

# Employee Training in Learning Organizations

Denis Barna<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

The author of the presented paper deals with a specific field of adult education – with employee training. Employee training plays a significant role within learning organizations which are aware of the importance of their personnel's permanent development in the field of job-related skills and knowledge. Investments in employee training help improve the quality of an organization's products or services and thus, increase its competitiveness on the market. Therefore, workplace training as well as school based or online distance learning form integral parts of each learning organization's policy.

## Keywords:

Learning organization  
Employee training  
Lifelong learning  
Adult education

## 1 Introduction

The current, dynamic society places high requirements on organizations, which must adapt to the rapid ongoing development and make continuous changes in their structure and functioning. These changes apply to personnel management as well. Organizations should create such conditions for their personnel, which enable them to adapt quickly and easily to the new reality. Without education and opportunities to develop their skills, it is not possible. Institutions which promote their personnel's learning activities – i.e. learning organizations – have an advantage in the market as opportunities for further education have the potential to accelerate the processes inside organizations and increase the efficiency and quality of their services provided to their customers. Such learning organizations can be characterized by a high quality personnel management (Barnová, Krásna, & Gabrhelová, 2019).

## 2 Lifelong learning and adult education

Adult education can be considered a part of lifelong learning, which is among the priorities of the European Union and its member states – including Slovakia. It can be defined as all the activities, which are carried out throughout individuals' lives with the aim to broaden their knowledge and improve their skills and abilities. The focus lies on preparation for the labour market, development of life skills, as well as various spheres of leisure time activities (Barnová & Vicianová, 2018; Krásna, 2014).

In organizations, the personnel must deal with various demanding situations on a daily basis (Lajčín, Hrmo, & Krištofiaková, 2014). From the aspect of maintaining competitiveness in the market, personnel must possess up-to-date information from their sector, as well as skills and abilities necessary for their further personal or organizational development (Barnová & Krásna & Gabrhelová, 2019). In other words – as research findings show – educated and skilled personnel are the basic precondition for the success and productivity of an organization and opportunities to take part in learning activities also increase the employees' job satisfaction

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<sup>1</sup> DTI University, Ul. Sládkovičova 533/20, 018 41 Dubnica nad Váhom, Slovakia.  
Corresponding author. E-mail: [denis.barna@yahoo.com](mailto:denis.barna@yahoo.com)

(Krásna, 2016; Krásna & Barnová, 2018). Therefore, employee training should become a priority in each organization having the ambition to strengthen its competitiveness in the market.

Adult education can be realized in formal, non-formal and informal learning environments in the form of both face-to-face or online instruction, which can be opted by learning organizations based on their needs.

### 3 Learning organizations

As stated above, every organization should be interested in the permanent professional and personal development of their personnel. When making efforts to maximize an organization's profit – which is the main goal of each organization – its customers' needs must be satisfied. It places high demands on increasing the quality of the provided goods or services, promptness of handling requests; but decreasing costs is equally important.

Currently, a shift in the understanding of organizations can be observed. A bigger part of profit is invested in the fulfilment of the needs and expectations of all stakeholders – i.e. personnel, owners, contractors, the organization's social environment, etc. Such a shift can only be the result of a change in the approach towards systematic development of personnel's knowledge. So, knowledge is becoming one of the decisive factors leading to a lasting success and, therefore, organizations should be aware of the value of investments in human capital (Matúšová, 2015). These changes in the approach to increasing knowledge are considered the basic characteristics of a learning organization.

The notion of learning organization is defined by Senge (1990). It is such an organization, in which people are permanently increasing their ability to achieve the set objectives by means of joint learning and learning how to take part in the creation of a more favourable reality. The basic prerequisite for increasing the efficiency of functioning is the personnel's continuous education and training (Krásna & Barnová, 2018; Barna, 2018; Barnová & Barna, 2019).

The requirements placed on learning organizations and their characteristics are as follows:

- A clear vision and direction of activities – including education – is necessary. The aim of the organization must be clearly formulated and all the activities in the organization – as well as individual teams and employees – must lead towards their achievement.
- The whole concept is based on high quality human resources. Caring for employees, creation of favourable working conditions, and the availability of a sufficient number of opportunities are necessary for the functioning of learning organizations. This requirement may be fulfilled by high quality human resources management.
- Initiation of changes in the thinking of employees and their overall development form an integral part of a learning organization. During the implementation of changes, a positive approach within the organization is important. It is the task of managers to spread the new philosophy in the organization. They can use their charisma in leadership and promote active forms of learning at the workplace. Changing the way of people's thinking is a very difficult and a long-term process as it can only come to a change in the attitudes by means of influencing people's knowledge, emotions, and experiences.
- Team work and open communication within organizations and their acceptance by every employee are a necessity. In practice, real team work is difficult to achieve and the possibility of its full and flawless functioning is questionable.
- Clear rules for working with information produced, gathered and used by personnel are a relatively new requirement, which needs special attention.
- In learning organizations, the term learning, its forms, methods, and principles in the widest sense must be defined, as these organizations tend to use non-traditional ways which are not mentioned in textbooks (Pokorná & Ivanová, 2010).

