A Survey Among College Students, Looking Forward Management Excellence

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Abstract: This paper is intended to contribute to the first topics of the MEB 2006 Conference, titled “Theoretical studies, modelling and adaptive approaches”. The survey presented here is an adaptive approach to management studies offered for college students, from the aspects of their personal views, expectations and values. The recent research work is based on three key questions, with further explanations and examples, helping with expressing the students’ expectations about their future sub-ordinate employees and, about their future bosses, based on the management principles and managerial characteristics learnt at our last semester Management course. The key purpose of the recent research work is to emphasize how students look forward the management excellence, what kind of management skills and sub-ordinate abilities are necessary to a long-lasting business success.

Keywords: management theories, management excellence, managerial behavior, business ethics, business success

1 Topics of Management Course Concerned

The Management course at our University offers – as usual – such theoretical and practical topics which help the students with gaining informations and skills becoming necessary to well perform their future job. Among others, we deal with managerial tasks and abilities, with leadership styles, business ethics and, furthermore, with the impact of managerial excellence on the business success.

Students have to learn about entrepreneurship theories, management theories and management ethics. Having attended the key topics, they should evaluate the managerial behaviors in different business situations, forecast the most probable consequences of these behaviors and, among others, formulate their own opinions about the case in question.

Since the start of market economy in Hungary, we have elaborated a large number of management teamwork games as well, in order to develop the students’
managerial skills – especially for such situations where strategic choices have to be made, people have to be directed, problems have to be solved and so on. These teamworks do not only develop students’ skills but reinforce their value bases concerning the proper managerial behaviors as well.

We use to finish each of our semester with a students’ survey since we have to know how do they evaluate the course in general, which topics have they been satisfied or dissatisfied with, which topics do they evaluate as most interesting or most useful ones and, finally, how the teamworks did establish their practical skills in special business situations. These surveys help us with further develop the theoretical and methodical contents of our Management course and, with elaborating further practical exercises.

In our last semester, fall 2005, we intended to implement a new students’ survey, the purpose of which was a general mapping about the harmony between the managerial skills and expectations learnt and, those ones the students prefer or disprefer, according their personal characteristics. The key topics of this survey have been related to the key traits of managerial excellence, learnt from the theories and from the practical cases.

We expected as useful results from this survey as from the former ones. The few and simple questions gave the students a full freedom of answers. This kind of survey resulted in a very large number of very different opinions. A colorful picture about the students’ personal evaluations and expectations have been drawn up, partly well based on the management principles learnt but, partly extending along with the different personal values represented by the students inquired.

2 The Purpose and Results of Survey

The survey has been implemented among 85 college students at Széchenyi István University in Győr, Hungary. The students have been asked about their intentions to take over managerial jobs in their future and, if yes, what kind of expectations and pre-conditions should be pre-supposed, in what kind of enterprises. The three key question and, the answers to the more detailed questions will be summarized as follows.

2.1 Key Questions of Survey

The students have been put only three key questions being short and simple. Additionally to the questions, an oral explanation about the purpose, with several concrete examples have been given as well. The three questions have been intended as key categories of survey. The explanations denominated several further questions as sub-categories of later evaluation, as follows.
2.1.1 What Kind of Managerial Jobs, Tasks and Pre-Conditions of Working Place Could You Accept in Your Future?

The purpose of this key question was, first of all, to enlight what kind of enterprise and which managerial level could be appropriate for the student, to accept a managerial job there. I was interested in which activity sphere and managerial job at this firm might be attractive for the inquired person. Further questions were directed to those managerial jobs he/she would I like to avoid if possible. Finally, the characteristics, conditions and expectations of an appropriate managerial job has been asked as well.

2.1.2 Which Properties of Sub-Ordinates’ Should Be Required?

By the help of this key question, I was interested in the working abilities and willingnesses the inquired person would require from his/her sub-ordinates in his/her future managerial job. Furthermore, what kind of psychologilcal, humanistic and ethical characteristics would be preferred? Concerning its relevance, this key question will be presented in the recent paper more detailed in the next chapter.

2.1.3 Which Properties and Abilities Should Be Characteristic to and Required from Your Future Boss?

The students have been inquired about the intellectual and professional abilities, about humanistic and ethical properties their future boss should have. Furthermore, his/her required leadership abilities and other preferred or dispreferred characteristics have been inquired.

The students reacted to the key questions by open answers in written form. Concerning each question, their task was to collect as more aspects and criteria as possible. In the course of the elaboration I broke down the answers according to the sub-questions mentioned above. Thereafter, the answers have been ranked according to the frequency they was referred to.

The elaboration of answers to the second key question will be represented by data table as well, in the next chapter. The key statements are summarized in the later chapters. Finally, I concluded to the utility of results in the practice and, to the advisable directions of further research.

