

EDUCATION, MOTIVATION AND COMMITMENT OF THE HUMAN FACTOR

Viktoriya Kalaydzhieva¹

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Abstract

The article analyzes the role of education, retraining and continuing professional training in the context of motivation, the commitment of the human factor and its successful professional realization. The object of the study are precisely these interrelated processes, and the subject of the study are the companies and the managers, on whom the successful and effective management of these processes depends.

The author's understanding of modern training and use of approaches and methods related to digital technologies is presented. The concept is advocated that learning technologies should motivate the independent activity of the learner, take into account his individual interests and age characteristics, with an emphasis on solving practical problems, situational and constructivist type of learning. The commitment and motivation of employees are analyzed as the essence and function of the company culture and regulations that condition and guarantee them. In the digital age and an economy based on knowledge, data and connectivity, a person is no longer just an individual, but also an intangible resource and capital carrying added value.

Keywords: *human resources; educational technologies; continuing education; commitment and motivation; human capital.*

JEL Codes: *O15, M53*

Introduction

The relevance of the topic is natural and objective. The world community is making serious and systematic efforts to find working, adequate solutions to the problems related to economic growth, environmental protection, social cohesion, the stable functioning of the economy and the financial system, poverty, and last but not least, illiteracy and education. In the digital age, the entry of digital technologies is a process of continuous, rapid change in the requirements for the competencies of all employees. The new requirements and goals of sustainable development make education and continuing education key factors for its successful implementation. On the other hand, when the economy is based on knowledge, the set of skills and

¹ Chief assist. prof. at the Faculty of Economics, South-West University "Neofit Rilski", Blagoevgrad, e-mail: viktoriq_kalaidjieva@abv.bg, vkalaydzhieva@swu.bg; ORCID iD: 0000-0002-1825-2228

competences is an important condition for forming and increasing the quality of "human capital". This, more than ever, is a prerequisite for professional realization and a path to the motivation and commitment of employees. Digitalization, as a factor for successful corporate development and stability, requires continuous improvement of qualification and digital knowledge through "lifelong learning" (Filipova, Yaneva, Mierlus-Mazilu, 2023, p. 118). Digital technologies have a strong impact on both the internal and external business environment (Kyurova, Zlateva et al., 2023, p.44).

In the 17 goals adopted by the United Nations (UN) and indicated in the document „Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development“ (Resolution adopted by the General Assembly, 2015), special attention is paid to access to education. Goal No. 4 in relation to ensuring quality education envisages until 2030: to guarantee fair and high-quality primary and secondary education; to provide access to quality technical, professional and higher education, including university education; significantly increasing the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills; to ensure that all young people and a significant proportion of the elderly population will acquire language and numeracy literacy; to guarantee the acquisition of knowledge and skills necessary to promote sustainable development (UN, 2015). Education is defined as a key factor in improving people's lives and it is concluded that achieving inclusive and quality education for all is one of the most powerful and proven means of sustainable development.

In the "Strategic framework for the development of education, training and learning in the Republic of Bulgaria 2021-2030" (2021), lifelong learning is defined as a priority area that must achieve two main goals: "Expanding opportunities for lifelong learning " and "Ensuring conditions to promote lifelong learning". The measures and activities by groups to achieve these goals have also been defined.

The European Center for Development of Vocational Training Cedefop (2011) and Osnabrück Declaration on vocational education and training as an enabler of recovery and just transitions to digital and green economies (2020) provide sufficient information and analysis on the effect of education and training on the labor market at the micro- and macro-level and its essential importance for the transition to a digital and circular economy.

The regulatory base in Bulgaria related to education and training is serious - the laws for all levels of education, the law on professional education and training, the law on crafts and others. There are not a few organizations related to its implementation - vocational schools and high schools, colleges, centers licensed by the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training, vocational orientation centers, employer organizations and others.

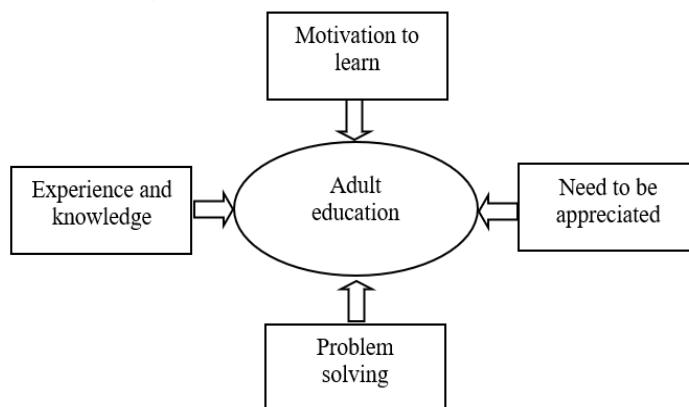
Results and Discussion

"The constructivist approach in education in many disciplines (especially in higher education and in the field called "Sciences") should be applied and find a place

in education in Bulgaria as well. The United States, Great Britain, Canada and other countries have long used "constructivism" as a state-approved approach to learning to shift the paradigm in education. In the Bulgarian education system, in many cases, theory is taught and there is usually not enough time left for its practical application. In the above-mentioned countries that have imposed the constructivist approach, the paradigm in education is the opposite. From practice and real practical problems that are solved within the school course, the theory is gradually derived and clarified" (Kalaydzhieva, 2023, p.494). According to Peneva (2022), "The situational method is little known and little used in teaching practice. The inclusion of the situational method in pedagogical practice is rather intuitive than subject to certain methodological training. This shows the poor knowledge of its essence, which perhaps leads to its limited use".

