

FURTHER CORPORATE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION – INSTRUMENT OF STABILIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the paper is to identify suitable methods of education for individual types of voluntary further corporate professional education, which could be applied also when changing the physical teaching environment to virtual or hybrid learning environment, and to propose the methods of education suitable for companies and attractive for the participants of the corporate trainings. In the empirical research, the questionnaire method and the interview method were applied. The respondents (140) were selected from two sections of the Statistical Classification of Economic Activities of the Slovak Republic, SK NACE Rev.2. The research results presented in the tables characterize the types of education in relation to the educational methods applied in the companies analyzed. The suitability of education methods is characterized also in terms of teaching environments, the physical, virtual and hybrid environments. The results of the research confirm that the methods of education affect the interest of the participants in all types of education.

***Keywords:** further professional corporate education, adult education, methods of education, learning environment*

INTRODUCTION

Further professional corporate training of employees is conducted in connection with the increasing requirements on the performance of individual work activities. It is a type of targeted education and is linked to economic activity. Its essence can be seen in creating and maintaining optimal harmony between subjective qualifications, i.e. the real working capacity of the individual and the objective qualification that results from the requirements of a specific profession and the tasks of the workplace, employee's qualification and job qualification. [7], [5]

Educational methods play an important role in ensuring educational activities in the company. Their choice depends on many factors such as educational aims, educational content and the nature of the issue, educational principles, target group, the personality of the lecturer, time and funding of education, as well as learners' preferences. From the learner's point of view, the method is an important

tool that not only motivates interest in education, but is directly related to the results of education and learning. Methods affect the process of memorizing and acquiring knowledge and skills and stimulate the learning of an adult individual.

The aim of the paper is to determine, based on empirical research, the methods of education, which may be used even when changing the physical learning environment to a virtual or hybrid learning environment for individual types of voluntary further corporate professional education, and to propose educational methods suitable for the company and attractive and motivating for learners. The paper is part of the primary research project VEGA No. 1/0328/21 “Post-pandemic business management: identifying temporary and sustainable changes in sequential and parallel management functions in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.”

FURTHER PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION IN AN ENTERPRISE

Further corporate professional education is an important part of adult education. Mandatory education includes educational activities that result from the legislation in force and from the internal organizational regulations aimed at updating training for certain professions and authorizing an employee to perform certain work activities.

Since the conclusion of the employment relationship, the employee completes entry training, which, in addition to initial learning and training for a new job, also includes mandatory education for all employees, namely occupational safety and health protection (OHS) and fire protection [8]. Mandatory education in the company includes also other trainings related to the renewal of skills and specified in the internal regulations of organizations.

METHODS OF EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

The research was carried out using the interview method and the questionnaire method. The interview was applied in the preliminary research and in the preparation of the questionnaire. For the implementation of the research, the opinions of respondents employed in food production, beverages and catering were taken into account. The respondents were selected by random selection; the year 2022 was decisive, so that we have comparable files for the year 2019 and the year 2022. In terms of the Statistical Classification of Economic Activities SK NACE Rev. 2, we selected respondents from Division 10 Manufacture of food products and Division 11 Manufacture of beverages, Section C – Manufacturing and from Division 56 Restaurant and hospitality activities, Section I – Accommodation and food service activities. The research took place in the periods February – April 2019 and February – April 2022. The total number of respondents was 140, namely 66 respondents from Section C and 74 respondents from Section I. [1]

In Section C there were companies of all size categories; in Section I small and micro companies prevailed. To evaluate the research results, we used the method of descriptive statistics. Two types of methods were applied for the statistical processing of the collected data: manual processing (the comma method was used for some types of questions) and automated processing (we analyzed the collected data in MS Excel). The results of statistical processing are processed in statistical reports in tables and are verbally interpreted.

CORPORATE MANDATORY EDUCATION AND APPLIED METHODS

Mandatory education is perceived as a periodic verification and regular renewal of work performance competences [7]. Mandatory education covers first of all the courses in occupational health and safety, fire protection courses, leading to demonstrating the knowledge and skills and professional competences in given occupations. In the analyses of companies, the mandatory education includes the education resulting from the legislation and the needs of organizations listed in internal company regulations.

