

Comparison of the use of selected employee training methods at management positions

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Abstract

The paper deals with the issue of education as an important matter influencing employees, with special attention being paid to the training of employees in management positions. The paper presents the results of a research carried out on a sample of Slovak companies aimed at identifying the situation in the field of education of managers in Slovak companies and comparison of the use of selected education methods. To meet the goal, the existence of statistically significant differences in the use of the selected learning methods has been verified in terms of their impact on labor productivity and professional growth of employees. Two statistical hypotheses were accepted using the Kruskal Wallis test at a significance level of 5%. Research results have confirmed that variables such as projected labor productivity growth and professional growth are factors influencing the choice of employee training methods in management positions.

Keywords

Human resource management, training&development, education, managers.

Introduction

Human resource development in general is a process in which people are expanding already acquired knowledge and skills and implement them in real-life business in the performance of their assigned tasks. Armstrong defines this as a certain developmental process by which employees can progress from the current state of knowledge to the future state. In this future state, a higher level of skills, knowledge and abilities is needed. The process thus involves educational activities which are designed to prepare employees for more responsible and demanding tasks. Education as such is necessary for the further development of one's personality [1]. This fact does not concern only employees at the lowest level of the company hierarchy, but also managers. Employee training is an indispensable tool for professional growth of employees. Every change requires new skills and attitudes as well. Companies that do not invest time and money in this kind of development cannot hope for any benefit from ongoing external and internal changes [2].

1. Literary review

Education is an underlying mean for successful functioning of any company. The knowledge of employees directly affects company's prosperity. Employee training depends on specific requirements of the company. It can be said that the constantly changing requirements, especially those coming from the external environment, give rise to the need to learn and improve the qualification of employees or managers [3]. Training is a planned effort of the company to create suitable conditions for acquiring the necessary work competencies. These competences include the knowledge, skills or behavior that are critical to successful work performance. The aim of any training is to ensure that the employees master the knowledge, skills and behavior highlighted in the training programs and apply them in everyday activities [4].

Human resources are very important and constitute the backbone of every company. They are also the key source of the company. Bearing this in mind companies invest enormous amounts into human capital

because performance of employees will ultimately greatly increase the performance of the company. Performance is an important multidimensional result-oriented construct and has a strong link to strategic goals of the company. The importance of education is directly related to the pressures that prompt changes which in turn affect almost all companies. The changes are mainly driven by an external and rapidly globalizing environment, which raises the need for dynamic development of all employees of managers [3].

Training can be seen as the most important factor in the business world, as education increases efficiency of both employees and the organization as a whole. Employee performance depends on various factors. However, the most important factor in employee performance is training, so it is imperative to organize various trainings and workshops [5]. The basic goal of any training is to help the management achieve its goals by utilizing and developing the skills of employees. Education is thus understood as a continuous and systematic activity [6]. Education and development are important activities that increase the overall performance of the company [7]. Employee performance depends on many factors such as job satisfaction, knowledge or management's approach. However, according to several studies there is a significant relationship between training and performance [8]. Kachaňáková, Nachtmanová and Joniaková describe that the goal of learning is to create the conditions for efficient performance of tasks through the process of potential-modelling. It follows that education is not just a one-off activity. It can be characterized as a continuous, organized, and rated process [9]. Investments in education and development are crucial for any company. High performance companies are increasingly recognizing the need to use the best training and development practices to increase their competitive advantage. Training and development are essential elements of every company that values its human resources. Many studies have highlighted the clear link between well-designed and strategic education and development initiatives and the nature of business as such. Warner Burke emphasizes that organizational learning is not just "done to improve the company". Learning and education are processes that aim to deliver specific results that include organizational reflection, improvement of the already-existing system, planning, and own analysis. Education has a clear role to play in achieving organizational goals by linking organizational and workforce interests. Organizational education must have a comprehensive strategy designed to change organizations' attitudes, values and structures so that they can better adapt to new technologies, markets and challenges [10].

The effect of education is largely influenced by the choice of appropriate employee training methods that represent the means and practices used when providing and acquiring knowledge, skills, experience and attitudes [9]. Based on the previous experience it can be stated that no method can work like a hard work does. Taking this into account, the effectiveness of employee training is crucial for ensuring a harmonious link between the objectives, topics, methods and place of education and employees and lecturers [11]. If the company wants to gain a competitive advantage, training must involve more than basic skills development. This means that in order to gain a competitive advantage, the company should generally perceive training as a tool that creates the intellectual capital. Intellectual capital includes basic skills (skills employees need to carry out their own work), advanced skills (for example, how to use technology to share information with other employees), understanding the customer or production system and own creativity [12]. Those companies that develop a good training program according to the needs of employees and the company alike always achieve good results. Education planning seems to play a very important role in the performance of the employee as well as in organizational performance [13]. This demonstrates that employee performance is important to the company's performance, and training and development are means to improve employee performance. Training also has an impact on return on investment. Organizational performance depends precisely on employee performance because human resources play an important role in increasing organizational performance [7]. Although many organizations focus on efficiency and cost control, education spending should increase as the organization becomes more efficient.