2.2 Survey Results in Detail

The survey has been intended to gain detailed answers to each of three key questions. Within the frames of the recent paper, however, I focus on the second one, because of its most high relevance with the management sciences and
practices learnt. Consequently, the first and third key question will only be shortly concerned while the second one will be represented more detailed.

2.2.1 Managerial Jobs, Tasks and Pre-Conditions Preferred

After gaining a college diploma, more than a third of students intend to enter employment at a large company or at its division. Several students preferred a small family enterprise.

The medium-level management was preferred by more than 60% of answers – at different, technical or economic areas of activity, mainly at logistics, tourism or building industry. Among the preferred working fields, potentially directed by them, the marketing area has a high priority – almost 30% of answers. More than 17% would not undertake managerial jobs.

The most broad experiences have been collected here about the character and conditions of managerial job. Among the 137 answers, 25 students emphasized the rich content of job, the need for professionality, creativity. Further 20 answers stressed the importance of challenge. A very high ratio, almost 38% was directed to the authority, prestige, reputation – connected to the attractiveness of teamwork and, of dealing with people.

The first key question resulted in 381 answers as total. Generally, the students’ future expectation are directed more gravely to the leadership, authority and humanistic factors of their future job than its concrete professional contents – this latter represented only by 18% of answers.

2.2.2 Properties of Sub-Ordinates’ Required

The purpose of this key question was a survey about how students could connect their management skills learnt with their personality, their own inward value system and future imaginations. The answers have been of a rich content and colorful variety.

To the first category of this key question I got 131 answers about the expected abilities and willingness to work. The 40.4% of answers underlined the creativity, richness of ideas, skills about professional novelties. Further 32.1% emphasized the importance of professionality. Surprisingly, only 4 students of 85, that is of 131 answers underlined the importance of foreign language skills – possibly because it is a rule among the students nowadays. The details see in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ABILITIES, EXPECTED FROM MY SUB-ORDINATES</th>
<th>SPREAD OF 131 ANSWERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creativity, familiarity with novelties, initiative temper, impulsivity</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional skills, experience, inventivity</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABILITIES, EXPECTED FROM MY SUB-ORDINATES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abilities</th>
<th>Spread of 131 Answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Curiosity, interest, thirst for knowledge, readiness to develop</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Various other abilities (e.g. versatility, snappiness, communicative drift, intelligence, IT and language skills)</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among the 335 answers about the working willingness and priorities, out of the working ability, various expression of working willingness to work and, behavior toward the boss has been highlighted.

Workaholism, persistence, enthusiasm, motivatedness and ambition represented 21.5% of answers. The soundness, responsibility, pretension and reliability has been mentioned in 16.4%. Collectivism and team spirit has shown also a high frequency of 11.9%. Students required a good contact with the boss as well.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subordinates’ Working Willingness and Priorities</th>
<th>Spread of 335 Answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workaholism, persistence, enthusiasm, motivatedness, ambition</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soundness, responsibility, pretension, exactness, reliability, efficiency</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collectivism, team spirit, attention, cooperativity, conformity</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy, bravery, voluntariness, ability to decide</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence in and loyalty to the boss, respectively</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other requirements (e.g. diligence, open-mindedness, dynamism)</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 192 answers about humanistic properties, the confidence, patience and mutual appreciation has been mentioned in 27.6%. Lower but yet remarkable frequency has been shown about honesty, sincerity, ethical reliability (38 answers, 19.8%), the adaptivity (31 answers, 16.2%) and the sense of humor and joviality (21 answers, 10.9%).

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Humanistic Properties</th>
<th>Spread of 192 Answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Confidence in others, mutual appreciation, patience, serenity, politeness</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty, sincerity, ethical reliability, humanity</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptivity, gentleness, smile, good HR, well-being, culture, friendship, partnership, working dinners etc.</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of humor, joviality, ability to relax, domestic atmosphere</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good-lookingness, tidyness, cleanliness, soundness, good health</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other virtues (e.g. submission, flexibility, tolerance, sociability)</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

About the other expected properties I have got only 12 answers. They was, however, full of colorful expectations – from the drift to work pro rata wages to the loyalty to the firm and working place.

About the subordinates’ required properties I got 670 answers in total – full with a rich content expressed. The number of answers refer to the fact that each
participant student had 7-8 different expectations about his/her future subordinates’ properties and behaviors.

### 2.2.3 Priority Properties of Future Boss

The purpose of this key question was to enlight how mutual the students’ expectations are toward both directions of corporate hierarchy. That is, whether they prefer their subordinates’ similar properties than those they are willing to accept from their boss. On the other hand, I intended to explore how the management skills and styles, learnt during the course, impacted on the students, how could they harmonized them with their own personality values and attitudes.

The necessity of intelligence and professionalism was mentioned in 108 different answers. The talent and high professional skills represented 45.5%. The problem recognizing and problem solving ability was mentioned in 26.9%. The literacy, culture, intelligence represented 10.2%. The foreign language skills was mentioned here – for similar causes – in a very low ratio as well.