MANDATORY – NORMATIVE EDUCATION IN ORGANIZATION

Mandatory training of employees mainly relates to those educational activities that obligate the employer to provide education and the employees to participate in the educational activities required [2]. Most of the mandatory educational activities intended for all employees of a particular employer entity relate to occupational safety and health protection, fire protection and are carried out by every employee after taking up employment, and then repeated with a certain periodicity.

The basic framework delimiting not only the area of mandatory trainings in securing health and safety at work but also the activities resulting from the necessity to complete regular trainings and also updating occupational training is Act No. 124/2006 [11]. Fire protection training (FPT) can be included in compulsory education. Pursuant to §20 of Decree No. 121/2002 On fire prevention, employee training shall be carried out before starting employment and repeated within 24 months. Employees who remain at the workplace after working hours, for instance police officers, have to take the training once every twelve months. It is essential that all employees participate in the training, including contract employees and part-time workers [9]. Similar to OHS training, FP training is conducted either in the physical learning environment or in the virtual one. Health and safety education is conducted under the guidance of safety technicians.

As part of mandatory education, other educational activities aimed at regular professional testing and renewal of skills may be described. This applies to various special job positions and activities where specialized training is required.

In the context of our respondent sample, we should mention hygienic minimum for workers in the food industry, first aid courses, training for professional drivers, forklift operators, etc [3]. Considering our research sample, the most important training is the hygienic minimum for workers in the food industry. Every worker in the food industry who has not completed a secondary or university education in the relevant field in accordance with Decree of the Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic, No. 585/2008 Coll. as amended [10] shall acquire a diploma – Certificate of Professional Competence – to perform epidemiologically significant activities in the manufacturing, handling and distribution of food and meals. First aid courses organized by the Slovak Red Cross are an important educational activity in the analyzed companies. [11], [12]

Mandatory educational activities also include professional driver training according to Act No. 280/2006 Coll. On the mandatory basic qualification and regular training of some drivers and the training of low-level and high-level forklifts operators once in five years [13]. Act 124/2006 Coll., on Health and Safety imposes on the employer the obligation to authorize only the holders of a valid operator's licence for the given class and type of forklift. [11]

Other mandatory educational activities that belong to specialized training are not discussed in this paper due to the respondent sample in the empirical research and the minimal occurrence of other educational activities in the analyzed companies. Mandatory educational activities include entrance training, which is usually provided by the personnel department staff, as part of the entire process of the employee joining the organization, or when transferring to another workplace or supervised by senior employees.

METHODS OF EDUCATION APPLIED IN FURTHER MANDATORY CORPORATE EDUCATION

Educational methods in further corporate professional education, either ensuing from the existing legislation or from the organization's needs, are conducted through a careful selection of educational methods. From the numerous typologies of methods, we have selected the classification in terms of the learner – instructor interaction. Within the framework, two groups of methods may be characterized, namely: traditional methods (including monological methods) and active methods (dialogical methods, situational methods, skill developing methods), and practical methods. These methods and their application are further specified in Table 1 below.

RESULTS OF EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

In the course of empirical research, we recorded results for the years 2019 and 2022. This paper contains a summarizing comparison of the changes arisen as a result of the better conditions for the application of ICT in education.

The primary division in the table is the education methods, which are subdivided into blocks. The basis is the classification into traditional and active methods of education. Their selection depends on the focus of education (cognitive, affective or psychomotor one). The aim of education represents the result of education, i.e. what the training participant will be able to do after completing the training event. In addition to the physical environment, virtual and hybrid environments are used. In the research, we also examined the application of these methods in relation to the type of teaching environment.

The basis of every training was the lecturer's monologue. All interviewed respondents confirm that their companies provide training in occupational health and safety trainings as well as hygiene minimums for workers in the food industry and entry training. Professional driver training, high-level and low-level forklift operation and first aid courses are not organized in all the companies analyzed. Traditional methods were followed by active, mainly dialogical teaching methods used in large groups but also in teaching individuals. At the same time, skills-developing methods and practical methods were applied. Dialogical teaching methods for small groups (brainstorming, Gordon method, and synectic method) and also situational methods were not used in 2019. All educational activities were implemented in the physical learning environment.

