

For a better quality of management education

Résumé

As globalisation is not anymore a dream or a simple idea, but a real and hard fact, a number of important aspects are becoming strategic issues. Among others, one could namely mention the out-borders transfer of goods, services, funds or capital, technology, manpower, information and scientific and technological knowledge. Obviously, industrial firms, business companies, financial, educational and research institutions are all and directly concerned.

As the act of management implies necessarily taking decisions about all activities concerning all forms of organisations, overall performance could not be high, thus the integration into the world economy successful, unless if decisions makers are themselves well trained and armed. This should imply the following requirements: Acquiring modern conceptual tools; Being aware of best practice techniques; Having good imagination and wide culture; And mastering a number of languages. Henceforth, a high quality management education, both in public and private institutions, becomes absolutely essential. Consequently, any graduate lacking such requirements would be a bad manager of the future.

The present author has a relatively long teaching experience in management sciences and managerial economics; He also has some deep thoughts about inadequacies of management training, in some of the Maghreb countries, to the present global market conditions. On this basis, he wishes to make a modest contribution to how performances of both management schools and actually trained and future business managers should be improved in order to successfully face the challenges of the next century. In essence, he believes that the opening of private business schools in developing countries cannot be left to become a matter of financial opportunities or a simple privatisation issue. The content of courses and the teaching methods are critical questions.

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1- Introduction

ملخص

باعتبار أن العولمة لم تعد حلما و لم تبق مجرد فكرة بسيطة و لكن أصبحت حقيقة واقعية، فإن عددا من جوانبها ذات أبعاد إستراتيجية. من بينها يمكن ذكر بصفة خاصة انتقال ما وراء الحدود لكل من السلع، الخدمات، رؤوس الأموال، التكنولوجيا، اليد العاملة، المعلومات والمعارف التكنولوجية والعلمية. و بطبيعة الحال، فإن المؤسسات الصناعية و التجارية، مؤسسات التربية والبحث كلها معنية و بصفة مباشرة.

The main and remarkable feature of recent times is the speed with which changes do occur. Among other things, not only the nature of goods and services are concerned, but also behaviors, strategies, thoughts, conceptions, knowledge and ideas. In the field of economics, the drastically imposing fact is the overwhelming move towards market economies, thus the re-enforcement of the idea of competitiveness and the resulting necessity for quality and performance.

At its simplest and broad meaning, competitiveness means the existence of many parties or agents chasing almost the same goals. But, for contemporary economists, competi-

من جهة أخرى، و باعتبار أن عملية التسيير ينطوي بالضرورة على اتخاذ القرارات تخص كل نشاطات في جميع أنواع المنظمات، فإن الأداء العام لا يمكن أن يكون عاليا، و منه الانخراط الفعال في الاقتصاد العالمي موقفا، إلا إذا كان متخذو القرارات أنفسهم مسلحين و مكونين على أحسن صورة. وهذا ينطوي على مستلزمات هامة منها ما يلي: الحصول على الأدوات النظرية العصرية، التعرف على أحسن التقنيات المطبقة، امتلاك فكر تصوري، ثقافة واسعة وكذلك التحكم في عدد من اللغات الحية. وهكذا، فإن الجودة العالية في تكوين المسيرين، سواء في المؤسسات العمومية أو الخاصة، أصبح أمرا ضروريا جدا. و عليه، فإن أي متخرج لا تتوفر فيه مثل تلك المستلزمات لا يمكن أن يكون إلا مسيرا مستقبليا سينا.

إن لصاحب هذه المقالة تجربة طويلة نسبيا في تدريس كل من علوم التسيير واقتصاد المؤسسة. و له أيضا بعض الأفكار العميقة حول عدم ملائمة التكوين في مجال التسيير، خاصة في بلدان الاتحاد المغاربي، لشروط السوق العالمية الحالية. على هذا الأساس، فهو يرغب أن يقدم مساهمة متواضعة حول كيفية تحسين أداء مؤسسات التكوين في مجال التسيير و كذلك الأفراد الذين في طور التكوين حتى يمكن مجابهة تحديات القرن القادم بكل فعالية و حزم. باختصار، فإن الفكرة الأساسية التي يدافع عنها هي أن الترخيص لفتح مؤسسات تكوين في مجال التسيير في البلدان النامية لا يمكن أن يكون مجرد مسألة ترتبط بالقدرات المالية أو سياسة الخصوصية. ذلك بأن محتوى البرامج و الدروس و كذلك طرق التدريس هي مسائل في غاية من الخطورة لأجيالنا المستقبلية و تطور اقتصادياتنا و مجتمعاتنا.

veness refers mainly to the capacity of creating and exploiting all opportunities leading to continuing better performance, thus better chances of surviving and expanding.

