

Impact of employees' training programmes on job satisfaction

Ana-Maria Bercu

The main aim of this article is to analyse the attitude of employees from wood-industry companies in the Northeast region of Romania about the training programmes that they have attended, consequently explaining the relationship between training and job satisfaction. The results show that it is necessary to implement high-quality training programmes because it has a positive connection with ethical rules, work recognition, supervision and commitment to work.

Keywords: Employees, job satisfaction, training, skills.

HUMAN resources are among the most important advantages that a company can possess. It is important for any company to hire people compatible with the values and company philosophy in order for both to develop together. Human resource management is not just personnel administration, but also the constant improvement of personnel in order to achieve the goals set by a company. Training takes place throughout one's life and encompasses at least two main phases: (i) the training with regard to the educational process which begins in the early years and continues in order to acquire qualifications, and (ii) professional development that take place after being hired by firms to develop the necessary job-specific skills. In the globalized world, the need of a specialized human resource is increasing and requires new skills, knowledge, attitude and behaviour. Studies have been made on the relationship between job satisfaction and skills, attitude and education, aiming at reflecting the subjective and the attitudinal variables which are having an impact. This article aims to link job satisfaction and employee's training programmes and aims to find the correlation between the two variables. We intend to respond to the following questions: What is the impact of training on job satisfaction? Are these directly or indirectly related to each other?

Literature review

The training and professional development of employees are parts of strategy in the company through the complex issues involved. Studies have shown that specific training of employees can have a greater impact on wages and productivity¹, a strong effect on the employment growth of small firms and a direct correlation between training

intensity and profitability for large firms². It also stimulates innovation in the workplace³. Some studies reflect the impact of training on the performance of the companies⁴⁻⁶ showing that if companies offer their employees opportunities of development, the latter are more satisfied. Highlighting the importance of employees' training on the performance of a company, Marquardt *et al.*⁷ reveal that organizations depend on the well-trained personnel who will be able to accomplish their tasks better. Considering the importance of training in professional life, some studies explain the role of specialized skills (of researchers) in the industry⁸. People are more satisfied and perform better if training has a direct effect on their performance⁹. The training is positively related with job satisfaction, as a result of quality of training, if employers could be able to improve the organizational performance increasing the volume, quantity and type of training¹⁰.

With regard to the wood industries, some studies show that the relationships to achieve high trust and commitment are based on share values and formal and informal communication between the participating parties¹¹ and other studies have focused on strategies at the company level in order to identify factors that can facilitate increased product innovation activity. Those studies compared organizational characteristics and perceived barriers to product development among innovating and non-innovating strategic business units¹²⁻¹⁵.

The concept of employees' training came to existence in Romania through the organic law in 1972 becoming a fundamental right, which today is established in the Romanian Constitution (Article 32). Under the Romanian Labour Code, the common law, Title VI – Training (Articles 192-210), training can be accomplished by attending courses organized by employers, through vocational internships in order to respond to the job requirements, through internships and specialized apprenticeship organized at work and through individualized training or other

Ana-Maria Bercu is in the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Carol I Blvd., No. 22, Iasi, Romania, 700505. e-mail: bercu@uaic.ro

forms of training taken by the employer. The Romanian Labor Code obliges employers to ensure training programmes for all employees at least once every two years if the company has over 21 employees and at least every three years if it has under 21 employees. The training costs fall under the management burden of the employer, unless the initiative comes from the employees and the training costs are negotiated between the parties. Employers with more than 20 employees must draw up and implement an annual training plan with the union or representative thereof. After its implementation, employees must be informed and made to sign an annex to the collective agreement or inserted a new clause in the individual employment contract. The initiator of a training plan can be both employer and employee. Although training is not negotiable forms of training (courses, seminars, on-job training), rights and obligations of the parties during the programme are established by agreement and the addenda passed to the individual employment contract. During the training programme, the employees will receive all their payments. In accordance with the training agreement, they will perform the work during the day, being accepted to leave the workplace to participate at the training programme.

Employee obligations resulting from participation in a training programme initiated by the employer refer to payment of all or proportional to the cost incurred by it for a period determined in the annex of the individual employment contract, if the employee resigns or is dismissed for reasons attributable to him. This duty is for the employees who are dismissed on disciplinary grounds, who are arrested for more than 60 days convicted by final judgment or a criminal court that established the prohibition to practice temporarily or permanently their job. Costs must be returned only when it refers to the training programme, not including salaries, allowances or injury.

