CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT ACCORDING TO AN INNOVATIVE MODEL

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Abstract: Every morning, in Africa, when the sun rises, a gazelle wakes up. It knows it will have to run faster than the fastest lion … otherwise the lion will kill it. Every morning, in Africa, when the sun goes up, a lion awakes. It knows it will have to run faster than the slowest gazelle … or it will starve to death. So, it does not matter whether you are a lion or a gazelle: as soon as the sun rises, you must run. The learning cycle of professional development involves experience, action, reflection, decision, and processing. The continuing professional development of the staff activating in research involves boosting and diversifying the skills of the personnel to take part in far more complex activities and also requires higher responsibilities. Therefore, the present paper shows the factors, main objectives, chief obstacles, and principles of professional development and training. At the same time, a set of suggestions and recommendations is also proposed here, more precisely a plan of action for the researcher's professional training/ development.
Keywords: researcher, professional training, continuing development, innovation
JEL: Q01, Q56, I23

Introduction

Lately, there has been much debate on the need for continuing professional training and development of the employees of an institution, training that should be focused on competence requirements. The institutions adjusting to such a development get higher efficiency scores among their employees [Noveanu, Potolea, 2008]. The development focused on competence requirements can only comprehend a relatively limited number of fundamental competencies, regarded as necessary for reaching the institution's organizational objectives. In the case of autochthonous institutions, the development focused on competencies should include the following fundamental elements [Covey, 2011]:

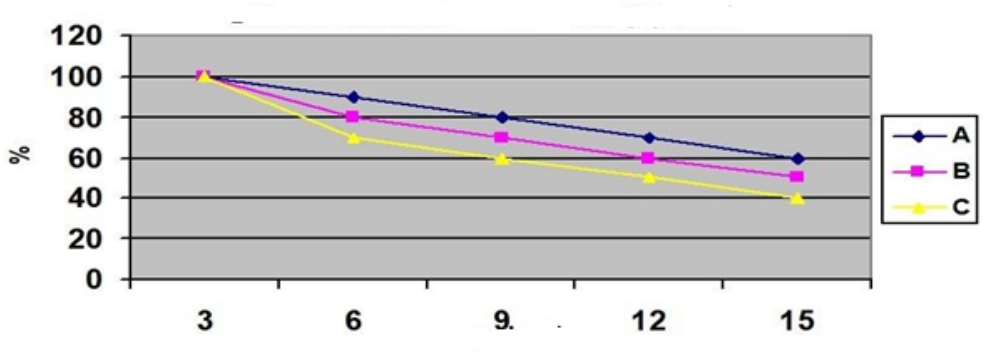
Strategic capacity involves a good understanding of the economic environment, development opportunities of both products and markets, as well as learning about the advantages and weak points of their institution.

The capacity to manage change considers identifying the need for change, building change programmes, encouraging other employees to get involved in implementing changes, etc.

Capacity to work in a team aims at facilitating a positive collaboration between people with different competence backgrounds.

The employee's knowledge wears out morally, which is why a constant update is so much needed in every domain where the employee activates. Figure 1 shows the model of how one employee's knowledge can degrade over time.

Figure 1. The knowledge degradation process of the employee
EVALUATION OF THE EMPLOYEE'S KNOWLEDGE



TIME YEARS
Source: data processed by authors
A - general level of knowledge
B - basic level of knowledge in the field of activity
C - specialized level of knowledge in the field of activity

According to the figure above, we can notice that, over time, it occurs a degradation of all knowledge categories of the employee. The most afflicted category is the employee's specialized knowledge in their field of activity. This is a natural occurrence since the organization is evolving over time and introduces new technologies, working methods, management types, and approaches to tackle problems, and the knowledge obtained years ago is no longer valid or has considerably changed. The key to personnel development is influenced by 3 factors, namely: knowledge, opportunities, and employer's behavior [Keller, 2014]. Knowledge is the foundation for developing the employee's competencies and has a direct impact on the intellectual potential and personality of the employee. Opportunities are the terms of using the knowledge acquired during studies and their usefulness in the field of activity. Behavior, as a development factor of the employee, plays a significant part, especially when their activity is carried out within a group.

