

PERSPECTIVES ON THE IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT: *In the context of a dynamic labor market, individuals need to stay competitive by constantly refining their skills and acquiring new knowledge. Choosing a professional path is the first step, and success depends on the support of the organization they are part of. The development programs offered by the company are essential for the success of both the employee and the organization. The paper titled "Perspectives on the Impact of Development Programs on Employee Performance" aims to explore multiple perspectives on development programs and analyze their impact on individual performance.*

Keywords: *training programs; human resources; performance; personal development;*

Theoretical framework

Throughout their lives, adults are forced to make less formalized decisions that concern personal choices or personal development, but also choices that are governed by a structured social and institutional framework, such as the education or work system.

Adults' decisions on the choice of educational and training paths have direct consequences for their career and field of work (Jigău, 2003, p. 5-6).

Vocational career is the career progression of a person throughout his or her life. In a specific field of work, career progression may include specializations, enhancements or advancements in an individual's career. (Tășica, 2003, p.37)

In a broader interpretation, the concept of career can be understood in various ways, including as a means by which the individual secures income in a continually growing, a way to gain influence within the organization and aspire to increasingly higher positions of work that bring various benefits, an opportunity for advancement, associated prestige, personal qualities and the role occupied.

Thus, career always involves revealing a balance between the organizational requirements and the employee's aspirations, representing an economic and social phenomenon, which due to the importance that is given to it today by individuals has become an object of research for various scientific disciplines (Tășica, 2003, p.38).

Career counseling and guidance is a continuous support given to the individual in the process of identifying interests and aptitudes for a profession, thus assessing the chances of success. To accomplish this, the counselor uses investigative means to analyze the internal and external factors that determine the individual to pursue a career. (Tășica, 2003, p.43).

Vocational Development Theory - Donald E. Super

"A Theory of Vocational Development," is a theory developed by Donald Super and focuses on understanding how individuals build and change careers throughout their lives. This theory emphasizes life cycles, phases of exploration, the role of personal factors in relation to career choice, the influence of socio-economic context and the development of self-concept in the career development process.

In contrast to Ginzberg's theory, Super's theory is criticized, suggesting that it does not sufficiently integrate previous research and does not explore in detail the process of trade-offs between personal preferences and reality. Proposing a guided approach to vocational development, Super's theory recognizes the importance of identifying with role models and argues that career success depends on finding a balance between aptitudes, interests, and personal values in the context of the environment. (Super, 1953, p.185-190)

Analysis of factors determining career choice

In today's society, the choice of a professional career is influenced by a multitude of objective and subjective factors that illustrate various influences, individual characteristics, as well as the socio-economic context to which the individual has been exposed, and the decision must be made after a dynamic and careful analysis.

External factors such as community and parental influences play a significant role in the choice of career development directions is indisputable. Parental status and emotional ties within the family are key elements that contribute to the impact of their decisions on the career choices of offspring.

For adults, the parental imprint persists in the selection of career development domains, adding to influences from friendship groups, circle of acquaintances, leisure activities and the community at large. Community norms exert a powerful influence on multiple aspects of personal ideals and general lifestyle.

In some cases, parental influences can be negative, especially when parents have not had what they consider to be successful careers or an adequate level of culture, education or understanding of social and professional relationships (Jigau, 2003, p.21). (Jigau, 2003, p.21)

Furthermore, in addition to external factors, there are a number of internal factors that may lead individuals to choose a career that they can refine along the way. McDowell and Hostetler mention in their paper some intrinsic factors such as: personality, concerns and attitudes, individual value system and beliefs.

In relation to personality, it can be said that certain occupational areas emphasize personality traits while others inhibit them. The way in which the individual interacts with his or her occupation is determined in particular by his or her cognitive, affective and volitional aspects, and the way in which they combine.

The personal value system, including helping people, material gain, the opportunity to be creative, and faith, plays a crucial role in shaping career success and individual decision making (Chiru, 2003, pp. 81-82 apud McDowell & Hostetler, 1996).

Taking into account every factor influencing the career decision-making process, once a career is chosen, it must be shaped and developed. This is where initial and continuing vocational training starts, as society is a dynamic, ever-changing one and individuals entering the labor market need career-long professional development in order to be successful.

