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## THE ROLE OF PROFESSIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMS IN CAREER DEVELOPMENT - EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

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**Abstract:** *At present, lifelong education represents a necessity arisen from a changing society. The forms it takes are many, and vary from one education system to another, from one country to another. Organizations must have coherent programs on human resource development by providing members with opportunities to improve organization and career advancement.*

*The results of the research show that people who have participated in training courses in recent years, and have developed communication skills, had acquired information applicable to the current activity and their participation was particularly determined by their personal motivation.*

*The empiric research presented in this paper is aimed to analyze the effectiveness of training courses in adult education. The study's objectives adress the need to increase the participation in adult training, in order to investigate the students' motivation in training and last, but not least, how much the participants could exploit the knowledge gained in these courses.*

**Keywords:** *adult education, training course, career development, communication skills, motivation.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The option for a society based on knowledge requires investment in human resources development, so that the employees acquire new competences and accept occupational mobility.

At the same time, quality should be promoted when new staff is employed and lifelong learning strategies must be developed, to the benefit of numerous people.

Taking into account the strategic objective set in 2000, in Lisbon, for the European Union, namely to become the most dynamic and competitive economic space based on knowledge in the world, education and professional development have acquired a particularly important role within the Occupational European Strategy. [1].

As a result, the European Committee encourages cooperation among the member

states and facilitates the coordination of their action in all the domains of social politics, particularly in professional development.

In a changing society, adults provide opportunities to recover what has been done, for subjective and objective reasons.

Therefore, the development / improvement of professional human resource represent an essential element in developing and maintaining staff motivation in organizations and institutions.

Within a society that is becoming more and more globalized, continuous professional development represents an issue that should concern each and every organization, as well as a means by which this organization can adapt to the requirements of the labor market.

Each organization needs to develop formation and development programs for human resources, by which they provide the

employees with formation and career development opportunities.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The present paper aims at identifying the manner in which adults attend formation courses, especially professional training courses, how effective they are in professional formation, their motivation and last, but not least, the degree of applicability of the knowledge acquired at these courses.

The survey has been used as a research method, starting from a questionnaire that contains 10 items and which has been applied to a representative sample of 50 subjects belonging to various activity domains, from the public and private activity sector, rural and urban area.

The majority of the interviewed subjects is represented by women (85%) and develop their activity in the public sector (82%).

The sample is not a representative one, as it has been constituted in order to complete the research. This is the reason why the conclusions cannot be generalized, just having the role of guidance in further attempts of developing such programs [2, 3].

The main information required by the questionnaire addressed to the respondents have taken into account the following aspects:

- the types of programmes which they have recently attended;
- their formation needs;
- the type of motivation that determined their participation in the program (intrinsic/extrinsic);
- the practical usefulness of the acquired knowledge;
- the effectiveness of the attended courses.

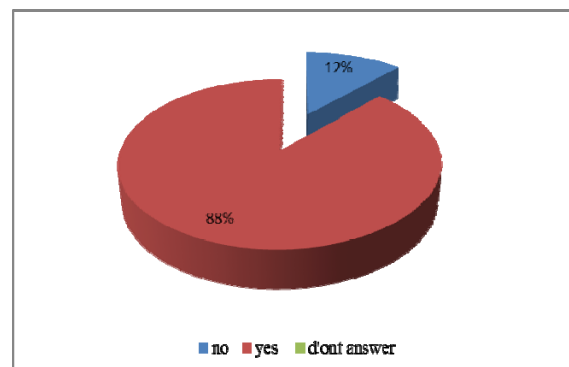
The questionnaire has been distributed by contacting the 50 subjects directly. All the three questionnaires have been correctly filled in, and constitute the object of the statistic analysis.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISSCUTION

The first step of the research was represented by checking the concordance

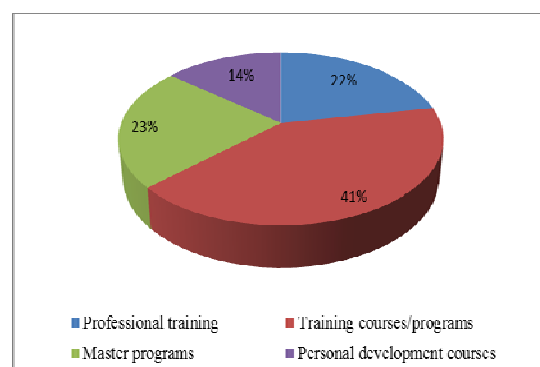
between the **present work position** and the **initial professional training**. From the total number of subjects, 88% consider that there is a concordance between their present work position and the initial professional formation, whereas for 12% their present work position is not concordant with the professional formation acquired throughout their studies (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Correlation between work and initial training



