

REVIEW ARTICLE

Theory, Practice and Characteristics of Management in Serbia

Svetlana Vukotic^{1*}, Tatjana Milivojevic², Nebojša Zakic¹

¹University Union-Nikola Tesla, Faculty of Entrepreneurial Business, Cara Dušana, Belgrade, Serbia.

² Megatrend University, Faculty of Culture and Media, Goce Delčeva, 8, Novi Beograd, Serbia.

*Corresponding author: Email: cecavukotic@gmail.com

Abstract

The paper analyses management and manager's characteristics which determine the success of organisations. For Serbian managers the only constant is change. The paper deals with this aspect in 3 segments: general characteristics in international and domestic context, the influence for national culture on the characteristics of managers and the characteristics of managers in times of change. The focus of our paper is on theory and practice of management in Serbia, a country that went through significant political, economic and social changes in the post-socialistic period, but which is already transforming in every aspect including educating managers for contemporary and future work challenges.

Keywords: *Change management, Characteristics of managers, Management, national culture, Organisational culture, Serbia.*

Introduction

Modern organisation functions in pluralistic social structures. Hence, it must be directed by authoritative modern management, which is not commanding but inspiring [1].

Even though no universal management system exists, there are, however, certain basic and key principles to management, which are general by nature. Their application enables establishing of management in a particular company. Of course, one should take into account the difference, which, generally observed, depend on the degree of achieved economic development, and which, in the final instance, incorporate both the external and internal ambient in which a company operates. Additional specificity relates to the degree in which the national culture is incorporated into the corporate culture.

Also, the literature increasingly insists on differentiation between managers and leaders [2], but in practice leaders and managers represent factors of the dynamic balance. Progressive and visionary organisations are paying much attention to determining of factors which are influencing successfulness of managers in performing of their determined functions in modern conditions. Namely, aside from controlling, planning, communicating and

coordinating, modern managers are also expected to be a successful leader who motivates, creates visions, manages changes and inspires. In this way, aside from compulsory expertise and knowledge, managers would also have all characteristics of a quality and successful leader. In compliance with [3] they are virtuosi in interpersonal skills and represent the future of corporations.

In accordance with this is also what [4] states: managers manage people, while people manage work. This is why wise managers acquire everything that is positive from others, while simultaneously adapting to the existing environment. This is the reason why the management from the East (Japan) is converging to the management of the West (USA). As far as Serbian management and S theory are concerned, one can say that we are at the beginning of the road to modelling of the typology of Serbian managers, with prevailing questions and dilemmas as opposed to defined attitudes and responses [5]. The reasoning behind this is not in achieving academic critical research objectivity, but merely in stating present conditions, which are still far from domestic management representing a model [6].

The work below provides an analysis of characteristics of managers from which a success of organisations depends. The essay deals with this aspect through three segments: general characteristics, in international and domestic context, the influence of national culture on characteristics of managers and characteristics of managers in the time of changes. Three groups of comparisons were analysed in detail. A parallel was first made between the literature overview in the world and in Serbia. Characteristics of managers at different levels and sizes of Serbian organisations were analysed, especially at the predominant level of small and medium-size companies. Third type of comparisons relates to similarities and differences between managers working in Serbia and those working abroad. The aim of this essay is to point to future managers the importance of characteristics they should acquire. In light of these findings even the existing managers could improve on their work and operations. Also, the essay could also be beneficial to expert and business communities.

After the introduction, first part of the essay deliberates on theoretical framework of characteristics of managers. This part consists of two sublevels: the overview of the international literature and the literature in Serbia. The second part details characteristics of managers in conditions of changes and provides a scan of the situation and conditions in the sphere of business and management in Serbia. We are of the opinion that the overview of conditions in the management theory and practice in Serbia, a country which is in the post-socialist period, started slightly more than two decades ago and which has witnessed some very tough and dramatic political, economic and social changes – additionally burdened by wars, international sanctions and eventually bombing – could be interesting to foreign readers.

Characteristics of Modern Managers

The literature shows that the management was both a cause and the consequence of the growth of international economy over the past century. At the same time, managers cannot effectively perform their part of work without a thorough and complete comprehension of simultaneous relations as a whole. Business organisations function as a whole, while the wholeness is the function of permanent and efficient communication, like a bloodstream and central nervous system [7]. The only proper conclusion which imposes itself is that

the management, as a formal discipline, increases potentials of managers. Enlargement of the list of competencies of managers requires of them to be creative and dynamic, to acquire management skills, responsibility towards quality, adaptive affinities, an attitude towards risk and reality concerning self-satisfaction. The expert profiles of managers are becoming more complex and diversified concerning activities they are performing. Namely, a proportion appears between their new cognitive spheres and increased engagement aimed at penetrating their dispersed essence on one hand, and extended competencies aggregated in a single person on the other.

