

Education of Employees in Organisations Operating in Slovakia

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Abstract: Education of people is among the basic goals as well as outcomes of modern society. It is conditioned by the current demanding and turbulent environment requiring constant improvement, enhancement, adaptation and development of the level of education. It means that education needs to be permanent, reflecting all current needs resulting from the reality of changes. Education of employees can be characterised as a permanent process in which adaptation and changes of work behaviour, level of knowledge, skills and motivation of employees of an organisation by means of learning on the grounds of using various methods occurs. It results in reducing the difference between the current competence of employees and requirements posed on them. The objective of the article is to characterise the level of the focus of organisations operating in Slovakia on continuing education and development of employees. This article aims at presenting the results of research conducted in 2012 at the School of Economics and Management in Public Administration in Bratislava and at the Institute of Industrial Engineering and Management, the Faculty of Materials Science and Technology in Trnava. The set of respondents comprised 340 randomly selected organisations operating in Slovakia. The key condition posed on them was the size of at least 50 employees. The analysis was used for information collected from literary sources or questionnaires. All the knowledge was dealt with in smaller parts in order to enable a more detailed focus. As to statistical methods, distribution characteristics were used to express the median. Most of the collected values were expressed in % upon the results summarisation. The methods of induction and deduction were used in the article upon deriving the conclusions. The method of comparison was used upon the evaluation of the present state, comparing organisations paying sufficient attention to human resources management and organisations not dealing with it at all. To evaluate the data, the SPSS 19 statistical programme and MS Excel 2007 were used. However, the research showed that only 9 % of respondents are heading towards the learning organisation successfully, i.e. 8 % of organisations apply the approach of targeted educational concept, and 1 % of organisations declared their approach to education to be the learning organisation concept. Unfortunately, more than 60 % of respondents are at the very beginning in the sphere of education, as they only restrict their educational activities to compulsory trainings enforced by legal regulations and to unscheduled courses.

Keywords: Education of employees, development of employees, learning organisation, human resources management, organisations operating in Slovakia

1. Education of Employees

Each organisation seeks to ensure appropriate workforce potential. Workforce potential organisations manage decides about success of each organisation. Workforce potential is a basic precondition of fulfilling the current and future tasks of an organisation in market economy. Workforce potential means not only the number of employees but also their knowledge, abilities, skills, intelligence, talent and personal characteristics necessary to meet set out goals and mission of an organisation. To recruit these employees is therefore among the most important and permanent activities of personnel management. (Kachaňáková 2008). However, it is important to realise that not only the use of external sources but frequently primarily the use of internal sources is concerned at recruiting. The use of internal sources is evaluated very positively by employees, and such behaviour of an organisation motivates them. In order for an organisation to be able to focus on internal sources at recruitment, continuous education of employees is necessary.

Trends in the education of employees are directed towards the development and education of employees leading to performance increase and quality efficiency measurement under the impact of the increasing pressure on constant change of environment (Saniuk et al, 2013, Saniuk et al, 2012). That results in the need of a change from occasional, respectively unscheduled education (i.e. education when necessary courses and trainings are only carried out on the basis of the need to obtain the given knowledge, respectively experience) (Stachová, Stacho 2013, Samáková et al, 2013) to the general approach to education, i.e. to so called learning organisation. The aim of the learning

organisation is to achieve the permanent education of employees focused on performance increase immediately but also in a longer time horizon on the basis of continuously provided feedback.

Organisational learning predominantly concerns learning on the move, learning from own experience and searching for new possibilities. In order for organisations to learn, they need to operate as an open and dynamic system. It needs to be open to external as well as internal impulses. It needs to create the environment without barriers and boundaries of “us and them” type (Hroník 2007).

Learning organisations purposefully use the learning process at the level of an individual, a group as well as a system as a whole towards the gradual transformation of the organisation in a direction satisfying interest groups in an increased extent. (Tidd 2007, Bureš 2007).

Hroník, F. identified several characteristics differentiating between education in a learning organisation, characteristic of innovative organisations, and traditional education. These characteristics are graphically shown in figure 1.

Considering investments in people, many managers worry that they will sooner or later lose these people. However, there is a worse thing than investing in training and education of employees and losing them – not investing in their education and development and keeping them. To gain and keep top people in an organisation is one of the key tasks of management in organisations focused on innovations nowadays (Wang 2012, Cagáňová et al, 2012, Urbancová 2010, Babeřová 2010).