However, one should stress here that fundamentally this concept of performance is not limited only to financial or economic aspects but extends to other important ones namely technological and social. Nowadays, almost everything is technology- and knowledge-based and people are offered opportunities to benefit from, in order to improve their well being or welfare. Their judgement is going to be based on the type of goods as well as the manner with which the operation or service is provided.

In all this, the manner with which resources are managed obviously matters too much and every bit of information and knowledge helping to increase value is, therefore, essential. Basically coming from education and training, such knowledge is transmitted through learning first at appropriate schools. Consequently, the act of establishing both public and private institutions, particularly those providing training in management, becomes necessary in order to overcome the overall mismanagement at macro- and micro-economic levels. By management, it should be understood the scientific making of decisions allowed by high quality training and modern knowledge. Needless to stress that the better managers are trained and conscious, the higher satisfaction, performance and development are for society at large.

2- Main characteristics of management teaching in developing countries

Different reasons are given when describing weaknesses of education systems in developing countries. First is lack of funds and investments in comparison with the growing needs of the rapid increase in the number of children attending the

age of schooling; second is bad or inappropriate allocation of financial resources; Third is the low competence level and the scarcity in the number of teachers; Fourth and not the least is the type of education and training policies dressed up by Third World's governments.

However, the effects of the previous explanations are real but not total. For, as far as the first reason is concerned, there is evidence which shows that education budgets in those countries are rarely spent at their full length¹. The dilemma is often put as follows: Is it more important to provide schools in sufficient number in order to face the growing number of pupils or maintain a certain quality of education even if quantitatively schooling places do not suffice. The choice is indeed problematic, since it relates to social justice and the question of analphabetism. In most cases, developing countries' policies tend to favor the former choice, while leaving the quality aspects for private and individuals' actions.

Inappropriate allocation of financial resources among regions, schooling phases or levels and types of training whether general or specialized, is another critical question in developing countries. In allocating resources, there is usually a certain tendency, particularly in some Arab countries, to favor given type of sectors, disciplines or subjects on behalf of others. This is the case of scientific and technological subjects, when compared to social sciences and arts.

Notwithstanding, all types of education reforms undertaken in the majority of most developing countries do suffer from lack of profound thinking and dynamics. This is the case for all levels, from primary to secondary to higher education and research. When carried out, such reforms usually aim at solving problems from rather a quantity point of view. Partly because of the growing needs and partly because of the urge of the United Nation Organization, dealing with the question of education, many and particularly the poorest of developing countries' governments appeal continuously for more and more funds. Their major efforts or objectives are to build more educational infrastructures. And, in so doing or concentrating, they neglect much serious questions namely those of control, standards and quality.

Referring to business schools in particular, and as far as control is concerned, despite that recognition is official for necessary changes in the economic and political structures, there is a clear tendency for *laissez-aller* and lack of control or at least supervision. For instance, in countries where it has been allowed to create private management schools², class opening and training offers are left to the freedom of people taking initiatives. Most often, recruitment of teaching staff is rather a matter of simple acquaintance³. Depending on financial means⁴ and dynamics of the director, relationships with foreign schools in the same domain are developed. Often partnerships are also realized in the aim of training management staff of both public and private industrial and non-industrial firms. Given the need for facing the new environment, demand for such services is great.

Unfortunately, the issue of standards is rarely discussed or raised in education institutions including the higher level ones, let alone business schools, both public⁵ and

1: Oukil and Damou (forthcoming)

2: In each of the UMA countries, there are numerous private management schools concentrated particularly in Capitals or big cities.

3: It is remarkable to note that private management schools in Algeria have and do not proceed for recruitment through announcements in newspapers.

4: More important is the support of wealthy and military high graded individuals.

5: In public economic institutes, mediocrity has been taking place.

private⁶. The neglect of this issue has led to very bad quality graduates in both fields of training and research. The diploma disease having spread very quickly and widely, it resulted at a post graduate level, for instance, in the so-called "Taiwan Doctorate". In such circumstances, management education and training is nothing but a disaster for the schooling system, the economy and society at large.

Remarkably, getting a diploma from the existing private institutions create greater opportunities for the private sector itself, since a number of graduates become managers of their own firms. By comparison, in the public sector, the attendance of similar courses and training opportunities is seen as either a favor from the manager or even just a temporary escape from a non-stimulating work environment. Thus, being indispensable for their carriers.