Mc Cauley and Lombardo [8] have concisely presented standards making managers successful in three categories:

- Attitude towards subordinates,
- Acquiring of necessary resources and
- Creating favourable working environment.

Also, [9] and [10] have grouped the preferences of individuals as:

- Vigorousness (introvert versus extrovert)
- Collecting of information (Reason versus intuition)
- Making of decisions (opinion versus feeling)
- Lifestyle (deliberation versus perceiving).

Aside from dedication to success and job satisfaction, there is also a dedication to the company. If we aim to completely comprehend attitudes of people toward work, we must also, aside from the concept of job satisfaction, take into account the attitude and the feeling of people toward their organisations [11]. Such attitudes, which we call organisational dedication, present in the best sense the power of one corporate culture, along with a degree of identification of people with their organisations, their engagement and preparedness to stay committed to them, even in the most difficult times. For example, this type of loyalty and dedication to the company is generally attributable to the Japanese management. It could be assumed that organisational dedication depends on a large number of factors, while the influence of these attitudes could be very serious. Researches have shown that job characteristics [12] are largely influenced by organisational dedication.

According to a group of authors [13], successfulness of managers is measured through: creativity, focus, speed of learning, building and maintaining of social relations, management of subordinates, compassion, openness and ardour, creation of development climate, confrontation with problematic employees, team orientation, balance between private life and work, ability to make a decision, self-awareness, employment of talented individuals, introduction of a positive atmosphere and flexible tolerant behaviour.

Three most desirable abilities sought by American employers from managers are: communication skills, ability to work with people (the power of influence, cooperation, team work) and initiative [14].

According to [15] the individual performance is a product – of spent effort, individual abilities and organisational support, which is why each company should at each given moment know the subjective abilities of its employees and what type of organisational support it is prepared to provide them with. Invested effort is the object of approximate anticipation, as it predominantly depends on, sometimes even current, personal engagement, and even the mood of employees.

Different parameters are represented in shaping of the profile of managers. One of these categories is communication, which is important for interpersonal relations. Managers should bear in mind that most people are not leaving the company, but their director (taken from [16]). For this reason, and according to [17], organisations have now begun to integrate ethics into their corporate culture and business practices.

Furthermore, the trust is one of the factors which influences the way in which a personality of the manager would be. The trust, as a necessary precondition of certain perceptions, and the action for a good performance can be observed in the following context [18].

- Sensation of authentic communication
- Feeling of personalised support
- Support in cooperation and team work
- Assuming of deliberate risks.

One of the forms of practical intelligence which is highly valued in a workplace is also the type of sensibility which enables successful managers to comprehend unspoken messages [19]. Starting from the strategy of facing changes and problems two basic styles of managers can be defined:

- The style of active approach to changes and problems (managers are flexible in overcoming problems and challenges, they analyse them, looking for more information, trying to understand the essence, realistically assessing problems, they are leading and managing changes, seeking support from employees, their advice...)
- Defensive style of managers (they do not consider the problem, they do not see the need for changes, they are rigid, traditional, calculative, looking for excuses, tackling individuals and not the problems, lacking self-confidence, seeking to maintain "status quo"...))

The structure of organisations today is more flat, without precisely differentiated levels of hierarchy. Its basic function is to be flexible, dynamic, mobile and economically viable. In such organisation there are no clearly defined distinctions between the work and career. Loyalty, dedication and adequate work are no longer sufficient for the company to offer long term advancement in the career as a reward. Managers can no longer rely on organisation in planning of their career and must learn to manager themselves and their work, the same as professionals. This job now requires complete persons which, by managing their own life, also bring benefit and create values to the organisation, company and themselves, including their career [20]. Organisations which were based on hierarchical structure and the culture of power and roles, the story about career was a constituent segment of such culture and interpersonal relations within such organisations... The goals of organisations are now more available and acceptable to each individual, while the communication is now more direct. The career is no longer regarded as a rise in the ladder of the organisation, but, above all, as a possibility to realise one's own potentials [21].

It is now more insisted on a new syntagm-portfolio career, the core determination of which represents a substitute of permanent employment with independence [22], which involves several different projects for various clients [7].

