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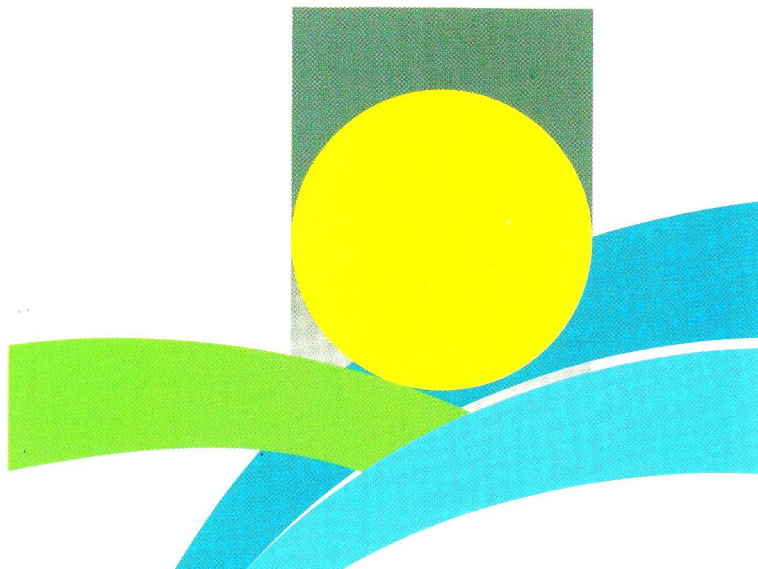
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# DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY : PROGRAMMES FOR RUSSIAN MANAGERS AT THE MOSCOW STATE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

By Oleg Vikhanski

*We now turn to Russia, an economy in the midst of an often painful transformation. Oleg Vikhanski's brief article describes how the Moscow State University School of Business Administration is trying to "do things differently".*

Is it possible to transform Russia into a democratic market economy?

The market economy will be created by vigorous, business-like and civilised entrepreneurs. Unfortunately, there are too few such persons and their position in the social structure is too weak. And there are still fewer knowledgeable of modern management.

There are currently many "business people", who are representatives of the shadow economy and criminal business. Though they are being copied by numerous other newcomers, as the market sphere develops, more real entrepreneurs will emerge. Over time, these entrepreneurs will be shaped not just by market forces, but also by classroom learning.

## "Business Schools"

So-called "business schools" are mushrooming. Most are essentially shams, with no knowledge of teaching approaches, simply hiring well-known economists as (well-paid) lecturers, talking about the country's woes and who is responsible for them.

Participants attend programmes because they think that that is the way to become a "businessman". They are provided with "better scope of knowledge". But virtually nothing attempts to change managers' attitudes, to inspire them to conduct business in a civilised way.

Trying to apply western approaches to current Russian situations is like conducting a cart as if it had the controls of a modern racing car: our mental stereotypes and culture as well as experience and aspirations are so different.

Furthermore, the teachers do not have any real grasp of what western teaching means. A major result of training must be the desire of the trainee to work better, in a new, more productive way.

On the other hand, foreign experience can be crucial in eradicating outdated management stereotypes and approaches as well as encouraging managers to work in new ways.

## Doing Things Differently

The Moscow State University School of Business Administration is striving to do things differently, in the Russian context. It was opened in 1990 after substantial preparation as regards classroom equipment, training techniques and teachers' qualifications.

The first programme was of ten one-week modules for middle managers in companies and organisations. Executives were to be prepared for working under market conditions, gaining at the same time entrepreneurial awareness. The two parts of the programme dealt with respectively expanding executives' mental outlook on management and developing their abilities in human resources' management, with emphasis on group work. Cases, small group work and projects were all used.

The second programme, 10 months, was for foreign businessmen. This followed previous courses for Japanese and Korean executives. All provided foreign currency with which to purchase equipment.

And, thirdly, we ran short seminars for senior executives.

## The Changing Approach

The results of the first programme (above) were not fully satisfactory: executives' attitudes to work did not change; the old socialist philosophy remained inculcated in them. So after the dissolution of the Soviet Union our focus became executives of independent firms, the newly emerging businessmen and entrepreneurs.

The programmes were then redesigned accordingly:

First, we focused heavily on the situational approach — what is actually going on in Russia at the time of teaching; then techniques were developed for motivating students for active participation in class; furthermore, each programme was adjusted to the specific goals and needs of the trainees ("entrepreneurs" in Russia are from a wide range of backgrounds); and we have to develop students' motivation for active learning.

This last aspect is tackled by beginning every week with psychological training, starting every class with a self-assessment exercise and running discussions in small groups on the basis of multiple choice questionnaires.

## Quantity And Quality

It is particularly difficult under the present circumstances to refuse to increase the supply of programmes for persons who merely want to claim that they have attended. The School's claim to "Top Quality" can only be maintained if we are very demanding. We teach managers that client satisfaction is all important, and we try to apply this ourselves.

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