Learning at the organisational level is supposed to equip the organisation with preconditions by means of which it will be able to handle tasks it sets itself and those resulting from the rapidly changing external environment.

Education of people is among the key objectives and consequences of the modern society at the same time. It is conditioned by the present demanding and turbulent environment, requiring constant enhancement, deepening, adaptation and development of the educational attainment of people. It means that education needs to be permanent and should reflect all current needs brought about by the reality of changes. Employee education can be characterised as a permanent process in which the adaptation and change of working behaviour, the level of knowledge, skills and motivation of employees take place on the grounds of learning based on using different methods. It results in a decrease of the difference between the present competences of employees and requirements posed on them.

The key objective in employee education is to create conditions for the effective fulfilment of organisation’s tasks through the purposeful and permanent formation of working potential. Investing in human resources leads towards their overall appreciation, particularly reflected in the increased performance of employees and the level of provided services, the possibility of using own resources to cover employee needs, self-realization and customer satisfaction, their loyalty to the organisation, time and financial savings in the positioning of employees (within adaptation, a functional procedure, transfer, etc.).

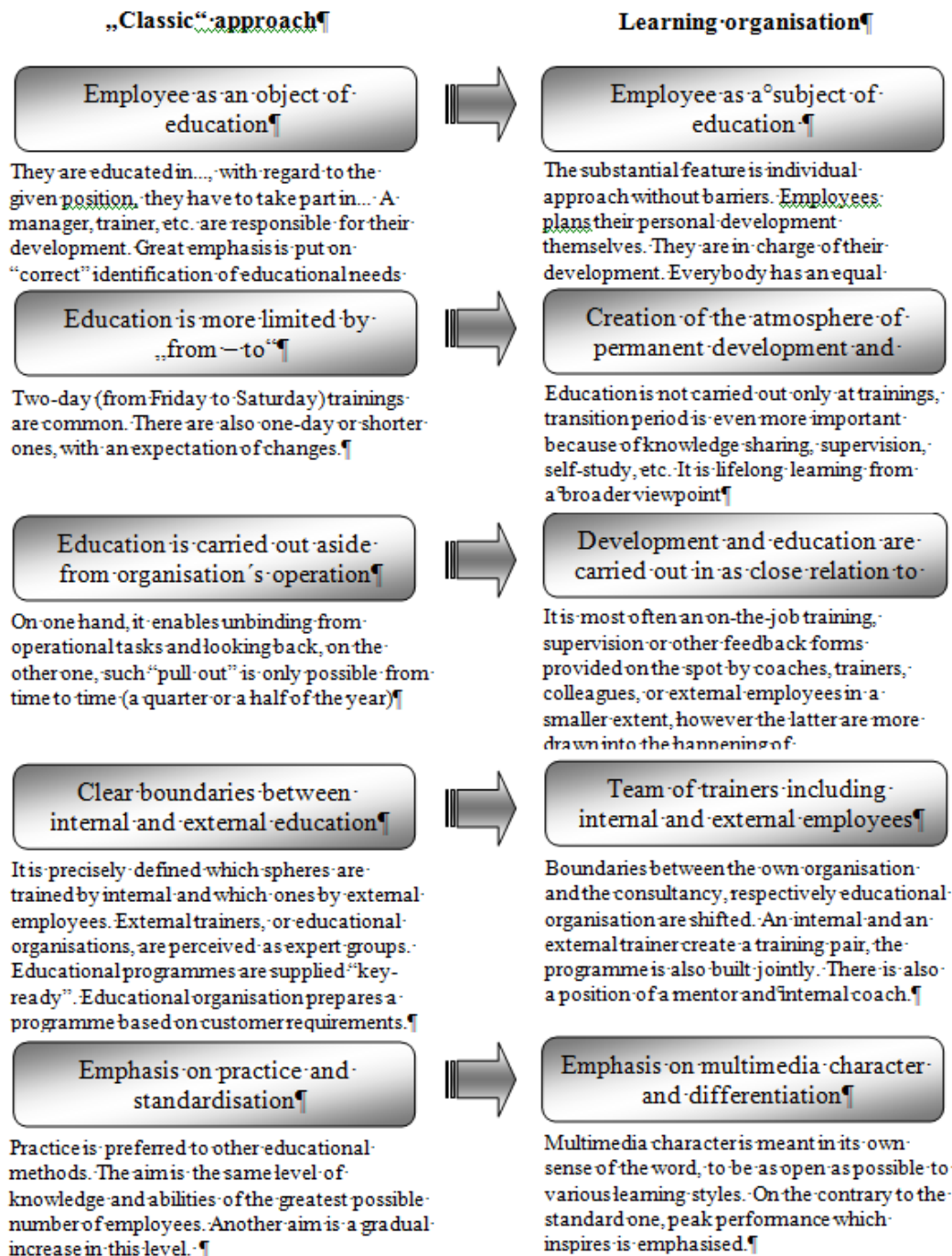


Figure 1 Trends in educational development

Source: (Hroník, 2007)

2. Materials and Methods

The analysis was carried out on how organisations operating in Slovakia approach human resources management. It had the form of questionnaire researches conducted over 2012, from February to May at School of Economics and Management in Public Administration in Bratislava and at the Institute of Industrial Engineering and Management in Trnava. Questionnaires were distributed in organisations with 50 and more employees. Upon determining the