The education is also important in terms of getting quality employees. Career development is an increasingly attractive or even basic requirement for many employees. In today's business environment, where many industries experience shortages of skilled employees, companies face strong internal and external competition when searching for quality employees. Any employer who seriously invests in education and development will benefit from the enriched work environment in terms of higher degree of employee stability as well as greater productivity and performance [10].

Education methods should be derived from the actual needs and the real level of knowledge of the individual target groups and therefore emphasis should be placed on the effectiveness of the methods. In case of passive methods such as lectures or seminars, these should be used only if the aim of the education is to provide only basic information on a certain topic. Decisions on the choice of appropriate methods at or outside the workplace, for example in the context of personal development of employees or newly recruited employees. An important factor is also the prioritization of active methods used in non-workplace education, especially when it comes to acquiring lasting skills or knowledge [11]. When choosing the right method of education, it is necessary to be aware of the factors on the basis of which we chose them, whether it is urgency, content of education, learning objectives, and so on. The basic methods we know include coaching, mentoring, tutoring, assisting, internships, rotation of workplaces, consultations, trainings, seminars, workshops, lectures, e-learning, simulations, brainstorming and the like [3]. As Sojka points out, the choice of methods depends on the goal of the training, also on the type of the management, whether it is top management or middle management and the quality of the lecturer [14]. When selecting the methods and the final form of implementation, the focus should be placed on active methods that would help to solve particular problems without heavily focusing on lecturer methods [15]. The first step in choosing a training method is to determine the type of outcome the company wants. These outcomes can include verbal information, mental skills, cognitive strategies, attitudes and motor skills. Training methods may affect one or more outcomes. Research on specific training methods has shown that in order for the training to be effective, the teaching process must be consistent with the desired outcome. The choice of the method should be based on the required outcomes and on the features that facilitate learning and knowledge transfer. Once the method is identified, the next step is to assess to what extent the method facilitates the learning and transfer of knowledge, the costs associated with the development and use of the method and its effectiveness [12].

Employees are aware of ways training is provided [1]. If someone does not provide training in an eye-catching way and does not capture the audience's attention, it means it's just a waste of time [16]. It is very important for the lecturer to know how to grab attention of his/her audience. It is very difficult for the employee to work well without any preparatory education [17]. Trained employees have better results compared to unskilled employees [13]. It is very important for each company to provide its employees with training in order to achieve the desired goals of the company [17]. Training and development increase the overall performance of the company. While it is costly to provide training to employees, in the long run the money is spent well [18].

A special category of employees whose education needs to be given special attention are managers. Managerial positions require a wide range of different skills and abilities such as analytical, diagnostic, ability to work under pressure, lead and motivate subordinates and many others. For this reason, the education and training of this category of employees is very specific and demanding. The choice of employee training method should be based, in particular, on the final outcome expected.

2. Methodology

In order to analyze the decision-making process on the methods of employee training we have carried out an extensive research. Attention was paid to the comparison of selected training methods of managers in terms of their expected impact on labor productivity growth and professional growth of managers. The research was carried out on a sample of 104 respondents, namely education managers, i.e. employees who are responsible for training of employees in companies, and at the same time deciding on the selection of specific training methods. Respondents were addressed personally and via e-mail. The standardized questionnaire was used to obtain the research data. The paper presents the results of testing the two research hypotheses using the Kruskal Wallis test at a significance level of 5%. The existence of statistically significant differences in the use of selected managers' training methods has been identified in terms of their expected impact on two variables, namely (1) the increase in labor productivity and (2) the professional growth of the employee. The impact of the relevant training method on the selected variables was measured on scale 1 (strong impact) -5 (weak impact).

For the purposes of comparison, the following training methods were selected:

- Assisting.
- Workplace rotation.
- Lectures.
- Assessment Centers (AC).
- Workshop.
- E-learning.

The rate of utilization of these methods was determined using the scale (1 - very often up to 5 - never).

