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**An Empirical Study: Training, Education  
and other Determinants Related to the Development  
of a Growth and Innovative Mindset - Essential  
in a Sustainable Business Context**

Carmen Florentina VLĂȘCEANU<sup>1</sup>, Gabriela ȚIGU<sup>2\*</sup>

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**Abstract**

*This article examines the scientific and educational approach of the success and innovative mindset, essential for a sustainable business context in relation to recent global events.*

*The research considered the theoretical empirical developments as well as the practical dimension in which it had emerged.*

*The methodology consists of the examination of the dimensions related to the development of a growth mindset to improve performance in business and entrepreneurial leadership, such as vision, innovation and creativity, risk taking, charisma, proactivity, followed by an analysis from the cognitive science perspective about what seems to be the secret to success: an adjustable mindset and continuing life learning approach.*

*The first part of the article focuses on the theoretical explanation of the entrepreneurial business leadership concept in relation to several other disciplines in which it had developed, such as sociology, psychology, management, economics, business administration, strategy, finance, marketing, followed by an analysis of the importance of learning in contemporary business context.*

*Theories and thoughts of experts of the cross-cultural field are highly regarded, providing a detailed insight into the intrinsic motivational factors of success, the continued development of online learning, projected directions and trends within the contemporary transformational global business context.*

**Keywords:** education, cognitive transformation, growth and success mindset, global business context, business performance, intrinsic motivation, sustainable business context.

**JEL Classification:** I25, I26

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<sup>1</sup> Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Bucharest, Romania, carmen\_vlasceanu@yahoo.com.

<sup>2</sup> Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Bucharest, Romania, gabriela.tigu@ase.ro.

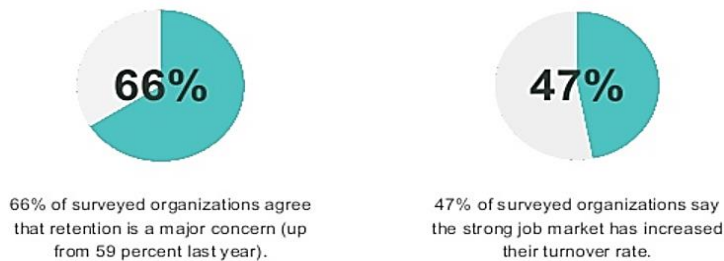
\* Corresponding author.

## **1. Contemporary Business Landscape – the Most Challenging Learning Opportunity**

The dynamic nature of the international markets in the context of globalization as we all witnessed, presented the businesses environment with a series of challenges and opportunities generated by the Covid-19 pandemic, which many countries are struggling to keep under control. Essential importance in reducing the spread of the virus by effective communication streams and equally promoting a safe recovery is attributed to the advanced technology and digitization, which played a key role in fighting this global pandemic. Entrepreneurs and business leaders remain focused on the evolution and the global healthcare response to the virus spread, in their attempt to revitalize the long-term economic health and achieve sustainability for their businesses. The successful business leaders are well aware that being ready for the future is not only a passive process of preparing and predicting, but a matter of vision and determination towards adopting a proactive strategy to shape the character of the business, by making far sighted choices (Gunther McGrath, MacMillan, 2000). In the knowledge-based economy, new entrants may have the ability to force the well-established market leading companies to redesign the business strategy as to better adapt their products and services to the current challenges in order to exploit opportunities appealing to the safety measures on the one side and the desires and intentions of people, on the another side. Today's entrepreneurs have to possess agility, clarity and professional attributes that enable them to identify the issues that ought to be addressed in the near and far sighted future, together with analytical capabilities of the global conditions, facilitating their decisions on diversification, expansion through connections with other businesses, market positioning on which their organization's future depends. It becomes apparent that the business consequences and contingencies are very dependable on the strategic decision makers, who are continually expected to rise up to the challenge and grow the companies by analysing the economic climate, forecasting future trends and efficiently responding to the challenges faced with (Handy, 1989). It could well be stated that the successful individuals are those who realize why the changes happen and discern what might be the appropriate direction, followed by conscious choices and welcoming the change in itself. This precise aspect it is believed to be the ingredient that fosters the development of a success and innovative mindset. Those individuals who manage to deal with the unknown in unprecedented conditions seem to be better able to control and overcome the sudden and unexpected evolution of events threatening to destabilize the presumed equilibrium of the status quo. The pillars of good strategic decision-making rest on strong human values - the best equipped, the most successful and long-surviving individuals are those who are well anchored in values that can hold them together in harsh circumstances and possess a set of determinants that do not change depending on the surrounding conditions. The current global events have been showcasing a high degree of volatility and tremendous challenges to take on. Looking at things from a different perspective, possessing strong values implies an analytical detachment