Depending on the set goal according to [23] there are several types of careers. Managerial competence represents one of the goals, where the application of managerial abilities represents the peak of career. Individuals with such goal usually have three key competencies: they are analytical, interpersonal, as they use the influence and control and are emotionally stable, with the

ability to use crisis as a stimulus, and not a paralysing factor.

The scope of our application and development of these abilities enables us to apply our unique human potential. Between the stimulus and reaction lies our greatest power – the freedom of choice [24]. With the introduction of a new syntagm which is present in the literature on management, and which is determined as a model of proactivity, all this can be presented as in fig.

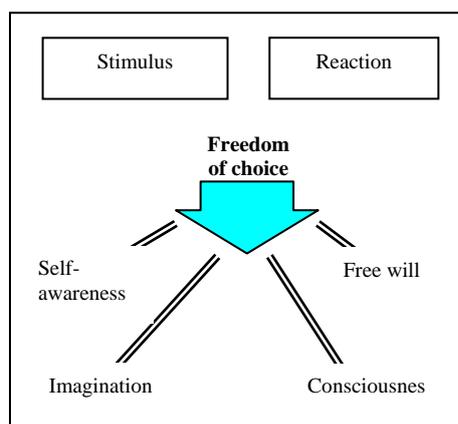


Fig.1: Model of proactivity

Source: according to [24]

Market turbulence and significant competitiveness make us witnesses of the need which imposes companies a high degree of business dynamics, quality and timely business activity, which above all rests on quality human resources, but also on good managers. It is stated in the literature that an ideal manager should have 147 characteristics. However, even if one tenth or 14 of them are present, he/she can be a quality manager. Some of these characteristics include: initiative, cautiousness, vigilance, communicativeness, self-confidence and objectivity [25].

Management in Serbia

The management concept was, compared to other developed countries in the world, involved late in development of Serbian economy. Transition business conditions include a whole series of changes, aligning and implementation of which cannot be conducted neither easily nor rapidly. The whole process should also be institutionally supported. However, neither the installed capacities, nor sources of raw materials or the institutional background, even the capital at disposal – cannot guarantee the business success. All these factors combined together could be quite insufficient without the adequate management to transform them into corresponding strategies leading to business success. It should also be

mentioned that lagging behind in introduction of the management concept, aside from transition turbulences, was also a result of negative ideological connotation, where techno-management was inappropriate, with much present prejudice concerning techno-management structure. In concise words, even when all other transition conditions are flawlessly met, if they are not accompanied by changes in management, which is the pillar of economy, the effects would be minor [26, 27]. In the last fifteen years, Serbia has had quite serious economic and political problems and during that time the management in many organizations was short-term oriented i.e. one of managers' main tasks was to ensure the survival of the organisation [28].

In Serbia, because of problems related to the adjustment of numerous changes, there is a misbalance between the offer and demand for managers. Directors in socially-owned companies are not being given a chance to undertake similar positions in private companies, as they lack market experience. Managers in private companies are being asked to establish and trace market ways of doing business. These jobs require confirmed experts with experience gathered through successful operations, and not only through declarative managing positions. Since privatisation flows do not automatically mean that positions are automatically transferred as well, there is a greater need for managers who have gathered their experience in private companies [29]. On the other hand, Serbian paradox is that for a certain period now there is a surplus of employees as opposed to the shortage of staff with modern knowledge and skills in the sphere of management. This surplus is a consequence of extensive employment in the previous system and non-market approach to management [30]. Mihailovic et al. [31] mention even wider elaborations stating that there was a leadership vacuum that needs to be filled with future business experts.

The Influence of Social and Cultural Factors

Managers are not individuals abstracted from a social and cultural milieu from which they came, in which they acquired their education and in which they do business, regardless of how much their managerial education leaned on the general scientific management model and, hence, on certain global rules of this profession. Therefore, before we try to identify certain characteristics of Serbian managers, we should remind of the depth and scope of influence of the national culture on

organisational structure and the style and way management.

Culture is a fundamental category of human life, as a second nature of human kind (i.e. nature shaped by mankind), which also supplies the process of production of material goods and political organisation of a society with "orientation frameworks" and rules for their functioning. Even though the apportionment, where the culture is treated from the aspect of activity, seems as unambiguous, depending on the width of scrutiny it still leaves room for certain bifurcations [32].

