

CONTINUING EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF EMPLOYEES IN ENTERPRISES

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Abstract: *The purpose of this paper is to present the reality of implementation of the continuing education and practices in Slovak business environment. Questionnaire survey was a tool for obtaining primary data. The survey examines the complex of continuing education and practices in Slovak businesses such as what forms, methods and techniques of education are used in education and training. The paper presents partial results of the survey concerning the advantages/disadvantages of education and training staff, as well as what are their motives to continuing education. For data analysis were used descriptive and inferential statistical methods - Pearson correlation coefficient and t-tests.*

Key words: *continuing education, forms, methods and techniques of education, employees.*

1. Introduction

Performance and success of organizations and businesses is significantly determined by human capital. According OECD (2007), human capital, in its narrower sense is represented by skills and abilities of workforce that directly affect the success of a particular company or industry [1]. Vodák and Kucharčíková (2011) indicate that the human capital of the company consists of employees, their congenital and acquired knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes and competencies [2]. In order to create a sufficient supply of skills and competencies, i.e. capital people invest in their education, study and other ways of acquiring experience and skills. The return on such investment is long-term, it returns

usually in the form of salary or other compensation.

2. Corporate education and training

Concepts of education and training are often associated. Anyway, some authors, such as Witt (2008) distinguishes between these two concepts. He argues that while training teaches employees to expect specific things to happen, for which they'll receive specific rewards or punishments, education teaches people to use brain tools. Training is about responding to some external stimulus and education is growth [3].

The corporate education is, according to Vodák and Kucharčíková (2011), recurring cycle based on the principles of corporate education policy which pursues corporate learning strategies and relies on

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organizational and institutional prerequisites for learning [4]. In order education to have a positive impact on the organization/company it should be closely aligned with the mission, vision and strategy, and should be carried out in a professional manner. Corporate education can be realized by external institution, internal experts or in its own education training center.

Training is perceived as essential to the development of production processes based around teamwork and skilled employees (Blyton & Morris, 1992, in Heyes & Stuart, 1996) [5]. Training also increases the extent to which employees feel valued by the company (Storey & Sisson, 1993, in Heyes & Stuart, 1996) [6]. Education and training helps to make and keep the job interesting and according Keep (1991, in Heyes & Stuart, 1996) is vital to the successful harnessing of employee commitment in the pursuit of organisational and operational goals [7].

The main aim of corporate education and training is to improve knowledge, skills and abilities of employees and thus increase overall organizational performance and competitive strength. At the core of education is learning. Illeris (2003) sees learning in a broad sense and claims that learning should be understood as all processes leading to permanent capacity change i.e. physical, cognitive, emotional or social in nature [8]. It means that the learning concept also extends to such functions and fields as personal development, socialisation, qualification and competence development.

The continuing education of a company's employees is a prerequisite in developing an excellence model for its quality management system [9]. At the EU level, the European Social Fund offers a lot of opportunities for the financing various training programs for corporate education [10].

There are a diverse range of reasons for implementation of corporate education and training. Schraeder referring to other authors argues that regardless of the stated purpose of training programs, the efforts are often intended to result in some level of improvement in the organizations' operations or level of efficiency (Hughey and Mussnug, 1997; Ladyshevsky, 2007, in Schraeder, 2009) [11]. As stated by Mary Garnett (in Horowitz, 2003) the training process begins by understanding the gap between how an employee is performing and what level of performance is appropriate [12]. Then, goals are set. For identification of the gap between current and desired performance could be used packaged assessment programs Holstead (in Horowitz, 2003) [13].

Moreover, "corporate education can also play an integral role in succession planning, leadership development, building organisation capability and capacity, and facilitating innovation programmes to generate new products and services and identifying new markets and customers. Organisations with a strategic approach to corporate education that invest in the learning and skills development of their employees find their investment increases over time" (Ryan, 2010, p. 29) [14].

2.1. Increase the effectiveness of education and training

Horowitz (2003) give some advices that help people to learn and make them learn faster and better if they: (1) have willingness to learn, (2) know why is for them important to learn, (3) believe that what they will learn will help them in real ways, (4) are in a supportive environment and are free from threat, (5) feel good about themselves and able to learn what is expected of them, (6) are provided the information they are to learn in several different ways, (7) learn by doing the task,

(8) have a chance to practice what they have learned, (9) are given feedback on their performance, (10) are praised when doing things well [15].