target group, depending on the size of organisation from the viewpoint of the minimum number of employees, we presupposed that organisations with the number of employees lower than 50 do not have a standardized and formally defined approaches to human resources management and to its individual functions. The collection, sorting and subsequent summary of information obtained from the researches were carried out from June to September.

The systemic approach for the objective evaluation of human resources management and their nature and for the elimination of details resulting from random events was used upon the article creation and the research evaluation. The analysis was used for information collected from literary sources or questionnaires. All the knowledge was dealt with in smaller parts in order to enable a more detailed focus. As to statistical methods, distribution characteristics were used to express the median. Most of the collected values were expressed in % upon the results summarisation. The methods of induction and deduction were used in the article upon deriving the conclusions. The method of comparison was used upon the evaluation of the present state, comparing organisations paying sufficient attention to human resources management and organisations not dealing with it at all. To evaluate the data, the SPSS 19 statistical programme and MS Excel 2007 were used.

340 respondents from the Slovak Republic participated in the research. The summary size structure of interviewed organisations is shown in Figure 2, implying that organisations with the number of employees between 50 and 249 were mostly represented in the research.

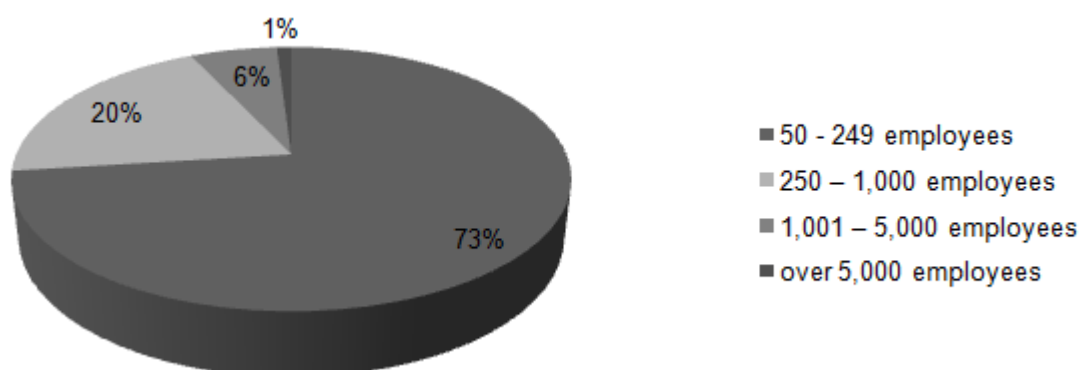


Figure 2: The size structure of analysed organisations

Source: Own research

The characteristics of the whole set of respondents within individual branches is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: The branches of the operation of organisations

Branch	The number of organisations	share in %
Industry	134	40%
Agriculture	16	5%
Energetics and water management	12	4%
Services	103	30%
Banking, finance, insurance industry	11	3%
Public administration	56	16%
Others	8	2%
TOTAL	340	100%