and the willingness to have own perceptions challenged and often have the courage to argue in favour of a new vision or strategic positions that may seem difficult to accept at times (Handy, 1989). Considering a more introspective approach, the degree and intensity of the emotional involvement comes from ones' internal motivation and passion, representing a crucial element to cognitive transformation, and may well be the key to a fulfilled life, as well as a successful business career.

Taking into account the continuous transformational character of the global environment, the secret of the successful individuals and strong business leaders lays in education, continuous training and sharpening of the management and professional competencies of their employees, as a long-term sustainable investment.



**Figure 1. High Performance Engagement Report 2019**

Source: McKinsey Global Survey <https://www.slideshare.net/BizLib/3-key-elements-to-keeping-high-performers-engaged>

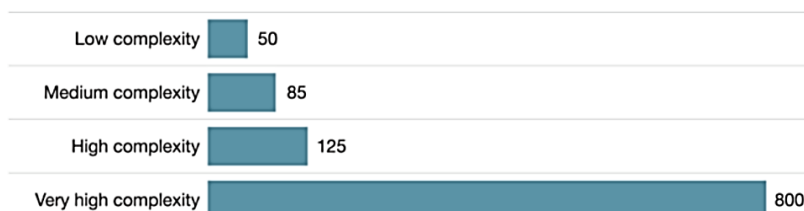
The above report issued by McKinsey Global reflects the concern of major organizations pertaining to the workforce retention and the high rate of employee's turnover in their attempt of achieving business sustainability. While industry standards for containing the Covid-19 impact are slow to emerge, the world of work is being transformed by the upskilling and reskilling revolution made possible by the digitization of the learning process. Learning organizations and academic institutions focus their strategies to help people manage the challenges in this new unpredictable setting developing training programmes that anticipate the needs and rise above to help the society towards a positive and sustainable professional path. Traditional corporations and multileveled global organizations have been for the past years struggling to deal with uncertainty and maintain an optimized level of efficiency and profitability meanwhile various start-ups and young entrepreneurs have seized the opportunity and turned it into their advantage, by successfully launching their private businesses.

## **2. Determinants and the Importance of a Success and Innovative Mindset in Current Times**

A growth and success mindset encompasses a set of character traits and skills which enable entrepreneurs to use the uncertainty for their benefit by identifying potential business opportunities in areas where others may not think of it as being possible. However successful these entrepreneurs might be

