

ROLE OF LIFELONG LEARNING IN DEVELOPMENT OF THE OF THE ORGANIZATIONS BASED ON KNOWLEDGE

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Abstract: *The contemporary society, which permanently changes and renews itself, confronts with a continuously increasing demand of qualifications, specializations, abilities and competencies in all activity areas. The capacity of organizations to adapt to these changes depends on the development of new knowledge and competencies. As a consequence of this fact, modern educational policies aim to the expansion of the continuing education concept on individual and organizational level. The article highlights the significant aspects related to the continuing learning in accordance with the new requirements of the society and organizations based on knowledge. It also discusses the effects of continuing learning on organizations development.*

Keywords: lifelong learning, society based on knowledge, learning organization, organization based on knowledge

JEL Classification: I21, I25, P46

1. Aspects related to the lifelong learning in the society based on knowledge

The society based on knowledge presupposes the stimulation of continuous education through the assimilation of new knowledge and competencies. The continuing learning is regarded as one of the most

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important sources of competitive advantage, for both individuals and organizations.

The concept of continuous learning has become important over the past years because it places priority on the creation, management and dissemination of knowledge. European Union defines the concept of lifelong learning as “all purposeful learning activity, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence”, as well as “all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences personal, civic and social” (<http://eurlexeuropa.eu>). The European Council underlined repeatedly the role of education and training regarding the long-term competitiveness of the European Union. The European countries promotes and facilitates continuing education to achieving the objective of establishing a knowledge-based community of states by promoting social cohesion, active citizenship, personal and professional fulfilment.

The demand for education is permanently rising and not limited to a certain age, degree or job position. Even among retired people there is a demand for continuous education for to extend their personal knowledge and skills (Draghici, 2007, p. 45). A retired person that wants to stay active and acquires new skills can to actively participate to all areas of social life. Consequently, continuing learning is viewed as basic component of education system and represents a more and more important concern of all education providers in the context of a society that suffers continuous change. Today, the continuing education is enhanced by the use of computers and has provided new opportunities on how people can acquire knowledge allowing them to chose learning time and place. The new didactic technologies have special significance and enable the formation of an interactive learning environment separate from temporal and spatial constraints. Educators are discovering that computer networks and multi-based educational tools are facilitating learning and enhancing social interaction (Stefan, Dragomir (Stefanescu) & Pânzaru, S., 2009).

The education system is important for delivering the continuing education programs for to develop to the employees new skills and knowledge, required by a very dynamic society. The best prepared in this respect are the institutions of the formal educational system (high schools, Public and private accredited universities, specialized institutions). On the

other hand, the employers prefer to train their new employees locally, according to the necessities of the specific job.

The objectives of the continuous learning and continuous training aimed at:

- promoting innovative projects from the continuing education;
- improvement of professional competencies in accordance with all technological changes and new challenges of the society based on knowledge for the employees of the organizations that work with a highest-level technology;
- development a favourable climate for participation into the continuing professional formation;
- reconverting of professional for the dismissed employees to get new jobs with a different qualification;
- high continuing level training to increase efficiency in the use of emerging technologies;
- stimulation of the suppliers of continuing professional formation;
- higher qualification for the employees that do not yet work in order to harmonize the knowledge and the competencies with labour market requirements;
- increase of the public and private investments into the continuing professional formation.

Today, the organizations require higher and higher levels of knowledge for their employees. The concept of learning organization is linked of the organizations that experimented with new ways of conducting business in order to survive in turbulent, highly competitive markets (Izvercianu, 2002, p. 158). Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995, p.72) argue for an organizational context in which the product of learning, namely the knowledge, can be properly used to organizational or individual level. This additional knowledge is necessary to master daily job requirements.

Based on the research results regarding the employees training there were formulated the main target groups of continuous education (Draghici, Izvercianu, Negru-Strauti & Barglazan, 2008, p. 507):

- The “qualifying education” is meant as an education for students who are enrolled at a university or any other educational institution to get a scientific degree. This also includes people who already have a degree and study to reach a higher degree.

- The group of “graduates and Scientists” requires activities to reach a higher level of personal knowledge and skills in specific and selected fields.
- The third group includes students of any age and any social level. These courses are open to everybody. Such courses offer a platform to learn and discuss about the latest research results and allow people to join lectures which are not related to their core subjects.
- The fourth group consists mainly of retired persons who are still interested in learning and extending their personal knowledge and skills.

Today more than ever, we are witnessing a strong need for the education system to be more open and close to real life from the perspective of the role that continuing education has in the development of a socially active and responsible behaviour, adequate to a society that suffers continuous change, dominated by turbulences (Abrudan & Năstase, 2012, p. 127). Based on the aspects highlighted above it is evident that the lifelong learning may contribute to future welfare and the proper functioning of contemporary society.

2. Considerations on the organizations based on knowledge

The changes imposed by the dynamics of the new requirements of the knowledge based society lead to the development of a new organizational model, capable to develop and use the creative potential of employees, to structure new responsibilities regarding the creation, management and dissemination of knowledge. The development of this type of company, preoccupied with the investments in educating and permanent training of the personnel is imposed by the contemporary society which confronts with a continuously increasing demand of qualifications, specializations, abilities and high competencies in all activity areas. The features of learning organizations are complex and refer to the utilization, development and partition of knowledge, to the partnerships in order to innovate and use informational technologies, to permanent training, etc. (Dragomir (Stefanescu) & Popa, 2009, p. 716). The organizations that promote lifelong learning are the following characteristics (Figure no. 1):

- organizational and individual development;

- highly qualified personnel, with abilities and competencies characteristic to knowledge based society;
- promoting and supporting in career;
- use of information as a strategic resource;
- developing competences and growth of the level of specializing;
- generalizing the practice of continuing learning and improvement of competencies;
- increase efficiency in the use of emerging technologies;
- development the partnerships in order to innovate and use informational technologies;
- development of the organizational culture, which is related to creativity, communication, permanent training and improvement.

