

CULTURE OF LEARNING – LEARNING ORGANIZATIONS IN CONDITIONS OF NATO MEMBER COUNTRIES

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Abstract: *At present lifelong education as well as learning organizations are the engines of any society. The authors of this article work at the department of management and deal with the issue of human resources, culture of organization, organizational behavior, managerial communication and creative managers and human resources development on its whole range of focus. The authors consider lifelong education an ongoing continuous process of learning that goes on during human's life and they also represent the Armed Forces Academy of General M.R. Stefanik as the only state military university and its mission. Furthermore the authors of the article point to personal life experiences with the organization of lifelong education courses that the department of management organized in terms of the AFA of General M.R. Stefanik for the fifth consecutive year entitled "Key competencies of managers".*

Keywords: *Lifelong education, learning organizations, training of managers, managers, key competencies of the managers, lifelong learning courses in terms of the Armed Forces Academy.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Lifelong Learning (LLL) is understood as a continuous, ongoing process of learning that takes place during man's lifetime. Although this idea is not new, it appears ever since the times of J. A. Comenius. In the second half of the 20th century it began to point to the need for lifelong learning as a lifelong necessity under the influence of the onset of scientific and technological revolution.

As milestones in this area can be considered the year 1970, declared the International Year of Education, when the theory of lifelong learning was gradually formed. In the 80^s it began to be reduced to the training aimed at acquiring specific knowledge relevant to professional growth in the profession, but already in the 90^s the look at lifelong learning has changed.

An Impact of new technologies is reflected in a rapid change of advanced economies, especially in their transition from production orientation to service orientation. Much more emphasis began to be put to the methods and process than on factories, machines and

natural resources what was displayed in the change of LLL mission.

There were talks about the society based on knowledge, about society which is learning and therefore about lifelong learning.

The fundamental characteristic of lifelong learning has therefore become its orientation to a man as the initiator and executor of all changes and processes in the economic, social, cultural and political spheres of society, especially on it's inside motivation and need to learn. To the forming of the conception of lifelong learning significantly contributed various international conferences on lifelong learning as well as various statements oriented to a learning society, the various declarations but primary *the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* (the memorandum) which was released in Brussels, 30.10.2001.

For further development of lifelong learning and the education system had great importance the Council of Europe meeting in Lisbon in March 2000, considered as a decisive moment for the future direction of European education policy, whose main principle has become the lifelong learning. Its

findings show that Europe has moved into *the era of knowledge* with all the consequences that this entails for the cultural, economic and social life. Since learning styles of life and work are vigorously changing, the individuals must not only adapt to them, but also change the usual ways of working, which is not possible without life-long learning. Memorandum considers the lifelong learning *any targeted educational activity whose purpose is to constantly improve the knowledge, skills and global competencies* - as the guiding principle for the provision of opportunities and participation in education in its diverse contexts for every European citizen. It is also a certain direction in NATO member countries in training of military professionals. **Lifelong learning** - is actually the thing to do. Memorandum considers enforcement of lifelong learning into practice as a top priority for the EU, stating the following objectives:

a) support of active citizenship – enabling of active participation of all citizens in all areas of social and economic life and the opportunity to influence the society in which they live;

b) support of employability - developing the ability to secure and retain employment.

Today there are still the measures for support the lifelong learning resonating, so-called 6 key messages.

- It's the most important chapter of the Memorandum, as indicating the direction the European policy on lifelong learning should keep:
- Key Message 1: New basic skills for all.
 - Key Message 2: More investment in human resources.
 - Key Message 3: Innovation in Teaching and Learning.
 - Key Message 4: Evaluation of learning.
 - Key Message 5: A new approach to career guidance and counseling.
 - Key Message 6: Bringing learning to the homes.

All of the above materials played an important role in shaping the concept of nowadays education and lifelong learning strategies in the Slovak Republic. They reflect mainly in the National Program of Education in the Slovak Republic for the next

15 to 20 years - known as the Millennium, in the Concept of further education in the Slovak Republic (approved by the Government in 2002) as well as in a new law on LLL No... In our organization we try to apply the laws of learning organization:

1. Today's problems are the consequences of Yesterday's "solutions".
2. The more inaccessible promoting of something is, the more it defies system.
3. Before the functioning worsens firstly it improves.
4. Easy solutions usually ends up in the back.
5. The treatment can be worse than the disease itself.
6. Faster is slower.
7. Cause and effect don't relate in time and space.
8. Small changes can bring the great success – but the areas where their effect is the strongest, are often the least noticeable.
9. You can have your cake and eat it - but not all at once.
10. We do not obtain the two small elephants by slashing the one.
11. There is no-one to blame.