Professional training of human resources

Starting from the premise that the human factor is at the heart of all activities, it should come as no surprise that we are interested in how this factor influences the overall conduct of economic and social activities and how it can be influenced to contribute effectively to the desired performance.

Human resources are therefore seen in modernist management as a whole made up of inherited physical and intellectual skills, innate talent, grace or inclination, but also skills that can be acquired through determination, study, training harmoniously combined with further training throughout a career. All this makes human resources constantly developing, which makes them invaluable in achieving organizational goals and vision.

In order to maximize the effectiveness of these resources, we need to carefully consider the distinctive traits of each employee, including their complexity and diversity, as well as their continuous dynamics. Each individual contributes specific personality traits, unique levels of knowledge and professional background, bringing with them diverse needs, motivations and social experiences, thus creating a complex and dynamic work environment. We also need to consider the influence of the cultural environment on employees, who bring with them varied cultural patterns.

Human resource management is not only about understanding professional competences, but also human diversity and cultural contexts. Therefore, an effective approach to human resources in an organization requires the recognition and careful management of these complex and dynamic issues in order to create an environment conducive to continuous performance and development (Ielies, 2002, p. 36-37).

Essentially, vocational training refers to any type of education that prepares for a particular

profession, trade or job by providing the skills needed to pursue it, regardless of age or level of education, including when the curriculum includes elements of general education. In view of economic change and the need for a flexible and adaptable labor market, it is necessary to develop an effective system of vocational training or retraining for adults.

Vocational training for adults consists of both initial and continuing training outside the specific framework of the national education system. Initial training provides the essential preparation for the acquisition of minimum vocational skills (Radu & Neamtu, 2007, p. 157-158)

The development programs or trainings are part of the continuous training process of employees and are intended to accumulate new theoretical and practical knowledge that is absolutely necessary for a profession. They are indispensable for training and reinforcing existing competences, while at the same time emphasizing the importance of acquiring new skills. The programs are developed following a process that includes the following steps: action plan, defining objectives together with managers, identifying the need for training, and developing training methods for employees.

Also, these programs contribute significantly to the professional growth and career development of employees, providing them with opportunities within the organization for continuous learning and improving their performance at work (Rotaru, 2006, p.96-98).

The design of the training program was designed to provide the skills needed for a variety of positions, avoiding standardized solutions applicable to all.

The involvement of an HR department in managing the training process directly influences all members of the organization sooner or later.

For example, each employee will need a specific type of training to develop his or her skills in the specific context of his or her work. To ensure the relevance of the training, it is essential that managers and supervisors, with their subject matter expertise, are involved at all stages of the training process, from inception to development. They will obviously want to evaluate the effectiveness of the training and confirm that it has had the planned impact.

Effective training contributes to increased performance of employees and the entire organization, generating favorable outcomes for

all involved. (Blanchard & Thacker, 2019, p. 31-32)

Trainings can be delivered to employees in different ways, of which we can mention: case study learning, role-play, job rotation, e-learning, mentoring and face-to-face delivery. (Martin, B. O., Kolomitro, K., & Lam, T. C., 2014)

- ▶ the case study method provides the chance for participants to develop their skills by presenting a problem;
- ▶ role-play method, where participants are involved in playing a character in fictional scenarios and learning takes place through reflection on the play;
- ▶ the job rotation method ensures that preparation for a particular job is achieved by rotating between different positions, while maintaining the original job;
- ▶ E-learning is a fairly widely used method nowadays and involves the delivery of training through an electronic program, eliminating the presence of a physical instructor. In this way it is essential that the participant is motivated to successfully complete the course and assimilate the information provided;
- ▶ mentoring involves a kind of partnership between a less experienced employee and a more experienced one, with the aim of providing support and guidance;
- ▶ face-to-face training delivery is the opposite of e-learning, so it involves direct interaction between a lecturer and participants in a physical environment; this method is an advantage for the interpersonal relationships and connections that can be made between participants and instructor; it also promotes the concept of team-based training, contributing to the development of collaboration and teamwork skills (Mozael, 2015, p. 39-40).

