientation of employee's interests accompanied with the act of adopting the decision on the change of profession or workplace. Aspects of job mobility related to individuals indicate that mobility is an individual's permanent quality, e.g. an individual's readiness and willingness to change one's activity. This kind of mobility includes choice of occupation or profession and related issues of the individual's social status and acquired status, as well as the nature of their career plans and ambitions. The job mobility in a narrower sense reflects an individual's ability to perform various kinds of work activities and functions, either within a given company and industry, in which the individual is employed, or in some other.

Job mobility is a movement of people characteristic of the change in occupation, place of work, job positions or roles. This change may occur inside one organisation, within one employer entity (intra muros), or may be connected with the transition to another organisation (extra muros). Job mobility affects activities of each enterprise.

In the next chapter we deal with these processes as forms of career movements.

3 Career Movements: Promotion, Relocation and Demotion

The original meaning of the term "promotion" is advancement of an employee in company hierarchy, i.e. moving to a higher work position. This is accompanied with a greater importance, status, and usually also a higher salary or more attractive benefits, as well as more responsibility. In practice, there are several typical kinds of promotion (Table 1).

Table 1: Typical types of promotion

Type of promotion	Description
Performance-based promotion/ merit-based promotion	Employees are promoted by their performance, while the content of job does not change.
Promotion by years of service	is connected with lifelong employment.
Promotion after the rule "in the right place, at the right time"	is based on prediction (based on thorough information) of developmental trends and readiness for changes.
Promotion based on the rule "let's eliminate the problem"	is resolved by means of exchanging a boss.
Promotion by means of simplifying (flattening) the organisation structure	Each role acquires more responsibility for the organization's final results, which results in the rising importance of scope and responsibility for work in each job position. Its aim is aims to improve internal organisational processes.

Source: After: Kariéra bez hraníc: Druhy povýšení [cit.2013-10-09] In: Matulcikova and Brevenikova 2014)

Relocation to another job

Some businesses systematically support employee mobility between workplaces, as they consider it an efficient method of developing their employees' potential. They fully utilise their human resources by relocating employees to another work or workplace. The aim here is to develop an employee's abilities and skills; change work tasks; innovate technical equipment, or on the other hand, reduce employee dissatisfaction with the job performed so far; handle with serious personal problems; deal with an inadequate employee development. These changes can also be connected with the employee inability to continue in doing the so far work or may be necessitated by organisational changes.

An opposite result, which is also part of relocation to another job, is **demotion**, career movement downwards, which may be initiated by a superior or employees themselves.

When evaluating job mobility we can record career movements in three directions: a) vertical movements (hierarchical dimension); b) lateral movement between professional areas on the same level (professional dimension); c) diagonal movements, i.e. movements across disciplines and functions (hierarchical or professional dimension).

While the vertical movement in the hierarchy is connected with the acquisition of status valuable job positions, and responsibility and incomes, the lateral movement is characteristic of the rise in qualifications, increasing knowledge, skills in several areas. The professional dimension in career opens opportunities for developing experience and knowledge by taking over new activities and project work.

Vertical career movements are a combination of opportunities, ambitions, and needs of an individual and their ability to respond and act in a given situation. Vertical movements upwards are seen as more valuable than acquiring knowledge, skills, or aptitudes by means of qualification or re-qualification education. An individual's ambitions result also from expectations of their family, friends, acquaintances, peers, etc.

Based on research, it in particular school system that plays a significant role in shaping ambitions, mainly owing to a continual evaluation in educational process.

Career advancement of an individual is often connected with the rise in social status and the extinction of some social relationships with the original social environment, as well as with some social isolation. (Plávková, 2008).

It is mainly people with higher and university education who anticipate changes in their job content and career rises for which they are deliberately preparing in the course of their lives, and which are often connected with changes in social status. (Matulcikova – Brevenikova, 2014)

4 Results of Analysis: Career Models

The core of the paper is the analysis of opinions of the graduates from non-economic study programmes who have been employed (for five years at least) in individual areas of the economy, which would enable their lifelong employability. Results of the analysis are projected in models of career and educational modules in terms of career development. These education modules contain crucial/key topics (identified by the authors) in business and economics, including management, which we propose as suitable economics courses for a selected non-economic study programmes in the Slovak Republic. Significant models of career identified on the basis of our analyses include the following:

A. Expert career

This model represents the acquisition of job position, which corresponds to an individual's talent and interests. The focus is on professional work performance, while the individual is interested in developing knowledge and skills in a given field and avoids the work activities might result in their promotion.

