

PROFESSOR JAAK LEIMANN – 80

The career of Professor Jaak Leimann, who now celebrates his 80th birthday, has been quite unique and multi-faceted. He is one of the key figures of the Estonian school of organisational and management theory who has won recognition as expert of management and an ideologist and promoter of the field of management consulting, but has also successfully served as a minister of economic affairs of the Republic of Estonia, in no less than three cabinets.

Jaak Leimann was born in Võru, South Estonia, on March 1, 1941. He graduated from the Tallinn Polytechnical Institute (TPI) economics faculty in 1964. Having worked for some years in the enterprises of his hometown of Võru, including managerial positions, he continued his studies at TPI in 1968, under the tutelage of Professor Raoul Üksvärav, the founder of the Estonian school of management theory. This launched his academic career. He received the degree of candidate in economics (corresponds to a Ph.D degree today) in 1972.

Leimann worked simultaneously as the trainer of students and practicing managers while providing management consultation services to enterprises and other organisations. Management consultation was also the subject of his later paper for the degree of doctor of sciences (the highest academic degree of the then USSR).

Jaak Leimann underwent scientific internship in Finland in the mid-1970s and propagated the knowledge and experience obtained there among his colleagues in Estonia, making an important contribution to the elevation of Estonia's practice of improving management methods to the advanced international level. Modern methods like teamwork and the forming of enterprises' strategies were being adopted by Estonian enterprises and Jaak Leimann's contribution to it was immense. He also became one of the leading liaison persons in the transfer of Finland's economic experience to Estonia. The significance of this experience cannot be overestimated, especially in the 1980s and 1990s.

In 1979, Jaak Leimann became the Vice President of Mainor, the development organisation of the Estonian Ministry of Light Industry. This position enabled him to participate directly in the solving of problems of one of Estonia's largest branches of industry, as well as in the initiating of first market economy-directed experiments. In 1987 he became the Chairman and professor of the Estonian Management Institute. This institute was responsible for the training in management and economics of top and medium-level managers for a majority of Estonian enterprises.

Jaak Leimann was a member of the team which elaborated in 1987 the initial platform of Estonia's economic autonomy and transfer to market economy (known in Estonia by the acronym of IME Project). The project initiated the complex of market economic reforms, which were implemented during the following five years. Leimann also consulted the reorganisation of Estonia's governance structure. He was the minister of economic affairs and the deputy head of government in Prime Minister Edgar Savisaar's government, which came in power in spring 1990 after the first free election. This was the government which steered Estonia to the restoration of its independence in 1991. Jaak Leimann was the minister of economic affairs in 1996–1999 in two further cabinets.

In the meantime, he worked with the international consulting firm SIAR Bossard, which supported Western enterprises entering the Estonian economy.

Having held several ministerial positions, Jaak Leimann returned to his old university after an absence of 20 years. He was the Professor of Business Organisation and the head of the chair of organisation and management at the Tallinn University of Technology (former TPI) in 1999 –2008. He has been professor emeritus since 2008.

Peeter Kross and Erik Terk,
former colleagues