

MANAGEMENT TRAINING PROGRAMME CHARACTERISTICS IN LATVIA

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-Abstract-

The goal of the paper is to reveal if the content and training methods of Management Training Programmes offered by T&D companies in Latvia can ensure the development of competences topical for managers in post-industrial economics. A meta-analysis of effective criteria of the content of Management Training Programmes and effective training methods in post-industrial economics has been performed. Managers' competences that are required for ensuring sustainable and socially responsible operation of a post-industrial enterprise have been identified in the meta-analysis. Practice oriented, experience based and integrated training methods have been identified. The authors revealed that the content of the training programme is a significant precondition for improving managers' competence because the efficiency of knowledge changes very fast in a post-industrial enterprise. The correspondence of the content of Management Training Programmes and training methods offered by T&D companies in Latvia to the effectiveness criteria identified in the meta-analysis have been tested with the help of content analysis. The content of Management Training Programmes should help to reduce the lack of managers' competence; however, in practice, the content of Management Training Programmes is often general and unclear, and not sufficiently various experience based training methods are used. The authors

recommend criteria for evaluating the content of Management Training Programmes and training methods.

Key Words: Management training, Management Training Programme, Management training methods, Training evaluation

JEL Classification: J240 Human Capital; Skills; Occupational Choice; Labor Productivity

1. INTRODUCTION

Problems with the content and methods of Management Training Programmes

Summarising the meta-analysis about the evaluation of Management Training Programmes performed by the researchers, it can be concluded that in post-industrial economics a tendency to design Management Training Programmes that would correspond to a particular enterprise in a particular industry is strengthening (Lloyd, Perryman, 2006: 31). As the key words in training evaluation are impact and value, i.e. what the impact of intervention is on the desirable business results, it is important to find out if the content of the training programmes and the training methods are linked with the initial planned needs or if they create a gap between them (Kalargyrou, Woods, 2010: 33; Pool, 2011: 9); thus, if the content and methods are linked with the development of competences topical for managers.

In the meta-analysis the authors have identified four significant elements for the evaluation of management training, where along with such elements as correspondence of the training goal to the enterprise needs and transfer of training results to the work environment, content of the training programmes and training methods have been distinguished as significant elements.

The *training programme content* is important because managers' competence has to be developed continuously as efficiency of knowledge changes very fast in a post-industrial enterprise (Brinkmann, 2008: 25). To evaluate the content of the training programmes, first, it is necessary to define the competences to be improved. Defining competences that should be acquired or improved during training, after training it is possible to evaluate more precisely the employee work performance, and defining competences before the training reduces worries about the efficiency of the resources invested in training (Hind, Wilson, Lenssen, 2009: 13; Kalargyrou, Woods, 2010: 33).

Nowadays, more and more enterprises are willing to control the direction of Management Training Programmes to adjust them to the specific needs of the enterprises. The goal of management training is to find solutions to main problems that managers face at work therefore there is a need for the cooperation between practitioners (managers themselves and T&D) and researchers to develop an innovative and practical training content and to do research that would facilitate changes in the ways managers work (Bolt, 2005: 17; Lloyd, Perryman, 2006:31; Korotov, 2009:22).

The authors have concluded that the correspondence of the content of training programmes to the development of managers' competences is the main evaluation criterion and results of two research can be used as a basis for designing this criterion: 1) most topical management competences which have been acknowledged in the research of Ashridge Centre for Business and Society (ACBAS) and European Academy of Business in Society (EABIS) (2006; see Hind, Wilson, Lenssen, 2009: 13); 2) eight needs to be implemented in the content of management training (Lloyd, Perryman, 2006: 31; Datar et al., 2010: 1), when summarising the analysis of MBA programmes.

According to the research results, the criterion for evaluating the content of Management Training Programmes is whether the training programme content facilitates the development of such competences as: 1) **openness to experience**, which includes openness to new ideas and the ability to challenge others to accept new methods of work, the need to act creatively and innovatively, the ability to work with unclear data, to experiment and continuously educate oneself; 2) **understanding about the social network, which comprises** understanding about financial and non-financial goals, observing the needs of all stakeholders, about the balance between the social needs and business management; 3) **developing partnership relations**, which includes developing internal and external partnerships, based on the interdisciplinary approach, and the skill to develop strategic networks and alliances, the ability to solve problems when there is lack of information, leadership skills: the ability to inspire, affect and manage others; 4) **creating a dialogue**, which comprises the ability to identify interested persons in developing relationships with the internal and external stakeholders, to balance competitive demands, critical thinking and argumentation skills; 5) **tolerance to variety**, which includes the skill to respect variety, understanding of differences and the ability to adjust and integrate one's own approach to various situations, the ability to make decisions in non-standard situations; 6) **strategic thinking**, which includes strategic look at the business environment, understanding of

global perspectives, knowledge about economic, institutional and cultural differences in the entire world.