Continuing training of the research personnel

Continuing professional development is the transformation process of the material represented by human, and the result of their performance obtained through this process, is the working force, the processed physical and intellectual skills in the native material, the work capacity of a certain qualification level [Câmpeanu-Sonea, Osoian, 2004]. The continuing development of the research staff is not merely a technique or even science, but, firstly, a social movement meant to assist human resources in understanding their place and role in society that makes employees capable of adjusting to the contemporary requests and demands, becoming more efficient and delivering performance. Accordingly, continuing development and training becomes a permanent necessity for the researchers, regardless of their professional background and domain of activity" [Pânişoară, Pânişoară, 2005].

Distinctions between training and continuing professional training [Mathis, P.C.Nica, C.Rusu, 1997

Professional Training Basic Qualification	Continuing Professional Training - already qualified employees, in certain domains, acquire new knowledge, skills, and work abilities, attend training sessions that are part of their job, on short poliqualification.

Source: data processed by authors

Continuing development and training are part of the process of becoming an adult, from a cognitive, affective, and psychosocial view, providing the framework for personal development that allows the employee to acquire new knowledge and adjust their bag of knowledge to new contexts in a shifting world. In this process of continuing training of the researchers, in particular, the trained persons are not just objects of the training, they become actively engaged elements open to partnership with their trainers. The most used organizing methods are educational forums, masterclasses, workshops, round tables, instructive seminars, individual study (under mentorship), updated scientific briefing and informing, internships and experience exchanges on certain topics, pedagogical/ andragogical circles and seminars, webinars, getting professional degrees, master degrees, doctoral degrees, etc.

A special role in continuing professional development and training of researchers is played by the professional development itself. Professional development, achieved by attending courses of continuing training and self-training as well, is quite necessary so a researcher can be able to convey a clear image of the present scientific world and learn efficient ways of working and interacting with their colleagues. Such a development is much dependent on the researcher's motivation to improve their qualification and ability to come up with a modern, diversified educational offer, focused on the employees' development needs [Joița, 2000]. Table 1 shows an action plan for the professional training/ development of the researcher.

Table 1. Action plan for the professional training/ development of the researcher

Criterion no.	Form of professional training	Venue	Trainer/ Organizer	Period	Objectives
1.	Scientific Events (conferences)	Domestically& Internationally	universities, academies, and research institutes	all year-round	operational and regional programmes, projects, and training programmes addressing researchers
2.	Individual Study	-	Research Team	monthly, all year-round	debating some ethical and research methodological topics of the economic theory
3.	Attending courses organized by professional training service suppliers in the country and abroad	online	universities, academies, and research institutes	all year-round	operational and regional programmes, projects, and training programmes

Criterion no.	Form of professional training	Venue	Trainer/ Organizer	Period	Objectives
					addressing researchers
4.	Doctoral degree	-	universities, academies, and research institutes	all year-round	Ph.D. training
	Stata webinar	Internet	Stata Campaign	all year-round	Thorough studies of the data processing techniques with the newest Stata developments
6.	Online courses Web of Science	Internet	Clarivate Romania	all year-round	improving knowledge on requirements in international research
7.	Research seminars	-	universities, academies, and research institutes	all year-round	debating methodological topics on ethics, and research issues in the field of economics
8.	Scholarships and internships carried out in the country or abroad	-	universities, academies, and research institutes	all year-round	improving knowledge about requirements in international research

Source: data processed by authors

According to article 192, alignment (1), Bill no. 53/2003, the professional development and training of the employees have the following main objectives:
employee's adjustment to the job requirements
achieving a professional qualification
updating job-specific knowledge and habits and improving professional training for the basic occupation
professional reconversion caused by socioeconomic restructuring changes
acquiring advanced knowledge, modern methods and procedures needed for carrying out professional activities
preventing unemployment risk
job promotion and advancing in the professional career.
The scientific activities have been/ are run within courses, training classes, seminars, scientific councils, round tables, workshops, scholarships, internships, etc. The online conferences facilitate real-time dissemination and synchronized learning for all participants in the event. The most popular platforms among researchers are the following: Zoom, GoogleMeet, Webex, and Twinspace [Doncean, Suslenco, 2022].
Furthermore, we would like to suggest a series of exercises addressing actions of professional development and training.

Exercise no. 1

Task: Write a journal containing all the positive experiences you went through as a researcher (a sketch). Do not write anything if you regard the experience as insignificant. Quite often we experience positive experiences that we are more likely to forget, while the negative ones (which can prove very demotivational) have higher chances of being kept in our memories. Try to write this journal as if you were writing a book: give plenty of explanations, try depicting feelings we have experienced on that particular occasion, etc. Then, at times, take the time and go through your text again. Updating all those experiences and reliving those feelings can provide the perfect opportunity to recharge your batteries to move forward and appreciate what you do/ have even in the worst moments of your research job.
My Journal

_____
_____
_____

Exercise no 2.