The empirical research was repeated in 2022. The changes that occurred in this year may be summarized as follows: the lower number of respondents for the operation of high-level and low-level forklifts; the decline observed is almost by half. Respondents explained that given the repetition of the training once in five years, it was not necessary to deal with these kinds of activity. All other educational activities were conducted in companies. The lecture remained to be a basis of corporate training; all other lectures (except the first-aid courses held in the physical environment) are either virtual or hybrid, in order to meet the needs of all participants of education. We observed differences in active methods of education. As compared with the year 2019, the application of active methods increased in 2022. The focus of learning environment was on the physical environment, although some methods were also used in the virtual environment. Dialogical methods in teaching small groups and situational methods were not used in 2019.

Table 1. Comparison in timeline development of changes in further corporate education

Methods of education			Types of educational activities		Further professional educational activities Changes (index number) 2022/2019				
					QT				RT
			A.	B.	C.	D.	F.		
a.	Monological methods	Lecture	1	1	1,369	0,857	2,125		
b.	Dialogical methods (large groups)	Learning conversation	1,0114	0,947	1,16	1,029	1,75		
		Chain discussion				0,968	1,5		
		Parliamentary method							
		Public discussion				1,217			
		Panel discussion							
	Dialogical methods (small groups); oriented to problem solving	Brainstorming				1,161			
		Gordon discussion method							
		Synectic method							
	Dialogical methods (individuals)	Coaching				1,5			
		Mentoring				0,809			
		Counselling	1,181			1,55			
		Assisting	0,928	1,022			1,8		
Consultations		1,565		1,857		2,16			
b.	Situational methods –comprehensive problem solving	Case study			3,83				
		Syndicate method							
		Role playing			5,66				
b.	Skill developing methods	Simulation			7				
		Demonstration	1,222	1,809	2,55	1,608			
b.	Practical methods	Instruction	0,8469	1	1,171		2		
		Transfer of specific responsibility			1,928	3			
		Transfer of special tasks			1,821	3,25			

Source: Results of own research.

Explanatory notes: QT – Qualification training, A – Adaptation training (100% respondents), B – Initial training (100% respondents), C – Special purpose training (46 %), D – Development of key qualifications (100% respondents), E – Enhanced training (0 respondents—not mentioned here). RT – Requalification training; F – Requalification in a related field (cca 12% respondents)

The indicated ratio figures characterize changes in the number of respondents who mentioned the application of individual education methods for individual types of further professional corporate education. In the case of high- and low-level forklifts operation, changes are not indicated since the number of respondents was not the same. However, in the year 2022, also the method of demonstration in the physical learning environment was applied in the case of forklift operation. In individual types of corporate education simulation method and demonstration method were used. The former was applied in the first aid courses in the hybrid learning environment and in entry trainings held in the virtual environment. The latter was used in not only for high- and low-level forklifts operation trainings, but also in the virtual environment entry trainings.

A distinctly higher application of skills developing methods was recorded. In OHS and FP educational activities, the increase from 18 respondents to 48 respondents may be noticed in the demonstration method. A similar high increase occurred in the first aid trainings. An increased use of the simulation method, may be observed in the training in the hygiene minimum for food industry workers (from 9 respondents to 23 respondents). The highest increase occurred in the instruction method in entry trainings, where it rose from 11 respondents to 49 respondents. [3]

In active methods, we can observe also a decline in applying panel discussion in the hygiene minimum trainings for food industry workers. Methods of education are affected by scientific and technological development as well as the ICT development, and that in turn leads to continuing innovations. [6]

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The research results indicate that monological methods based on the lecturer's interpretation are still highly preferred. The traditional lecture method is complemented with active educational methods applied with regard to individual types of corporate education.

Companies apply a creative approach to mandatory education, mainly in entry training activities. As part of the initial trainings for the given research group, we recommend to use the FRED online platform, i.e. library of interactive training materials. This training is mainly intended for restaurant workers.

Mobile learning, i.e. learning through the Internet or network, needs to be recommended for corporate trainings. Currently, social media (e.g. LinkedIn, Facebook, YouTube, or Skype) may be recommended for mandatory corporate trainings.

Learners' learning motivation may be supported by means of videos with simple, short and entertaining animations. We recommend to use microlearning [4] in corporate training. Owing to a large number of mobile phone users, recently, a small volume of information content has been on the rise in education.

In the applied methods reported by respondents, we missed situational methods. Gamification and game-based learning may be recommended as an effective way of simulating situations encountered by employees and improving their decision-making skills. Similar goals in education may be achieved with artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (XR) technologies.

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