3. Results and discussion

In the framework of the research, the state of use of different methods of training of managers in Slovak companies was examined. As illustrated in Table 1, it is clear that the less widely used training methods for managers are assessment centers and workshops. The most commonly used methods are e-learning, workplace rotation and lectures. Based on these results, it is possible to conclude that the training of managers is based on standard educational methods, which are commonly used in other types of job positions as well. It is also important to use modern methods, such as workshops and assessment centers, to acquire a wide range of knowledge necessary for the managerial work. Since these methods are time, finance and organization-demanding, it can be assumed that this is the main reason for their low utilization rates. At the same time, they also require cooperation with external consultants, which may be perceived as a barrier by some employers.

It was subsequently determined whether the extent to which enterprises use different learning methods will be different depending on the predicted impact these methods might have on labor productivity and professional growth of employees.

H1: We assume that there are statistically significant differences in the use of educational methods in terms of the expected impact on labor productivity.

Based on the results shown in Table 1, it is clear that the most effective education method impacting the labor productivity is workplace rotation. This method is based on the fact that an employee stays at one workplace for a certain amount of time (allows the acquisition of knowledge directly during the course of work), but it is limited due to the nature of the company. As the least effective method for increasing work productivity is perceived the method of AC and workshop.

Table 1: Mean Rank Values - Labor productivity

	Methods	n	Mean Rank
The impact of educational methods on labor productivity growth	Assisting	104	289.93
	Workplace rotation	104	261.78
	Lectures	104	365.33
	Assessment centers	104	445.26
	Workshop	104	439.25
	E-learning	104	335.84

Source: Statistics 21.

Based on the testing using the Kruskal Wallis test, the H1 hypothesis has been confirmed and it is therefore possible to argue that the choice of training methods depends on the impact the company wants the method to have on the growth of labor productivity. It is clear that companies perceive labor productivity as an important factor that can be influenced by the right educational methods, and on this basis they decide on the methods which they will choose in the education of their employees on the managerial positions.

Table 2: Testing of hypothesis H1

Test Statistics	
Chi-Square	78.921
df	6
Asymp. Sig.	.000

Source: Statistics 21.

The second variable examined was the professional growth of an employee. Educational managers should choose those training methods that they expect would impact the professional development of employees.

H2: We assume that there are statistically significant differences in the use of training methods in terms of the impact on the professional development of the employee.

As shown in Table 2, respondents see the method of assistive and e-learning as the most effective in terms of impact on professional development. AC methods and workshops are again perceived as the least effective for the professional development, so it is possible to assume that the given methods are not widely used in Slovak companies, which may be one of the possible reasons for such a perception.

Table 3: Mean Rank Values – Professional Growth

	Methods	n	Mean Rank
The impact of educational methods on professional growth and development	Assisting	104	336.96
	Workplace rotation	104	256.02
	Lectures	104	372.17
	Assessment centers	104	417.91
	Workshop	104	406.63
	E-learning	104	339.01

Source:
Statistics
21.

Using the Kruskal Wallis test, it was found that the rate of use of the methods under examination differs depending on the impact these methods might have on the professional development of employees. Hypothesis H2 was also accepted. Based on the results, the perceived impact on the professional development of employees can also be considered as a variable that influences the choice of learning methods.

Table 4: Testing of hypothesis H2

Test Statistics	
Chi-Square	53.409
Df	6
Asymp. Sig.	.000

Source: Statistics 21.

Employee training is an important matter influencing employees that should be part of the human resources management of each organization. The increasing demands on the performance of employees should also take into account the demands for further education. This is especially true for management

positions that require a wide range of knowledge and skills. Besides, the fulfillment of managerial functions is also demanding because it requires constant innovation in the field of work skills development in order to respond to changing conditions of the external environment. Therefore, training in companies must be ongoing and, in particular, constantly innovated process to ensure the professional growth of workers in management positions. Only sufficiently trained executives can ensure the progressive development of the company.

Despite this fact, according to the results of the research carried out under the conditions of the SR, insufficient attention is paid to the education of employees. As the results of the research show, the use of modern teaching methods such as workshops or ACs are used only rarely while assistance and rotation at the workplace are used more often. While there is no doubt about the effectiveness of the methods used, it is necessary for companies to broaden the range of training methods, especially for managers. Methods such as workshops or ACs allow employees to acquire new knowledge from the outside environment, which can make a significant contribution to the work productivity and professional growth. It can be assumed that the reason these methods are not yet part of the educational process in Slovak companies is their organizational difficulty and finances required for the implementation, as they often require cooperation with external trainers or companies lack information about the actual benefits of these methods.

It is important that the education managers themselves who are responsible for the implementation of education in their companies disseminate their knowledge of current learning opportunities, evaluate the benefits of education and, on the basis of rigorous analyzes, create modern curricula that respond to current and future management requirements of employees.

Acknowledgement

The paper has been elaborated within the project VEGA No. 1/0909/16.

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