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# MBA EDUCATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF DEBRECEN AND ITS FURTHER DEVELOPMENT TOWARDS DOUBLE DEGREE PROGRAMMES

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**Abstract:** *University of Debrecen is the oldest higher educational institution in continuous operation in Hungary based in the same city. MBA training at Debrecen Agricultural University was initiated by 0257-91/1 Tempus Joint European Project Grant. The project was coordinated by the Netherlands Institute for Management (RVB) Maastricht. Participating institutions include University College in Dublin, Agricultural University in Wageningen and Debrecen Agricultural University. Minimum requirements established were a BSc (or equivalent) degree, an English certificate of language proficiency and one letter of reference from work supervisors or former teachers. Application requirements included a completed application form, Curriculum vitae, a certified copy of degree(s), an official copy of language knowledge certificate, a letter of recommendation and the receipt of registration fee payment. The academic year began on 1 September 1991, and project studies were carried out in small groups. Practical experience that had been gained before enrolment was taken into account and after the successful completion of the requirements students were granted MBA degrees.*

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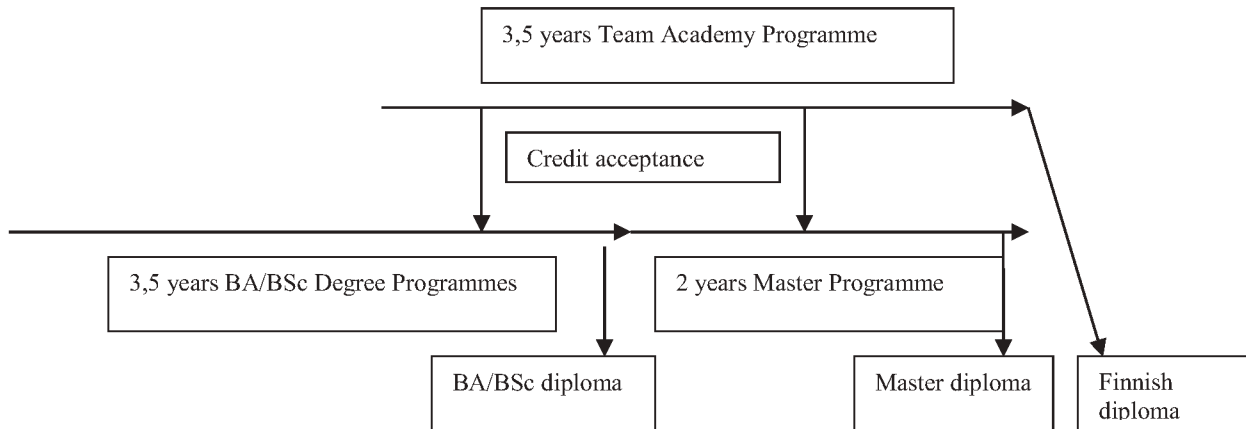
The First Debrecen Executive MBA was intended for personnel who have at least five years experience in the management of food or at an agribusiness company, and who have been identified as potential candidates for future top level management positions. The goal of the program was to provide a global view of issues, broad perspectives and management skills on analysis of economic and policy issues relevant for food and agribusiness management with emphasis on the economic and policy environment of the region.

The First Debrecen Executive MBA course was assessed on the dynamic relationship between strategy and competition. Food, agribusiness and other cases were used to explore the development and implementation of strategies requiring the application of conceptual, analytical, problem identification, and problem solving skills to develop organizational strategy. In addition, the program allowed participants to work on a supervised research project, which involved the completion of a bibliography, the organization of materials, the selection of suitable problems, an understanding of related literature, the selection of appropriate procedures, formulation of a plan, collection and organization of data, investigating and the writing the thesis.