Besides constructivism, there are many different well-analysed and familiar educational theories and technologies. What unites them and is not controversial are the basic didactic principles that must be observed during training, regardless of whether it is a question of continuing professional training, retraining, for different companies as a profile or trainees with different educational qualification and personality typology . Of course, depending on the age characteristics, the current educational qualification, the motivation and psychological profile of the trainee, the emphasis and influence of each of these principles is different. In connection with the demographic problems and the speed of entry of digital technologies, in addition to the term pedagogy, related to children, the term andragogy appeared. Knowles (1988) defines it as the science and art of helping adults to learn. According to him, older people who learn more often do so because of internal necessity and motivation, rather than the compulsion of push factors, and this can be illustrated by the following four main points of adult learning. The approximate ratio of pull to push factors is 3:1.

Figure no. 1. Factors in adult education



Source: Beyts, B., (2022). Malka kniga za golemite mfdeli v kouchinga. Plovdiv: Izd. Kushta „Hermes“, p.33, Knowles, M. (1988). *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: From Pedagogy to Andragogy*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Book Company.

Depending on the personality type, the trainer must assess whether the trainee prefers concrete practical skills rather than abstract theoretical knowledge, whether he likes intuitive solutions by trusting his perceptions, whether he works independently or prefers teamwork, whether he has an affinity for non-standard problems and solutions, or prefers routine ones etc. (Myers & Briggs, 1975).

A large part of the methods used in the design of computer-mediated learning are related not only to constructivism. Behaviorism may have had the greatest influence in the early use of computers in education. It is often associated with the name of B.F. Skinner (1984), who showed the advantages of computer-based learning and the possibility of redesigning the US school system for this purpose. The technological steps that the recommended type of training should follow are also described - setting a goal, analyzing the learner's capabilities, algorithmic instructions for action and working with a computer, as well as providing feedback and repetitions for reinforcement. According to this learning theory, the interactivity between the learner and the computer is very important. Opponents of this educational technology point as a negative and attack its basic requirement for achieving results (Skinner, 1984). Subsequently, other concepts emerged, such as cognitive theory, where, in contrast to behaviorism, which is primarily concerned with learning outcomes, the interest is in the content, the prerequisites for learning and the sequence of the material taught. Communication theory requires using more than one channel to communicate with the learner, to identify filters and interferences in order to limit as much as possible the noise in the channels that distorts the information. They significantly influence coaching practice in learning and the role and style of modern management.

According to Beyts (2022):

- Behaviorism is based on the processes of conditioning and reinforcement and the degree of activity in the learning process is reactive.
- Cognitivism has as its object and interest the processes of mental activity, and it talks about adaptive learning.
- Humanism is based on self-efficacy and life experience i.e. it's about reflective learning.
- Neuroticism is associated with information processing and memory i.e. it talks about receptive learning (p.175).

The variety of theories and practices in training make it very difficult and important to choose a methodology for achieving efficiency and good results. The lack of motivation, the different ways in which people learn and think, the relationship of learning content with professional duties and personal preferences for learning style, differences in personality types make it extremely difficult to choose an optimal learning method. According to Atanasova & Krastev (2021) and many other authors, the entry of various innovative methods into the learning process (visualizations and social media, interactive textbooks, electronic tests for checking knowledge,

collaborative/collective solving tasks/case studies, gamification, etc.) is part of the modern changes in higher education (p.133-142).

Continuing vocational training should be tailored to the company's weaknesses in terms of personnel of active working age with appropriate qualifications. This will overcome the discrepancy between the required and possessed professional skills, as well as avoid hiring people for jobs that are below their educational qualification level. The possibilities of new digital technologies in education must be used, related to knowledge bases, with virtual, augmented and mixed reality (VR/AR and MR), which allow an up-to-date and effective way to arouse the interest of the learner. Distance forms of learning, online teaching and learning will have an increasingly relevant character, and the positives of them, but also their disadvantages and risks when using them, should be well known. We are now talking not only about digital transformation of business, but also about digital transformation of training.

