

WHICH MOTIVES DRIVE EDUCATION IN A SELECTED COMPANY

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Abstract

Rapidly changing business environment requires from companies great flexibility and innovatory in responding to new challenges. Knowledge of employees is becoming a significant competitive advantage. Therefore business education can be understood as the key tool of corporate competitiveness improvement. The purpose of this article is to identify and analyse the basic motives which drives employees to seek further education and participate in educational process organised by the employer. The research adopts a case study research method and a quantitative methodology analysis based on a questionnaire among employees of the researched industrial company in the Slovak Republic. The main findings of the research are: the identification of main motives for education, and the fact whether employees are motivated by their managers to actively participate in educational process. In summary there is a recommendation how to overcome the problem of insufficient transfer of new skills and knowledge into practise.

Keywords: *motive, motivating, educational process, model*

1 INTRODUCTION

For companies, the skills of the employees are vital to meeting both current and future business demands while, for individuals, skills levels are clearly influential in determining employment and earnings potential [3]. This is rather common sense of perceiving the need to develop employees of the company. Unfortunately, this results in twisted or restricted understanding of the role of education at the workplace. To fully seize the market potential every company has to strategically and systematically prepare the most supportive background for development and learning at workplace.

There are many reasons why to pursue business education. Business education or learning and development is defined as the process of ensuring that the business has

the knowledgeable, skilled and engaged employees it needs [1]. It ensures an intelligent of strategic action at every level and gives individuals the tools and awareness to improve that strategy. It makes world-class expertise an integral part of company [4].

Furthermore, the importance of learning at the workplace has been becoming more urgent since we have moved from the Industrial Age through the Information Age into Knowledge Age. New patterns of work and new business practices have developed, and, as a result, new kinds of workers, with new and different skills, are required. Global connectivity, smart machines, and new media are just some of the drivers reshaping how we think about work, what constitutes work, and the skills we will need to be productive contributors in the future [2]. Moreover, the way the entire business learns can be instrumental in its innovation and profitability [5].

This article deals with the problematic of business education. In a selected company it researches the current situation and recommends what should be done to improve educational process of the company based on key finding of the research.

2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to collect the quantitative data, the research based on a questionnaire technique was done. The questionnaire was distributed both electronically and in print among employees. It was answered by employees from the production department and software department. In order to ensure the correctness of results, the rejection criterions of incorrectly fulfilled questionnaire were adopted. Furthermore, a case study method was used to collect the qualitative data. This method analysed the problematic in a company involving semi-structured interviews with a personal manager. Respondents were asked to express their motives to educate themselves, satisfaction with educational process and whether they use new knowledge or skills in their work day. There was used 10-point scale for these motives:

1. Development of my skills and abilities
2. Development of my professional knowledge
3. Increase in my work productivity and quality
4. My own need for professional development
5. Higher financial remuneration
6. To make a career in the company
7. To contribute to the market success of the company
8. To keep my work position
9. It is required to participate in educational activities
10. No particular motive to educate

3 KEY FINDINGS

The research was conducted in the industrial company in Slovakia with 200 employees in an average which is a branch of a foreign company. The main object

of the company is to produce software and hardware for transport and railway systems. The outcome of the research provided a subjective opinion of employees. There was 34.69 per cent return of questionnaires. The average age of respondents was 26 – 40 years; secondary school education was dominant at production department and university education at software department. In average, 74 per cent of respondents have been working in the company for 3 – 10 years. This high percentage gives evidence about workforce stability.

3.1 Corporate attitude towards education of employees

The personal policy of the researched company is based on the philosophy of close cooperation with the university. This is consequently influencing the policy of education and development of employees and the policy of acquisition of new employees. The aim of personal policy is to acquire skilful employees and based on participation in trainee programmes during studies to incorporate a prospective employee into company's structure, philosophy and tradition resulting in low turnover of employees.

The strategic framework of education of employees is set by the global structure given by the parent company. Company's attitude towards education is strategic and systematic, i.e. the emphasis is put on long-term execution of educational activities for all employees in regular time periods.

Execution of educational activities is done via external supplier, i.e. the appropriate educational institution is addressed. The most often a seminar or training is chosen. The schedule of educational activities is elaborated at the beginning of the year for particular departments. The education is carried out at all three levels; top management, middle management and operational level of management. Every department has its own budget for financing educational activities.

Managers are asking employees about their satisfaction with educational activities (learning materials, lecturer, etc.) as well as improvement ideas, which has met with positive response of employees.

Another tool to monitor the effectiveness of educational process is checking based on in advance set factors in production such as productivity measuring after particular training, error rate measuring, etc.

3.2 Key finding of the questionnaire

Researching educational process required asking managers what is the policy of education. Managers unanimously comprehend education of employees as an investment in the future. Top management of the company makes effort to involve employees and their managers to the process of education planning. Not only is planning based on needs stemming from manufacturing and technological processes, but also on personal educational needs of employees. 60 per cent of managers are actively participating in process of education planning for their subordinates and 80 per

cent of managers motivate their subordinates to participate in educational activities organized by the company.

Inevitable side of effective education is motivation to participate in educational process. To comprehend the meaning of the education, employees have to be informed about the goal, course and outcomes of the education. As can be seen in the table 1, 40 per cent of employees from production department and 54 per cent of employees from software department are felt to be positively motivated by their managers (answers “yes” and “rather yes”). As can be seen in the table 2, 34 per cent of employees from production department and 43 per cent of employees form software department are felt to be informed about the goal, course and outcomes of the educational process (answers “yes” and “rather yes”).