Source: Own research

3. Analysis and Evaluation of Present State of Focus of Organisations on Education and Development of Employees

Our research focused on the education of employees, as appropriate education ensures that employees have knowledge and abilities necessary to carry out their work, not only the present one but also a future one. The level and intensity of education in individual organisations differs according to particular needs, set out goals and possibilities of an organisation. Generally, in order for education to be effective, it needs to be well arranged and systematic, and needs to be continuous within a repeating cycle. Analysing the process of employee education, we found out that organisations most frequently provide basic unplanned education, when courses necessary for desirable performance at the given position are carried out at the moment of finding a deficiency, respectively a change - so called random approach. The second most frequently implemented approach is organised approach, within which educational activities are planned and requirements for courses are precisely specified according to the

requirements and needs of an organisation. However, quite high number of organisations marked the level of their education as so called zero approach, when organisations only educate their employees in the compulsory, i.e. statutory sphere (Figure 3).

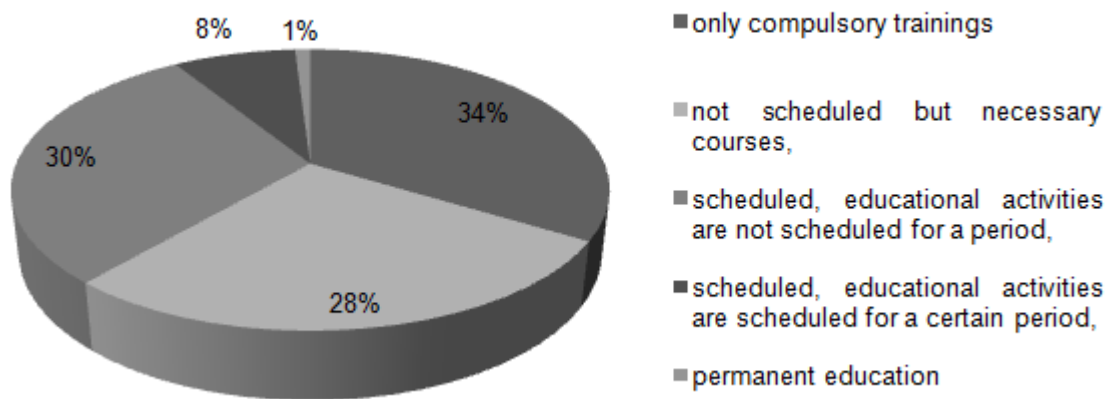


Figure 3: The course of education in the interviewed organisations

Source: Own research

We also analysed the effects of the place of headquarters of an organisation on the process of employee education. Results are shown in Table 2 and Figure 4. Results obtained from the 2012 research comply with the results of a research conducted by the Business Alliance of Slovakia, which implied that mostly educated are citizens working in four Bratislava districts, and the level of education is decreasing eastwards (Hajko, 2011). Our research also showed that organisations themselves mostly educate employees working in organisations operating in Bratislava, however not even at an average level of 2.46, as the range of the level of education is set out at five levels on the grounds of five approaches of organisations to education, from so called zero approach, having value 1 up to a learning organisation with value 5. Slightly above average approach to employee education was only reported by organisations with nationwide operation, achieving the average level of 2.83.

Table 2 Impact of the place of headquarters of an organisation on the education process in 2012

Education provided in your organisation (2012):	Headquarters of organisation				
	BA	Western SR	Central SR	Eastern SR	whole SR
only compulsory trainings	19	24	42	28	2
not scheduled but necessary courses,	11	23	38	18	3
scheduled, educational activities are not scheduled for a period,	19	26	31	17	9
scheduled, educational activities are scheduled for a certain period,	9	10	2	3	4
permanent education	1	0	0	1	0