Research methodology

The main research questions addressed here are: can employees' training have an impact on job satisfaction? What is the effect of such training on job commitment?

The research objectives respond to these issues:

- Determination of a company's training policy.
- Determining the overall satisfaction of employees based on training programmes.

The above hypotheses relate to different aspects, as follows:

H1 – The employees are satisfied with the organizational climate, working conditions, relationships with colleagues and managers.

- Sub-hypothesis 1.1 – the ethical values such as integrity, respect and performance are important for the employees (over 60%).
- Sub-hypothesis 1.2 – competitiveness, professionalism and professional ethics constitute the main factors for the organizational climate in a company.
- Sub-hypothesis 1.3 – the working conditions (as recreational space, breaks, access to water and coffee, conditions to have lunch, etc.) are according to the employees' satisfaction.

H2 – Employees in executive positions prefer traditional methods of training (e.g. guidance on post-employment) rather than dynamic methods (e.g. role-play).

- Sub-hypothesis 2.1 – most employees prefer to learn by repetition.
- Sub-hypothesis 2.2 – dynamic methods like role-play, explanations, demonstration, e-learning, etc. are not preferred by the employees.

H3 – Firms conduct annual trainings.

H4 – Firms are focused on the professional development of their employees.

H5 – Employees are satisfied with the professional development offered by the company (over 40%).

To reach the targets we chose the questionnaire survey to obtain explicative data about factors with impact on job satisfaction and job commitment. The questionnaire method is used here because of its standardized character and its representativeness. To review secondary data, we used direct observation method. Direct observation was made by analysing internal documents of the firms (training plans and strategy considering the training of their employees). The period of study using questionnaires was: 17 October–15 December 2015, via e-mail. Sampling of convenience method was used. Questionnaires were sent to employees who had e-mail access and agreed to take part in the study.

The employees were from wood-industry (firms with registered place of business in the northeast region of Romania formed by six counties – Bacau, Botosani, Iasi, Neamt, Suceava and Vaslui), according to the public data given by ANAF – the National Agency of Fiscal Administration, Romania.

In these regions, hundreds of companies operate, mostly focused on the production of wooden furniture, toys, parquet and joints. Based on the quality of their products, the companies have obtained a positive image on the profile market, at national and international levels. Mainly Western European countries, like Germany, Austria, Italy, the Netherlands and Sweden, drive exports of wood and wood products. About 33.46% of the northeast region of Romania is forested and provides 26.7% of harvested timber production. Logging contributes to

significant volume of timber extracted from the region and the large forest areas (420.797 ha in Suceava, 266.261 ha in Bacau, 256.463 ha in Neamt), provide 25.12% of the total wood production of the country. The volume of timber from industry, accounts for the largest share of softwood with 2134.5 m³ representing 54.21%, followed by beech 959,900 m³, representing 24.38% of the total timber.

The research sample consisted solely of employees of woodworking companies in the northeast region of Romania, the base criterion being the quality of employer – employee under a valid labour contract. Questionnaires were sent to 227 employees from different departments by e-mail, informing them about the main purpose and objectives of the study in respect to data protection law. Incomplete questionnaires were discarded and only 132 responses were considered for the study (7 respondents in first-line management, 39 in middle-management and 86 in operational line). The questionnaire had 14 questions – demographic questions, and those regarding training and job satisfaction. The results were analysed using the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet.

Considering the demographic questions, our findings show that 28.03% of employees are between 18 and 35 years of age, 59.84% between 36 and 55 years of age and 12.12% are over 56 years old. Among those surveyed, 58.33% had graduated secondary education, 10.41% attended high school and 31.26% had higher education. With regard to seniority in the firms, 66.7% of respondents had between 3 and 5 years of experience, 16.7% over 10 years, 12.5% about 6–9 years and 4.2% had under 2 years of experience.

Empirical results

The satisfaction of employees at work was tested through a series of questions involving organizational climate, working conditions, relationships with colleagues, relationships with managers (hypothesis 1 of this study). The results showed that the company was a place where integrity (93.75%), respect (83.16%) and performance (78.33%) were essential values for the employees. The organizational condition of the analysed firms was characterized by competitiveness (70.83%), professionalism (72.6%) and professional ethics 61.66. (Figure 1).