in their line of activity, nothing would be possible without a valuable set of the character traits backed by a lifelong learning mentality and ongoing sustained effort. Somehow, these individuals manage to remain extremely disciplined, being always in touch with the reality and continually analysing the business environment, the dynamic shifts in the economic conditions and the evolution of the markets. They seem to be organically attracted by challenging projects where their adaptive nature is better used in designing strategies and structure, rather than investing their energy into already successful business organizations. In these times of dramatic transformation, strategy becomes more and more the focus of energy and interest for entrepreneurial leadership, shadowing a sense of uncertainty over the decisions making process (Drucker, 1999). Generally, a successful mindset is grounded in a vision and the role of training and education comes to inspire and influence the society. Top performers envision their dreams translated into actual successful results and achievable goals being committed to hard work until dreams become reality. The majority of the high achievers consider that the opportunity of success is more important than the possibility of failure and the current global turmoil poses many opportunities for some. Comfortably accepting taking chances, having a higher risk tolerance compared to the majority of people and in case of project failure, they are very likely to learn quickly from the experience and try again (Kiam, 1986). Another important determinant is confidence. Successful individuals, managers and entrepreneurs have a high degree of confidence, they believe in their own abilities, which help them overcome failure, knowing that they will succeed the next time. A good level of confidence comes from having sustainable principles, knowing own abilities and limitations – a key characteristic in tough times or setbacks. The level of confidence derives from the awareness of the self-possessed aptitudes and capabilities, inborn talents and abilities which become efficient tools in planning and managing the business ventures and various circumstances (Grove, 1983). In these transforming times, many learning enterprises emerged aiming to attract and re-skill people who possess the intrinsic motivation and “have the ability of seeing opportunities, identifying gaps between needs and wants, are ideas generators, very perceptive of the surrounding world, with a good understanding of people’s intentions and emotions (Boyle, 2004).

Productivity gap between average performers and high performers, by job complexity, %



**Figure 2. The relationship between talent and business performance**

Source: McKinsey Global Survey <https://www.slideshare.net/BizLib/3-key-elements-to-keeping-high-performers-engaged>

McKinsey Global highlighted the relationship between talent and performance and differentiating complexity aspects between average and high performers. Learning programmes designed to enhance logic and reasoning skills in order to solve consumer and business problems continue to attract those who are “perseverant and determined to succeed overwriting the long working hours, disappointments, and setbacks” (Love, 1986). Crisis management, risk management, business development training, procurement & supply chain, blockchain management, machine learning, financial, leadership development, executive courses, business bootcamps, all offer the knowledge sharing of the brightest academics and industry experts. The majority of the academic institutions have employed and perfected their online research programmes striving to contribute and become an active part of the solution to the problems we face today and build along with the student’s determination, vision and enthusiasm. Their passion, along with good communication skills, planning and decision-making becomes essential when they have to deal with various circumstances and problems, finding the most appropriate resolution (Blanchard, 1999). Decision-making in times of crisis is another essential skill and sometimes, the difference between success and failure can be the individuals’ ability or inability to plan and prepare for the future. Thinking ahead about the changes a company needs to make to continue growing implies fewer surprises in the long run, as sometimes unexpected growth can leave entrepreneurs scrambling for immediate solutions for lack of equipment, staff, and time. (Branson, 2013) highlights that failure could very well be one of the secrets to success, as one can innovate and grow only by trying something new and if failing occurs, the learning process ensures the continuity in an improved form. However, dealing with failure is not an easy undertaking; it is common to every human being, regardless of the efforts that are being put in, in order to avoid it. Everybody faces challenges and unpleasant events in life, but resilience and how to overcome failure is the essential trait that builds a growth mindset. Successful individuals are those who have the capacity to quickly adjust to changes and overcome challenges on their journey of failing forward and reconcile emotionally to a fresh start. The ability to quickly reroute derives from the attitude, the overall outlook, the ability of mastering a personal psychological support, as well as adopting a continuous life learning approach. Entrepreneurs and leaders in general, experience many setbacks and their success is dependent on their ability to overcome failures and quickly bounce back, being persistent and resilient to different challenges and circumstances (Hanson, 2018). Learning & development organizations have tailored their programmes as to instil such intangible skills while teaching the ability of applying elaborate problem-solving techniques, communicating effectively and being empathetic listeners, essential to developing an innovative business culture.