In the context of lifelong learning there often occurred the term *key competencies* - it means knowledge which enables the man, at that point quickly, responsibly and competently makes decisions and reacts and copes with changes in the profession, social and personal life. They are not tied to a particular profession and they are the basis for further learning.

These include:

- ability to communicate and collaborate;
- ability to solve problems;
- creativity, independence and performance;
- ability to take responsibility;
- ability to think and learn;
- ability to justify and evaluate etc.

Lifelong learning should be closely linked with the acquisition of these competencies. Based on the above knowledge and NATO member countries and specifically AFA proceeded to address the development of the key competencies, organized by the Department of Management for the fifth year for the needs of people development and their responsibility in terms of AF of SR.

2. THE ARMED FORCES ACADEMY (AFA) AND ITS CURRENT MISSION

The public is not familiar with the role and future direction of this institution, so I would like to preface a few known facts. Armed Forces Academy of General Milan Rastislav Štefánik (AFA), based in Liptovský Mikuláš, was established by the Act No. 445/2004 Coll. AFA establishing educational institution as a successor to the former Military Academy. It is a State College - Military College of university type.

Further education centre is a part of this institution, which provides education and career training courses and various other short-term vocational courses in terms of lifelong learning. This institution is responsible for implementation of career education, as well as other specific needs of military life under special regulations. AFA is the top of the educational and scientific institutions and the only military college of university type that prepares officers for AF of SR in two levels of higher education:

- The accredited bachelor degree programs of study;
- Fields of study in engineering and a Master's degree under current regulations.

Higher education takes place at the AFA. In three bachelor degree programs, covering most of the skills of junior officers from OS SR system of disciplines:

- Transport machinery - curriculum Machinery and equipment;
- Electronics - curriculum Electronic Systems;
- Management - curriculum Management.

Lifelong learning in AFA is realized in addition to areas center for further education and training in the workplace - the departments and institutions. Department of Management is the youngest department at school. It is involved in training of future officers for our department and participates in varying degrees in all degree programs than any department of management in Slovakia. It teaches courses in an accredited bachelor degree program 3.3.15 Management, as well as in the master's program 8.4.2 Economics and Management defense resources.

3. LIFELONG LEARNING COURSES - MANAGER'S KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Knowledge of teaching in this subject is properly utilized within the lifelong learning courses, which the Department organized the fourth consecutive year, entitled "Key competencies of the managers". The content is modular built and is focused on capabilities that are for managers in AF of SR very necessary. These modules include the teaching of knowledge, competence and competencies needed in the current management. Specifically, the development of these core competencies within our proposed individual modules:

1. Effective management module;
2. The communication skills of the manager;
3. Module Teamwork - team building and leadership;
4. Stress and psycho-hygiene of the manager;
5. Social contact and label of the manager;
6. Module New Trends in Education Manager.

An organization of these courses is a 3 - day training camp in length: one module = 24 hours (1 lesson 45 minutes). Maximum number of participants per course is 20 people. Between modules is a monthly break. During the input of professional instructors from the ranks of university teachers and lecturers of external participants in the courses they take the issue through active social learning. There are theoretical inputs in addition to various forms of teacher active learning by example, surveys, tests, questionnaires, model situations, workshops to prefer particular experiential learning and dialogical forms of teaching by applying to the active forms of employment.

The course participants are looking for possible solutions of problems during the discussion with lecturers and they suggest creative - innovative techniques by practical experience. Theoretical inputs are combined with knowledge and practical experience of course participants in AF of SR, so all management training is getting a sense of efficiency.

Each participant is issued a certificate of the subsequent completion of a training

module in the intentions of the laws of another adult and lifelong learning.

At the end of the course (module), Course participants completed a questionnaire, which assessed the educational module. We try to seek by an anonymous way the views of completed course i.e. on its content, form of education, access to tutors and also to collect their comments and recommendations for improving the quality of courses.