Please list 3 actions of continuing professional training for a period of 3 years:
*1*_____
*2*_____
*3.*_____

Exercise no 3.

Task: Reflect on your profession, and analyze those said before.
Sometimes, stress, routine, and fatigue, accompanying every profession, take their toll and demotivate the researcher. How can we fight this process whose occurrence is only natural but can cause inefficiency problems? In other words, a researcher will do less qualitative work and feel more unhappy and stressed with their condition. Under the circumstances, to fight such an appreciation of the scientific educative and instructive act, we can reupdate the initial motivational conception. Similarly, this exercise can be useful at any time when the current situation is a degradation of the past one.
Additionally, try the following imagination exercise: if you were a fresh graduate now (in case you are more experienced in the institution), would you still choose a research career? If your answer is affirmative, then your motivation for professional development is still there, yet it needs to be reinvigorated [idem].
Please write your reflections down, especially what motivates you in terms of professional development:

_____
_____
_____

At the end of activities, there were established and hierarchized a series of motivational actions addressing the professional training/ development of the researchers based on the pyramid method.

Figure 2. Pyramid of motivational actions for the professional training/ development in the researchers' view

Action 5. INDIVIDUAL APPROACH
Action 4. CONSTANTLY PROVIDING FEEDBACK
Action 3. ENCOURAGING EMPLOYEES
Action 2. DELEGATING POWER
Action 1. EFFICIENT COMMUNICATION

Source: data processed by authors

Motivational actions, in the researchers'view, are as follows: efficient communication, delegating power, encouraging human resources, constantly providing feedback, and individual approach.

Principle-based activities for continuing professional training/ development

When organizing and running activities of continuing professional training/ development for researchers, the manager of an institution should consider the following key principles:
The principle of responsible professional reflection and decision implies regarding the researcher as a professional, whose decisions are based on reflection upon one's practice and arguments for advancing their professional development.
The principle of coherence and continuity addresses the transfer of concept and value-based fundamentals of change for the continuing professional development and training of the researchers. The professional development should be a continuous process encouraged within the institutional and academic framework for the overall benefit and advancement of the research activity.
The principle of individualization concerns two main aspects, namely (I) continuing training, which answers the needs for training of every trainee, and (II) continuing training, which provides development opportunities for the individuals involved in the training process. The first feature involves studying the training needs of the researchers and correlating training contents, forms, and strategies for continuing training with these. Creating the development conditions for the researcher's individuality remains the main task of the institutions concerned. It is necessary to identify the individual particularities of the scientific researcher, and also contribute to their development. This principle highlights the subject of the educational action, namely the continuing professional training of the researcher. The principle of individualization implies molding a person with integrity, both autonomous and responsible [Neculau, 1996].
The principle of free choice. The absence of choice makes quite impossible the development of individuality and subject of research action, update of the learner's capacities, and the advancement of professional competencies. The presence of opportunity to choose the best-tailored package of educational services, topics of high interest, the organizational framework for the professional training activities, the most suitable supplier of training services, and to go on their particular route of professional development (in the case of researchers or employees of the institutions concerned) turns out to be indispensable for the continuing training. The subject qualitative is dictated by the capacity for freedom of choice and proactive attitude, based on irrefutable arguments deducted from the self-evaluation of their activities.
The principle of creativity and success. iul creativităţii şi succesului. The individual and collective activity contribute to identifying, if not discovering, and developing the individual particularities and uniqueness of the study group. Creativity is the trigger of the researcher's insight into their capacities, limits, weaknesses, and strengths. Achieving success in any activity contributes to getting a positive self-image that boosts better performance in terms of self-improvement and defining a professional self. Self-evaluation of their professional activity, reflection, and experience learning are factors leading to success.
The principle of trust and support. The trust shown to the learner, and support given to their attempts at self-improvement and updating should substitute the excessive control and trainer's conduct over the trainee's activity [Blake, Mouton, 1979].
Accordingly, the researcher's framework should be empowered (motivated, responsible and able to make decisions) in their activity and professional development, and also

supported through mentorship and other assisting programmes. The methodological circuit of the evolution path of the researchers' training activities has the following stages: initial training - continuing training - self-training, and it is a determiner of the quality of the researcher's activity [Suslenco, 2021].
Thus, the continuing training process, developed within the research institution concerned, is a necessary operation in changing circumstances, of continuous motivation, and stimulation of both managers' and researchers' creativity, of meeting the modern requirements for organizing, running, and assessing the refresher process. This process should be focused on transforming the tutoring institution into a learning institution, and the tutoring researcher into a tutor providing the enabling environment for creative and independent learning.

