

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF THE TRAINING PROCESS AND STIMULATING CREATIVITY – A CHANCE TO OVERCOME THE ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL CRISIS

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Abstract

Most Romanian enterprises have dismissed a great number of employees in order to cope with the economic imbalances caused by the global financial crisis.

In order to come back to economic growth, it is necessary to improve the quality of human resources management and to plan carefully the necessary of personnel in terms of quantity, but mostly in terms of the quality of their skills. Optimizing the use of personnel has become an imperative in the current circumstances, when the number of employees and the hours actually worked are constantly reduced. This goal can be achieved through investment in human resources: training and development, improved syllabi, stimulating creativity, competence and career management in line with the developments in the economic and financial environment.

This article presents the results and conclusions of a research on the quality of training and stimulating creativity, in Romanian companies. The study was conducted by the questionnaire survey method, applied in 30 enterprises that employ 11575 people and in two Romanian training institutions, from 30.03 to 15.04.2010.

The results of the research highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the training process in Romania and propose solutions to improve its quality, valuing human potential, creativity, the capacity to innovate and competence as strategic assets in overcoming the difficulties generated by the global financial and economic crisis.

Key words: human resources, training, competence, economic and financial crisis.

The global economic and financial crisis makes us reflect on how economic organisations can survive and how they should reorganize to resume growth, taking into account staff aspirations, the structure of work and the management style. Orientation towards the improvement of provisional human resource management, with a better use of existing resources, paying special attention to the business forecast, raising standards in terms of human performance contribution to the overall performance are strictly necessary to overcome the crisis.

In increasing the economic accomplishments of organisations, a representative place is taken by individual and collective skills, which provide increased efficiency, ensuring sustainable development. (Kaplan et Norton, 1996).

Together with the classic financial and economic results, their proposal refers to:

- Skill indicators, personnel motivation and the performance of the information and communication system, which makes up the foundation that determines the progress of performances;
- Indicators on customer satisfaction;

- Synthesis and technical indicators on production, innovation, post sale services

The social background of economic performance reveals that, to achieve its goals in a sustainable manner, a business must shape its strategies taking into account the importance of human resource development and social management.

The social component is reflected in the level of the employees' quality (skills and motivation) as well as in the quality of processes (training level, adaptability, learning and innovating skills). The encounter between the objectives of the management and the employees, both individually and collectively, has to result in performance, especially based on the quality of human resources. (Martory et Crozet, 2008).

Investment in human resources should be allotted a privileged place and can be put to use especially in times of crisis like this one, when financial resources are limited, whilst human innovation and creativity have the potential to overcome these difficulties. Therefore – taking into account the evolution of the company's internal and external environment from the perspective of the progress of jobs, assets, skills and employee

motivation – we consider that, in this period marked by the global economic and financial crisis, an employee training that is adequate and efficient means spending less but more efficiently, capitalizing the human potential, the capacity to innovate and competence seeing them as strategic assets.

MATERIAL AND METOD

The goal of the article is to present the results and conclusions of a research on the quality of training conducted by the questionnaire survey method, applied in 30 enterprises that employ 11,575 people, and two Romanian training institutions, from 30.03.2010 to 15.04.2010.

The questionnaire was designed with a common core for all the categories of respondents (managers, workers employed during the past three years in non-leading positions, representatives of training institutions) and some specific questions customized for each of the three categories of subjects, which make the stratified sampling, namely:

- 95 managers, decision-makers in 30 enterprises from the NE Region with a total of 11,575 employees, expressed their views on the quality of the training provided in the training institutions in Romania;
- 180 people working in the 30 companies from the NE Region that are the subject of this analysis. Their educational level is high school, post high

school or university and have been employed during the last 3 years;

- 50 trainers who operate in 2 Romanian training institutions (a university, a vocational training centre for the railroad transport staff).

The quantitative representativeness is high and the reliability of results has also good results.

Table 1 shows the four-category classification of the enterprises where the survey was conducted, by the number of employees, according to European classifications. The activity areas they represent are transport, textile, automotive service, mail and telecommunications, trade and tourism.

Table 1
Classification of enterprises by the number of employees

Employees	Enterprises			
	Micro	Small	Medium	Large
Total Number	3	15	7	5
În %	10	50	23.33	16.66

Table 2 presents the common trunk of the questionnaire, related to the opinions on the quality of training provided by the specialised Romanian institutions expressed by the employees and managers of the 30 institutions analysed and by the trainers.

Table 2
Questionnaire on the quality of training provided by specialised Romanian institutions and the possible options of respondents

Opinion/ Quality level	Very good 5	Good 4	Average 3	Satisfactory 2	Unsatisfactory 1
Training: -information -knowledge - the degree of modernisation of the educational process Total no. In %	Well informed Highly trained Very high	Informed Trained High	Average Average Average	Poorly informed Poorly trained Low	Very poorly informed Obsolete Very low
Development of creativity and initiative Total no. In %					
Practical and procedural skills Total no. In %					
Post training integration Total no. In %					

Additionally, each category of respondents was asked a question concerning the level of motivation expressed in both the training course and, subsequently, while pursuing their professional activity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

- Most managers (84%) believed that employees are well or very well trained professionally, whilst

21% stated that they are averagely trained. Also digital skills are very good.