The capacity of organizations to adapt to the requirements of the society based on knowledge depends on the development of new knowledge and competencies. The labour must be prepared to be flexible and the companies one cannot develop without promote permanent continuing learning and training programs. This type of organizations goes through changing processes with immediate effects on its capacity to create, bring about and use efficiently the new knowledge. A study by the Learning Organization Network of the American Society for Training and Development identified four factors that need to be taken into account for aligning the organization to the lifelong learning challenges:

- 1. Focus on the whole system;
- 2. Use of multiple and integrated change efforts;
- 3. Goal of team and/or system competence;
- 4. Emphasis given to “double loop” learning (learning how to learn as well as learning new skills and knowledge).

Companies’ survival depends on their ability to develop the knowledge and skills of their employees. From this point of view, organizations should focus more on fostering creative ideas, on facilitating interactions and information sharing among their employees, as an essential condition of success. When talking about lifelong learning and its result in terms of knowledge, one needs to take into account that organizations that refuse to take the challenge of continuous improvement through learning are doomed to fail (Codreanu, 2008, p. 501-506).

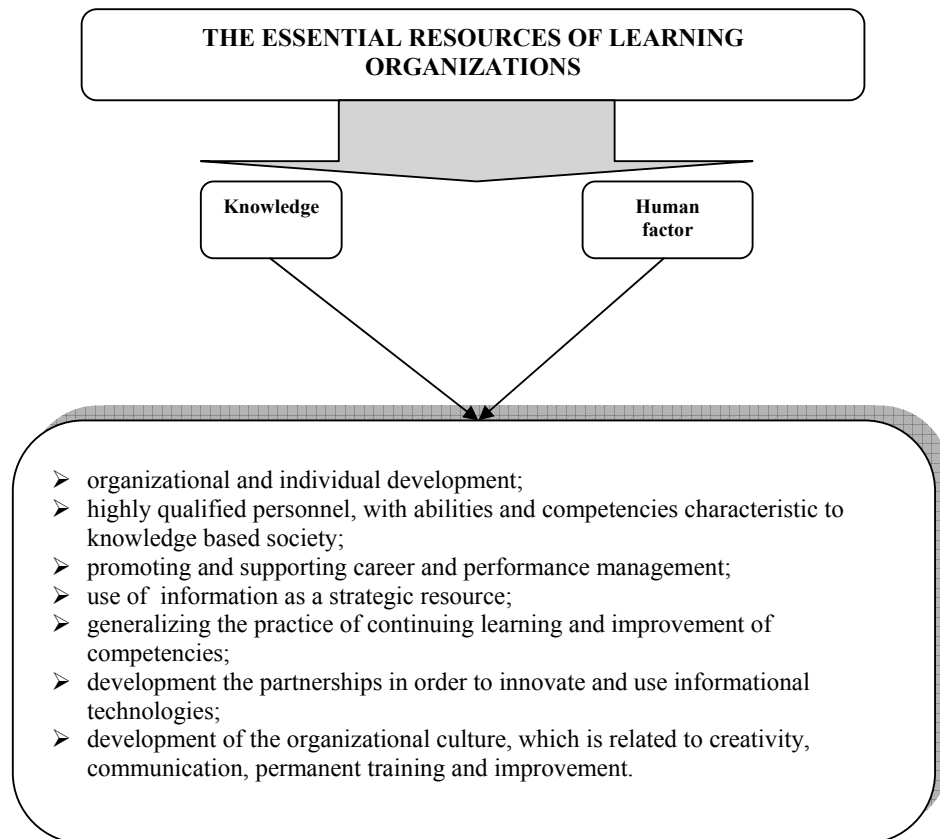


Figure no. 1. Essential resources of learning organizations

Practice has proved that a considerable part of the Romanian entrepreneurs do not grasp well enough the role of lifelong learning and of continuing training in development of the modern organizations. Within the Romanian companies the usage and implementation of these concepts represents for most of them faraway desiderates. It is required a mentality change as far as the professional formation, in the sense of increasing the awareness level towards the importance of continuing learning, of the motivation degree for knowledge expansion and the development of the people competencies(Abrudan &Nastase, 2012).

Given the challenges raised by society based of knowledge, one cannot developing the modern organizations, focused on the values of knowledge, without promote lifelong learning and permanent training programs. Such organizations are highly aware of the role and the value of the information in the market competition and they are interested in creating, obtaining, accumulating, understanding and using of the advanced knowledge. The organizations y must also have the capacity to adapt to the requirements of society based of knowledge, by developing the new methods of instruction, by lifelong learning, permanent training and improving the specialized knowledge.

3. Conclusions

The permanent accumulation of knowledge through lifelong learning and continuous training represents one of the main characteristics of the contemporary organizations and a mandatory condition for a society based on knowledge. Taking into account these aspects, new responsibilities appear and develop. Such responsibilities are related to creating, managing and disseminating the knowledge in the organization and they confirm a new stage in the evolution of organizations management.

In Romania the rethinking process of the lifelong learning and investment growth in education and formation are obligatory. Only way to achieve to long term success is to adopt a different vision regarding the way of conceive and practice the lifelong learning. The investments in training and professional education of human factor within the organizations and the promotion of modern managerial practices represent the categorical solutions for durable development within the Romanian organizations.

Under the strong influences of the challenges offered by the knowledge based society, the future belongs to companies that focused on the values of permanent training, because such companies know how to manage their intellectual capital by generalizing the process of lifelong learning and permanent training.

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