The culture, therefore, provides human nature to the social organisation. In accordance with this we can quote the following statement: *if we were to have to culture, we would not be human at all, at least not in a way in which we grasp this concept* [33]. William Wilson, renowned modern Harvard sociologist, defines culture as "the way in which individuals, in a community, develop their comprehension on how the world functions, and the system of decisions which they base and adopt on the basis of such comprehension." Quoted from [56]. The culture serves as a guide to social and individual life. The culture determines what and how we think, feel and how we live, as it provides a pattern for understanding what needs to be understood as valuable and meaningful, how a meaning is construed and who and for whom (on whose behalf) formulates it [34]. As such, the culture is also a source of personal and collective identity, as a myriad of factors which both encourage and limit social and individual existences.

Frequent disruptions of historic continuity and changes of ideological principles have had a severe impact on Serbian society. During these changes role models, values and spirit were first dismantled, then rebuilt again, and then the role models, values and spirit were lost again, so the present society lies on ruins of previous traditions, general values and collective identity. This is in line with a view that culture represents a complicated complex of elements. According to [32] these elements, as new ones, are periodically added to the basic corpus of its codes, cognitive insights, valuations and determinations which are in long-term context, transferred and reproduced, enabling one culture to be above all recognised and differentiated compared to others, in spite of all changes.

If the transition of Serbian society is viewed in a historic perspective, it could be said that it is

almost uninterrupted. The last transition was extremely brutal, followed by a sudden breakdown of one cultural identity, and a slow and uneven finding of another. "Value vacuum" is often used as a term for a transition period between the old and new system model.

This is accompanied by an institutional, legal and moral weakness, vagueness, incompleteness, discrepancies, significant disorientation and confusion. Significant social, economic and cultural changes represent the sources of crisis of individual and collective identities, especially when they produce a value vacuum. Turbulent historic and political circumstances – civil war, poverty, disintegration of the country and isolation, which were followed by a global economic crisis, lead to the development of minimum strategies for emotional and psychological survival. People become introvert, flooded by a feeling of depression, bitterness, fear, anger, concern, needlessness and helplessness. All this combined destroys the trust in institutions, organisations and individuals in them, and leads to reactive-defensive and aggressive-defensive mentality and fortifies the syndrome of acquired helplessness, which additionally deepens the crisis. The positive side of transition mentality is in its vitality, pervasiveness, resourcefulness, inventiveness and pragmatism, while the negative aspect is in anarchism, ad hoc improvisations instead of careful planning, absence of moral and profiteering. The poverty, deepened by global economic crisis and insecurity, also imposes individual and organisational culture and survival ethics, characterised by "short-termism" because of the absence of conditions for establishing of long-term visions and strategies.

Economic and Business Climate

Social and economic processes in Serbia over the past two decades underwent some dramatic changes. The country found itself in the past decade of the twentieth century in numerous plights, when the former Yugoslavia, established as the federative country after the Second World War, dissolved and when the international community imposed severe sanctions against Serbia. The culmination came in 1999, when the country suffered a massive destruction during the NATO bombing, when many industrial capacities were completely destroyed. After the democratic changes in Serbia in the year 2000 came the period of transition of social and economic system, lagging behind a decade compared to other countries in Eastern Europe.

Transition processes led to significant economic advancement, so the GDP grew at an average rate of 5.4% [35]. However, this was insufficient to compensate for a development gap occurred during the nineties of the past century. In spite of great improvements until the outbreak of the global economic crisis in 2008, Serbian economy in the period of transition according to [36] was characterised by a low GDP per capita, high percentage of poor (10-20%), unemployment rate greater than 25%, unfavourable position of the country concerning international competitiveness and significant foreign trade deficit. Because of the global economic crisis Serbia in 2009 recorded a GDP decline of 4%, which is the only year with a GDPO decrease since the beginning of transition. However, in 2010 the GDP recovered and is since on a constant rise.

The overall picture of business climate in Serbia today is moderately positive. Over the past several years Serbia recorded an influx of investments from large foreign companies, an average GDP growth rate of over 4%, with GDP growth estimates for this decade of over 5% [35]. The trade deficit has been significantly reduced, and according to the data quoted by [37] since 2009 the export recorded a speedy growth, while the coverage of import with export in 2012 stood at 59,3%, which is considerable more compared to ten years before when the coverage stood at mere 36%.