Interesting look at increasing the efficiency of education and training offers Schraeder (2009) who recommends perceive employees as customers [16]. The organization efforts should be focused not only on meeting, but on exceeding a employees'/trainees' expectations. "If employees, in a training environment, are viewed as customers, and steps are taken to augment the training experience by not only meeting, but exceeding the employees' expectations, then the effectiveness of the concomitant training may be improved" (Schraeder, 2009, p. 134) [17]. Following this author offers strategies for augmenting employee training:

1. Adopt flexibility. In a training environment, learning may be enhanced by being flexible in the design of the training (Hornik et al., 2007, in Schraeder, 2009) [18]. This flexibility could relate to the content of the training in which the specific topics covered are targeted directly to the needs and interests of trainees.

2. Infuse active participation. Training should include some degree of active participation by the learners, engaging them in activities that directly relate to the intended objectives of the training session.

3. Create an environment conducive to learning. It means to organize physical environment in a manner that is conducive to learning. The quality of learning could be enhanced by organizing the seating so that it is comfortable and laid out in a way that reflects the nature of training that will ensue.

4. Focus on different learning styles. It is acknowledged that individuals tend to learn differently based on preferred styles of learning (Chambers, 2005, in Schraeder, 2009) [19].

5. Promote networking. Given evidence that the support from peers in a training

venue can impact the overall effectiveness of the learning (Cromwell & Kolb, 2004, in Schraeder, 2009), it might be beneficial to augment training by providing contact information on other training participants, encouraging trainees to communicate and interact following the training session [20].

6. Promote professionalism through quality of interaction and materials. It is highly likely that individuals attending the training session will begin formulate perceptions about the training well in advance of the actual training event.

7. Provide pertinent local information. Training is often conducted at central locations, requiring participants to travel to the training venue. In pursuing this strategy, details regarding the local area where the training will be conducted should be sent to participants (Schraeder, 2009) [21].

3. Material and Methods

A statistical population consists of employed people in the productive age who are willing to learn. Since the population was very large, respondents were selected in random manner i.e. probability random sampling was used. The collection of primary data was conducted through questionnaire survey among employees. Total number of people interviewed was 500 and the rate of return is 15.78%. Research sample consists of 79 respondents from the field of administration (53) and production (26).

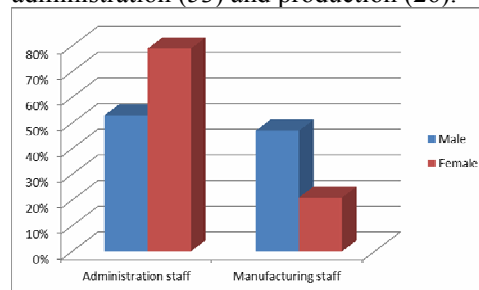


Fig. 1. Research sample

Source: authors

The main objective of the research was to determine whether organizations provide education; what forms, methods and techniques of education are used in education and training. We also investigated what advantages/ disadvantages of education and training trainees see, as well as what are their motives to continuing education. Partial objective was to determine whether there are differences between the administrative staff and workers in manufacturing.

For data analysis were used descriptive and inferential statistical methods - Pearson correlation coefficient and t-tests. The statistical software SPSS was used.

4. Results

In formulating hypotheses we assumed that employees positively perceive corporate education and training because of its benefits for their work and that staff from different sectors differently perceive continuing education and training. Based on these assumptions, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H1: *There is a general tendency of respondents to see continuing education beneficial for their work and it is the main reason for their education and training.*

H2: *There is significant relationship between the elements of continuing education (participation in it, importance for the profession and for self-development, its need and knowledge and acquired knowledge) and its benefits (general benefits, career development, assessment, interpersonal relationships, motivation).*

H3: *There is a significant difference between administrative staff and manufacturing staff (production workers) with respect to how they perceive continuing education.*

4.1. The importance of education for professional development

To the question “Do you consider continuing education important for your professional development?” most respondents answered in the affirmative (75%) (Figure 2). Thus, we can conclude that there is a general tendency of respondents to see continuing education beneficial for their profession (work).

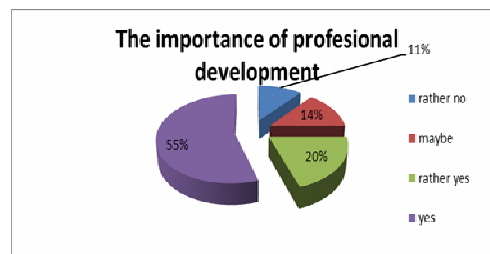


Fig. 2. *The importance of professional development*

Source: authors

4.2. Testing the relationship between continuing education and its benefits

This hypothesis was verified by frequency analysis using the correlation coefficient. Relationships between five elements of employees' education: participation on it, the need for education performance, importance for job performance, importance for self-development, acquiring exploitable knowledge and its five benefits: general benefits, career development, assessment, interpersonal relationships, and motivation were measured by using the Pearson correlation coefficient. The interpretation of value of the correlation coefficient is as follows: < 0.1 is trivial correlation, 0.1 - 0.3 is small correlation, 0.3 - 0.5 medium correlation, > 0.5 is high correlation. Results are visualized in Table 1.