As regards **the subjects' interest in attending various formation courses**, the following conclusions could be drawn: From the total number of people who were interviewed in the survey, 46% stated that they had recently attended formation courses, out of which 24% attended master programs, 22% attended professional training, and 8% attended personal development courses (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Types of courses



Training courses have been lately perceived as formation/specialization courses that take place within a short period, in an organizational context, and meet the



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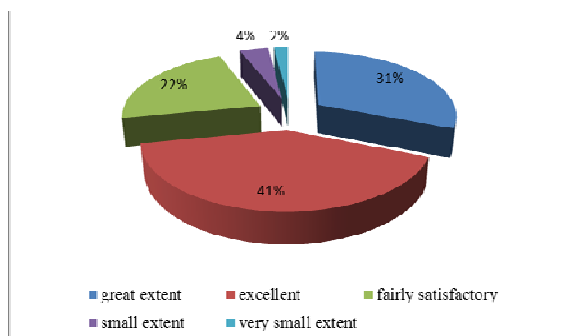
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requirements of the economic environment. As a result, 41% of the subjects consider that **professional development by training courses is extremely important**, whereas 31% consider it important. A small number (2%) consider it of small importance, or attribute it no importance at all (2%).

These figures indicate the fact that the interviewed subjects consider training courses particularly important (especially at their work place).

When asked about the **extent to which the courses they attended improved their knowledge**, 31% of the subjects answered that the courses had a high contribution to their improvement, 41% of them considered that it was fairly good, 22% that it was moderate, 4% - a small extent, and 2% labeled this contribution as insignificant. It can be concluded that their effectiveness is acknowledged by a significant number of subjects (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Improving knowledge after participation in training programs

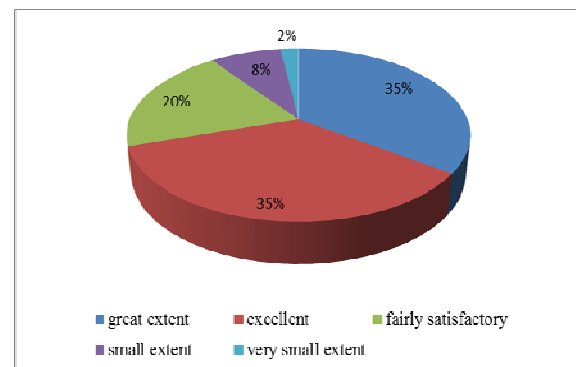


According to the European Commission, one of the key competences that need to be developed throughout our life is the

communication competence that should be acquired by the end of the compulsory education cycle and must be maintained and updated throughout our life.

Within the study that was completed, one of the questions referred to **the extent to which communication competences are developed by attending professional training**. More than 70% of the interviewed subjects consider that by attending training courses they develop communication competences to a high extent, whereas only 8% consider that communication competences are improved to a small extent, and a mere 2% - a very small extent (Figure 4).

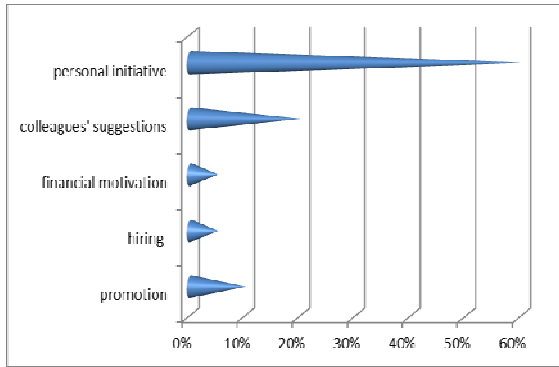
Figure 4. Improving communication skills



Another aspect under discussion referred to **the adults' motivation in attending professional formation courses**.

As a result of the subjects' questioning on this particular aspect, 60% answered that they had attended the courses because they had been aware of their formation needs, whereas 20% were influenced by their colleagues' suggestion, 5% had a financial motivation and 10% attended the training courses in order to advance their career (Figure 5).