As far as business climate is concerned, according to the reports of the Foreign Investors Council from 2011 and 2012, [57] the general impression is that, in spite of initiated reforms, there was no significant improvement in the overall business climate. Business entities in Serbia are still daily facing unpredictability, inconsistencies and the lack of transparency and respect of law (difficulties in the application of law were especially stressed), along with other aspects of the overall previously mentioned situation in the society. Fortunately, previous synchronic overview of the situation does not point to the frozen, fixed condition and can be largely relativized with a diachronic perspective. Namely, during 2012 the Foreign Investors Council has cooperated with the Government and international organisations, business community and civil sector. The Council initiated and took part in approximately 50 activities aimed at improvement of the business climate, organised a promotion of the White Book and several expert round tables and established 20 partnership arrangements. Council's Assembly has confirmed preparedness of members to actively promote

sustainable business environment, by giving concrete reform proposals which are based on common experiences. Members have concluded that a more proactive approach and the synergy of activities in 2013 would create additional value and achieve a positive influence on fulfilment of a common goal – establishing of better, more predictable business environment in Serbia [57].

Business climate depends, above all, on the quality of legal and institutional frameworks, but also on cultural, value and mentality factors. Serbian transitional culture is characterised by parallel existence of retraditionalisation and contemporariness. There are three value patterns in Serbian society: traditional – rural-patriarchal and archaic; socialist – a relic of command economy, single-party authoritarianism and paternalism, also meeting the needs for security; and modern – with liberal values of equality and independence. Retraditionalization represents an attempt of renewal of traditional in contemporariness [34]. It reflects as a main obstacle to modernisation, as it adopts old cultural patterns, which have become an obstacle to adjustment to new conditions. Hence, pre-contemporariness, contemporariness and post-contemporariness exist at the same time in Serbia today. We are distancing ourselves from identification with a wider collective, but the European identity is still not excessively akin to us. Results of the research "Cultural Orientation, Ethnic Distance and Culture of Peace in Serbia and Balkans" show that Serbia exhibits a tendency towards distancing from patriarchal value pattern, desiring of liberal values and coming to terms with modernisation, but on a lower level [38]. However, Serbian businesspeople and managers, who, on one hand, belong to and work in the Serbian society, but, on the other hand, do business at international and global levels, represent actors whose vital interest is for the country to become modernised as soon as possible and as completely as possible, so institutional frameworks and business climate could improve and support further economic, and subsequently social improvement. The modernisation also involves education and training of managers.

Current and Desirable Characteristics of Managers in Serbia

Management in Serbia, as we already stated, has developed over the past two decades in conditions of constant changes, which were specific, and to the extent different compared to other countries in the world. The overall economic and social turmoil in Serbia imposed the need for radical

changes in company management, organisation and operations. As stated by [39] establishing of the managerial class with characteristics which will, nevertheless, have a fragrance of the Balkan region, is rather responsible and laborious task.

The pace and content of changes have influenced the specificity of the occupation in Serbia. One of the specificities is the speed of reaching managerial positions. Radovanovic [58], says that in Austria and Switzerland, for individuals to reach a medium level managerial position they must at least have ten years of experience. In Serbia, on just one year, individuals can reach the top managerial positions. And this does not represent an advantage. Domestic managers who reached the top too soon are excessively turned to themselves, their own goals, they have no power of leadership, they cannot pass the knowledge to their associates, which should represent the essence of management.

Along with a speed of reaching top managerial positions, managerial profession in Serbia is also characterised by instability. Rapid and unforeseeable external and internal changes mean that people don't stay too long in managerial positions. Managerial experience in one organisation, even good results achieved, are no guarantee for a selection to the managerial position in another organisation. To be a manager in Serbia frequently means to spend only a small portion of the career in a managerial position.

The level of education of managers in Serbia is still very low. Selection of people who reach managerial positions is frequently conducted according to various types of connections (kinship, political ties, etc.) which does not create a suitable situation for creation of quality managers. According to [40] one can often hear today employers saying they lack quality managers. However, this does not only depend on education and availability of managers, but also on adequate techniques for selection of managers, defining of workplaces, further investments in education and training and establishing of the motivation system.

Results of the research, which was conducted in Serbia, show what are, according to managers, their most important characteristics, and how should they actually be. Some of these characteristics in the profile of managers describe them as: hard working, clever, honest, ambitious, enthusiastic, vigorous, flexible, creative, courageous, aggressive, optimistic, strong and stable [26].

Stefanovic et al. [2] state through 12 guidelines how a leader should act in Serbian companies. He/she needs to: define a mission of the company and create a flexible environment, but also to (re)shape the culture of the company and transform the organisation from a solid pyramid into a flexible circle or evolving network. Furthermore, it is important to encourage innovation and undertaking of risks, but also foresee the future and understand the present. They must also think globally and act locally. Also, they should correct weaknesses and be proactive, but not restrictive. The list of demands does not end here. This is why it is necessary to encourage managerial and entrepreneurial education in Serbia.