B. Advancement career

The starting assumption is a temporary nature of the present job and is viewed as a springboard to a higher work position, for which one has to acquire required knowledge, skills and aptitudes. In order to gradually meet competences required for the performance of higher positions, they have to develop their volition and motivation properties. On principle, an individual is promoted until they have fulfilled corresponding requirements and gained prescribed competences. Those who pursue this type of career consider this approach their philosophy of life.

C. Own business career

This career model is suitable for those who expect to be able to practise a lot of freedom in decision-making at work. These people do not like their work to be structured for them by their superiors, do not want to be controlled too much and are not satisfied with their fulfilment of work duties only; they wish to be able to influence the content of their job.

D. Multi-career orientation

This career model is suitable for people who are interested in several career areas and diversity in their professional lives leads to their self-actualisation. This career orientation brings also some advantages, e.g. decrease in the risk of loss of job, a great deal of experience and contacts gained in one job and can be used in another job, i.e. multi-career orientation may be accompanied by a synergy effect. However, its disadvantage is time constraints: if an individual is involved in several activities at the same time, they cannot possibly spend the same amount of time on doing each activity in contrast to those who perform only one kind of activity. In that way a multi-career orientation leads to decreasing one's own competitiveness. The solution is in the choice of a suitable strategy and elimination of disadvantages.

E. "Work Only" type of career

This model may represent a person's long-term orientation or only one stage in their career development. It is based on the idea of work as a primary source of income, while such aspects as the harmony of work and talent or interests and needs of an individual are of secondary importance. This career model represents the career path chosen by people who need to secure a particular volume of income, or those who have no clear career motivation but need an adequate income for their spare-time activities.

These types of career are connected with various levels of knowledge and skills, namely knowledge of economics and business/entrepreneurial skills. Each participant of education, either in formal or informal education pursues their aims of career and ideas of their future work performance based on their individual abilities and personality traits. That is why the educational offer in educational and school institutions should on the one hand, correspond to the needs of the labour market and the requirement that school graduates be involved in the work process as soon as possible and in the easiest possible way, and also that their personal needs and aims may be fulfilled. The offer of economics education in itself should be arranged in specific modules so that needs of labour market participants' may be fulfilled, i.e. those of employers and job applicants, while a significant role is also played by the efforts for setting up a business of one's own.

The needs for economics education of graduates from non-economic study programmes and their future employers have ensued from our researches/surveys made with employers and individuals (who are either employees or self-employed/do business of their own). These researches and surveys provided the basis for the construction of **five modules of education in terms of career development:**

- Module A: Development of economic knowledge and business skills for individuals who prefer pursuing professional career, i.e. become experts in their specialisation (expert career).
- Module B: Development of economic knowledge and business skills for individuals, who are interested in moving upwards in the company hierarchy (advancement career).
- Module C: Development of economic knowledge and business skills for individuals, who are interested in doing business on their own account (own business).
- Module D: Development of economic knowledge and business skills for individuals of multi-career orientation.
- Module E: Development of economic knowledge and business skills for individuals who see work only as the source of income (work-only career).

On the basis of the research carried out, where respondents were graduates from selected non-economic study programmes and representatives of employer entities, we can establish the following areas of economics education and business skills, the content of which is specified in individual modules (Table 2):

Table 2: Modules based on the needs of graduates and business entities

	Graduate needs	Needs of business entities
Expert career	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Labour law (Act of agency employment, Labour Code, organisational changes and reducing the number of employees, and other legislative amendments) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Essentials of statistics Economic statistics Statistics softwares (calculation of specific indicators)
Advancement (linear) career	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fundamentals of economics and preparation for managerial position Financial analysis and financial planning Leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information science Microsoft MS Office, MS Word, MS Excel, MS Access. Database systems: SQL language, C++ programming language, JAVA, JAVA Script Business risk and crisis management Human resource Management
Doing Business/Own business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate economy National economic policy and strategic analysis of external environment Legislation regulating a particular area of business Accounting Financial-economic analysis Taxation Marketing 	
Multi-career orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial Management Insurance Industry Communication Business Economics 	
“Work-only” type of career	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accountancy software Accounting: single entry book-keeping and double entry book-keeping Financial and economic analysis Strategic analysis for planning 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insurance and Insurance Industry • Taxation 	
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Names of courses arranged into separate modules reflect requirements which respondents of research and surveys considered useful or necessary for pursuing a particular type of career.