The University of Debrecen, Centre of Agricultural Sciences (UDCAS) has established the Postgraduate Training of Corporate Studies on 1 September 1998. This course still exists at the University. During this period, the curriculum has changed twice and its name has also changed to Postgraduate

Training in Entrepreneurship. The University Council decided to continue this training in the future. It contains four specialisations: commerce and marketing management, human resource management, European studies and (Masters Business Administration) MBA. In 1998, the training started in Budapest, in a rented building managed by the International Organisation of Hungarian People, and the first graduating class received its diploma in June 2000. The total number of students receiving their diplomas was more than 100. Because of the Hungarian demographical situation and its labour market, the number of students has increased year by year. In its activities within the scope of this program, UDCAS assists in solving a social problem in Hungary, by giving a second diploma for those who cannot find gainful employment. The increased interest in this training could be related to the fact that graduated students were satisfied with the quality of the training. The aim of this training was to provide knowledge for managers in economics, domestic and international marketing, finance, human resource management and EC management, so they would be able to work as experts in different fields of business. These tendencies met the requirements of international trends. The experience of the 5 academic years verified the success of the training, as did the fact that, in Hungary, several universities and 19 private schools began to offer this kind of managerial training. Originally, students came from different parts of Hungary to Budapest to study.

*Figure 1: Implementation of the Degree Programme in Entrepreneurship Development*



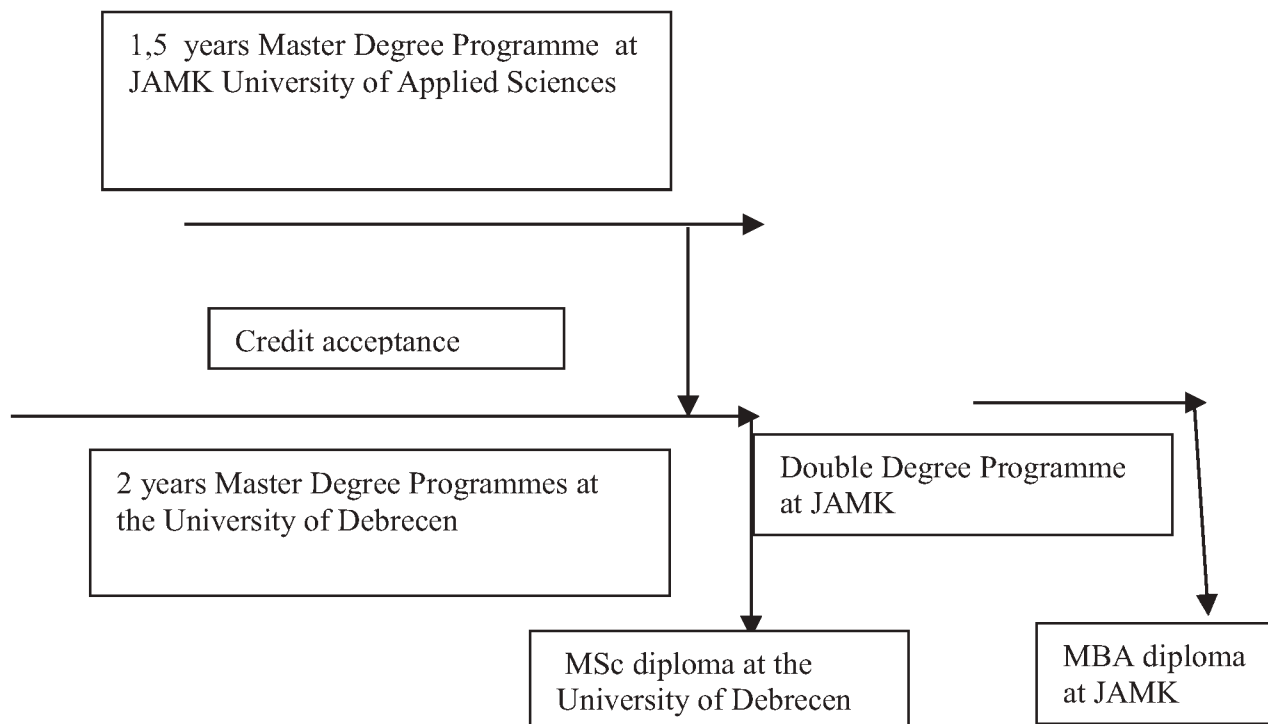
3,5 years Team Academy Programme  
 source: own development by Andras Nabradi and Zsolt Csapo, 2010

MBA education finished in 2005 in Budapest. University of Debrecen, Faculty of Agricultural Economics and Rural Development continued the operation of the MBA Programme in Debrecen. The aim of the training was to allow for graduated experts to have suitable knowledge in economics, marketing international business, finance, human resource management and EC management, so they could find work as managers in different fields of business. Students should have been prepared to find good jobs, to modify jobs and

to be able to come up to the changing requirements in the labour market.