Regarding the working conditions, the employees (93%) considered that the company’s headquarters, possibilities for being assured the transport and the IT equipment are important. Recreational activities access to water, coffee, conditions for having lunch, etc. are important factors with impact on satisfaction and commitment at job.

If we take a look at the degree of satisfaction with these factors, we see that 100% of the employees very satisfied with the company’s headquarters and IT equip-

ment; 95.8% are very satisfied with the attractiveness of employment. Recreational activities satisfy 79.2% of the employees. Access to water is satisfactory for 75% of the employees while the conditions to have lunch satisfy only 66.7%; 29.2% are relatively satisfied, and 4.2% are not at all satisfied with these conditions. For transport facilities, 70.8% are very satisfied, 25% less satisfied, and 4.2% are not at all satisfied. Considering opportunities for regular recreation, 8.3% consider it as highly satisfactory, 87.5% as unsatisfactory and 4.2% not at all satisfactory (Figure 2).

The results show that the recreational factors implied could have a major impact on employees, but, in terms of satisfaction, they do not meet the expectations of employees. Regarding the transport factor, no notable difference exists between importance and satisfaction perception of employees.

With regard to the working condition, we find that 62.5% of the employees are satisfied with communication of the superior management, 91.7% are satisfied with the direct supervisor, 75% are satisfied with the nature of

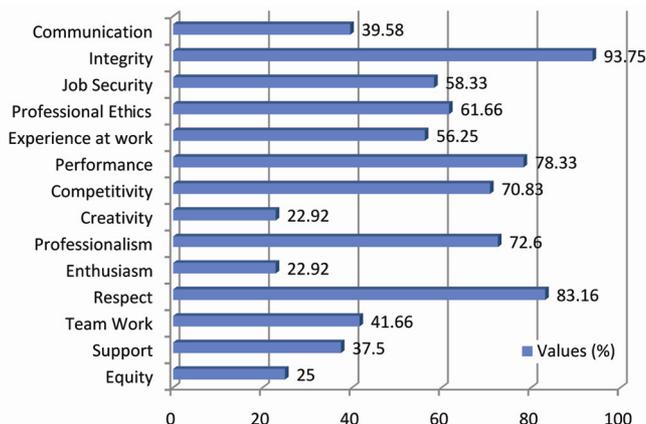


Figure 1. Factors of organizational climate.

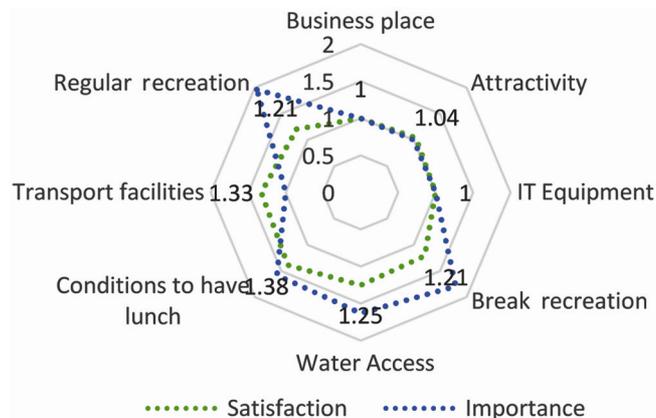


Figure 2. Satisfaction and importance of quality factors of organizational climate.

feedback, 54.2% are satisfied with the nature and intensity of control, 95.8% are satisfied with the quality of collaboration with other departments and 75% are satisfied with knowledge of the strategy. The communication between employees and the managers can be improved by implementing weekly meetings in order to discuss problems and possible solutions, thus motivating people to expand their knowledge and create a framework of informal training. Control is another aspect that could be improved by freedom of expression, to take the initiative and do things in one's own way. With the highest relevance, the results help increase the satisfaction of the employees without pressure on the system. Thus, hypothesis 1 in this study holds true.

Testing hypotheses 2 and 3, the results show that 43.75% of the employees prefer to learn by repetition, while 22.91% preferred exemplification. The remaining responses (study case – 4.16%, role plays – 4.16%, learning at home – 2.08%, post rotation – 8.33%) were variable. E-learning was not chosen by any of the respondents. This may reflect that the employees preferred the interaction with other people to learn, to explore, to understand the work process and not the training given through the modern technologies (via internet, on-line courses).