This feedback is a very valuable source of information and also some incentive to improve the courses. Return of the questionnaires within each module is relatively high, ranging from 85 to 100% which shows the interest of the parties to participate in improving management training courses.

Rating is available to the public part - AFA Annual Report, evaluation of course participants and their observations allow improving and enhancing these services and contribute to the total satisfaction of all concerned. The aim of this paper is not only to acquaint the general public with experience in teaching management subjects but also with the results and practical experience in management courses organization for 2009 in terms of AFA - specifically the Department of Management of the AFA in Liptovsky Mikulas. Detailed analysis of the various modules based on feedback (questionnaire and individual interviews) in those courses attended by a total of 86 participants (see detailed Table 1).

Table 1 Composition of participants in courses

Module	Term 2007	Number of entered	Number of participants	Average age	Prof. soldiers	employees	University study	USO study
1	19.-21.1.	20	17	34	12	5	11	6
2	26.-28.3	21	16	31	14	2	10	6
3	23.-25.4	22	12	32	8	4	11	1
4	18.-20.6	21	17	33	12	5	14	3
5	17.-19.9.	24	15	35	9	6	11	4
6	26.-28.11.	15	9	36	6	3	9	0
together	6 modules	123	86	33,5	61	25	66	20

Chart 1 Composition of participants in courses

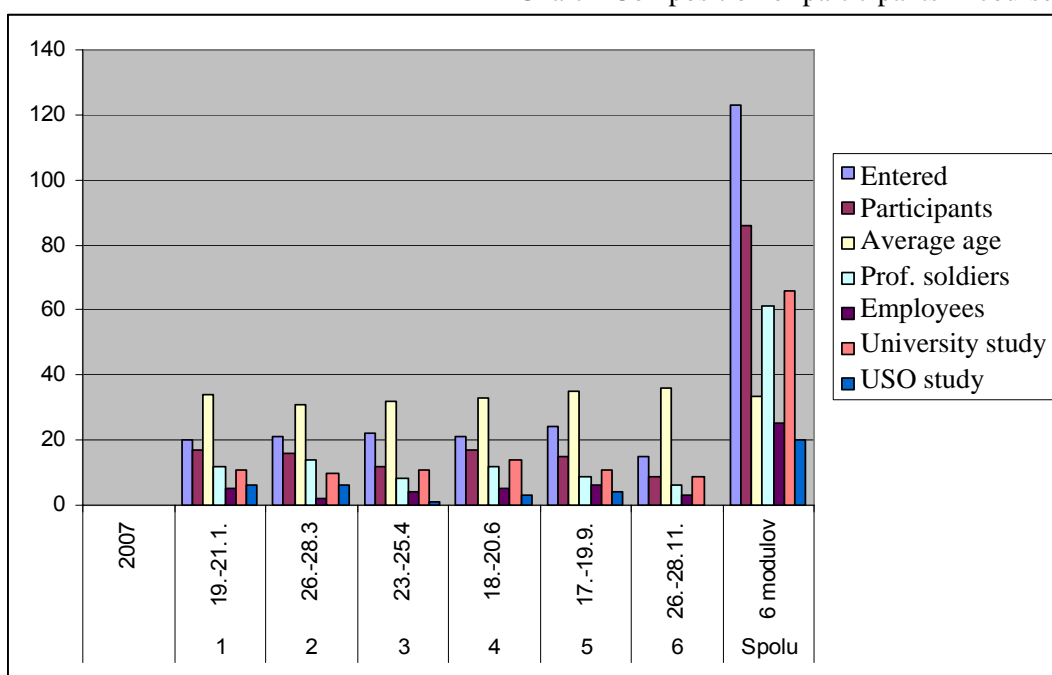
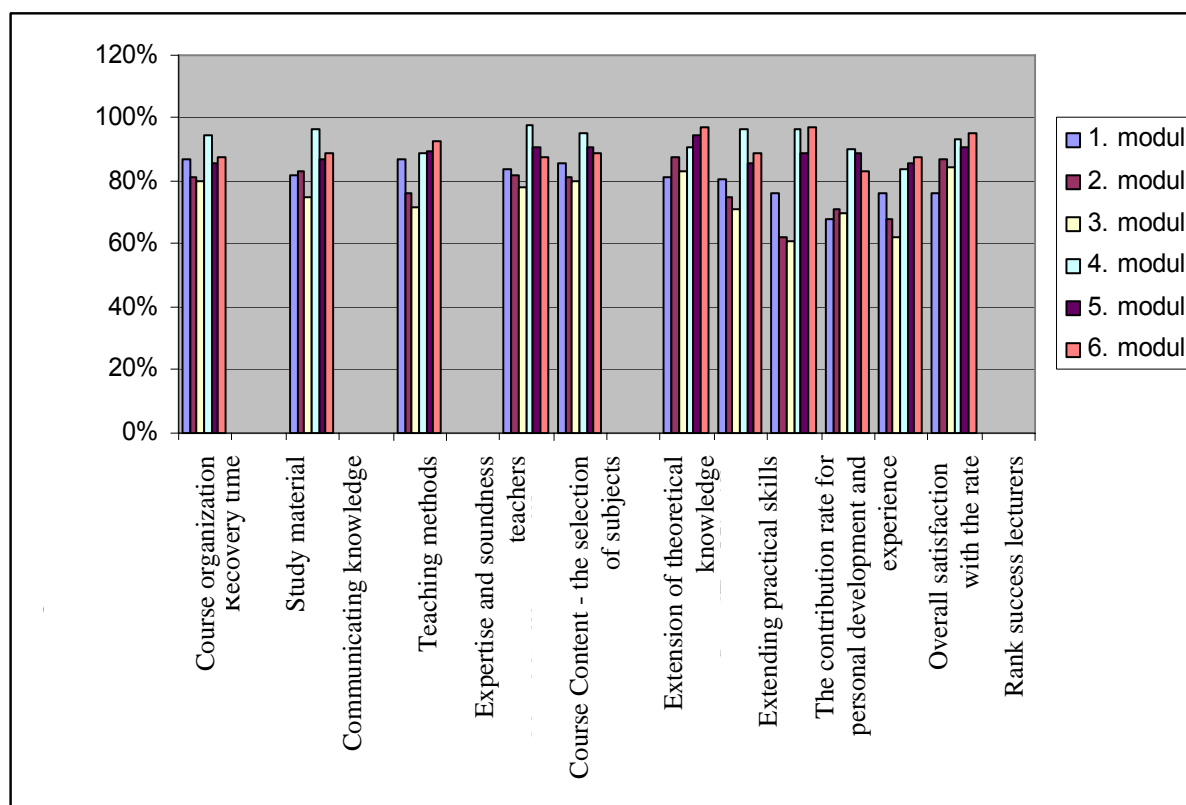