### **3. Adopting a Growth Mindset to Improve Performance and Ensure Business Sustainability**

The world's business environment, major industries and national economies have been shattered by the recent global crisis triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic that changed the core and the norms of living and working conditions around the globe. Nevertheless, people with a mentality of always learning are able to see opportunities where others see problems, and therefore adapt in a successful way to the occurring changes and transformations of the world around. Authenticity and enthusiasm often translate into creating new ideas, designing products, strategies and business models leaving behind the traditional way of doing things. Creativity and innovation will pave the way towards a sustainable business context. The combination of the creative thinking with today's technological developments will translate in major future disruptions and great discoveries in science, information technology, economics, biotechnology and other associated fields, improving the global welfare and the overall quality of life itself. Today, more than ever, the world needs leaders able to propose new ways of doing things and ensure the sustainability and preservation of the population and global resources. Extreme importance is attributed to the training component and the educational dimension which focuses on acquiring the necessary skills and techniques that are applicable in the real world (Handy 1994). People appreciate people who are good listeners and represent their interests well. Research showed that individuals who are exposed to leadership while working, regularly participate in workshops and seminars learning management skills, strategies and theories specific to leadership, etc., can better identify the diversity and the difficulty of problem-solving, distinguishing between advantages and limitations. The latest significant growth of modular credential based online programmes offers the opportunity of sharpening ones' skills as a future entrepreneur, planner, public speaker, debater, negotiator, etc. - skills that are of maximum importance in a leader's professional portfolio in addition to reading, participating to lectures and conferences. Literature review showed a mix of factors contributing to the reasons and motives why some people wish to influence change and seek positions of power (DeHeaven, 2008). For some, the desire to be in the middle of the action is sufficient to mobilize their efforts, while others seek to make an impact in the community. Living their lives with good meaning and purpose might be sufficient to take on a daunting task, while other may adhere to a certain ideology (Kiyosaki, 1998). People are fuelled by various intrinsic motivations, from ideals of overcoming own limitations to exhilaration of solving problems or a desire to feel relevant generated by the psychological need to prove one's worth or "it might be the honour of holding highly regarded positions and make an impact in the world" (Deci, Ryan, 1985). Whatever the motivation, the general tendency is to filter the experiences by the impact caused by someone who encouraged and inspired us with the power of their personal example.

#### **4. Findings: The Importance of Learning in Contemporary Business Landscape**

Education continues to play an essential role in the development of young talents as it provides them with the building blocks they need for the future. However, the recent times highlighted a need of upskilling and reskilling of talents with the help of the digital transformation and automation who is estimated to have an unprecedented impact in the world. As a result to the Covid-19 pandemic, 74% of the surveyed executives of a Gartner report will permanently keep online part of the remotely placed workforce. The existing workforce is increasingly reskilled by learning organizations whose flexible study programmes are focused on driving learner engagement to meet today's business needs and anticipate the future demand and transformation of work. A McKinsey Global 2019 Survey on distribution of organizational investment reflects the priority of business enterprises highlighting that training and development receives considerable investment funds: close to 25% training and developing compared to the 15% allocated to recruiting and compensation changes. Thinking analytically and creatively and knowing how to manage a business is a great advantage, and a great number of universities are actively teaching subjects specific to entrepreneurial leadership as to instil the set of attitudes, skills and behaviours that students need in order to develop a growth mindset to succeed academically, personally and professionally (O'Rourke, et. al. 2014).

A 2018 LinkedIn Learning report highlighted that 81% of the executives interviewed regarded human talent as a top priority, while 90% considered learning and development to be a necessary benefit to the company's employees. According to 2020 LinkedIn Learning survey, managers spend on average 30% more time learning soft skills than the average learner. There is a broad array of online learning facilities and MOOC programs a form of accessible massive online open courses specifically designed to target all segments of students, from young learners to reskilling professionals to aspiring managers, entrepreneurs and executive leaders. It is clear that the education becomes a competitive advantage and a real investment - one which effective organizations appreciate as being an advantage for the individual, especially when practical experience may be lacking. As the world is confronted with what was proved to be a severe global crisis, the society had been forced to rapidly change and coupled with the career span which is shorter on average, as a consequence the need for intelligent people in organizations is increasingly growing. On the same note, organizations need to foster the opportunity for young talents to grow while they work and develop critical thinking abilities, practical and analytical intelligence (Goleman, McKee, Boyatzis, 2002). According to the LinkedIn Learning workforce report conducted in 2018 where 200 executives, 400 managers, 1,200 talent development professionals and 2,200 employees were interviewed, approximately 94% of the employees declared that they would work longer in a company if invested in their career development. The same survey reflects the importance levels of certain skills developed under the training programmes and rated by the talent developers:

74% leadership skills, communication 66%, collaboration 50% and 50% role specific skills. The technological advancements of past years facilitated the introduction and development of the distance learning and online mentoring programmes, which had a tremendous impact on traditional higher education, reframing the fundamental academic structure of the educational institutions. Technological advancements, coupled with the imposed restrictions caused by the pandemic, forced the relocation of business activities strictly online. In some circumstances it had proved to be a perfect short-term sustainable strategy and the ideal long-term trajectory of the organization's future.

## **5. Conclusions and Recommendations**

For the past years, the overall global trend was to embrace training and education as being the gateway towards a society better adapted to transformational changes, to the point where the well-developed countries have increasingly been supporting specialized training and funding programmes. As the global pandemic brought all industries to a halt, indirectly forcing organizations to remote their activities online, it becomes apparent that this trend will continue to increase. The importance of training and development will become globally recognized. According to 2020 LinkedIn Learning survey, more than 75% of each generation of learners prefer taking personalized course recommendations based on their career goals and skill deficiency: 77% of boomers, 78% of generation X, 79% of millennials and 80% of generation Z. Many people are motivated to learn, or start-up own businesses, continually developing themselves by keeping updated with the market trends, competitors' strategies, initiating creative and innovative ideas, thus ensuring the sustainability component of the business. As new ideologies emerge favoured by the world's interconnectedness and made possible by the technology development, various possibilities are created for those with a growth mentality and a desire to improve themselves. In these challenging times, all aspects ought to be considered: planful opportunism, trends forecasting, global economics, management practice, marketing strategies, business process reengineering, information technology, organizational learning and ultimately, the art of leadership (Tichy, Cohen, 2002). Past business developments and two decades of theories and research bring us to the challenging present times, opening the way to the future possibilities, business innovation of new concepts and business models, in this continuous transformational landscape of uncertainty. By assessing the wide spectrum of the global system complexity in the context of the current conditions, the conclusion to be drawn is that the current crisis management followed by decision making requires objective assessment, creativity of ideas, service and portfolio management as to restart, revive and reposition the performance in sound and sustainable business strategies. Organizations ought to embrace a growth mindset, creating a culture in which employees feel encouraged and motivated to contribute to the company's vision and assist communities with innovative products and services to better adapt, communicate, collaborate and enjoy



livelihood in a healthy and safe environment. While companies play a major role in hiring and attaining young talent through internships, international exchange programmes, etc., so do the academic institutions, L&D organizations play a crucial role in broadening the students' perspective, fuelling their passion and drive to continually develop themselves. As the world of work continues to undergo dramatic transformations, aspiring young talents who are at the moment acquiring their baggage of knowledge and preparing for a career need to be aware of the growing demands of the employment markets and what are the necessary skills that increases their chances for a more successful targeted recruitment. Training programmes that allow them to apply the discipline and strategic thinking patterns, learning about real case studies and making connections between the scientific findings and the reality display may well inspire their following actions and way of life, improving their ability to draw own logic reasoning and conclusions. As the world of research is being reshuffled, mainly influenced by the dramatic impact of this unprecedented crisis, besides the teaching of the scientific discoveries, theoretical principles and concepts, the goals of the educational system and learning organizations should concentrate more on increasing the practical component of training. It is of paramount importance that alumni involvement in workshop activities be increased, aiming towards efficiently shaping the workforce, the future managers, entrepreneurs and business leaders for a well-balanced and self-sustaining society. An efficient educational system fosters a culture of learning in an encouraging environment meant to inspire the individual's potential to acquire and develop a strong and healthy belief system. Determination, dedication and sustained effort expands performance records in school, career and life, enabling people to feel motivated and concentrate all their resources and abilities into achieving the highest goals.

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