We notice that in case of the wood firm employees, training is focused on exemplifying the work, on mentorship and on one's own achievement, rather than on methods which are dynamic, not only communicating a sense. Linking function with the response, especially at this question, we notice that case studies and role plays were chosen by managers, showing the necessity to put them in different hypothetical situations, unlike the execution functions which are more perceived in motion and need some action and practice (Figure 3).

To test hypotheses 4 and 5, the respondents were given the opportunity to express their views on training in the company and support given by the firm for their professional development. About 89.58% of the respondents mentioned that they are supported by their firms for professional development. All respondents participated in the training programmes conducted but only 83.33% wished to participate in future programmes. This shows that some employees were not satisfied with the programmes or they could not implement what they had learned.

Since by law, training programmes can be initiated both by the employer and the employee, we wanted to know views of the companies on such initiatives. About 45.83% of the respondents did not know if their company encourages them to participate in training courses, because they did not try to discuss this matter until now, while 54.17% felt that they are being supported in these initiatives. The last training courses were characterized by 20.8% as being less innovative and 79.2% considers that the training courses were relatively or extremely in-

novative, 89.66% of the respondents said that the training was extremely or relatively highly useful and 10.34% consider that the information was insignificant.

However, none of the respondents mentioned that the information was useless. So training programmes are useful, but the information required could not be used in the work of employees, which makes us think that there was a problem of transfer of information from the course to work activity, advocated also by the response propensity earlier which was chosen as the most preferred embodiment the realization and repetition as a learning method.

The respondents were agreed that the information provided at the training programmes was tailored to their needs, also with the planned training objectives of companies. Training courses offered relatively valuable information according to 20.8% of the respondents; while 79.2% found it less valuable to their work (Figure 4).

The next set of questions are about expressing agreement, respectively, disagreement on certain statements. For the first allegation, 93.75% are partially or totally in agreement with the opportunity to learn new things, and the remaining 6.25% disagree partially. Regarding evaluations, 79.16% agree wholly or partly on evaluations that are detailed briefings and 20.84% for this assertion is not true (partially disagree/total disagree). Opening the company to employees, 45.83% believe it defers their human resources department, the rest feeling they disagree with this statement, that do not think they listen when it comes to participation in decisions in the organization. For 93.75% of the respondents, lifelong education is extremely important, understanding the need to update the information held and their expansion, while 6.25% believe it is not always necessary to learn (partially disagreed). Regarding performance evaluation, action which subsequently leads to the establishment of training required, employee respondents believe that it is good that the assessment is made by direct superiors (83.33% agree totally/partially), while 16.67% think direct superiors' opinion is not enough. About 75% of respondents believe that they will be helped if they ask to find new information, while 25% are not satisfied with the help of those around them when they want to learn something new.

To verify the transfer of information from the course in real work, 72.91% believe they can show colleagues new things that they have learned, and the rest are indifferent (4.16%) or do not believe that they have the support of managers to use the knowledge gained (22.93%). The rotation of the post is seen as a way of motivating enough for 39.58% of the respondents (strongly agree/partially), and the difference believes that the post rotation is not motivating enough for them. When hiring, initial training was qualitative in terms of the 87% of respondents, while for 13% of them, the training offered by the superiors was not complete or useful.

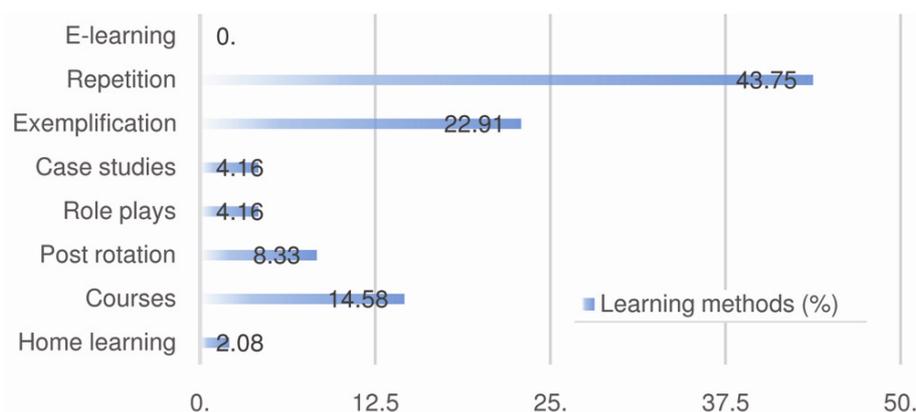


Figure 3. Learning methods.