5 Discussion: proposals for possibilities of developing economic knowledge and business skills

The nature of the topic and the implementation of research were necessitated by disproportions in the labour market and educational market. We focused on graduates from noneconomic study programmes of non-technical stream, because these graduates are recorded in statistics as the most difficult employable graduates on the labour market. We were searching for the causes of this difficult employability in order to find means and ways of achieving easier employability. In the course of analyses, it was in particular employers of individual graduates who were very helpful as well as graduates themselves (we focused on those who had completed their formal education at least five years ago). We explored mainly the conditions of their transition from school to the world of labour and specific features of the process of looking for employment. Jobseekers selected the type of higher education according to their personal abilities, interests and the need to implement their careers in a given area.

Opinions of employers clearly indicate that graduates have theoretical the knowledge required in the field in which they graduated and are suitable candidates for employment. However, the problem lies in a much lower demand for these graduates than is the number of those annually completing particular fields of study; and thus, there are not jobs for them within the fields in which they completed their higher education. Employees who have been working in their field/specialization for a long time means higher assets to their employers due to more employees' extensive experience, skills and also greater creativity resulting from their practical skills. Employers listed the following shortcomings of their employees who graduated from university programmes of study analysed in our research:

- Inadequately developed creative thinking and strategic thinking, limited abilities of reflecting on options of solutions in given situations (so important mainly nowadays, in the period of permanent changes);
- Low ability to apply theoretical knowledge: employees are good at presenting theoretical knowledge but not so good at applying them in practical activities.
- They demonstrate low level of interpersonal and communication skills, inadequate behaviour towards customers, co-workers, or poor cooperating and team working abilities.
- Their character properties are inadequately developed in terms of perception of values; they lack sense of ethical values, consistent approach, respectability, and responsibility in the performance of individual activities.
- They often lack enthusiasm for the work performance, as well as perseverance, independence and initiative; many of them need to be employed to be well-paid.

The employers' proposals focused on the improvement of the preparation of graduates from analysed study programmes. Although many of these study programmes are developed in the long run, and the higher education institution can further modify them in some way.

On the other hand, graduates from the study programmes analysed, mainly those who did not succeed in finding suitable jobs with employers and who needed to opt for self-employment (setting up a business of their own) expressed somewhat different opinions. In their responses, they mentioned in particular requirements of economics knowledge and business skills. They said they lacked at least basic economic knowledge to set up their own business; for many of them that was the only chance to succeed on the labour market. Another graduate group was made up from those who, in order to take care of basic subsistence and their very existence, also tried to do any job just to earn the amount of money needed. This group of graduates needed the knowledge from other fields of science other than those provided by the field of study that they had completed. Majority of job opportunities are in the area of providing counselling services in the economy, accounting, and taxation. However, these are the very areas in which graduates (our respondents) were unable to acquire the knowledge and skills needed for the performance of mentioned working activities only by means of short-term preparation. They admitted they were unable to perform these activities due to inadequate knowledge and skills, unfamiliarity with legislation and the business environment. Requalification for these kinds of work would necessitate completing university study of this kind of specialisation; on the other hand, short-term preparation is not an adequate solution.

In addition, the graduates who succeeded in finding an employment with an employer and at the beginning of their career performed the kind of work connected with content of their studies, but after some time they exchanged the expert career for the advancement line career and found themselves in managerial positions. However, after some time in those managerial positions they again found that the applicability of the knowledge they gained by completing a given field of study declined in importance for the performance of their work, and the knowledge of economics, planning abilities, arranging various activities under conditions of limited resources, organising work in

a suitable way, leading people, presenting results of work in public, and making sure that there is demand for results of work on the market raised in importance.