The expected leadership abilities have been mentioned in 448 different answers as total. 33.5% of them represented the deed for dynamism, willingness to decide, responsibility and respect. The friendliness, politeness got 27%, the familiarity with employees and, the ability to motivate them gave a ratio of 23%. A similar ratio was given to the subordinates’ appreciation (23%) and the interest toward colleagues (19%). Among the various other expectations, the market-consciousness, flexibility and the good communication has shown a respectable ratio.

The expected humanistic-ethical values have been mentioned in 173 different answers as total. Among them, the sincerity and honesty got 30.6%, the good intentions, perception, helpfulness represented 25.4%. The efficient leadership has shown a frequency of 11.0%. Further 32.4% of answers referred to properties and behaviors to be avoided. Among them, more students mentioned the managerial arrogance, depreciation and discrimination.

### 3 Evaluation

The survey has been implemented in mid-November 2005 when students attended the greater part of semester of Management course. They got lectures about management theories, organisation and its operation, leadership styles and requirements and so on. The written answers have been got within the frames of a lecture – spontaneously, without outward impressions.

Instead of a detailed inquiry, I only put the three key questions and, students had to answer fully open answers in arbitrary number. Namely, I intended not to
influence the answers by any way. That means, the detailed categories of answers have been formulated nothing but at the elaboration of them, according to the logics of contents of answers.

The students’ highest interest directed toward the third key question – the expected properties of supervisor. The subordinate’s expected properties follows it and, the lowest interest has been directed to the characteristics of company, profile, working place and hierarchy level of possible future leadership. The frequency rati of key answers and, the spread of students’ interest is to be seen on the following charts of Figure 1.

![Figure 1](image)

The rati of key answers and, the spread of students’ interests

Based on a detailed evaluation, the following statements are to be underlined:

**Among the enterprises, preferred by students,** the large companies play a leading role which implies their prestige-sensibility. Students prefer the mid-level managerial jobs, possibly based on their sense of reality. The preferred activity fields glint the professional areas of their studies or, the marketing activities. Only several students avoid to become a manager at any date. More of them, however, avoid the bureaucratic works. Among the priorities, the challenges, rich content and team work leads.

**Of the employees’ expected abilities,** the professionality and creativiy play a leading role. Here, the affinity to work, the pretensivity and collectivity are high priorities.

Among the humanistic properties, the highest frequency of mentions has been the sincerity, gentleness, thereafter the confidence, adaptivity and motivability play a dominant role.

**As supervisor’s expected spiritual and professional properties,** students mentioned the knowledgeability, problem solving force, culture and literacy by a high frequency. Within the category of leadership properties, the firmness, willingness to decide, thereafter the humanity and, finally, the motivativeness and, the subordinates’ appreciation have shown a high ratio.
Among the humanistic and ethical expectations, the sincerity, understanding, helpfulness, pretensivity and responsibility leads. The arrogancy and discrimination is to be avoided.

The disadvantage of a such kind of survey is the high level verbality and, a chance of getting extremely broad variety of expression of answers of similar meaning. Its key advantage is, however, the very few questions which permits the inquired persons to give various answers without any external influences. This approach offers a further benefit of colorful picture about students’ opinion and imaginations, by a high explaining force.

Conclusions

The college students are, generally, willing to undertake managerial jobs in rather high ratio, in very different activity fields. Their imaginations about the idealistic managerial properties are well based on the management theories, skills, styles and behaviors learnt. On the other hand, they have strict expectations about an idealistic supervisor. Without any contradiction, the students having made great demands on their sub-ordinates, have represented the same requirements against themselves in the case they become managers in the future.

Elaborating the large series of answers, several further conclusions may be drawn.

- The high level freedom of answering the key questions promoted the extension and colorfulness of answers. The 85 participants gave 1846 free answers to the three questions. That means, on the average, they gave 22 answers per capita, contributing to the survey.

- The the third key question got the most answers (795), the second one (by 670 answers) is the second in the priority and, the first one (by 381) the last one. This means students primarily deal with the problem of acceptability of their future boss and, only a secondary question is how they can deal with their future sub-ordinates.

The lecture contents of management course may have a role in the ratio of answers as well. Namely, students well perceive for instance the asymmetry of compulsivity between the hierarchy levels of power. It seems, they highly emphasize the supervisor’s role in the attractiveness of their future job. Based on their studies, they suppose they more effortless may impact on their subordinates in order to behave well but, nevertheless, they may be obliged to their boss – caused by his authority.

The quantitative elaboration of answers, the spread of answer categories and, within it, the speed of particular answers reflects to broad and colorful variety of students’ phantasy and, the weight ratio of their expectations. The interpretation, categorisation and, their contents and ratio analysis may give a basis in formulating a questionnaire for the further, directed surveys of research.
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References