Source: Own research

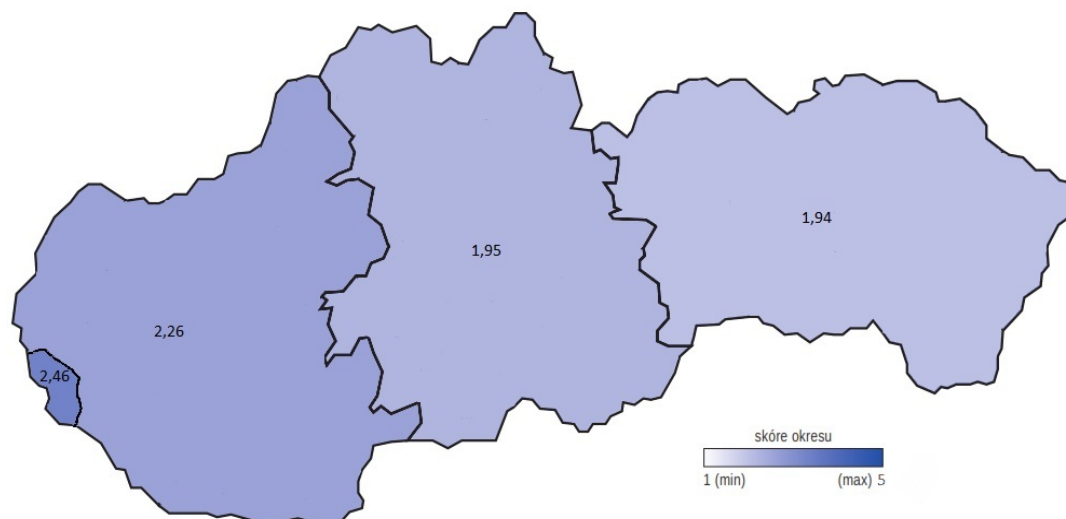


Figure 4: Impact of the place of headquarters of an organisation on their approach to employee education

Source: Own research

To make the learning organisation concept implementation possible, it is necessary to establish so called personal perfectness, i.e. the employees should be aware of the need to improve and educate themselves continuously. Our research showed that 70 % of the interviewed (see Table 3) use self-education as an educational method (sometimes supported by lectures, seminars and handbooks), which of course sounds more than positive at the first sight. However, majority of these organisations leave the whole educational burden on individuals, while they do not realize that self-education is appropriate for obtaining new knowledge, but only to a limited extent for obtaining new skills obtainable mainly on the basis of active educational methods. However, the research showed that educational methods supporting education by the situation experiencing form are rather little used in the interviewed organisations, e.g. outdoor learning is used in 15 %, a stay in a subsidiary abroad in 10 %, mentoring in 13 %, and the assessment centre only in 4 % of the interviewed organisations, while the mentioned methods are efficient for the model situation training.

Table 3: Methods used for the education of employees

Which of the educational methods are used in the interviewed organisations:	[%]
Lectures, seminars, handbooks	72%
Self-education	70%
Internet	38%
Work on projects	29%
Rotation at workplace	26%
Electronic media (e-learning)	22%
Coaching	21%
Outdoor learning	15%
Mentoring	13%
Stay in a subsidiary abroad	10%
Video conferences	6%
Assessment centre	4%

Source: Own research

To gain the learning organisation characteristics, it is necessary to create the atmosphere of permanent educational development which is directly conditioned by team learning and thus mainly by the full knowledge sharing within the organisation, emphasizing the team. However, the research showed that only 12 % of the interviewed organisations share knowledge fully (see Table 4), while most organisations claimed that its sharing is not rewarded, respectively

that they follow neither the amount nor the quality of shared knowledge (see Table 5). Knowledge sharing can be supported by rewarding employees for such behaviour, however most organisations follow in detail neither the amount nor the quality of shared knowledge for which an employee could be possibly and appropriately rewarded. (Šujanová 2012, Urbančová 2012, Wood 2013)

Table 4: The extent of knowledge sharing in the interviewed organisations

The extent of knowledge sharing	[%]
Only the knowledge necessary for work is shared	48%
Knowledge is rather shared	37%
Knowledge is fully shared	12%
Knowledge is the means of securing monopoly	2%
Knowledge is the means of securing power	1%

Source: Own research

Table 5: Form of evaluating and rewarding knowledge

What is the form of evaluating and rewarding knowledge?	%
it is not rewarded,	66
the amount and quality of shared knowledge is monitored in detail, and employees are financially remunerated for it,	21
the amount and quality of shared knowledge is monitored in detail, and employees are non-financially remunerated for it,	9
other	4

Source: Own research

Permanent evaluation of the employee education efficiency has an impact on reaching and sustaining of the learning organisation environment, while this evaluation is at the same time the basis for other educational needs identification. The evaluation should be an answer to the question to what extent declared educational objectives have been fulfilled. When we compare the results of our research to researches conducted in 1998 and 2000 at the University of Economy in Bratislava (researches were conducted on comparable respondent samples) (Kachaňáková 2002), we can see that the number of organisations systematically evaluating their employee education efficiency has currently decreased (see Table 6).