Confirmation of these assumptions is also provided by [41], according to which by ranking (of 133 countries) at the global competitive ambient, the present situation in Serbia concerning preparedness of management to delegate authority (101st place) and improvement of relations between employees and employers (113th place) is very unfavourable. Additional obstacle represents an estimated low quality education of professional managers (90th place), along with a generally low level of reliance on professional management in Serbian organisations (118th place). Serbia should improve the quality of managerial education and permanent development of professional skills, which would establish conditions for a more proactive behaviour and overviewing of current business challenges.

As stated by [39] a possible future management model in Serbia will prefer those associates who are prepared to improve and promote people around them. In order to achieve this, they must possess the power of integration. Managers of this type should have the following characteristics: initiating, innovating, self-development and development of the organisation, foreseeing and adapting to changes, planning and deciding on the future, encouraging associates to actively partake in the process of conceiving business operationalization, acting at the same time cooperatively and elastically.

Similar statements on unavoidable characteristics which should be encouraged in managers in Serbia are also provided by [41], who place a managerial accent on: possessing abilities to detect potential business opportunities, innovativeness,

Creativity, flexibility and efficiency in the process of decision-making, including knowledge and skills to successfully reach and implement key decisions.

The size of the organisation could be one of determining actors for managing such organisation. In accordance with this are also the characteristics of managers, depending whether the company in question is large, medium or small. Aside from the size, it is also important to acknowledge the profile of the organisation. Miner differentiates four basic types of organisations, on the basis of differences in their structure, ways in which they function and roles they place on their managers. Miner divides organisational structures into the following types: hierarchical, professional, entrepreneurial and collective [42].

Small and medium-size companies (SME) are dominating in Serbia. The SME and entrepreneurial sector in 2011 included 319.304 SMEs, which represents 99,8% of the total number of all companies. SMEs generated 65,3% of the total employment, 65,5% of all turnover and 55,2% of the GDP in non-financial sector in 2011 [43]. For the reason of undoubted importance of SMEs, the importance of managers in this sector is also essential. In order to illustrate this we will present a portion of results of the (mini)research (sample of 85), which was conducted in 2009. The study on business and personal value criteria of entrepreneurs and managers in researched small and medium-size companies in Serbia [44] is based on two groups of value criteria. These are personal and business value criteria. The largest number of managers and entrepreneurs in small and medium-size companies regard health, family and personal security as their greatest personal value. Education is important, almost as a financial success and enterprise. More precisely, financial success is considered as somewhat more important personal value (by 0,82%) compared to education. Furthermore, another interesting finding is that (self) discipline was the least important personal value for this polled group. Aside from discipline, less important values also include: tolerance, job/employment and flexibility. Team work, persistence and reliability collected 15-20% of votes, which tells that entrepreneurs and managers privately do not value them much.

In the case of values which were regarded as the most important by entrepreneurs and managers from the business point of view, the differences were not that visible compared to personal values. Only two values have more than 50% of total responses, including professionalism and

responsibility. Then follow: trust, persistence, discipline and focus on success. The least important values are team work and quality.

Ten values regarded as important from both personal and business aspect (among 15), even though with a different degree of importance, are: health, trust, credibility, financial success, education, enterprise, persistence, team work, flexibility and (self) discipline. Among the top five most important values, from a business and personal aspect, the only common value is the trust, which points to the importance of trust for successfulness of small business, if one takes into account that greater assonance between personal and business value criteria improves managing activities in the company.

It is also important to note that education has a relatively low degree of importance from both personal and business aspect of small business managers. By importance, the education is eighth (out of 15 researched) personal value, and only eleventh business value. At the same time, financial success is the seventh personal, and sixth business value. Therefore, for small business entrepreneurs and managers financial success is more important than education both according to personal and business value criteria.

On the other hand, the global economy has created significant opportunities for small and medium-size companies, which lead to changes in organisation and functioning of these businesses. However, SMEs are very frequently characterised by a lack of international business experience, then a "lack of managing talent" for international business, which increases involved uncertainty and risk. SMEs thus face difficulties in achieving foreign and domestic production expansion simultaneously [45].

