

# Chapter 68

## Graduate–Level Leadership Education: Lessons From the Leadership Program Development Process

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter aims to describe how one of the leading business schools in South East Europe responded to market pressures for training competent leaders by installing novel practices in leadership education at the university level. The purpose of the chapter is twofold: (1) to outline the key steps in the process of a graduate study program development; (2) to present the advantages of adopting a holistic approach in leadership education. The chapter calls for more discussion on curriculum development and emphasizes the importance of sharing experiences in improving the quality of university leadership education.*

### INTRODUCTION

In the turbulent world of business today, we are witnessing major novelties in the way modern organizations operate such as the increase in international orientation, changes in organizational structures and establishment of growing numbers of organizational teams to support the business operations. The success of businesses in the market is not a matter of chance, but a function of the quality of the managerial decision making. A defining characteristic of successful businesses is adequate leadership.

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As one of the four fundamental functions of management, leadership plays an indispensable role in the development of type of business. Hereof the labor market is in constant demand for trained professionals capable of taking leadership positions in the public and private organizations operating in such a challenging and complex environment. In addition to that, recent corporate scandals at major global companies have highlighted the importance of high-quality and ethical leadership. The social need for the business economics - Leadership university graduate study program is manifested primarily in the still unfinished transformation of Croatian society. Croatia desperately needs individuals who can bring change at all levels of society. The influence of individuals who are able to unite the key dimensions of leadership discipline is the basic foundation of the development of every complex society, and without the development of authentic identity, society is unable to transform itself in accordance with the needs and challenges of the modern age.

The primary role of business schools is to monitor trends in the business world and respond to market needs by reducing the gap in demand for skilled professionals. Strategies that respectable business schools implement to successfully perform this role are based on continuous improvement of their existing courses or introducing new courses and study programs. Unfortunately, little is known about how business schools approach the development of courses and programs aimed at educating future leaders. This chapter aims to describe how the leading business school in the Republic of Croatia responded to market pressures for training competent leaders by installing novel practices in leadership education at the university level. The purpose of the chapter is twofold: (1) to outline the key steps in the process of a graduate study program development, (2) to present the advantages of adopting a holistic approach in leadership education.

Using the case study method, the chapter summarises the authors' experiences in the curriculum development and highlights key actors of the process along with their main responsibilities. The authors highlight several important issues that need to be considered while designing a competitive study program, starting from the institutional framework to student preferences. The chapter also presents the most important scientific, social, cultural and economic issues that such a study program is capable of addressing. Furthermore, the chapter provides syllabus summaries for all of the courses building this program and special attention is placed on outlining the appropriate methods in shaping students' leadership skills.

Investigating the phenomenon of leadership as a way to build authentic identity is a top scientific issue of social and organizational development. Leadership is a key phenomenon in understanding success in the management field, where multiple individuals work together toward a specific purpose. Whether at the level of transnational entities or at the level of family, leadership concepts are crucial in setting and achieving organizational goals. The contribution of the chapter to the leadership education literature is evident in the systematic display of the major benefits that a holistic approach to educating future leaders has over traditional approaches focused on narrow areas of leadership. Finally, the chapter calls for more discussion on curriculum development and emphasizes the importance of sharing experiences in improving the quality of university education.

## **LEADERSHIP EDUCATION: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

There is a growing need for competent leaders across all areas of human activity. In the world of business, this need is a consequence of the internal changes and external pressures companies are facing. Changes in organizational structures and the growing number of different types of organizational teams

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