Table 6: The evaluation of employee education efficiency

Do you systematically evaluate your employee education efficiency:	[%]
Share of organisations in % in 1998	66
Share of organisations in % in 2000	70
Share of organisations in % in 2010	56
Share of organisations in % in 2012	41

Source: Own research

Organisations systematically evaluating education effectiveness most frequently use the method of evaluating responses of employees immediately after education and the method of evaluating the fulfilment of goals set out in the education plan of employees. Evaluation should be a response to the question to what extent defined goals of education have been fulfilled. Detailed analysis showed that at education evaluation, organisations prefer rather formal methods and evaluating an actual change in performance before and after education is only used in a small extent (see Table 7).

Table 7: Evaluation methods of employee education effectiveness

Which of the evaluation methods of employee education effectiveness is used in your organisation?	2012
Reporting the overall number of education days of an employee	28
Evaluation of the fulfilment of goals set out in the education plans of employees	53
Evaluation of responses of employees immediately after education	57
Performance measurement before and immediately after education	11
Performance measurement before and after education (following several weeks or months)	11
Informal feedback from direct superiors	35
Informal feedback from employees	40
Observation at work	27

Source: Own research

Analysing the part focused on education and development of employees, we were also interested in the opinions of managing employees concerned with the given sphere in analysed organisations. In this relation, we asked them about their personal opinion on what they consider to be three key spheres of education in the period of upcoming three years. Table 8 shows the most frequently repeated education spheres marked by managing employees as prospective in the period of upcoming three years.

Table 8: Spheres of education considered by organisations to be prospective in the period of upcoming three years

Which spheres of education do you consider to be prospective?	2012
Managerial skills	40
Higher level of education qualification (university, school-leaving examination),	15
Economics and marketing	20
Technical and technological spheres of education	25
Foreign languages	50
PC skills	22
Legislation	4
Creation and usage of European funds	7

Source: Own research

4. Recommendations for present state improvement

With regard to the findings, we proposed a set of questions with a range of closed responses for the analysis and implementation of the environment of so called learning organisation, on the grounds of which, in combination with using a summary table, an organisation can find its bottlenecks.

For the purpose of analysis of the level of establishing so called learning organisation environment, we compiled a question summary for organisation to answer (Table 9).

Table 9 Questions analyzing the sphere of learning organisation implementation, with scoring evaluation

QUESTIONS AND ANSWER VARIANTS	Points
1. Are company employees willing to learn?	
a) yes, they suggest courses themselves	15
b) yes, but courses have to be suggested by company	10
c) no, they aren't, and they avoid courses	5
d) no, they aren't, and the company is not interested in their education	0
2. Knowledge in company is:	
a) fully shared	15
b) rather shared	10
c) only knowledge necessary for work is shared	5
d) a means of securing power, respectively it is not shared for fear of working position loss	0

3. Company uses mainly these educational methods:	
a) self-education, e-learning, outdoor learning, internship in a foreign subsidiary, coaching, rotation at workplace, mentoring, lectures, work on projects, videoconferences, assessment centre	15
b) self-education, e-learning, outdoor learning, mentoring, rotation at workplace, lectures, work on projects	10
c) self-education, e-learning, rotation at workplace, mentoring, lectures	5
d) self-education, lectures	0
4. How is employee education interconnected with carrier growth strategy?	
a) It is exactly specified which courses, certificates and trainings employee has to attend and complete in order to have an opportunity of carrier growth.	15
b) It is only generally defined what type of courses, certificates and trainings employee should attend and complete in order to have an opportunity of carrier growth.	10
c) It is not defined which courses or certificates employee needs for carrier growth.	0
5. How is education carried out in your company?	
a) permanent education	15
b) organized educational activities planned over whole year	10
c) trainings and courses in case they are needed	5
d) only compulsory trainings	0
6. Does your company evaluate education effectiveness?	
a) yes, education is systematically evaluated	15
b) yes, but we do not have an elaborated evaluation system	5
c) no	0

Source: (Stacho, 2012)

On the grounds of provided answers, individual values of these answers are counted up. Individual point ranges, on the grounds of which a particular level at which an analysed organisation is, are stipulated in Table 10.