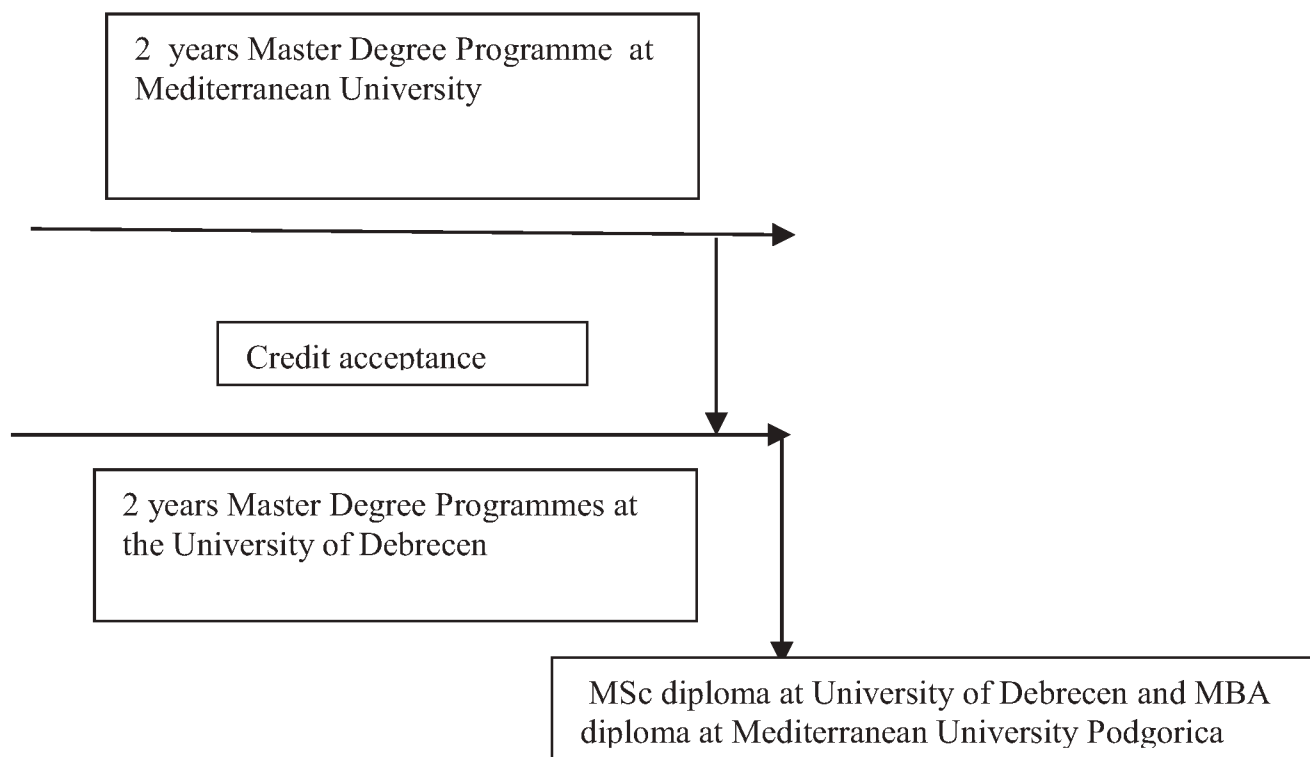
Unfortunately, companies in Debrecen and surrounding areas could not provide enough students for the further operation of the MBA programme. In the meantime in accordance with the Bologna process, Bachelor and Master Degree Programmes have been accredited according to the Hungarian National Accreditation Board. Taking into consideration of the above mentioned facts the Faculty started

