

Further professional education: challenges in an unstable environment

Tatiana O. Razumova (0000-0001-5726-4136)¹, **Irina D. Burak** (0000-0002-3740-7969)¹⁽¹⁾

¹ Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russia

Abstract. One of the indicators of human capital development today is the degree of involvement of the country's adult population in lifelong learning. And it seems reasonable from the point of view of the Decent Work concept proposed by the International Labor Organization, thanks largely to which society has come to understand the importance of self-realization and personal development of workers. This article highlights the field of further professional education, demonstrating its opportunities, prospects, and impact on changes in an employee's work career, particularly in the transition from an executive to managerial position. The authors used the example of Master of Business Administration (MBA) programs to demonstrate the return on investment in this type of training, confirming the development of relevant managerial competencies in the majority of MBA graduates. Moreover, it is shown that further professional education can be an effective instrument for adapting to the labor market even in an unstable environment.

Keywords: Professional training · Labor market · Employee development · Human resource management.

1. Introduction

In today's highly competitive environment, the need for lifelong learning (LLL) of an individual to meet the changing conditions of the labor market, maintaining their human capital at a high level and remaining in demand as a specialist throughout the entire period of their employment becomes more acute. Such factors as increasing retirement age, digitalization of the economy, reduction in the working-age population, increasing demand for new professional competencies and personal characteristics of an employee against the background of a general decline in the need for personnel, etc., all contribute to the relevance of this thesis in our country. Digitalization seems to be the main driver for LLL in 21-st century – it creates for working people the threat of being substituted by robots (Acemoglu and Restrepo, 2017; Condliffe, 2019); it calls for new competences in business (Balenko, 2018; Freddi, 2018; Kashirin, 2017) and in everyday life. COVID-19 pressed employees to remote work (Chernoff and Warman, 2020; WHO. Getting Your Workplace Ready for COVID-19, 2020) that formed the demand for new skills not only to use computer technologies but to manage working place and working time independently with lack of direct control from the management.

A significant role in the system of professional education in Russia is played by further professional education, which allows not only to improve the qualifications of an individual, but also

¹ Corresponding author: irina.d.burak@mail.ru

to master a completely new profession in a fairly short period of time on-the-job. If we consider the typical life cycle of a person, we can see what role additional education plays in terms of the concept of lifelong learning. For example, a person receives a general education up to the age of 17, and then within 3-10 years (depending on the direction) - secondary professional and/or higher education. Consequently, for a period of 40-45 years, further education is remaining.

An important stage in an employee's career is the transition from a subordinate to a managerial position, which involves a significant change in the employee's function. These changes can be seen by comparing and analyzing the personalized specifications of the subordinate and managerial positions. In modern economic conditions the manager should understand the business strategy of the company, its organizational structure, have a systemic, innovative, and strategic thinking at a qualitatively new level. On this basis further professional education is built: it allows people to reach a new level of understanding of all business processes taking place in the company.

In terms of the content of further professional education programs, not only hard skills, but also soft skills continue to be in demand. An individual's success in professional career is related not only to knowledge of the subject area and mastery of hard skills, but also to the ability to participate in the work process. Soft or flexible skills include communication, critical thinking, creativity, teamwork, leadership, etc. In other words, these are the superstructure over the hard skills that make an employee unique, make him or her more desirable to the employer and desirable to the team, and increase the effectiveness of the work activity. Since these skills are useful for all professions, the focus on them in further professional education programs will be maintained in the future.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, programs of professional retraining with the additional qualification of "Master of Business Administration (MBA)", aimed at training managerial personnel, along with on-the-job training, programs of professional development and professional retraining, are widely used in the Russian system of further professional education. They are implemented mainly in higher education institutions, and the content of this type of programs varies depending on the educational organization and teaching staff, i.e. each developed program is a unique educational product.

Nevertheless, MBA programs were not always perceived unequivocally on the Russian labor market, since at the beginning of their development programs were created in the image of foreign counterparts focused on Western business models, which was often not applicable to the Russian reality. Consequently, the efficiency of the Russian MBA programs was not that high. Awareness of this problem led to significant changes in the content of programs of this type, which was also facilitated by the update of the legislative framework in the field of education in 2013.

Today, programs that are well-balanced and allow listeners to get a new qualification without interruption, in a short period of time to update their knowledge in a certain field are in demand. The variety of forms and methods of training contributes to the increasing number of educational needs of the country's population.