Training methods. Research indicates that in training self-evaluation managers assign three times higher importance to the training content than to its transfer to the work environment. It is explained with the fact that managers delegate tasks not execute them themselves (i.e. apply the newly acquired knowledge), therefore expanding their knowledge is more important for them. To enhance managers to change and transfer the acquired knowledge to the work environment, it is important to select appropriate training methods (Powell, Yalcin, 2010; Pool, 2011:9).

When evaluating the management training methods it is important to observe two criteria: 1) to what extent experience based training methods are applied – managers are involved in different cases and they have the opportunity to reflect (Mulec, 2006:15); 2) to what extents traditional training methods are changed for integrated ones, e.g. coaching, consulting, acquiring structured experience, action (Antunes, Thomas, 2007:22; Büchel, Antunes, 2007:11). Acquiring action comprises simulations, team building, individual as well as groups projects and many other approaches that facilitate solving business problems that are often related to real manager's responsibility and that allow colleagues to interact and to find out different aspects of one's enterprise. Management coaching is considered to be the most promising training tool. Involvement of top managers in training classes is useful as it balances linkage between theory and practice and makes training more motivating (Antunes, Thomas, 2007:22; Büchel, Antunes, 2007:11). Such methods correspond to learning by doing, which can be considered a type of learning in a post-industrial enterprise.

2. CONTENT ANALYSIS OF TRAINING PROGRAMMES

2.1. Research methodology

In the present research the authors analyse the content and training methods of 150 Management Training Programmes offered by 25 T&D companies in Latvia, applying the content analysis of the programme content and training methods. Based on the theory of training evaluation and verities of applied research, the authors have distinguished the following categories in the content analysis: 1) managers' competences; 2) training themes: themes of training classes, training courses and themes within the course; 3) concreteness of training programmes: if the goal, the target audience, attainable outcomes are indicated, if an extended explanation of the content is offered, if the training methods are indicated; 4)

training methods; 5) the length of training: short-term or long-term, which are organised in modules; 6) feedback. To compare with the situation in practice secondary data were used: findings of the interviews with enterprise training experts (Enkuzena, Lasmane, 2012).

2.1. Results

Content of Management Training Programmes. Evaluating how the content of Management Training Programmes corresponds to the previously defined required managers' competences, it can be observed that more frequently (60 – 70% cases) the programme content is aimed at improving such competences as openness to experience; understanding of a social network; understanding about the social network within the enterprise; developing partnership relations, especially problem solution and leadership skills; tolerance to variety, especially in decision making in non-standard situations; strategic thinking. Rarely, i.e. in some cases only, the programme content is aimed at improving such competences as understanding of global perspective, economic, institutional and cultural differences all over the world.

Evaluating the themes of the training programme content, it can be observed that most of the themes (80 – 90%) comprise management competences: improvement of knowledge and skills. A detailed analysis reveals that such themes as coaching, related to manager's self-efficiency and managing employee development; time management; communication including managing negotiations and meetings; team building and team management; acknowledgement, developing and implementation of leadership potential in management processes that is related with managers finding out their personality traits, understanding their self-efficiency, development of delegation skills; strategic management are offered more frequently. It can be admitted that although more seldom, but such themes as change and innovation management; managing and evaluating an enterprise as a system; project management; local and global marketing; financial management; knowledge management; human resource management, especially staff motivation, appraisal and development enhancement, planning and organisation of training; emotional intelligence; agreeing individual and company values are also offered.

As interviews with experts approve, in the practice of training in enterprises the following themes are mentioned as top ones: time management; communication skills; team management; human resource management; manager's role; sales skills; motivation; work planning; management skills; leadership; skills to elicit

and offer feedback; change management; customer service. The content of the training programmes offered by T&D companies comprises the above mentioned themes but a problem mentioned by training experts in enterprises appears: only some T&D companies offer corporate training or cooperation in adjusting the training programmes to the needs of the enterprise. The analysis of the training programmes of T&D companies revealed that 20 programmes out of 150 offered customising the corporate training or programme to the needs of the enterprise.

Concreteness of Management Training Programmes. The goal of training was indicated in 60% of cases, the target audience (management level; experienced or new managers; managers' field of work) was indicated in 65% of cases; the attainable outcomes – 50% of cases; an extended explanation of the programme content is offered in 52% of cases; training methods are indicated in 54% of cases. Thus, the concreteness of the offered training programmes should be evaluated as partial, which, as interviews with the training experts in enterprises indicate, make the choice of the training provider and the programme according to the needs of the enterprise more difficult.