Denomination of the table

Table 1

		Elements of education				
		Participation in education and training	Importance of education for the profession (job performance)	Importance of education for self-development	The need for education performance	Exploitable knowledge
Benefits of education	General benefits of education & training	, 414**			, 316**	, 269**
	Influence on career development		, 356*		, 166*	
	Influence on staff assessment					
	Influence on interpersonal relationships	, 332*		, 567**		
	Influence on motivation					

Source: author

Statistical significance of differences in terms of the work area respondents Table 2

Question		Average	Standard deviation	T (Test criterion)	Sig (2-tailed)
Are you educated in your work?	administration	2,35	,650	3,931	,105
	manufacturing	2,15			
Do you think it is important for your profession continuing education?	administration	3,35	,541	4,075	2,598
	manufacturing	2,61			
Is your continuing education important to you?	administration	2,20	,417	3,572	3,722
	manufacturing	3,61			
Is continuing education necessary to pursue your profession?	administration	2,19	,600	5,384	3,642
	manufacturing	2,37			
Are acquired knowledge exploitable in your job?	administration	3,15	,283	3,211	1,614
	manufacturing	2,68			
Do you see any benefits of continuing education?	administration	3,05	,164	3,407	,681
	manufacturing	2,11			
Does your continuing education influence your career development?	administration	3,35	,082	3,388	,483
	manufacturing	2,69			
Has participation in continuing education an impact on staff assessment?	administration	2,35	,639	4,531	1,723
	manufacturing	2,11			

Question		Average	Standard deviation	T (Test criterion)	Sig (2-tailed)
Does education improve interpersonal relationships in the workplace?	administration	3,30	,033	4,037	2,805
	manufacturing	2,21			
Is continuing education motivating for you?	administration	3,05	,617	3,711	3,776
	manufacturing	2,79			
Does your employer support staff education, training and development?	administration	3,33	,377	5,484	1,540
	manufacturing	2,66			
Has your organization developed a program for staff education, training & development?	administration	3,04	,525	3,565	3,987
	manufacturing	2,61			
Do you educate yourself during working hours?	administration	2,35	,350	3,192	,646
	manufacturing	2,19			
Are you satisfied with the conditions for education provided by your employer?	administration	2,30	,013	4,067	2,845
	manufacturing	2,11			
Does the content of education relate to your job performance?	administration	3,33	,477	5,489	1,549
	manufacturing	2,66			
Do you meet existing forms and methods of education in the workplace?	administration	3,04	,544	3,735	,787
	manufacturing	2,61			

Source: authors

The most important findings and results:

- There is a significant relationship between the participation in corporate education and interpersonal relationships.
- This result indicates that the education brings improvement in relationships in the workplace.
- There is a significant relationship between the importance of education for self-development and a shift in interpersonal relationships.
- There is a significant relationship between the awareness of education importance for the job performance and career development. Respondents indicated that continuing education is important for their profession and that may affect their career development.
- Respondents perceive continuing education as beneficial for them, knowledge gained can apply in practice.

- There are no significant relationship between education and its impact on motivation.

- There are no significant relationship between education and staff assessment.

4.3. Testing the significant difference between administrative and manufacturing staff

In hypothesis we assume significant differences between administrative staff and manufacturing staff with respect to how they perceive continuing education. Verification of this hypothesis was verified by means of t-tests. Responses on individual question were by t-tests compared in relation to the work area. Results are shown in Table 2 (above).

In no item were found statistically significant differences between administration staff and manufacturing staff. Our assumption that administrative

staff is likely to show greater interest in and attach greater importance to education, training a development than manufacturing staff was not confirmed. That is why our (alternative) hypothesis assuming the existence of differences between administrative staff and manufacturing staff in perceiving continuing education is rejected in favour of the null hypothesis.

5. Conclusion

Based on the analysis, we can conclude that employees have a positive outlook on further education and its benefits. Education influences on their career development, assessment, motivation and interpersonal relationships. Appreciate that it is possible to find continuing education and training benefits as marked mainly the acquisition of new information, self-development, acquiring new contacts and a new perspective on the issue. Often mentioned that they that can be educated within the working hours and in doing so to let off steam, because there is a pleasant atmosphere.

The most important benefits for their work also included improving communication with people, acquire new knowledge, self-knowledge, streamlining workflow, better use of working time, getting hindsight, a better understanding of the decisions of superiors and improvement in assertive communication.

Based on the above, we recommend that educate employees especially during their working life in the field of communication and language competence, presentation skills which may help them continue to acquire and improve their professional skills.

Acknowledgements

The article is part of the solution of the research grant *KEGA 017PU-4/2013*

Networking of some element of faculty structure.

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