Another striking example of changes in the labor market can be a change in the career model: the research of L. Gratton and E. Scott (Gratton and Scott, 2017) in this regard demonstrates that the three-stage career model, when a person first received education, then worked and then retired, gradually gives way to a multistage career, when education is possible at different stages of the labor path, and the career is built several times and not just in different companies, but even in different industries. At the same time, as Goffey R. and Jones G. show, now people began to reach the peak of their career earlier, which in a three-stage model predetermines a longer stay in one place (Edwards, 2016).

Thus, the system of lifelong learning appears to be the most important factor of an individual's adaptation to the ongoing changes in the labor market, in particular, further professional education as the main element of this system.

It is impossible not to mention the consequences for the further professional education sphere of the global challenge of 2020. The situation of severe epidemiological situation caused by the spread of a new coronavirus infection (COVID-19) had a serious impact on the Russian labor market: the

unemployment rate increased, 20-50% of companies reduced their staff, 30% of companies forced employees to take unpaid leave, and 20% reduced their salaries, the number of resumes on job search sites at least doubled (ILO: More than one sixth of all young people lost their jobs due to COVID-19, 2020).

Another important consequence of the COVID-19 crisis was that workers changed a number of areas of their work time organization, relying more than ever on technology. This required a degree of flexibility and adaptability from them, which in some cases was accompanied by additional training. The above circumstance can be considered a positive externalization of the pandemic, since the use of distance technology in the work process can significantly reduce the time costs of its implementation, and therefore the practice of its application has increased significantly (ILO. Remote work during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020). In this regard, the demand for new skills that allow employees to carry out their work activities with the help of distance technologies (Shklyaruk and Garkushi, 2020; Sagdeeva, 2020), as well as in new conditions (combining face-to-face and distance work) has also increased. It is possible to develop them in any convenient format and at minimal cost through further education programs, which are characterized by a variety of training methods, flexibility of program implementation formats, practice-oriented and the possibility of program customization, as well as opportunities for learning without age restrictions and creating an individual educational trajectory.

2. Materials and Methods

The content of an individual's training and the choice of a training program largely depend on the position held. At the beginning of the career path more attention is paid to professional knowledge, skills and abilities, while higher positions require more leadership and managerial competencies. Master of Business Administration (MBA) programs, in particular, aim to develop such competencies. To confirm the hypothesis about the positive impact of an individual's mastering an MBA level program on his or her working career, confirming the development of the necessary competencies in the listener, we conducted a survey of 2013-2017 graduates of MBA programs of the Faculty of Economics of Moscow State University (Burak and Razumova, 2018). The distinctive feature of the graduates was self-financing of education, as the purpose of the study was to assess the individual return on investment in additional professional education. This circumstance did not allow collecting quantitative data on the level of graduates' income, so the increment of income in our work is considered as a qualitative parameter.

3. Results

The results of the study show that 50% of respondents (those who have moved up to a higher position, opened their own business, and are in the process of moving up to a higher position are counted) achieve career growth as a result of mastering the MBA program. The indicator "In the same position" cannot be considered as negative, because all respondents went through a period of crisis in 2015 and the stability of the workplace, in this case, can act as a reflection of such a function of further professional education as retention in the workplace during economic fluctuations. Foreign experience of research in the area under consideration shows that further professional education is used in some countries as one of the tools to get out of the crisis (Kadarik, 2017).

The data obtained indicate an increase in income (45.8%) and job satisfaction (78.3%) of the study respondents as a result of the MBA program. The lack of changes in the level of income of a significant part of the graduates (43.7%) is probably due to the period of the study, which included the crisis of 2015, so the stability of income cannot be considered as a negative indicator. Decrease of income of respondents is caused by maternity leave, sick leave for a long period of time, bankruptcy of the company, negative reaction of the employer to the employee's qualification "master of business administration" (due to which there were dismissal and opening of own business). Considering individual answers of respondents, we can see that income growth is also observed in those graduates who have expanded their functions in the position they hold. At the same time, respondents who

opened their own business or moved to higher positions noted not only an increase, but also the same level of earnings, or even a decrease in earnings. Thus, we can say that a higher position is not necessarily accompanied by an immediate increase in income.

4. Discussion

The results of theoretical and empirical research allowed us to draw the following conclusions:

- justified expectations indicate that graduates obtained the necessary competencies;
- the following positive changes in the career of MBA graduates were identified: career growth, increased income, increased job satisfaction;
- satisfaction with work today is an important element of the impact of the education received;
- the diploma of the program of further professional education MBA can serve as both positive and negative signal for the employer;
- further professional education is one of the tools to develop managerial competencies.