Obstacles of the continuing training/ development process
Obstacles show a higher degree of objectivity, and, depending on frequency, are as follows:
long distance to the training center that provides more training opportunities
high cost of some courses answering the training interests of the researchers, possibly due to the smaller opportunities and more limited information resources on the diversity of training offer and, especially, about courses available to researchers
higher travel and accommodation costs caused by attending courses
inadequate duration of courses related to individual training needs
deficiencies of the law framework or failure to comply with the legal provisions of the institutions concerned.

Suggestions for continuing professiona evaluation
Assessing the training results in the context of teaching, learning, and research is the main piece of the continuing professional development and training process. Evaluation is another tool that provides feedback for the self-regulation information that is necessary in the process of making decisions for improving/ developing the continuing professional training.
Under the circumstances, we can deduce the following:
a) evaluation is a process, a stage-based activity ran over time
b) evaluation is an indispensable piece of the training process
c) evaluation is not limited to the trainees' opinions, it also addresses domains and issues of higher complexity
d) evaluation involves measures, tests, comparisons, appreciations, etc. which allow adopting decisions meant to improve the process of professional training.
Evaluation is a professional endeavor by which it is defined, identified, and provided information about academic performance as a basis for making further decisions. The evaluation process of academic performance takes the following steps: measuring, appreciating, harnessing, and adopting measures for improvement/ harnessing/ decision-making.

Conclusions and recommendations
The continuing professional development of the staff implies increasing and diversifying the employees' attitudes to involve them in more complex activities and also have higher responsibilities. Unlike professional training, professional development provides the

possibility to gather far more complex and diversified professional skills and knowledge, and so create opportunities to advance in one career. Professional development comprises the entire personnel of an organization, mostly addressing the management board of the organization, and also the staff with technical expertise. The personnel development aims to improve the professional performances of the employees and develop their intellectual potential, so they can assume higher responsibilities in the future. The development of the staff is a must activity for every organization since, over time, some of the knowledge and skills degrade or wear out.

From the organization's standpoint, the development of its staff is a high-complexity activity that requires taking into account a series of aspects and performing more actions that are more or less connected. First of all, it is necessary to make an evaluation of the employees' professional performances and thus identify the areas that need appropriate professional development. This assessment process is the foundation for making decisions about the professional development of some staff categories or employees of a certain subdivision of the organization concerned.

Secondly, the organization should know its development potential, at least for certain staff categories. Accordingly, the evaluation of the employees' capacities and identification of their development possibilities is another must. Under the circumstances, the organization concerned should be aware of the maximal limit of professional development, especially for the key employees.

Thirdly, the organization should identify the employees' objectives for professional development. In this case, the objectives of personal development should coincide with the organization's development objectives. The main objectives for the professional development of the employee are the following: promotion, acknowledgment, improving self-image, assuming higher responsibilities, etc. Achieving these objectives is a desirable goal for the organization since employees with outstanding performances are more likely to be attached and interested in the development of the employing organization.

More specialists in the education field have come up with recommendations for increasing the efficiency of distance learning activities and better management of methodologies and emotions. Here are some of them:

− compliance with life contexts and reorganization of the distance learning process with regard to the new conditions, learning from past mistakes, and showing openness to changes

− methodology for organizing distance learning should include actual information on the tasks and responsibilities of the tutors, students, and parents in crisis situations, regulate the time spent in front of PC and TV, combine synchronous and asynchronous classes, make the schedule of the activities, etc.

− creating video lessons and educational programmes for various learning situations, including distance learning

− the isolation period can cause depression, stress, and tension among students, parents, and tutors, and for this it is recommended to run communication activities on various daily topics, listening to the problems shared by students

− since there are many digital learning platforms and tools, in the case of distance learning, it is necessary to start with those activities that are easily implemented by both students and tutors

−drawing attention to the disadvantaged students, who do not have appropriate learning conditions, and who require more attentions from both their tutors and colleagues.

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