Thus, two main categories of programs are distinguished: on-the-job and off-the-job. On-the-job training, which includes orientation, coaching, and job rotations, gives employees the opportunity to fit into the job and understand the organization. Off-the-job training can help with overall industry knowledge and provide learners with new experiences and perspectives.

The importance of training is also highlighted in terms of its impact on job satisfaction, employee retention and motivation. Well-trained employees are more likely to satisfy customers and experience higher levels of job satisfaction,

leading to superior performance. Training is essential for achieving organizational goals and maintaining a positive work environment. (Elnaga & Imran, 2013, p. 139-142)

Methodology

For the development of this paper I have chosen to do qualitative research because "qualitative research is the concentration of several methods, involving an interpretive and naturalistic approach". (Chelcea, 2001, p.59-60)

Investigating this topic qualitatively allows me to gain a detailed analysis of employees' perspectives and experiences of development programs, as well as the factors that influenced their career choice, with the opportunity to gain contextual information. Qualitative research also makes it easier for me to explore in depth individual motivations and perceptions that enhance individual and organizational performance.

In order to collect data that will help me to complete the paper, I have chosen to use semi-structured interview, because through this technique I can understand and learn more about the perspectives that the subjects have on their career and development programs, and their impact on performance. I will interview a number of 10 subjects to provide me with a comprehensive and comprehensive overview.

Research aims and objectives

The purpose of this research is to gain a deep and detailed understanding of employees' perspectives, experiences, motivations and perceptions of development programs in the organization.

The overall objective of this qualitative research is to investigate and gain a comprehensive understanding of the subjects' perspectives on career and the impact of development programs on organizational performance, focusing in particular on the perceptions and experiences of the employees.

From this objective, several specifics emerge, of which I list:

1. to identify and analyze the factors that determine individuals' career choices;
2. to identify and analyze the factors that lead employees to opt to participate in early career development programs;
3. analysis of factors that may act as barriers to

employee participation in development programs;

4. assess the positive impact of participation in early career development programs on job performance;
5. analysis of employee perspectives on employee training and development through development programs.

The choice of the population studied in this research will focus on women and men employed in various roles in the organization. This decision is based on the desire to gain a comprehensive perspective on how training and development programs influence organizational performance among both genders.

For this research I will opt for a snowball sampling method. This will be based on selecting participants who are recommended to be easily accessible and available to participate in the study.

Result

The factors that determined the career choice

Choosing a career is an important step in the life of every individual that is influenced by a multitude of intrinsic factors such as personal interests or values, but also extrinsic factors such as family, friends or mentors. All factors contribute to the final decision, each of them having a more or less significant importance.

Regarding this multitude of factors, the chosen respondents had different, but also similar, opinions.

If MSZ considers that the major influence in choosing a career was an extrinsic factor, namely the high school experience and the guidance towards social sciences: "... in the 11th grade I had the subject of sociology, and thanks to the teacher who is a empathetic, sociable, focused on the development of students' knowledge and open to learning as much as possible herself, but also her students, made me want to learn more about sociology, about society and what are the factors that influence this society to go how it goes and how it works"; for the IAM respondent, his own desire to help people as a nurse had a greater influence, highlighting a personal quality as the main factor: "empathy towards people made me choose this job initially"

The respondents identified the following as external factors that had a role in choosing a career: teachers, family or life partner, but also the

opportunities that arose. UM acknowledges the major influence from his high school computer science teacher, which led him to choose the educational profile at the college: "The computer science teacher in high school was an influence, an influential person from my point of view, who guided me in this direction. And leaving here I ended up choosing the profile that I later finished at the Faculty of Mathematics and Informatics."

In contrast, LM and LV highlight how unexpected events and opportunities influenced their career paths. LM arrived at the computer faculty by pure coincidence, without having had any previous connection with computers: "I went to the faculty, this faculty because it was the first on the list... and so by chance, without having anything to do with the computers, we got to the computers." LV, on the other hand, took advantage of an unprecedented opportunity to write projects for European funds, which opened a new direction in his career: "The desire to take advantage of an unprecedented opportunity... when the opportunity arose I said ok let me try."

