

Is Continuous Training Relevant to Employees and Sustainable Development ? Evidence from Timis County

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Abstract

Based on the idea that the most valuable resource of an organisation is the human resource, our research objective is related to identifying the perception of the importance of staff training for company development. The analysis was realised based on a survey completed by 122 persons living in Timisoara, Romania. Almost all respondents perceive employee training and development courses and specializations as important and very important for the development of the company. This general opinion reveals the importance of training activities for both, employers and employees. Approximately 60% of the cases related to the training sessions were fully paid by companies, while 14% of them were fully covered by the beneficiary. In addition, the survey statistics proved that companies contribute financially for executive and younger employees to a much greater extent than to the elderly ones. In general, the employees were satisfied by the overall quality of the courses attended, confirming their positive influence on their personal and professional development.

Key words: training, employee satisfaction, sustainable development, survey, Romania

J.E.L. classification: M52, M53, K31

1. Introduction

In order for organisations to survive in this competitive economy and volatile marketplace, employees satisfaction became extremely important. Therefore, the organisations realised that the loyalty and efficiency of its employees are its key competitive advantages. For achieving this, training and development for increasing employees' efficiency and job satisfaction should yield higher returns than the costs involved. Nowadays, training and development is understood as one of the best ways to retain your employees. Moreover, these one-time costs with employees' development will have returns over the long-term, building up towards the sustainable development of the company.

This research is based on an online survey, completed by both employees and managers, and it represents the first step on analysing the impact employees development has on the performance of the organisation. Due to the complex implications of this topic, this paper will present the main reasons for attending training and development courses, presenting the respondents' opinions on the importance and relevance of training and development courses.

2. The premises of the study

Due to the current volatile conditions and unsustainable growth, the crisis of employment could deepen in Romania. Citizens with limited experience are facing higher risks of unemployment and lack of labour safety. On the other side, employers are facing great mobility of the labour force, especially in the developed regions of the country, which makes it difficult to develop and grow the companies on the basis of permanent and trustful human resource. Therefore, the work paradigm should shift towards the organisational climate offered to employees, focused on innovative working methods, employed to develop employee skills and offer them various advantages (flexibility for working hours, the possibility for home office, trainings for permanent development on both professional and personal life, etc.).

As long as the most valuable resource of any organisation is considered its human resource, we presume that the most educated employees will become one of the most important competitive advantages. Therefore, the human resource strategy should be closely related to the permanent development of employees, although it will increase the costs for companies over the short-term. For this reason, Čihovská and Hvizdová (2011) emphasized the necessity for shifting from the traditional view of considering employees as costs towards increasing their values. Through a sustainable educational and training policy, employees become eager to learn and permanently develop. In addition previous studies (Kotler and Armstrong, 2011; Dobre, 2013) proved the positive relationship between employee care and job satisfaction, and constant development is one way organisations show their interest for employees.

By offering employees opportunities for training and development courses, the organisations transmit a signal of appreciation towards their employees, increasing their potential. In addition, employees' work will improve by the extra knowledge, helping the human resource on achieving a new work potential, and even receiving a raise for improved efficiency or a promotion (Trelová, 2016).

Although training and development courses are traditionally understood as means of increasing the organisational performance based on the human resource developed, nowadays they are perceived as employee benefits, along with healthcare, hospitality, loyalty rewards, etc. Moreover, in the current environment employee benefits should be offered individually, based on a flexible programme of employee benefits. This way, each one would opt for what motivates him best, or based on its personal needs (Trelová and Olšovský, 2017).

Based on this recent awareness on the value of human resource in any organisation, our research objectives are related to identifying the perception of the importance of staff training for company development. For it, there is a need for revealing the motivation for attending vocational training courses, based on the frequency of attendance at training and development courses and the main types of training and development courses where employees participated. Further research on the degree of satisfaction related to the courses followed and the usefulness of these courses may be reflected through the impact employees development has on the performance of the organisation. In this paper, only the first stage will be presented, as the premises for further analysis of the relationship between employees development and organisational performance.

3. Methodology

A cross-examination was initiated by the survey undertaken for this study, as we consider it as the best scientific method for reviewing the subjective opinions of the people, under their differences related to gender, age, education, professional level, etc. The results may be used by employers in terms of offering an educational package adapted to the labour market requirements.

This analysis was realised based on a survey completed by 122 persons living in Timisoara, Romania. The convenience sample was consisting of managers and employees, who completed the survey online. The statistical analysis of the responses was realised through the SPSS software.

The first part of the survey reflects how many training and development courses were attended and the main reasons for attending them. Next, the survey emphasizes the respondents' opinions on the importance of the training and development courses for each one. The last part of the survey is

related to personal characteristics of the respondents: age, gender, level of education, position and the field of activity, and will be used to structure the overall database on population differences.

4. Results

Answers related to the question "From your point of view, how important are employee training courses and training for company development?" are presented in Table 1. The answers are presented based on population characteristics.