Table 2 Analysis courses

Module	1. module	2. module	3. module	4. module	5. module	6. module
Course organization	87 %	81,2 %	80 %	94,3 %	85,7 %	87,5 %
Recovery time	82 %	83 %	75 %	96,2 %	86,8 %	88,8 %
Study material	87 %	76 %	72 %	88,8 %	89,8 %	93 %
Communicating knowledge	84 %	82,2 %	78 %	97,7 %	91 %	87,5 %
Teaching methods	86 %	81,2 %	80 %	95,5 %	90,5 %	88,8 %
Expertise and soundness teachers	81 %	87,5 %	83 %	91,1 %	94,9 %	97,2 %
Course Content - the selection of subjects	80,5%	75 %	71 %	96,3 %	86 %	88,8 %
Extension of theoretical knowledge	76 %	62,5 %	61 %	96,3 %	89 %	97,2 %
Extending practical skills	68 %	71 %	70 %	90,3 %	89 %	83,3 %
The contribution rate for personal development and experience	76 %	68 %	62 %	83,7 %	85,4 %	87,5 %
Overall satisfaction with the rate	76 %	86,8 %	84,2 %	93,6 %	90,9 %	95 %
Rank success lecturers	6	4	5	2	3	1

Chart 2 Detailed analyses of evaluation rates



4. CONCLUSIONS

The above analysis shows that the greatest success can be found in module No. 6 “New trends in education managers” and the least popular module was No. 1. “Effective management” but on the other hand, 76% overall satisfaction with the level of the course is by no means small. Again, it is confirmed that the quality of the course also depends mainly on the quality of teachers, a fact that the Department of Management, the organizers are clearly aware of.

A new challenge for further Training managers is particularly open and offers individual modules (courses) for the civil sector - organizations (companies) in the region of Liptov.

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