International business successes are mainly contributed by qualified managers, while the aim of all corporations (regardless of their size) is to exceed the borders of their countries. These international managers should be able to reach business decisions without hesitation and make business moves completely independently, frequently without assistance and suggestions from the company's headquarters, which are dislocated. Also, it is very important for a manager to be skilled and willing to train subordinates, thus achieving their optimum engagement, in an adequate number, and in the most rational way. Communication with a parent company is of great importance, meaning that the manager must know from whom to acquire proper

information and what is the most suitable moment to request such information, so they could remain timely [46].

Ideal characteristics of an international expert could also be alternatively and wittily described. They must have a stamina of the Olympic swimmer, to have mental capacity of genius, conversation skill as a language professor, to be non-partisan like a referee, tactical as a diplomat, persistent as a builder of Egyptian pyramids. If they intend to work and live abroad, they must have a sense for culture, moral of a juror, but not as rigid, ability to blend with an environment, like a chameleon [47].

Serbian Managers Perceived by Foreign Businessmen

It is interesting how foreign businessmen evaluate Serbian managers. A general impression is predominantly positive. According to them, managers in Serbia possess significant managing potential. They are fast and intelligent. However, Serbian managers also have a lot of bad habits in treating people (they lack developed communication skills) and the lack of management knowledge. Furthermore, one of their deficiencies is poor organisation, which is closely related to resourcefulness in particular situations, which is where managers in Serbia seem to be deficient in knowledge [25]. A large study, titled National Research of Organisational Culture in Serbia [59], which was conducted by consultancy Human Synergistics in 2010 supports a thesis on more aggressive behaviour. Results of this research concerning ideal culture show that aggressive behaviour in Serbia was somewhat more desirable compared to organisations outside Serbia.

Also, excessive emotionalism prevents them from being more successful in business and management. We must stress that emotionalism represents certain occurrences which are negative in principle, such are impulsiveness and impetuosity, but also some which are humanly positive, but are harmful for business in a highly competitive and turbulent market environment, which demands rationalisation, restructuring, re-engineering of a company and downsizing (as a neutral-expert definition, or euphemism, for dismissals over survival or development strategy). A centuries-long traditional mentality and a mentality inherited from decades-long self-managed socialism, where a society and companies were dominated by the spirit of collectiveness, solidarity, cordiality and humane

orientation proved to be a halting mechanism to the rationalism, abstractionism and impersonality necessary for present punishing market game: "... the bond of family (and organisation) has an unbreakable connection to the development of Serbian society. Through tradition and with different forms of the family, the family bond has constituted the first and strongest societal group through which the individual develops his personal identity. The connections between the employees and their organisation were quite strong during the long period of socialism. Most of the employees worked in the same organisation for all of their working lives [28]." This is, one could say, a confirmation of what [48] said in a research pointing to an existence of collectivistic orientation of managers in Serbia. Also, this is in line with findings pointing to a low value of individualism in Serbia, which were described by [49]. At the same time this is a confirmation of a correlation between the national culture and organisational culture. More precisely, this points to the same speed of their changes. This is also in line with a metaphoric claim [50] that a national culture has a long historic memory.

Concerning theoretical knowledge and competencies, the opinion of foreign businessmen is that Serbian managers are quite well educated, but that they lack practical experiences [25]. Aside from the lack of managerial experience, there is also another problem concerning a discrepancy between theory and practice, which makes the application of good theoretic concepts difficult. Namely, the society as a whole is ruled by a discrepancy between general (social, political, legal) strategies and goals of their application. And when general elements are well conceived, the stumbling block appears in their practical application. This is the point of convergence and overlapping between general and organisational culture in Serbia, and it is difficult to enforce changes in business organisations which are met with various resistances in a social environment. However, this ascertainment is not a reason for resignation, but to the contrary, as it points to the need for educated, self-aware managerial staff, capable and competent to initiate and implement powerful and vital organisational culture, which would, by respecting local cultural individualities and characteristics, succeed in motivating employees to change those attitudes and habits which represent a stumbling block on a path to adjustment to modern business and development conditions. Violent, clumsy and non-well-thought interventions on a cultural tissue could only be counterproductive and increase fear and

resistance to changes, in a society which recently suffered sudden, huge, stressful and even traumatic changes.

It, nevertheless, seems that the willingness to change is present and that the only thing missing are skilful "contractors". The research we earlier quoted, Relationship between GLOBE organisational culture dimensions, job satisfaction and leader-member exchange in Serbian organisations [28], shows that employees in Serbia also have high expectations from the management, which means they are ready for changes, and which is additionally supported by the attitude that a "ball is in the courtyard of managers" which should now capitalise on this preparedness.