The third fundamental question of quality is very badly taken into account to the point that it is argued that the bad performance of developing countries is not only due to scarcity of funds, but mainly to bureaucracy, corruption and above all incompetence of decisions makers at all levels of governance⁷. Most significant to note, however, is that the great majority of managers of the industrial sector, in Algeria for example, does not hold university degrees⁸ and are not trained for management specific purposes⁹.

As the large majority of the teaching staff originates from the public sector, the unavailability of highly qualified or specialized personnel and their consequently high remuneration make it necessary and sometimes financially advantageous to employ rather temporary, half time or second quality trainers. For some unemployed people, it becomes preferable for them to accept teaching any or different subjects than staying idle. In many cases too, the employed teachers find it financially useful to do extra hours in order to raise their revenues. In such circumstances, quality is obviously not of great importance nor a priority for management schools directors.

Students attending private schools of management face with no other alternative than spending a certain amount of money and prescribed timing hoping either to find jobs in the public sector or set up their own enterprise. Generally, students in business prefer such schools not because they perfectly know about the content of studies provided but because requirements are free from restrictions and that it is worth it, given the attraction of the title of the degree to obtain¹⁰. Truly, the tendency to believe that all private training schools are better compared to public ones is not totally correct. On the basis of field observation in Algeria and readings of some developing countries' case studies, it is, quite possible to state the main and general characteristics of private schools of management in developing countries as follows: First, their number is becoming greater and greater¹¹ where structural and political changes do occur; Second, their are managed generally by teachers or university lecturers; Third, compared to similar public institutes, they are generally advantageous in terms of facilities, good will

6: In private institutes either, because of incompetence or neglect of directors.

7: United Nations officials had visited many developing countries to explain the matter.

8: Mokadem, 1993.

9: Oukil, 1999.

10: Class discussion with students: INSIM, 1996-1997.

11: In most cases, they are concentrated in big cities.

and reputation. Fourth, they propose nearly same programs and attractions¹². However, it is important to point out, here, that these characteristics do not necessarily make them all better in terms of teaching staff and quality teaching. As a matter of fact, it is their specific offer for graduation in business subjects which privilege them and not them being private and thus of high quality.

Concerning the content of syllabuses, they are generally classic for most of those schools. All their proposed offers include the following basic subjects: Accountancy and finance, budgeting, International trade, and languages. More elaborated programs add other subjects namely data processing, marketing and information systems. At the post-graduate level, syllabuses are generally more elaborated and often are copies of those adopted in similar schools abroad, namely in the United States of America, Canada, Germany and France. In such cases, some other or new subjects are generally introduced. Specifically, one could mention the following: Strategic Management, Human Resources Management and Computer application. In what follows, we present results of our comparison between actually existing public and private business schools in the case of Algeria.

Comparison between public and private schools of management

	Public	Private
- Existing Institutions (+) (as Nov. 1999):	08 (*)	19 (**)
- List of business subjects considered:		
+ Accountancy & Finance:	X	X
+ Auditing:	X	X
+ Business Intelligence:	-	-
+ Banking & Insurance:	X	-
+ Conflicts Management:	X	-
+ Techniques of Communication:	X	X
+ Computing:	X	X
+ Eco. & Manag. of Information:	-	-
+ Economics of R & D:	X	-
+ Economics of Innovation:	X	-
+ Human Res. Management:	X	X
+ Information Technology:	-	-
+ Information Systems:	X	-
+ International Trade:	X	X
+ Management (Gen. & Strat.):	X	X
+ Marketing (+ International):	X	X
+ Production management:	X	X
+ Publicity & Promotion:	X	-
+ Project Management:	X	-

12: Outstandingly that **SUCCESS IS GUARANTEED.**

+ Quality Control:	X	-
+ Re-engineering:	-	-
+ Standardization:	-	-
+ Tech. Res. Management:	-	X
+ Time management:	-	-
+ Total Quality Management:	-	-
+ Project elaboration:	-	-
- Number of graduation levels:	04	03

(+): Names are varied from ‘School’ to ‘Institute’ to ‘Centre’.

(*): INPED; ISGP; ISE; ESC; INC; CETIC; ENTP; CIEFAC.

(**): INSIM, EFTG, ISG, Eco-Fam, Informal Formation, EPSIAD, Formation N; Ecole IFITA; COGESTI; ESAP; ESG; IFMA; IHEC; IECI; CFCM; all situated in Algiers; Outside the Capital, one has the following : EGC-Bedjaia (East); EFG-Tizi-Ouzou (North East); EGIC-Oran (West); ISEC de Paris (Alger et Tlemcen in the west). Note also that the first of these private schools has been created in 1990.