Table 10: The level of learning organisation implementation on the grounds of summary point evaluation of individual questions

Feature of an innovative industrial enterprise	Your result	Level of your organisation
Learning organisation	90 – 80	A
	79 – 55	B
	54 - 20	C
	19 - 0	D

Source: Author

Organisations were divided into the following four possible levels within the “learning organisation” sphere:

- A. Organisation educates its employees permanently and purposefully, while education is based on actual needs of a company and employees. Between individual courses, employees have to fulfil educational tasks. Employees are thus continuously in the process of learning. Besides specialised trainings and courses, education is also carried out at workplace by means of mentoring and coaching. New experience is subsequently consulted within working teams. Such education is supported at all levels of organisational management. The effectiveness of such education is obvious; employees as well as organisation advance and create a stronger position in the competitive business environment.
- B. Organisation has established an organised approach to employee education; it has arranged specialised educational courses for a certain period and in a certain extent on the grounds of the analysis of educational needs of individual employees and the analysis of offers of educational agencies. Education is supported by line managers, who arrange and propose courses for employees themselves, and employees are willing to attend proposed courses, as they are aware of subsequent career growth possibility.

- C. Organisation has not compiled an education plan. Employees attend courses necessary at the given moment to fulfil their tasks in educational agencies providing the best offer at the given moment. Effectiveness of such education is minimum, employees are only educated with regard to their present position, and thus education does not help them in possible career growth either.
- D. Organisation does not support employee education. It is restricted to such an extent that only trainings required by legislation, decrees or professional regulations are carried out. Employees can educate themselves above this framework, however on their own initiative, on their own costs and in their free time.

Table 11 was prepared to reveal bottlenecks in the “learning organisation” sphere, from which the interviewed can particularly define which part within the learning organisation sphere is necessary to focus on in order to reach a higher level in this sphere.

Table 11 Table revealing bottlenecks in the sphere of learning organisation implementation

No. of question / answer	1	2	3	4	5	6
very well	a	a	a	a	a	a
above standard	b	b	b	b	b	
below standard	c	c	c	c	c	b
bad	d	d	d		d	c

Source: (Stacho, 2012)

5. Conclusion

In order to overcome the negative effects of the crisis and to sustain competitiveness on the European market in the future, organisations in Slovakia need to adopt the idea that permanent education and employee development are necessary, and that they can only succeed with qualified workforce. It is also the initiative of the EU policies in the given field focused on the increase of investments in human resources and in emphasizing the lifelong education priority. However, Slovakia is still a country where organisational managements have not realised the importance of the education of their employees. In the situation when organisations try, as a result of the crisis, to make all their activities more effective the threat of savings in employee education is becoming real. Such solution would be very short sighted. Employee education is a necessity and knowledge is the key factor of economic prosperity. If organisations understand this and if they manage to survive on the market during the crisis thanks to good management, they should also consider scenarios topical after its weakening. However, it is all conditioned by the existence of efficient and qualified employees bringing forward creative ideas and having the courage to experiment. Like all the activities of human resources management, the education and development of employees also have to be well-grounded and effective, i.e. interrelated to performance objectives. Therefore, the concept of performance management is becoming topical in organisations, suggesting the interconnection of performance evaluation and the employees' further education and development. It means that the results of evaluated employees are the basis upon determining the objectives for the upcoming period, where performance objectives and objectives in education and development are interconnected. However, the research showed that more than 60 % of organisations are at the very beginning with regard to education, as they only restrict their educational activities to compulsory trainings enforced by law and regulations and to unscheduled courses which need to be carried out at the given moment.

We see justification of the given research part in practice particularly in revealing irresponsible behaviour of organisations operating in Slovakia in directing and advancing in the sphere of education. On the basis of our presentation of obtained results, organisation managements can compare their own present state within the given sphere to state that interviewed organisations declared, and subsequently consider options of its enhancement. We also consider as contribution the compilation of a block of questions for both analyzed characteristics in combination with the summary table, based on which organisations can find their bottlenecks in individual spheres. At the same time, we consider as necessary to continue in this research in order to improve, modify, enhance and develop individual approaches on the basis of new information obtained from interviewed organisations

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