*Figure 2: Existing Double Degree Programme between JAMK University of Applied Sciences and University of Debrecen*



source: own development by Andras Nabradi and Zsolt Csapo, 2015

Figure 2: Double Degree Agreement between Mediterranean University Podgorica and University of Debrecen



source: own development by Andras Nabradi and Zsolt Csapo, 2016

the accreditation of "Master's Degree Programme in Business Development, MSc" in 2007. The curricula of this Master's Degree Programme covered all the subjects set up in the former AGRIMBA MBA Programme. The accreditation finished in 2008 and the first generation of students started their studies in 2009. In addition to it, the "Master's Degree Programme in Business Development, MSc" in English language has also been accredited. The interest for the new Master Programme was considerable and until now it is. The faculty management realized that the labour market requires graduated students with high problem solving ability, creative thinking etc. The Degree Programme in Entrepreneurship Development (Team Academy Programme) at the JAMK University of Applied Sciences, Jyväskylä, Finland provided a good solution to meet the labour market requirement.

Team Academy started its operation in 1993 at JAMK University of Applied Sciences (that time named Jyväskylä Polytechnic). When students join the Team Academy, they form teams and each team establishes a business and stays together throughout the studies. The teams implement various types of projects for outside customers. A special project group, which consists of members from various teams representing the skills and knowledge required for the project, is formed for each project.

The two universities started the negotiation of a common educational model in 2009. The general Cooperation Agreement between the two universities has been signed in November 2010. Double Degree Programme including from University

of Debrecen the "Master's Degree Programme in Business Development, MSc" and from JAMK University of Applied Sciences the "Master's Degree Programme in Entrepreneurship and Business Competence (Master of Business Administration)" has been signed in April, 2011.

Structure of the integration of Team Academy Programme and the Double Degree Programme is shown in Figure 1.

Student after finishing the first two years of their bachelor studies can join to the Team Academy Programme/method. The entire Degree Programme is based on credit acceptance between BA/BSc and Master Programmes. By the end of the 5.5 years educational period students get the basic BA/BSc diploma, the Master diploma of University of Debrecen and the Finnish MBA diploma based on the double degree agreement between the two universities. So far 22 students earned the mentioned Finnish MBA diploma.

In 2014 the Finnish Higher Education Law has been changed. MBA type of education can be started for Bachelor graduated students after 3 years working experience. That is why the Double Degree Programme had to be modified.

The main change was that master graduates must have one more year working experience (the necessary 2 extra years can be fulfilled within the framework of Team Academy Programme during their master studies) to be allowed to enter the Finnish Double Degree Programme. The necessary 30 credits can be fulfilled within 1 or 2 semesters depending on students.

The current existing Double Degree Agreement is shown on Figure 2.

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Next step was to extend the Double Degree Agreement on MBA level. University of Debrecen, Hungary and Mediterranean University Podgorica, Montenegro had a common TEMPUS project between 2010-2012. One of the main outcome was to introduce MBA Programme in Commerce and Marketing at the partner Mediterranean University. The project was successful and the programme started in Montenegro. The cooperation has been further developed into Double Degree Programme in 2016 and the 2 universities are going to sign the Agreement in November 2016.

The degree programme from the University of Debrecen is "Master's Degree Programme in Business Development, MSc" and from the Mediterranean University Podgorica, Montenegro is "International MBA in Management, Marketing and Finance". The Double Degree Programme uses the Team Academy method, as well.

The structure of the Double Degree Agreement is shown on Figure 3.

The Double Degree Programme ensures for students from both universities that after their 2 years of master studies they can earn 2 master degrees. The joint programme was announced by the leader of the Degree Programme in Montenegro in front of the national TV channel (Atlas TV).

*Picture 1: Interview with Atlas TV in Montenegro about the Double Degree Agreement with the Dean of Montenegro Business School, Mediterranean University*



*source: photo with Atlas Tv, 2016 by Tunde Risko Csapone*

Negotiation has been started also in Nitra within the framework of our Agrimba Network to establish Finnish educational method there.

## SUMMARY

University of Debrecen had and has important role establishing and operating AGRIMBA network. The professional content of the MBA Programme has been incorporated into the "Master's Degree Programme in Business Development, MSc". MBA education has been refreshed through Double Degree Programmes. The combination of master studies (MSc and MBA) could further be developed in the AGRIMBA Network.

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