Thus, we see that the prospects for the development of lifelong learning as a factor of increasing the competitiveness of workers of different ages and improving their quality of life are quite favorable. And further professional education, in particular, is used as a tool of adaptation to the labor market not only by employees, but also by employers and the state. The pandemic of a new coronavirus infection has dealt a serious blow to all sectors, including education. Nevertheless, through programs of further professional education it was possible to help workers adapt to the new realities and learn new competencies, including employees of the educational sector. Relevant, in our opinion, areas of training in the near future will be management of remote teams, development of employee performance indicators, audit and optimization of business processes and labor relations during the pandemic, reduction of employees: outplacement with their own hands, optimization of the HR budget.

5. Conclusion

The directions for further research in this area can include the identification of individual benefits from further professional education programs of other levels: professional retraining and professional development, in order to possibly identify other significant parameters of benefits for individuals, who are currently paid little attention to. This will allow more customization of programs of this type, which will have a positive effect on the educational outcomes of students and on the quality of programs in general.

References

1. D. Acemoglu, P. Restrepo, Robots and jobs: evidence from US Labor Markets. Working paper 23285 (2017). <https://doi.org/10.3386/w23285>
2. J. Condliffe, Some Workers Hate Robots. Retraining May Change That (2019). Accessed on: November 14, 2022. [Online]. Available: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/19/technology/amazon-automation-labor.html>
3. E. Balenko, Promyshlennost' poskupilas' na tsifrovizatsiyu [Industry bought on digitalization] (2018). Accessed on: November 14, 2022. [Online]. Available: <https://www.rbc.ru/newspaper/2018/07/03/5b3a26a89a794785abc9f304>
4. D. Freddi, AI & Soc **33**, 393-403 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00146-017-0740-5>
5. A.I. Kashirin, Formirovanie kompetentsii i komand – perspektiva razvitiya ekonomiki, professional'nogo i biznes-obrazovaniya [Formation of competencies and teams – the prospect of economic development, professional and business education] (2017). Accessed on: November 14, 2022. [Online]. Available: <https://www.rea.ru/ru/org/cathedries/rostechkaf/Documents/Каширин%20А.И.%20Слайды%20Формирование.pdf>

6. A.W. Chernoff, C. Warman, Covid-19 and implications for automation. Working paper 27249 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.3386/w27249>
7. WHO. Getting Your Workplace Ready for COVID-19 (2020). Accessed on: November 14, 2022. [Online]. Available: <https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/getting-workplace-ready-for-covid-19.pdf>
8. L. Gratton, A. Scott, The Corporate Implications of Longer Lives (2017). Accessed on: November 14, 2022. [Online]. Available: https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/the-corporate-implications-of-longer-lives/?social_token=4cb2f7585cb03f57803043f021c6bd01&utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=social-direct
9. H. Edwards, Lyudyam pridetsya stroit' kar'eru neskol'ko raz v zhizni [People will have to build a career several times in their lives] (2016). Accessed on: November 14, 2022. [Online]. Available: <https://www.vedomosti.ru/management/blogs/2016/07/04/647877-pridetsya-neskolko-raz-v-zhizni-i-stroit-kareru>
10. MOT: Bolee odnoi shestoi vseh molodykh lyudei lishilis' raboty iz-za COVID-19 [ILO: More than one sixth of all young people lost their jobs due to COVID-19] (2020). Accessed on: November 14, 2022. [Online]. Available: https://www.ilo.org/moscow/news/WCMS_746206/lang--ru/index.htm
11. MOT. Distantionnaya rabota vo vremya i posle pandemii COVID-19 [ILO. Remote work during and after the COVID-19 pandemic] (2020). Accessed on: November 14, 2022. [Online]. Available: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---europe/---ro-geneva/---sro-moscow/documents/publication/wcms_754535.pdf
12. M.S. Shklyaruk, N.S. Garkushi, Model' kompetentsii komandy tsifrovoi transformatsii v sisteme gosudarstvennogo upravleniya [The competence model of the digital transformation team in the public administration system] (RANEPA, Moscow, 2020)
13. L.S. Sagdeeva, *Creat. Econ.* **14(8)**, 1507-1520 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.18334/ce.14.8.110703>
14. I.D. Burak, T.O. Razumova, *Bul. VSU. Ser.: Econ. Manag.* **1**, 114-122 (2018). Accessed on: November 14, 2022. [Online]. Available: <https://journals.vsu.ru/econ/article/view/2554>
15. I. Kadarik, Estonia: New training schemes aim to counter unemployment (2017). Accessed on: November 14, 2022. [Online]. Available: <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/observatories/eurwork/articles/estonia-new-training-schemes-aim-to-counter-unemployment>