Aspects of personality are elements that play an essential role in influencing the choice and success in a career, as they must be linked to professional interests. Characteristics such as curiosity, perseverance, empathy and the desire to persevere can determine not only the professional direction, but also how a person develops and adapts in the work environment.

Curiosity is an important personality aspect of respondents working in a technical field. So PGE, SA and BI, all active in such a field, illustrate this fact with their views. PGE tells us about how he spends a lot of hours trying to discover how various technologies work: "Yes, I've always been very curious. [...] Therefore, at the beginning of secondary school I spent a lot of hours [...] I basically I poked my nose into everything I could to find out and discover for myself how things work, and over the years I realized that I would like to be active in a field where I would use the technology part a lot."

SA shares a similar passion for knowledge and documentation: "I'm a curious person in general, meaning if I'm interested in a field, I document about it." Empathy is another trait identified by a number of respondents as a factor in their current career choice. MSZ, IAM and MD emphasize this quality in the way they have chosen their careers and in the way they go about their work. MSZ states that her empathy and openness directly

influenced her choice of field: "Yes, I'm definitely an empathetic, open person. I like to help people around me to solve their problems if they ask for my help."

In antithesis, we noted UM's view that personality had no significant impact on this choice: "No, I really don't think personality is a deciding factor." The influence that comes from family, role models met or mentors can be quite strong and can even lead a person towards choosing a career path that motivates or inspires him/her. Family support was a key factor in many respondents' career decisions. PGE, for example, mentions that his family was constantly supportive, contributing financially and morally to his career development in technology: "My family influenced me in the sense that they always supported me... they made the necessary efforts to enable me to continue my studies and finance them."

MSZ reveals that his family has been very open and supportive, allowing him to explore different options and choose a path that he liked: "My family was very open to whatever option I chose.... and they encouraged me to go for the option I wanted."

Many interviewees remember with gratitude the teachers who inspired and guided them towards specific career directions. LM, for example, acknowledges the major impact of his mathematics and physics teachers in high school, who piqued his curiosity and gave him the confidence to pursue a career in the technical field: "I had good teachers in both mathematics and physics and they somehow managed to pique my curiosity, to give me confidence...". MD tells us about many teachers she remembers with admiration, mentioning the ones at college who guided her to what she is today: "Throughout my life as a student I have met many teachers (...) I remember teachers in high school, I was in a high school that I didn't necessarily like, but I liked the teachers there. I remember a teacher in college who very carefully guided me towards saying what I am today [...]"

Career plans and development programs

In a dynamic and ever-changing professional world, career development is no longer just a matter of the individual desire of the employee, but also of the support that comes from organizations through the various development programs that they can provide.

Respondents had diverse views on the support offered by companies for their professional development. Most of them emphasize the importance of the support offered through training for their professional as well as personal development. For example, SA states that "Trainings are very important methods in a person's career and not only in their career but also socially".

Also, all interviewees admit the need for development programs to keep up with organizational dynamics, especially in technical areas such as IT. LM tells us that, "in IT companies, there is an emphasis on this training side. There's not much way we can survive in that area"

While we are all aware of the major impact that organizational support has, we are also exposed to situations where this support has not been available from firms. PGE tells us about her experience in her previous job, where she did not receive the necessary support: "(...) in my previous job, although I'm sure there are procedures behind it and maybe even dedicated people for the training side, at least in the department I was in and the team I was in, I didn't really feel that, unfortunately." LV tells us that he has noticed involvement from the organization but not at a maximum level: "I think they were useful, but I think it could have been deepened"

There are differences in how organizations implement trainings and provide support. For example, PGE describes onboarding training that includes face-to-face and online sessions, with direct participation from colleagues from different departments, whereas CMM and MD mention the use of e-learning, workshops and peer mentoring.

The most important resource in an organization is the human resource, and companies should continually leverage and improve it through various practices and initiatives. Respondents mention that the organizations where they work provide the resources for their development and provide access to different specific platforms.