(X): Provided.

(-): Not provided.

The study of the above table would allow to make the following principal observations: First, The number of private centers providing training in business is more than double that of public; Second, that indeed private business schools tend to concentrate on basic and traditional courses; Third, that the more one move towards updated syllabuses, both private and public management institutes or schools are largely by-passed. This is the case when comparison is made namely with world best management schools, such as Stanford and Harvard, both in the United States of America.

3- Possibilities of Improving Future Management Education and Training

It is quite obvious that ideas for improving management education and training will, should not and cannot always come from abroad. When that is the case, logically appropriate adaptation should be carried out. Among the points which should be taken into account in future reforms, it is quite plausible to stress the following three ones. Note however that most, if not all of those points, not only have great impact on the fame of management schools in various developed countries, particularly in the United States of America, Canada, Great Britain, Germany and France, but are also pertinent in the context of present globalization for developing countries themselves. The proposed elements to take into consideration are as follows:

3-1: Greater attention to recruitment of teaching personnel

In order to up grade the quality of teaching and training in both public and private schools of management in developing countries in general and Maghreb ones in particular, there are various ways that one could choose from.

- A- Recourse to local specialists with high degrees and long experience;
- B- Calling for same categories from neighboring or advanced countries;
- C- Inviting top professors from various countries to pay annual visits.

As far as the last option is concerned, there is an urgent appeal to concerned authorities in the Maghreb countries to institutionalize the status of “visiting professor” particularly in the public sector, since it will stimulate greater contribution from specialists.

Obviously, the will to improve teaching conditions depends also on financial capabilities. Hence, it could seem that only well-established and big schools could afford to pay for best or high quality teachers. Wrong is to think so, and experience shows that partnerships in the field of training in management could help overcome some of those difficulties. Notwithstanding, cooperation between private management schools in the Maghreb countries could be original and fruitful. For the time being, no well-known official experience in this matter has yet occurred.

International pedagogical practices should also be given greater attention when they are implemented in Developing countries. For instance, student evaluation of trainers should not be taken for final and real value judgment against these when they apply strict control concerning some behaviors that are wrongly considered as part of liberty and modernism ¹³.

3-2: Adoption of standards and stricter selection methods

Reputation of management schools, private or public, is maintained through application of high standards or their improvement. This is indeed the case of all the famous International Business Schools. Entrance to Stanford and Harvard Business School, for instance, is subject to given criteria and intellectual capabilities for all students. Naturally, high standards cannot be maintained where low level trainers and trainees are the great majority. Probably, one way of overcoming the difficult task of maintaining high standards is to establish yearly national or international classification according to some criteria based on the quality of teaching methods, scientific contribution, demand for the school graduates by the market and their success in the field.

3-3: Introduction of new subjects namely the following

3-3-1: Business Intelligence (BI)

This is an extremely important subject, which has emerged in recent years but which is not unfortunately thought, particularly in management or business schools of developing countries. Despite the difference in its appellation¹⁴ between developed countries themselves, its essence relates to the necessity of watching the variations and evolutions of things in the surrounding environment. This basically concerns industrial firms and deals with two critical questions: that of technological progress and that of competitiveness in general. Could one imagine really the possibility of managing a firm while being out of the market while changes occur and evolution take place?

13: Should one allow, for instance, entrance to the class at any time or smoking?

14: In French, the term is “Veille Stratégique et Technologique”

3-3-2: Economics and Management of Technological Innovation (EMTI)

Traditional or classical competitiveness based on comparative advantages and reduction of margins is definitely bypassed. More plausible is that based on competitive advantages¹⁵. These types of advantages are essentially allowed by technological or industrial innovation. For the famous Josef Schumpeter, this type of innovation is at the heart of the development process. Accordingly, where the rate of innovation is low, business would not flourish. To recall, it is not sufficient to innovate but to also manage it; that is to know how to exploit it and maximize its diffusion in society. In specific terms, innovation has links with technology, society and of course economics. Understanding it and knowing how to manage it is, therefore, essential for business managers. Knowing how to best stimulate researchers and innovators is, of course, at the heart of the issue. Best managing human, technological and financial resources requires real competence.

3-3-3: Management of Technological Resources (MTR);

The usual tendency in teaching management subjects is to emphasize the money or financial issues. This is indeed an incorrect aptitude, particularly as far as industrial managers are concerned. For these, management cannot be limited to financial decisions, be they long, medium or short term; Technological resources are certainly the real and durable sources for progress. It should be mentioned, here, that technological resources are not only limited to machinery and systems, whatever their degree of sophistication, but extend necessarily to all technical elements, including patents, informal know-how and experience. Any manager who neglects or underestimates such sources put certainly his firm at risk. Moreover, the tendency of managers to neglect or underestimate small things and ideas exposes automatically their firms to ever-loose great opportunities. Schumaker seems consequently quite right as he said and set the famous title for his book: small is beautiful.