We shall conclude with a quote from this very thorough research, which supports the previous insight: "The dramatic increase in products, markets, enhanced technology, and robust competition has led to a dynamic global business environment. Serbian middle managers are aware of the need for change (a high "as it should be" future orientation), however, the challenge lies in implementing strategies that stick. The high level of expectation of employees in Serbian organisations for performance oriented organisational culture has to be followed by such performance oriented management approaches that align employees' incentive and accountability mechanisms with the goals of the organisation. A key to redirecting employee performance toward organisational goals is to establish a performance oriented culture in which employees understand the importance of and the connection between their performance and the organisation's success. The failure to involve staff constructively in an organisation's efforts to become more performance based means running the risk that the changes will be more difficult and protracted than necessary." [28].

Conclusion

We are today witnesses of rapid society changes in global relations and creation of a society of knowledge which places personality and the ability of an individual in the focus of attention. Educated individual as a representative of the society of knowledge is a universally educated individual, such individual is capable of applying such knowledge, keep up with the present and manage the future. One of the most important tasks in the society of knowledge to be tackled by company managers is striking a balance between conflicting requests, and running businesses in accordance with short-term needs and long-term

goals, and all this in relation to all key stakeholders. Tasks of the management will be completely covering goals, planning, strategy, values and principles of organisations, their structures and bonds between different members, their alliances, partnerships and common tasks, their researches, design and innovations [51].

Even though it lags behind the developed world, Serbia is taking huge steps towards society of knowledge. A good sign and an important step in the right direction is in the fact that Serbia has identified the need for a skilful management, even at the highest levels of executive power in the country. Hence, government officials stated that Serbia cannot come out of crisis if investments, competitiveness of economy and export do not represent a top priority, adding that the country also needs capable and quality managers in all spheres [60].

The situation in the segment of domestic managers is gradually changing for the better. According to Radovanovic [58], each generation of managers is better than the previous one. Domestic managers advancing in the ranks of foreign corporations present in Serbia have a chance to expand their knowledge further, to train and develop their corporate awareness. However, the situation in small and medium-size companies is still not satisfactory. It is especially important for owners to understand the importance of adequate recruitment, monitoring and training of managers, as this would help them recognise competencies needed for management staff, and which are also needed for achieving good results and development of a company, how to further improve competencies of managers and how to motivate them to excel even further. In the case of management in public and state-owned companies which are controlled by the government and local self-administration further management professionalization is needed for the purpose of avoiding politicisation and partocracy of high managerial positions, which is also perceived by the Law on Public Companies adopted in 2012 and reforms of public and state-owned companies [52], which is currently under way.

Perfecting of the human knowledge represents a historic natural process, which is qualitatively changing over time. In any case, taking into account the present moment is also unavoidable. Especially because: in each new time dimension managing of common work activities is becoming increasingly complex demanding more and more knowledge and skills [53].

It is undoubtedly important for the process of education of managers to be accompanied by implementation of their competencies. Employees should be secured a place in the team, while managers should be awarded a coaching role. In the final instance, it seems that human resources at disposal in the country and abroad represent one of more important potentials of Serbian economy [54]. Introduction of more faculties and study courses related to the management in Serbia, programmes of which are compliant with programmes in European and international universities, also points to the awareness of the need and importance of thorough education of future managers. Cumberment with hyper-changes which were caused not only by a shift to a market-oriented economy, but also by war devastations and international isolation of Serbia, the effects of which can still be felt, impose the need for involvement of all participants and establishing of a proactive attitude aimed at more rapid exit from the crisis.

In accordance with desirable characteristics of managers and leaders we quoted here, it would not be an overstatement to claim that Serbian managers could be an avant-garde, a locomotive of

the entire economic and social development of the country. Namely, the same as society and national culture influence the organisational structure, in the same way the organisational structure, as a part of the system or a subsystem influences the wider system. Development of leadership characteristics, abilities and skills of Serbian managers could positively affect the collective condition characterised by resignation and defensiveness and further inspire and motivate the change in mentality. However, advance managers should in the same manner be aware of and remain sensitive to cultural and mentality dimensions, as the pace of change of mentalities, as the backbone of identity, is the slowest and most difficult. It is not necessary or desirable to exert pressure for the purpose of changing of "blood picture" of a society, as Serbian culture and Serbian mentality, as any other, have their own very positive and constructive characteristics. Besides, the aim is not for managers from different countries and cultures to be formed according to a unique model, but to jointly, in accordance with the concept of transculturation, which was introduced by a Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz [55], improve and enrich the theory and practice of management and organisational culture.

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