Table no. 1. Results from survey analysis on the question "From your point of view, how important are employee training and development courses for company development?"

	% of total resp.	Gender		Position in the firm		
		Male	Female	Executive	Middle Mgm.	Top Mgm.
<i>Useless</i>	0.8	2.3%	0%	1.5%	0%	0%
<i>Not important</i>	1.6	4.5%	0%	1.5%	2.9%	0%
<i>Important</i>	28.7	34.1%	25.6%	26.9%	31.4%	30%
<i>Very important</i>	68.9	59.1%	74.4%	70.1%	65.7%	70%

	Field of activity (values in %.)											
	Financial / Accountancy	Public administration	Audit	Sales	Constructions	Consultancy	Education	IT	Mass media	Human resources	Automotive	Others
<i>Useless</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Not important</i>	0	14.3	0.0	11.1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Important</i>	23.5	0	34.6	44.4	50	55.6	40	0	33.3	0	0	25
<i>Very important</i>	76.5	85.7	65.4	44.4	50	44.4	60	100	66.7	100	100	75

	Age					Level of education			
	19-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	over 55	Highschool	Bachelor	Master / postgraduate	Doctoral
<i>Useless</i>	5.9%	0%	0%	0%	0%	20%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Not important</i>	0%	0%	2.8%	6.3%	0%	20%	0%	1.6%	0%
<i>Important</i>	41.2%	24.4%	25%	18.8%	62.5%	0%	40.4%	20.6%	42.9%
<i>Very important</i>	52.9%	75.6%	72.2%	75%	37.5%	60%	59.6%	77.8%	57.1%

Source: authors' own calculations

69% of the respondents evaluated this aspect as "very important", while 29% of them as "important". In terms of gender differences, more women (74.4%) than men (59%) considered employee training "very important", while the rest of them considered it as "important"; opinions such as the training courses are "useless" or "unimportant" were expressed by very few men. They were from public administration and companies operating in sales.

Regardless of the level of their job position (in executive/middle management/top management), respondents considered that these training and development courses are very important (66%-70%) or important (27%-31%). Moreover, based on the responses, a lower level of education is associated with an evaluation of "useless" or "unimportant" for the question mentioned.

For the question "Have you participated in any type of training or development courses over the last five years?", less than a quarter of the respondents specified that they have not attended any type of courses over the period mentioned. Approximately 80% of the women respondents attended these type of courses, a little more than men (70.5%). About half of these women respondents and 30% of the men attended the minimum number of courses, between one and five, and approximately 20% of men and women participated in five up to ten training and development courses. More results on courses participation and the number of courses attended by every respondent are presented in Table 2 and Table 3.

Table no. 2. Results from survey analysis on the question "Have you attended courses or any kind of training or specialization over the last 5 years?"

	% of total resp.	Gender		Position in the firm		
		Male	Female	Executive	Middle Mgm.	Top Mgm.
Yes	76.2	70.5%	79.5%	70.1%	77.1%	95%
No	23.8	29.5%	20.5%	29.9%	22.9%	5%

	Field of activity (values in %.)											
	Financial / Accountancy	Public administration	Audit	Sales	Constructions	Consultancy	Education	IT	Mass media	Human resources	Automotive	Others
Yes	76.5	71.4	80.8	55.6	50	77.8	100	100	33.3	100	100	83.3
No	23.5	28.6	19.2	44.4	50	22.2	0	0	66.7	0	0	16.7

	Age					Level of education			
	19-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	over 55	High school	Bachelor	Master / postgraduate	Doctoral
Yes	47.1%	87.8%	72.2%	81.3%	87.5%	40%	68.1%	82.5%	100%
No	52.9%	12.2%	27.8%	18.8%	12.5%	60%	31.9%	17.5%	0%

Source: authors' own calculations

Table 3. Results from survey analysis on the question "How many courses have you attended?"

	% of total resp.	Gender		Position in the firm		
		Male	Female	Executive	Middle Mgm.	Top Mgm.
None	24.6	31.8%	20.5%	31.3%	22.9%	5%
1-5 courses	41.0	29.5%	47.4%	46.3%	37.1%	30%
5-10 courses	22.1	20.5%	23.1%	16.4%	25.7%	35%
10-15 courses	7.4	9.1%	6.4%	3%	5.7%	25%
more than 15 courses	4.9	9.1%	2.6%	3%	8.6%	5%

	Field of activity (values in %.)											
	Financial / Accountancy	Public administration	Audit	Sales	Construc- tions	Consul- tancy	Educ- ation	IT	Massm- edia	Human resourc- es	Auto- moti- ve	Others
<i>None</i>	23.5	28.6	19.2	44.4	50	22.2	0	25	66.7	0	0	16.7
<i>1-5 courses</i>	41.2	57.1	34.6	44.4	25	22.2	100	25	33.3	33.3	0	58.3
<i>5-10 courses</i>	17.6	0.0	23.1	11.1	25	44.4	0	50	0	66.7	50	25
<i>10-15 courses</i>	11.8	14.3	11.5	0	0	11.1	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>more than 15 courses</i>	5.9	0	11.5	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	50	0