3-3-4: Time Management (TM)

“Time is money” and “Time is of gold” are among the many terms used for expressing the importance attached to time in terms of its value and opportunities which it could involve. In the present World of rapid evolution and quick changes, modern managers cannot, therefore, afford to waste time. If, fundamentally, time involves order, accuracy and chances for creating wealth, then it becomes strategically important to use it most effectively. Respecting appointments either with buyers or sellers allows greater chances for success and performance. Managing time results, consequently, in gaining respect and money. If one does not something, someone else could do it and realize benefits or advances.

3-3-5: Multi- or Cross-Cultural Management (CCM)

This type of subject should improve the capacity of business students, as well as actual managers, to understand and take into account differences between people, generations, origins and nationalities. As making business depends on the capacity of convincing buyers or others, the more and best a negotiator could understand his/her

15: The idea is well developed by Porter.

interlocutors the greater the chances for success. Words, gestures and behaviors could have different meanings intra- and inter-nations. Consequently, it is fundamental to know others at best possible in order to maximize the chances for success, particularly in case of trade or exports negotiations. In the famous dictum, there is certainly some truth as it says that “when one knows one language, he is worth one person, but when he knows two languages, he is worth two persons and so on”.

3-3-6: Environment and Information & Communication Technologies (EICT)

Business students or acting business managers need to give to pay great attention to both internal and external environments and communication. Internally, things should be organized, stimulated and supervised. Dys-functioning does usually occur when communication is absent and such functions are not practiced by the managing staff. On an external level too, various events could affect firms and loosing sight of that is, therefore, extremely dangerous.

Studying and being well trained about information and communication technologies allow chances for making best use of different means to promptly act or react to certain events or changes. Investing in such technologies is growing because they allow working on real time and being up-to-date.

3-3-7: Information and knowledge (IK)

Information and knowledge, which become strategic resources for business firms, require not only practical experience but also theoretical support. Knowing the fundamental issue behind the need for information and the necessity of producing knowledge is a new challenging task for particularly industrial managers. Learning about it provides simulating thinking about how to prepare for the future. As the nature of inputs becomes more and more important, there is a need for adaptation and anticipation.

3-3-8: Motivation and leadership (ML)

Motivation is not one single rule or action, which can be learned and applied; It is a continuous adaptation and application of better and better ways of stimulating human resources, be they engineers, technicians or other employees. Such a task is hard unless a good leadership is in place. But leadership is not something that does not evolve; New ways are appearing and attending courses on the subject could well allow to obtain extra knowledge and maximize good communication. Research works show that financial means of motivation are less important than for instance consideration and participation at decisions making. Unfortunately, management practices in the Arab World tend generally to give more importance to leadership than stimulation of different kinds. This leads to durable tensions and conflicts between management and employees.

3-3-9: Systems of performance evaluation (SPE)

The study of comparative systems of performance evaluation is important so far as, factually, there is no ‘best way’ possible. As the act of management relies on the use of spirit, intelligence and knowledge, imagination could lead to improve systems of evaluation in order to up grade levels of performance. As a matter of fact,

competitiveness itself requires continuous comparisons with others. Therefore, internal and external performance evaluation cannot but reinforce the quality of management. Even when the case is of a pioneer or a leader, continuous control of the level of performance is strategically important. In other words, the gap from followers could be closed and lead to greater difficulties.

3-3-10: Project elaboration (PE)

This particular type of course is extremely important as part of the training program in business schools. For, once graduated, students are either recruited by public or private firms or go to set up their own enterprises. In market economies and in countries where unemployment is high, knowing how to create business firms cannot at all be insignificant. For those students who learn how to create, choose and manage all types of resources, namely human, get an extra chance to succeed than people who by administrative injunction launch their projects.

CONCLUSION

Humanity lives nowadays in an era where information becomes a strategic resource for nations and firms. Aside human, financial and technological resources, all of them require appropriate management skills. In essence, this implies that, present and future managers need to be capable of leaning and using more and more of advanced managerial knowledge in order to maximize productivity and success of their firms.

In this case, business or management schools have, therefore, a critical role to play in modern societies. Whether public or private, the quality of their training and services becomes an issue that cannot be left out of control. For, on quality and performance will, indeed, depend the strength, the contribution and the survival of firms and nations.

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