Training methods. Such training methods as group work, discussions, role plays, analysis of experience, case analysis, practical tasks, which only in some cases were characterised more specifically, are more frequently offered in management training. Such methods as video training, homework assignments that should be done in a real work environment, tests to diagnose particular qualities and obtain information about the changes in qualities during the training process, development of an action plan after training, i.e. a plan to transfer the training results to the work environment are less frequently mentioned. In 3 cases T&D companies offer a pre-test of knowledge and skills before training, individual consultations for trainees in the training programmes. It has to be admitted that feedback, i.e. training evaluation is offered only in some cases (10 of the analysed programmes).

Length of training. The offer of training programmes is explicitly dominated by short-term training (1 – 4 days, the length of training classes from 4 – 8 hours) – they are offered in 125 programmes out of 150; long-term training is offered in 15 programmes, in 10 programmes the length of training was not indicated. Long-term training is offered in modules with task for knowledge transfer to the work environment between training classes. The so-called business classrooms where the length of training is 5 – 6 months are practised and 180 academic hours training is held. In practice, as the interviews with training experts in enterprises reveal, a tendency to organise short-term training also dominates (25 experts from

20 enterprises indicated to that). On the one hand, such practice approves that there is a potential lack of a system in organising training, but on the other hand, it can also be considered a feature of a post-industrial enterprise: the training demand varies very much based on the changing situation. It has to be admitted that those T&D companies that offer long-term training programmes emphasise the possibility to introduce changes in the training content and methods as demanded by the client.

3. CONCLUSION

The content and training methods of the Management Training Programmes offered by T&D companies in Latvia can be evaluated as partly corresponding to the improvement of the competences required by managers in the modern post-industrial economics. The theme coaching is frequently mentioned. It is offered as a programme and also as a theme or a tool within another programme. The analysis of the programme content allows assuming that coaching in such a form as it is characterised in the programmes can effectively facilitate the development of the competences managers need. In the interviews training experts in enterprises admitted that also in practice knowledge about coaching and the skill to use coaching principles help in human resource management.

However, in general, a tendency that the content of Management Training Programmes is comparatively general and unclear, that trivial and in their essence little informative theme formulations are used can be observed. 6 T&D companies (30 programmes out the 150 analysed) whose programme content comprises themes important for the global perspective on economics, business environment, enhancing strategic thinking can be mentioned. These are, e.g. such themes as positional diagnostics of the management system; basic non-trivial statements of strategic management that comprise analysis of the experience of enterprises of different countries (Russia, Ukraine, the USA, the Netherlands, Sweden); Value Stream map; Harvard principal negotiation methodology; MTA Learning methodology for developing others, delegation and information: “two mirror approach” for developing management effectiveness.

Programmes whose content is aimed at developing such competences as understanding of global perspectives, economic, institutional and cultural differences all over the world, which can be an example for the elaboration of Management Training Programmes of T&D companies, are rarely offered. The themes that are included in these programmes are: strategy development for business development at the local and international markets; raising team

motivation during the times of change; moderation of strategy meetings; management by distance; as well as acquisition of so far little used management instruments in the enterprises of Latvia but offered in the programmes as methodology of DISC behaviour model, process optimisation: TOC and LEAN, which can facilitate effective development of an enterprise in post-industrial economics.

Only one of the analysed programmes offered managers the possibility to improve their organisation skills of staff in-house training in a practical seminar, as well as improving professional competences in managing training classes observing the specifics of adult learning. However, taking into account that in the interviews training experts in enterprises indicated to a larger proportion of in-house training within the enterprise training system, it can be considered that this theme has a potential.

Literature analysis identified practice oriented, experience based and integrated training methods that are considered perspective in the development of management competences. Evaluation of the content and methodology of Management Training Programmes of T&D companies of Latvia revealed that such methods are offered but their formulation is often general. In most of the programmes it is difficult to identify what competences are improved with the help of these methods, how it happens, how the outcome is attained. The analysis of the content of the interviews with training experts in enterprises revealed that training providers should increase the proportion of practical and interactive training methods. When performing the analysis of the offered training methods, the authors concluded that formally the number of practical and interactive training methods can be considered sufficient (they are indicated on average in 60% of the analysed programmes). However, according to the opinion of training experts in enterprises about the training methods, it can be concluded that how professionally the trainers of T&D companies apply practical, practice oriented, experiences based, interactive and integrated training methods is a topical issue.

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