Table 1 The comparison of being motivated

<i>Are you motivated by your manager to participate in educational process?</i>					
	Yes	Rather yes	Can't say	Rather no	No
Production department	24%	16%	26%	16%	18%
Software department	23%	31%	12%	27%	8%

Source: author

Table 2 The comparison of being informed

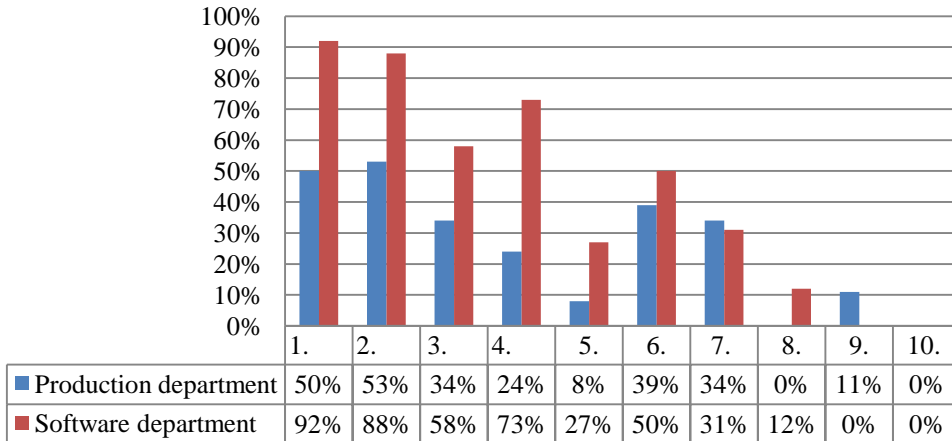
<i>Are you informed about the purpose, course and outcomes of educational process?</i>					
	Yes	Rather yes	Can't say	Rather no	No
Production department	18%	16%	24%	18%	24%
Software department	15%	27%	8%	38%	12%

Source: author

Furthermore, 58 per cent of employees from production department consider educational process to meet the requirements of their work (answers “yes – 32” and “rather yes – 26”). 84 per cent of employees are satisfied with the execution of educational process. The practical benefit of education was probed. 26 per cent of employees said they use new information in their work, while 53 per cent use this new information only partially. Similar situation is in software department, where 58 per cent of employees agree that educational process meets the requirements of their work (answers “yes – 12” and “rather yes – 46”). On the other hand, up to 73 per cent use new information in their work only partially.

Graph 1 depicts results regarding the motives of employees to participate in educational activities. The first-place motive is to *develop skills and abilities*, which is followed by motive to *develop professional knowledge* (at software department and inverse at production department). The third-place motive is *own need for professional*

development at software department, which is the fifth-place motive for production department.



Graph 1 The motives to participate in educational activities

Source: author

1. Development of my skills and abilities
2. Development of my professional knowledge
3. Increase in my work productivity and quality
4. My own need for professional development
5. Higher financial remuneration
6. To make a career in the company
7. To contribute to the market success of the company
8. To keep my work position
9. It is required to participate in educational activities.
- 10.No particular motive to educate.

Table 3 Motives regarding the length of employment

<i>Length of employment in years</i>	<i>Motives</i>
3 – 5	<i>Development of my skills and abilities</i> <i>Development of my professional knowledge</i> To make a career in the company <i>Increase in my work productivity and quality</i> <i>To contribute to the market success of the company</i>
<i>continued on next page</i>	

<i>Length of employment in years</i>	<i>Motives</i>
6 – 10	<i>Development of my skills and abilities</i> <i>Development of my professional knowledge</i> <i>Increase in my work productivity and quality</i> <i>To contribute to the market success of the company</i>
More than 11	<i>Development of my skills and abilities</i>

Table 4 Motives regarding educational background

<i>Educational background</i>	<i>Motives</i>
Secondary education	<i>Development of my skills and abilities</i> <i>Development of my professional knowledge</i> <i>To make a career in the company</i>
Higher education (master)	<i>Development of my skills and abilities</i> <i>Development of my professional knowledge</i> <i>To make a career in the company</i> <i>Increase in my work productivity and quality</i>

The selection of particular motives was further analysed from the viewpoint of length of employment in the company and educational background. It was assumed that particular motives would vary in relation to these two variables. Interestingly, there was found extraordinary similarity as can be seen from tables 3 and 4.

4 SUMMARY

New challenges, new technology, new companies and products are constantly emerging as well as new ways of work processes. Therefore up-to-date skills and even new skills and knowledge are required. Investing to people in form of education enables companies to have these upgraded skills and knowledge.

To remain competitive and keep up with the accelerating pace of technology the company is investing in education. However, there is missing a unified concept of life-long learning.

The first step to enhance the ability to transition new knowledge into practise is to elaborate so called “action plan” between an employee and his or her manager or supervisor.

This action plan should follow this sequence: *where am I now – where do I want to be – how do I get there – what action do I have to take – where am I now?* It can be achieved by answering these questions:

1. Which skills and knowledge precisely acquired in educational process do you desire to implement into your work?
2. What steps are necessary to take in order to successfully implement these skills and knowledge?
3. What schedule has to be elaborated (concrete steps and deadlines)?
4. Which resources will be needed for the fulfilment of schedule (financial, human, and physical)?
5. When are you starting?
6. How do you know whether you successfully taken these steps (based on which measures)?

To support the process of elaboration of the action plan, these questions could be helpful:

1. What are your expectations of education (what outcomes do you expect)?
2. What did you carry off the educational action? What was interesting for you, the most surprising?
3. Which part of the educational action needs broader explanation?
4. What do you think about the overall usefulness of the educational activity (what would you change, fill in)?
5. Do you consider the studying materials enough fitting and practical?
6. How will the educational activity help you do your job better?

This action plan in a great measure will improve situation of informing employees about the goal, course and outcomes of the educational process. In addition, it is vital for an employee to be continuously supported by his or her manager or supervisor for the duration of the process of carrying out the action plan.

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