

# Is the traditional university dying?

## Interview with Vlado Dimovski

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### VLADO DIMOVSKI

*This is the second part of the interview with Professor Vlado Dimovski. The interview was held before the COVID19 crisis, on February 5, 2020, during his visit to ESPM for lectures, sponsored by MPCC/ ESPM, and Professor Vivian Strehlau. The first part is in IJBMKT, v. 5, n. 1, p. 16-22.*

*Vlado Dimovski is a Slovenian economist, philosopher, politician, consultant, and professor of management and organization at the University of Ljubljana. He has degrees in economics (MA, BA), philosophy (BA), management, and finance (Ph.D.). He got many awards and has been elected member of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts (since 2016). As a consultant, he has been working with World Bank/EDI, UNIDO, UNDP, McKinsey, A.T. Kearney, and Deloitte. He has been an advisor to numerous governments and institutions, like the Macedonian Prime Minister. In politics, he has served as the State Secretary for Industry, and as Minister for Labor, Family, and Social Affairs while Slovenia has entered the EU*



**IJBMT: Two questions in one, regarding strategy and structure. [See part 1 of the interview in IJBMT, v. 5, n. 1, p. 16-22]. Wouldn't the many different types of structures that we teach in business schools not apply in practice? Are fantastic structures, different structures, innovative concepts being taught for nothing? At the same time, are startups starting wrong in terms of structure?**

**Vlado Dimovski:** Education, and specifically business education, cannot keep pace with some sectors, such as the IT sector, which is so fast that changes are sometimes counted in days. Some industries, like apparel (or the rest of the industry), are slower.

However, in business schools, we try to provide companies with some frameworks. But we are terribly slow in business schools! Most business schools are too slow to keep up with changing business reality. First, because in some sectors, this is happening so fast that we basically cannot reflect on systematizing and proposing theories and practical actions, especially, as I said, for the IT sector, and some other industries that are connected to it. We cannot reflect on all the changes. This speed of change is factor number one.

Number two is because technological changes, like big data, for example, are not always detected immediately or immediately detected and applied to different businesses. Big data is an incredibly challenging change. McDonald's, for example, and other big companies, use big data because electronics have entered the field, and they want to use electronic processes. Today, we have the tools with which we can deal with big data. But in terms of organizational structure, things do not change that fast.

For us, business teachers, it ends up being easier to teach the classics than to reflect what is happening in the business. It is safer for us. We say, "Leave me with my framework"! One of the business schools' main problems is that the courses are still set up in functional areas, such as finance, human resources, marketing, production, like this, like that. But current management requires horizontality. What we call in business schools the "business reality" is probably something from the past.

**IJBMT: As you mentioned, the university must keep pace with the changes in business reality and create a more exciting environment for students. I am aware that you apply an interesting technique, doing classes for young people, named "the buzz groups." Could you explain to us what it is about?**

**VD:** Well, in reality, it is elementary. You stop with your lecturing every fifteen minutes, and then you give the students the possibility to talk about the subject up to that point and preparing for the next point. My lectures are usually 15 plus 15 plus 15 plus 15 minutes. In the end, you put this like a chain together. It seems extremely easy, but it relies on my study to increase the focus and retention rate of the students. I did some studies in the past in terms of psychology and found out that today's generation is not focused on one thing but focuses mostly on five to seven things simultaneously. The class must be very dynamic in terms of giving them information to keep them, let us say, focused. That is number one.

Second, when they come to the class, they virtually do not have communication with one to each another. And putting the students together in a group of five, six people - the buzz groups- is how they must communicate with each other.

Number three, they are very individualized today. They are not prepared for teamwork at all. This technique enhances the collaboration because they are responsible for team production, and not only for individual production. Nowadays, in every company, organization, or association, you must work as a team. Not only did the team's creation is essential, we did not tackle that question, but also the team spirit.

**IJBMT: It is a kind of "learning how to learn."**

**VD:** Learning how to learn but also learning different things in terms of patience and listening to others. Because they only look at phones and smartphones and not communicate.

**IJBMT: It sounds so familiar...**

**VD:** It forces them to communicate. And the span of this generation focus is shorter. If I would go like three hours, a minute per minute per minute, the class will not happen. We should shorten the span of, let us say, the focus of attention. That gives them five to seven minutes to breathe, look at the phones, exchange the views, and so on. And then another fifteen minutes – fifteen-minute cycles.

**IJBMT: OK, last question, a “simple” one. With the changes you mentioned, that show that the university cannot go step by step with the environment; that the business schools cannot change as rapidly as the market; that the young generation thinks and behaves differently; that the future of professional training may be in the corporate universities. My last question: is the traditional university dying? Is the academic approach obsolete?**

**VD:** Being politically correct, I should say no [laughs]

**IJBMT: Do not give up right now!**

**VD:** We have to admit it and admit many changes in education and the environment and so on. The corporate universities emerged because companies need, now, much training, retraining, and so on. The market changes require company changes, not only revitalizing strategies and policies all the time, but also in design, structure. [See part 1 of this interview in IJBMT, v. 5, n. 1, p. 16-22]. The companies need to train and retrain. If you look through the eyes of corporations, some basic principles training, of course, is required. But for solving the problems that come from reality, the traditional university cannot provide the right answers.

That is why these corporate universities are becoming part of reality. For us, the universities, or let us say, the classic university, we should admit that the world is changing. And we should start to make strategic alliances with corporations. That is number one.

Second, we have to put much more training on the staff. Nowadays, it is not only the content that is important, but also how you present it. There are different techniques of teaching, different techniques of learning, and we should absorb them.

Number three, which I think will be our significant advantage, is the personalization of teaching.

**IJBMT: Using technology?**

**VD:** If you have a lot of students, you must teach “on average.” I think we should personalize the learning process. The learning curve for individual students can be different from the others. It will come when students choose video lectures from different parts of the world, from varied universities. They will collect points at that one lecture. They will have enough points to get the degree no matter where they will get the knowledge in this process.

**IJBMT: As professors, we have our personal challenge for the future, right? Professor Vlado, thank you very much.**

**VD:** Thank you.