These opinions motivated us to design the kind of study programmes, which would not be closely specialized, but through which students would acquire a wider range of knowledge and skills also from other fields, which would support their easier employability. This proposal interferes with design of conceptions of study programmes in the Slovak Republic, and on the part of those who have designed the so far study programmes; it is often connected with lack of understanding and disinterest in making changes in this respect. To date there are only a few interdisciplinary study programmes, e.g. Technical University and the Faculty of Medicine, Comenius University in Bratislava, or the Law Faculty, Comenius University and the Faculty of National Economy, University of Economics.

The current situation on the university education market and some systems of designing study programmes currently in use in the Slovak Republic lead us to presenting at least some partial proposals for developing economics knowledge and skills. In the analytical part of the paper, we have worked out only the proposals that offer partial solution, namely proposals for the need of particular courses in economics, which would develop required economic knowledge and skills of graduates from noneconomic and nontechnical study programmes. In formulating these proposals, we started from the opinions and needs of respondents – graduates from noneconomic study programmes and their ideas of what courses/ subject disciplines they find the most interesting in view of their employability and for the development of types of career specified in this paper.

The situation on the labour market and needs of dual professional preparation can be expected to advance also the development of interdisciplinary study programmes, which will enable the preparation of graduates for alternative job opportunities or ones in which they will achieve better quality of work.

Conclusion

We have designed modules of economics education, which contain selected logically related topic areas. Participants of further education will be able to select the module that best corresponds to their expectations concerning their career movement and suits best their needs. However, the design of modules of supplementary economics education cannot be the basis for the implementation of any economic work activities; on the other hand, it can provide a basic survey and knowledge of economics and business skills, so that an individual can easily cope with business and life activities.

Based on the analysis of responses in questionnaires and in face-to-face interviews with respondents, the institutions at which the research was carried out can be classified into four groups:

- 1) higher education institutions that do not offer economics education and do not need to secure it even in the future;
- 2) higher education institutions that have no courses in economics and need (for various reasons) to introduce some;
- 3) higher education institutions that offer adequate education in economics in their study programmes, and so extension of this kind of education is not needed;
- 4) higher education institutions that offer basic economic education and are interested in its extension, or we recommend the extension of economics courses on the basis of our research.

Results of the research carried out in selected employer entities and employees indicate that the respondents are mainly interested in the following areas of economics education and development of economic skills:

- a) Designing strategy, developing alternative strategy solutions, in relation to external and internal analyses.
- b) Planning and developing specific types of plans, e.g. project plans, working out business plans containing all its parts, and the like.
- c) Finance: acquire knowledge of basic terms, definitions, explanation of basic concepts, and doing simple financial analyses.
- d) Taxes: become familiar with basic legislative starting points valid in the area of taxation, accountancy and understand some economic relations and connections.
- e) Insurance and insurance industry: learn about insurance products provided that best correspond to the nature of the performance (of activities) and to services.
- f) HRM management: acquire knowledge and skills of leading employees (in the case of anticipating linear career), communicate with superior bodies.

These areas of economics are demanding and mastering them requires a considerable in-depth study, which is both time-consuming. Another problem is that these subject disciplines are related to other economic knowledge and skills; therefore, learning only one area of problems is complicated. There is little time left apart for a systematic study required for the performance of the activities listed above.

However, it is possible to become familiar with some fundamentals. The best solution is to design several modules, which contain selected areas of economic education; these modules would be logically interconnected, and participants of further education would be able to choose the module that best suits their needs. On the other hand, modules of supplementary economic education cannot constitute a basis for the implementation of economic working activities in practice, but enable the learner to obtain a basic overview and knowledge of business and economics so that they could easier advance in their business activities and cope with various life situations.

We propose to offer the economic education in subject disciplines listed in Table 2, in extension forms of study, and without the interference with the accredited study programmes and define these subject disciplines or courses on the basis of graduates' needs and requirements of their future employers.

Conditions of socio-economic development enable graduates from several HEIs to find employment also in the private sector, however, to achieve that they miss basic economic education, which would enable them an easier performance of activities in a business of their own. The aim of our project is to offer essential supplementary possibilities of economic education. In view of the possibilities of graduates from noneconomic programmes in research institutions and also in the private sector it appears that it would be suitable to include in their education economic disciplines specialized in a given field, e.g. business in the media, support to business and employability. However, graduates from these extended economic courses cannot be expected to be able to perform all the economic activities related to business, but they will acquire, e.g. only a general and basic overview of the Slovak Republic and will familiarize themselves with essential economic relations and contexts.

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