PGE mention that in the organization where they work they are allowed access to both external training platforms such as Udemy, Coursera, LinkedIn Learning, but also internal: "basically to LinkedIn Learning and other trainings that are already on their internal platform. In most large organizations access is already facilitated for everybody"

Participation in organizational initiatives is essential for professional as well as personal development.

All interviewees said that they had participated in such programs in the last year, whether it was face-to-face training, mentoring or simple e-learning, but also that they had seen a more or less significant impact.

For example, BI says that the trainings had "a tremendously major impact in terms of being able to deliver on time the products that we were supposed to have delivered and in terms of being able to write a test program much faster", but also recounts that there were some that helped him to be more mentally prepared in critical situations. LM also tells us about the impact on his career of the certification courses he took: "they helped with my CV, I mean I have some heavy certifications, I mean they counted".

While there is a consensus on the positive impact of training, the specifics of this impact vary according to the field of activity and professional needs of each respondent.

The benefits identified by the respondents as a result of participating in certain programs were numerous, including: gaining new knowledge in their fields, making work easier, but also increasing the quality of work.

In terms of improving job performance, BI and SA emphasize the benefits of technical and management training. BI describes a project management training, initially considered unhelpful, which proved extremely beneficial to the team, facilitating the understanding of terms and the timely delivery of projects: "(...) being familiar, at least with the concepts, helps you tremendously to deliver what you have to deliver on time and within the time and resources available." Similarly, SA states that the technical trainings have made their daily work much easier and efficient: "I have acquired technical knowledge(...) my work is much easier now and I have learned certain methods that I didn't know before."

Regarding the development of technical and soft skills, SA and MSZ have similar perspectives. SA mentions that, in addition to technical knowledge, he also acquired valuable soft skills through public speaking training, which improved his communication skills: "(...)I have acquired certain soft skills... the public speaking training I really think helped me a lot."

Performance and trainings

Professional performance is closely linked to the development opportunities offered through trainings and training programs. In an ever-changing world, employees need to constantly improve their knowledge and skills to remain competitive and effective.

Respondents' views on the link between participation in early career training and performance were fairly similar.

PGE, MSZ and IAM emphasize the importance of early career training for integrating employees and making a positive impression. MSZ emphasizes the absolute necessity of these programs especially at the beginning of a job: "(...) I think that early career training is extraordinarily important, because the employee, the new employee often feels very lost and it is necessary to come with additional information".

On the other hand, VL and LM note that although trainings provide a knowledge base, they are not always sufficient and employees need to seek additional information. VL states: "(...) I really created a knowledge base through the trainings, but it was not enough, that is, I had to look for more to get interested because in the end, I take it as a challenge (...)." Regarding the consequences of not participating in certain training programs, the individuals questioned highlighted either the negative impact that can occur or certain potential reactions of employees.

PGE and SA emphasize the negative consequences of the lack of trainings on daily performance and team integration. SA specifies that without these programs, employees will not be able to complete daily tasks: "Well, the biggest consequence would be the failure to complete daily activities, that is, you cannot complete certain tasks, because you run into different problems."

On the other hand, BI and LM, people with extensive experience in the labor market suggest that although trainings are important, self-teaching and individual study can compensate to some extent for their lack. BI considers that one training is not enough to become completely competent and efficient, and LM considers: "(...) it depends on the employee, i.e. if someone is passionate about that language(...) it aroused his curiosity, (...) If you like to study on your own then it's possible they won't be affected, let that be a viable alternative to the courses the company either provides internally or pays for others."

Employee motivation

Employees in an organization can be motivated by a multitude of factors, both intrinsic and extrinsic, and through several means. The perspectives of study participants reveal that there may be a link between organizational support provided through these development programs and employee motivation

BI, PGE, and SA emphasize the importance of trainings in increasing the motivation and feeling of appreciation of employees. BI states that the trainings increase the feeling of motivation and commitment to the company: "the feeling of motivation and staying within the company is increased." PGE mentions that trainings offer the opportunity to learn new technologies and processes, which contributes to motivation: "it would mean a lot to me... to attend some good trainings."