	Age					Level of education			
	19-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	over 55	Highsch- ool	Bachelor	Master / postgra- duate	Doctoral
<i>None</i>	52.9%	14.6%	27.8%	18.8%	12.5%	60%	34%	17.5%	0%
<i>1-5 courses</i>	35.3%	41.5%	41.7%	43.8%	50%	40%	40.4%	44.4%	14.3%
<i>5-10 courses</i>	11.8%	31.7%	19.4%	12.5%	25%	0%	19.1%	25.4%	28.6%
<i>10-15 courses</i>	0%	2.4%	5.6%	25%	12.5%	0%	6.4%	6.3%	28.6%
<i>more than 15 courses</i>	0%	9.8%	5.6%	0%	0%	0%	0.0%	6.3%	28.6%

Source: authors' own calculations

From all types of training and development courses, 43% of the respondents attended courses in Taxation and Accounting (Audit, Taxes, Accounting, Budget, Acquisitions, ACCA Courses, etc.) and 20% of them in Management (entrepreneurship, project management, organizational analysis, managerial internal control, risk management, etc.). About 8% of the respondents participated in courses of "Communication" and 6% in courses related to the development of digital competences (ECDL, Office, any other course on the Internet or digital competences). Although participation in these courses is viewed as a mean of permanent development for 65% of the respondents, courses or training for personal development do not appear to be very popular (only 4% attended such type). Very few courses on sales, human resource, training, and European funding were declared by the respondents.

The answers indicate that people who are in top management positions tend to participate in training and development courses to a much larger extent than any of the rest (95% of them participated in these courses over the past five years). In addition, the highest level of respondents who attended between five and ten courses are those from top management. For executive and middle management levels, the respondents usually attended from one to five courses.

Respondents who are 25-34 and over 55 are those who participated the most in these courses (more than 85% of them). Moreover, three-quarters of them attended from one to ten courses, being the most involved in their personal and professional development over the last five years. A little less of the respondents aged between 35 and 54, approximately 60%, participated in multiple courses. It can easily be observed from the answers grouped that for the highest education level, doctoral studies, respondents declared the highest number of courses attended over the last five years.

The economic sectors with the least respondents who were trained or attended development courses are in mass-media (33%), constructions (50%) and sales (56%). All the respondents working in education attended at least one training and development course. Other sectors with most respondents with participation in such courses are related to human resource, IT, public

administration, consultancy, and financial and accounting.

Besides aiming for permanent development, a quarter of the respondents specified that their participation was a request from the employer. Accordingly, about 60% of the training and development courses attended were fully covered by the company, and 14% of them were covered by the full expense of the respondents. Differentiated gender analysis does not illustrate significant differences between men and women, but when we look at the age or position occupied in the company, things are quite different. First of all, we can see that firms contribute much more financially to executive and younger employees to a much greater extent than to the elderly.

In terms of the quality of the courses attended, most respondents offered an evaluation score. On average, the courses were evaluated with 8.46 for their overall quality. Based on how useful these courses will be for the respondents' professional and personal life, they were evaluated with an average of 8.51. It was interesting to observe that lower grades were offered by the youngest respondents (between 19 and 24 years old) and by those with lower levels of education.

5. Conclusions

Almost all respondents (97.6%) perceive employee training and development courses and specializations as important and very important for the development of the company. This almost unanimous opinion reveals the importance of these activities for both, employer and employees. Accordingly, approximately 60% of the cases related to the training sessions were fully paid by companies, while 14% of them were fully covered by the beneficiary. The questionnaire proved that companies contribute financially for executive and younger employees to a much greater extent than to the elderly ones.

Regarding participation in different training courses and specializations, about three-quarters of the respondents confirmed that they had participated in at least one of such activities over the last five years. Regarding the profile of the beneficiary of such courses, as it appears from the data obtained, it can be concluded that the beneficiaries of these sessions are:

- more women (79.5%) than men (70.5%);
- involved in management (95% from Top Management and 77.1% in Middle Management) to a greater extent than in an executive position (70%);
- young, within the age bracket of 25-34;
- increasing with the level of their education.

The average of the training courses attended by the respondents, over the last five years, is approximately six courses. However, a quarter of the respondents did not participate in any training, and the same amount of companies to which respondents referred to did not send their employees to training or development courses. Moreover, most courses attended by employees are related to accounting, taxation, or management, and those on training, human resources or European funding are the least popular within the choices offered by the companies. The positive fact is that although a quarter of the respondents attended some type of training or courses as their employer required them to, about two-thirds of the respondents participated in training and courses for their personal development.

6. References

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