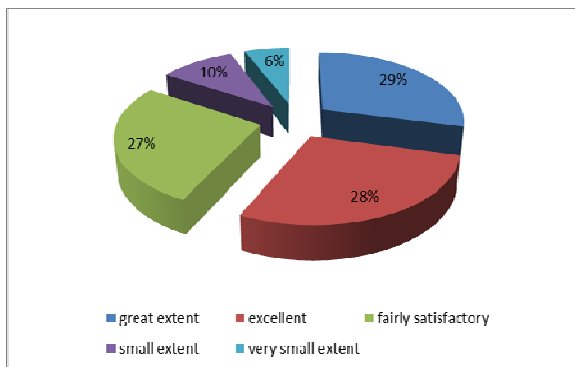
Figure 5. Motivation of participation in training programs



One of the aspects that was taken into account in our survey was the subjects' **satisfaction level towards the most recent formation course they had attended.**

To this purpose, the subjects were asked to assess the formation program they had attended taking into account the following factors: contents, the relevance to their professional activity, the balance between the theoretical and practical preparation, the trainers' activity, the formation methods, and so on.

Figure 6. Satisfaction get through participation in the last training course



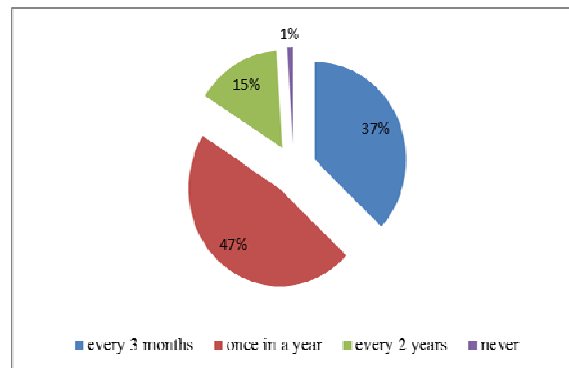
The aspects that raised the subjects' expectations were – according to the subjects' assessment: 29%- to a great extent; 28%- excellent, 27%- fairly satisfactory; 10%- to a small extent, and 6%- to a very small extent (Figure 6).

When questioned about the **usefulness of the attended courses**, and whether they had helped them in their career, 27% of the subjects answered that the courses had been extremely useful for their career, 26% considered them useful, 29% considered them

of moderate usefulness, 14%- to a small extent, and 4%- to a very small extent.

Regarding the regularity of training sessions, the interviewed subjects stated that – in order to acquire new professional competences- an employee should attend training courses once a year, (47%), every three months (37%), or every two years (16%) (Figure 7).

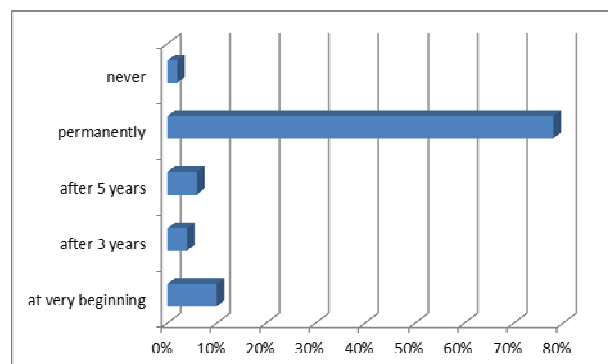
Figure 7. Training' participation frequency



Related to the previously mentioned issue, we have investigated the extent to which the competences acquired during the training programs were put into practice. 39% considered that their participation in courses had improved their performances moderately, 29%- to an important extent, 22%- to a very important extent, 8%- to a very small extent, and 2% to a small extent (Figure 8).

If we take into account the moment in their career when the training courses are particularly useful, almost 80% consider they are permanently necessary, whereas 10% consider them useful at the beginning of one's career.

Figure 8. Appropriate career period in which training courses are useful





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It should also be mentioned that, within the training courses, besides the professional competences, communication and relation competences are also improved, taking into account the fact that 31% of the subjects made friends during the training courses.

improvement of professional and relational competences.

Overall, the study points out that the people who have recently attended the training courses, have developed their communication competences. Moreover, the acquired information was applicable in their current activities, and the respondents were intrinsically motivated.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

As a result of the study, we have come to the following conclusions:

- a fairly large proportion of the questioned subjects work in the domain for which they have been prepared. For most of them, professional training plays an extremely important role in the career development, seen as a specialization within the organization.
- attending training courses leads to the improvement of professional competences.
- more than 70% of the respondents consider that they have improved their communication skills, after their participation in the training sessions.
- a positive aspect would be the fact that, in many cases, the respondents' motivation is intrinsic, as they are aware of the necessity of professional training, as well as the importance of career development.
- the majority of them (53%) appreciated the utility of the acquired knowledge and the necessity of attending courses, at least once a year. Another consequence of their participation in the training, alongside communication competences, is represented by the

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