CMM states that trainings contribute significantly to motivating employees, because it demonstrates that the organization invests in their performance, being necessary regardless of the level of experience: "(...)in terms of motivation, I think it is very high, given that the employee somehow sees that his company wants to invest in him and his performance. (...) regardless of the level of experience, (...) there are still different aspects that need to be improved by the organization.

When they were asked: "Did you notice a connection between participation in trainings and a sense of professional fulfillment?" ", the respondents identified different causes of the feeling of fulfillment that occurs after participating in an organizational development initiative.

BI and PGE emphasize that the feeling of professional fulfillment comes from applying the knowledge acquired through trainings in daily activity. BI believes that the personal contribution brought within the company gives a strong sense of fulfillment: "What I mean is that your contribution brought within the company, as long as it has a very high impact, clearly it gives a sense of fulfillment yes, I feel good that I was able to do this job, not necessarily that no one else could, but simply that I was able to after a training session (...)"

LM and SA mention that success in the final exams of the trainings or active participation in the desired trainings bring a sense of fulfillment. MSZ and IAM emphasize that training provides

the skills needed to perform tasks successfully and that the organization that puts employees first contributes to a sense of professional fulfillment. IAM says: "At this workplace I am put first"

VL and MD believe that the sense of fulfillment comes from recognizing the importance of their work to the organization and from enjoying what they do. MD emphasizes that the feeling of fulfillment comes only if you like what you do: "The feeling of fulfillment comes only as a consequence of the fact that you like what you do"

BI, SA, and MSZ emphasize that trainings contribute to professional and personal development, which leads to an increase in overall satisfaction. BI states that the interest in training and the way it is delivered are crucial: "Participation in training involves professional and personal development." SA mentions that learning from specialists contributes to a beautiful development on both levels: "It seems to me that we should hang on to everything we catch(..) we can learn different things from specialized people."

IAM, MD, and CMM highlight the importance of trainings for professional and personal fulfillment, emphasizing that they contribute to a satisfying professional and personal life. MD points out that professional and personal satisfaction go hand in hand: "If what you do professionally satisfies and fulfills you... you clearly feel like a fulfilled person."

CMM states that a well-trained staff contributes to better results and a high level of overall satisfaction: "If the organization has a very well-trained staff, it will clearly also have the best results... overall satisfaction will be higher."

Conclusion

Conclusions Following the conducted research, numerous perspectives were identified regarding the impact of professional development programs on employee performance and motivation. Regarding the factors that determined the career choice, they were diversified, including both intrinsic and extrinsic influences. In terms of gender differences, women often highlighted empathy and a desire to help as major intrinsic factors in their career choice, while men more frequently cited technical curiosity and a desire to understand how things work. This distinction emphasizes the importance of individual personality and interests in determining career

direction. In contrast, extrinsic factors, such as the influence of family, teachers and mentors, are often mentioned as decisive factors for respondents who rely on their support and guidance. Family, in particular, was mentioned by all interviewees as having a significant impact on their career decisions, as constant family support was essential both morally and financially, facilitating access to education and professional development.

Related to organizational professional development initiatives, experience on the labor market has had its say in terms of perspectives on the support offered by companies. Employees with extensive experience recognized the value of development programs in maintaining up-to-date skills and increasing professional performance, but also highlighted the fact that participation in them is not enough. Experience has proven to them that individual study and the desire to know more are absolutely necessary to reach maximum performance in a role. In contrast, newer employees in the labor market particularly valued organizational support in the initial stages of their careers.

They emphasized the need for on-boarding training and mentoring programs to effectively integrate and develop the necessary skills. They also highlighted the positive impact of these programs on morale and motivation, demonstrating how important organizational support is for retaining new staff. Respondents' perspectives on performance and motivation showed that professional development programs play a crucial role. Respondents emphasized that participation in these programs contributes to increased performance by updating the knowledge and skills needed to face daily challenges.

They also noted that organizational support through trainings and mentoring is essential for maintaining a high level of motivation and commitment. Regarding gender differences in perspectives on performance and motivation, women tend to value more the emotional support and opportunities for personal development offered by training programs. They highlighted the importance of peer support in maintaining motivation and commitment. On the other hand, men were more focused on the concrete aspects of professional performance and achieving tangible results (results over time) by participating in professional development programs.

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