- 34% believed that the development of creativity and initiative is unsatisfactory, 23% considered it as average, while 21% appreciate it as being good or very good.
- 51% stated that practical and procedural skills are poor, 22% opted for „average” and 21% believed this aspect is good or very good; digital skills are widely considered to be very good.
- Post training enterprise integration is good or very good, according to 49% of managers, average, according to 27% of them and 21% perceived it as poor

Taking into account the lack of practical and procedural skills when hiring, but as well the fact that, despite this training shortcoming the vast majority integrates well within the company they operate, we asked managers to give an opinion on the level of motivation of employees. 99% stated that employees hired during the last 3 years have a will to become somebody important, to build a professional career, being very motivated.

The same questions included in the common trunk presented in Table 2 were answered by the 180 employees working in the 30 companies from the NE Region. Their educational level is high school or university and they have been employed during the last three years.

The following results have been revealed:

- 77% have appreciated that the level of knowledge gained in educational institutions in Romania is good and very good, whilst 23% rated it as low. Digital skills are very good.
- 87% stated that the development of creativity and initiative is poor, 12% average, and 1% opted for the grade “good”; at the partly open question, customised for the category of respondents in the sample, 91% have held that the mode of presentation is attractive, opposite to boring (2%).
- 55 % believed that practical and procedural skills are poor, totally inadequate for the tasks entrusted to them in the firm; 45% opted for “average” and none of the employees had a good or very good opinion; the exception is the digital skills part, overall widely appreciated as very good.
- Post training enterprise integration is considered unsatisfactory by 39% of employees, 31% consider it is average, while 30% granted the grade “good” or “very good”. We have asked an additional question so we could study these options better. Most of the interviewees stated that they don’t exteriorize these opinions through a dialogue with their managers. Main causes of difficulties in integration are based on the lack of internship and integration programs for new employees, but also on the type of organisational culture, nepotism,

coalitions, which make this process difficult, the specific of the activity fields, which leads to a rule and procedures system that generates strong informal relations and a specific behaviour, cooperation and communication.

- 97% of employees stated that they are very motivated for work performances, both by the will of building a career and because of the instable economic and financial environment, which makes it very difficult to find a new job in NE Romania, one adequate with the education level.

The opinions of the trainers are the following:

- 69% appreciate that the graduates’ know-how level is good and very good and 31% see it as average. The degree of modernisation of the educational process is very high. Teaching activities often include online courses and e-communication, through the website of the institution, mailing and e-homework.
- 10% consider that the development of creativity and initiative is good, and 80% that it is average; these results are explained by absenteeism, which makes this mission rather difficult.
- 60% appreciate that practical and procedural skills are unsatisfactory, 24% average, and 16% consider them good and very good, safe digital skills, which are unanimously seen as very good; trainers explain this phenomenon by the fact that currently practical training is not provided in an organised manner, under the guidance of trainers, but freely, according to the trainee’s choice. Thus, disparities are inherent, the lack of guidance and monitoring being the most common answers to the open question “why?”.
- 76 % of trainers said that they did not have enough data regarding the graduates’ professional career and so they were not able to assess their professional integration.
- In what regards motivation, the trainers appreciate that some of the trainees are interested mainly in obtaining a diploma, the quality of learning ranking lower in their minds, especially in university and post-graduate courses, where tuition fees are paid by the trainees (41%), while in professional education trainees are highly motivated (57%).

The results of the research show the differing perceptions of the training beneficiaries (managers and employees) and the training providers, and the main causes of these points of view.

Summing up all these opinions, the following strengths and weaknesses can be highlighted because of our research:

- **Strengths:** the level of theoretical knowledge and the up-to-date quality of the information

acquired during the training process; very good digital know-how;

- **Weaknesses:** practical and applied skills are deficient, the level of creativity development is low and the companies lack the programs needed to integrate new employees.

CONCLUSIONS

Despite the differing perceptions of the training beneficiaries (managers and employees) and the training providers regarding the quality of training and the causes that lead to these results, all the people who were interviewed confirmed their adhesion to the idea that training and skill development are a solution to overcome the difficulties caused by the economic and financial crisis.

The high level of theoretical knowledge acquired during high-school, after high-school and at the university offers good individual skills and very good digital skills, which must be integrated and correlated with the collective and organisational skills needed in the companies where graduates are going to lead their professional life. H. Bertrand stressed the fact that “the road to competence is part of a vast body of means, methods and principles of management that have generated the change of workplace relationships in order to meet the current requirements of quality and performance” (Bertrand, H., 2002).

It is necessary to stimulate creativity during all the stages of the process of training and applying acquired knowledge.

In what regards the actual situation of Romanian companies, a management that stimulates its employees to acquire and develop

new skills and correlate them with the EU level of training, theoretically as well as and especially in what regards practical, applicative skills, is a chance for them to escape from the recession and to resume economic growth. The Romanian State, in its quality of coordinator of the National Educational System, plays a major role in the coordination of educational funding in accordance with the labour market.

It is also necessary to eliminate from the management of economic organisations all the political connotations or those based on interpersonal relations and to reinforce, at the same time, the European regulations in the field of competition, non-discrimination and equal opportunities.

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