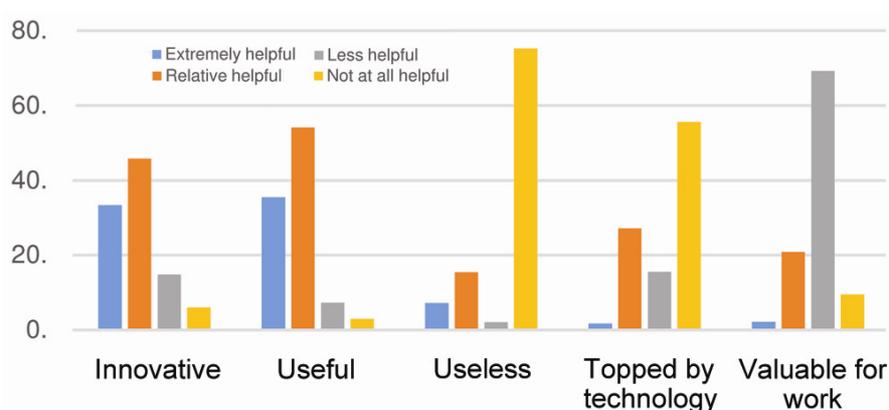


Figure 4. Perceptions of employees regarding the usefulness of training programmes.

Reflections on employees training

The value of an organization depends on its employees. So a company must employ competent and motivated people. To be competitive and profitable, a company must include education, training and employee development as an essential part of its strategy. Human resource development is necessary, which includes training of new staff and improvement of the existing one. It must be linked to a set of national and international factors – socio-economic, institutional, material and human. Human resource development strategies of the firms from the wood industry from the North-East of Romania have their matrix. Its fulfilment of strategic objectives leads towards the abolition of dysfunctions and optimizes the operationality and functionality of the companies. A wide range of studies are available on the impact of motivation, education, and organizational climate on job satisfaction, but few studies focus on the impact of training programmes on job satisfaction. This may be due to the fact that it is difficult to quantify the direct or indirect effects through multiple factors involved. Hackman and Oldham¹⁶ define job satisfaction as reflecting the affective reaction of individuals to various aspects of the job

or employment situation, being a predictor for attitudes and behaviours. Since training is an important factor, which affects the performance of a firm, the correlation between job satisfaction and employees’ training could explain attitudes and behaviours at work.

To achieve organizational objectives, companies focus on opportunities for education, training, learning and development, at building and improving individual group and organizational performance. The strategies listed below (with benefits and possible problems) are generally used by the firms analysed.

- (a) Training on the job provides benefits to tasks involving physical labour and is low cost.
- (b) Guidance on the job helps employee development and encourages managerial skills; it is also low cost.
- (c) Learning methods helps the employees learn on their own pace and find other new methods to acquire skills and knowledge.
- (d) Trainings developing expertise (mainly technical) supports organizational development and management, and the employees’ personal development as well.

In order to check if the training programmes are effective, they can be conceived as a process which measures the following: reaction or behaviour of those trained to the quality of the training programme, knowledge gained during the training programme, changing behaviour of the trainees and results and impacts following the training programme.

Limitations and directions for future research

This study has some inherent limitations. First, due to the organizational context in which we test the hypothesis being very specific (wood industry from Romanian northeast region firms), our findings may not hold time for those employed in other domains. However, our findings can be replicated in other organizations, being an important empirical question that can be tested in the future. Our study reveals a direct correlation between training programmes and job satisfaction, but we have limited data concerning multiple factors, which can affect attitude and behaviour after the training process. Analysis of changing behaviour throughout the training programmes, effects on the trainers and trainees and direct effects on the job itself could be considered for future studies. Moreover, the relationship is unequivocal. The training programmes have a direct effect on job performance, and, correlated with motivation and commitment (which are influenced by factors as working conditions, communication, facilities offered by employers, etc.) explains the employees job satisfaction.

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