### 4 Changing a traditional organization into a learning one

According to Truneček (2004), there are four basic criteria which must be fulfilled throughout the process of changing a traditional organization into a learning one:

1. It is necessary to create a specific climate motivating individuals to learn and to fully develop their skills and abilities – i.e. to do more than they are obliged to.

2. The organization's learning culture must be spread not only in communication with their suppliers, but also customers and important partners.
3. A specific strategy of human resources development must be applied – individual learning and organizational learning must be among the organization's key activities.
4. The continual process of organizational change must be the result of individual and collective learning.

The main advantage of learning organizations lies in the fact that it comes to a qualitative shift in the thinking of people and in the approach to their jobs. In this context, Pokorná and Ivanová (2010) define five fields which must be developed:

1. Systematic thinking, which is demonstrated as the ability to see processes within the organization in mutual connections. It is the process of transition from the traditional perception of consequences to the recognition of causes and prediction of the further development, as well as various alternatives of possible future consequences. It requires a genuine interest in things happening in an individual's environment and in the results of other people's activities. Systematic thinking in an organization must go beyond own interests, job position, tasks and duties. If it really works, it ensures the interconnection of all events and activities within the organization.
2. Personal qualities, skills, and mastery, which are of a significant importance for an individual and which are focused on by that individual in the process of lifelong learning. They are developed by clarifying and deepening individuals' visions, concentration of their energy, working on the patience and on an objective perception of reality. They form the spiritual background of an organization. Such personal qualities of employees enable organizations to build on the specific skills of individuals and their commitment, to be pro-active, systematic, and to apply innovative approaches. Under such conditions, every member of the personnel is fully aware of their uniqueness in the organization given by their skills and competencies and seek for new opportunities for further development.
3. Mental models which are deeply rooted in individuals' concepts, generalizations, opinions and images having an impact on their interpretation of the world and their existence in it. Although they are subconscious, they are decisive from the aspect of personnel's actions. In learning organizations, the traditional mental models in relation to the organization, to duties and customers must be modified, they should be replaced by modern ones in the case of every member of the personnel, especially managers. Mental models are very close to attitudes of employees towards their employers, their duties and responsibilities, customers, but also products or services.
4. Creation of a shared vision in the learning organization is a complex process. It is the ability to create visions and to transfer them to be shared in the organization and to create a favourable climate for achieving the point when the shared vision becomes superordinate to the visions of individuals. In this context, charismatic leadership plays a crucial role. It can be considered the most suitable managerial approach when working with visions. A vision shared by every member of the personnel shows the direction of the organization's activities as well as the activities of working teams and individuals. A clear definition of an organization's vision helps to see the reality and continuously evaluate the internal and the external situation of the organization.
5. Team learning is a necessity in functioning learning organizations, so the personnel should develop their collaborative competencies. Team learning helps achieve exceptional results and also accelerates individuals' personal and professional growth when compared with results achieved without education or training.

If organizations want to transform into learning organizations, a high level of collaboration between teams and individuals leading towards the achievement of the shared vision and the partial goals of the organization is necessary. According to Pokorná and Ivanová (2010), although all the five fields must be developed simultaneously – as they influence and build on each other – systematic thinking has a specific position. It functions as an integrator of all five fields and creates a link between theory and practice.

## **5 Online learning in learning organizations**

Online learning or e-learning is a convenient, cost-saving and efficient individualized form of learning, which is also attractive especially for the younger generation. Its benefits compared to face-to-face education make it attractive for organizations as well.

Learning organizations are usually involved in three basic form of e-learning activities, which are characterized by Aceto and Dondi as follows:

1. Workplace training in the form of a structured educational program carried out online or in the form of blended learning. In some cases, only certain segments of an educational program corresponding to the needs of an organization are selected.
2. Inter-institutional education providing space for relatively new learning opportunities is a result of a cooperation between several organizations. It is exclusively based on mutual communication regarding innovations and for the purposes of sharing information and examples of good practice.
3. Professional educational networks, which are virtual communities of specialists from a particular field, provide discussion forums for exchanging professional knowledge and experiences. It is a form of intended learning leading towards the achievement of professional goals (Aceto & Dondi, as cited in Barnová & Krásna & Gabrhelová, 2019).

## 6 Conclusion

The current situation in the society, increasing competition, and the situation in the labour market place the requirement of continual learning on personnel. If they want to succeed, they must permanently work on widening, deepening and actualisation of their knowledge. Unfortunately, there are still organizations which are not aware of the importance of providing a sufficient number of educational opportunities for employees. Creating favourable conditions for personal and professional development of employees not only increases their qualifications but also their job satisfaction. As stated above, job satisfaction contributes to a growth in productivity and the efficiency of processes within an organization, therefore it is worth to invest into education and training.

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