Unfortunately, the levels of the indicator participation in informal training of persons with higher education show that in Bulgaria, as part of the EU, the situation is alarming and far from the average European values of this indicator. More worrying is the fact that for the period 2007-2022 the growth of this indicator is negative. Analyzing the data from Table 1 participation of persons with higher education aged 25-64 in non-formal education in EU countries and Bulgaria during the period 2007-2022, for Bulgaria in the period 2007-2011 there is a decrease of 12.7 percent points, in the period 2011-2016 a decrease of 2.5 percentage points, and in the period 2016-2022 the decrease was by 3.7 percentage points.

In the EU-27, in general, there is an increase in the relative share of persons with higher education who participated in non-formal training, but for 2022 there is no data. The increase during the period 2007-2016 was 9.2 percentage points. The highest relative share for the period 2016-2022 is reported in Sweden - 77.2%, the Netherlands - 75.3% and Austria - 70%, and the lowest relative share is in Greece - 22.7%, Bulgaria respectively - 31.1% and Poland - 35.9%. It is noteworthy that compared to the period 2011-2016, where Romania has the lowest relative share of 13.6% in the entire EU-27, in the period 2016-2022 a serious increase in the relative share of 30.8 percentage points is reported, respectively Romania is with - 44.4%.

Table no. 1. Participation of persons with higher education aged 25-64 in non-formal education in EU countries during the period 2007-2022

TIME	2007		2011		2016		2022	
GEO (Labels)								
European Union - 27 countries (from 2020)	51.7		59.3	b	60.9	b	:	
Bulgaria	50.0		37.3		34.8	b	31.1	
Greece	28.2		21.7		24.8	b	22.7	
Netherlands	61.0		74.2		79.6	b	75.3	

Austria	64.8		67.3		74.9	b	70.0	
Poland	46.4		44.3		43.2	b	35.9	
Romania	14.7		18.5		13.6	b	44.4	b
Sweden	84.6		80.2		69.8	b	77.2	

Source: Eurostat. (2022). Participation rate in education and training by educational attainment level: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/trng_aes_102/default/table?lang=en

Note: Special value (:) not available; (b) break in time series;

"Creating, maintaining and developing human resources with optimal quantitative, qualitative and structural characteristics is a strategic economic and social priority" (Dimitrova, 2023). According to her, lifelong learning is seen as a primary tool through which the economy and society can cope with the challenges of the development of the modern world, and people can acquire, maintain, supplement and change their knowledge, skills and competences in accordance with the requirements of the labor market. This defines continuing vocational training as the main priority of policy and practices in the field of education and training both at the EU level and in the individual member states, in particular Bulgaria.

Some data in the context of continuing education in Bulgaria and the EU are given in Table 2.

Table no. 2. Enterprises providing training by type of training and size class – % of all enterprises in the EU-27 during the period 2005-2020

TIME	2005		2010		2015		2020	
GEO (Labels)								
European Union - 27 countries (from 2020)	55.6		63.6		70.5		67.4	
Bulgaria	28.7		31.2		42.2		41.1	
Greece	21.0		27.8		21.7		17.8	
Latvia	36.4		40.4		99.9		96.8	
Romania	40.3		24.1		26.7		17.5	
Sweden	78.4		87.0		93.1	b	91.5	b
Norway	86.0		96.8		99.1		93.0	

Source: Eurostat. (2022). Enterprises providing training by type of training and size class - % of all enterprise:

[https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/trng_cvt_01s\\$defaultview/default/table?lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/trng_cvt_01s$defaultview/default/table?lang=en)

Note: Special value (:) not available; (b) break in time series;

From data published by Eurostat in Table 2 for enterprises providing training by type of training and size class - % of all enterprises for 2020 in the EU-27, the average indicator has a value of 67.4%, with the leaders being Latvia with indicators respectively - 96.8% , Norway - 93.0% and Sweden - 91.5%. Only Greece with 17.8%

and Romania with 17.5% are behind Bulgaria - 41.1% according to this indicator. The role of company training, as well as the cognitive competencies, professional skills and personal qualities of the staff employed by the company, is indisputable.

However, when it comes to the role of man as an individual, resource and capital, attention must be paid to two extremely important factors related to the effective use of employees. These are the satisfaction, commitment and motivation of the staff in the work process and the realization of the goals, the strategy and the company culture and policy. The literature review made by Nikovska (2022) related to the definition of employee commitment can be summarized as follows: it is characterized by innovative behavior related to the desire for a personal contribution to the company's success; efficiency in the employee's work; empathy with the goals of the organization, its values and company culture; a condition associated with vigor, dedication and involvement.

If we go beyond the sphere defining the essence of commitment as a sensory-emotional and cognitive phenomenon and construct, the following main factors can be added, which we believe have an influence:

1. Relations with the manager and team leader;
2. Working conditions;
3. Interpersonal relations in the team;
4. Evaluation of work and results;
5. Opportunities for career development;
6. Payment of labor, including extraordinary tasks;
7. Social benefits;
8. Job satisfaction;
9. The reputation of the company;
10. Opportunities for training and upgrading of qualifications;
11. Provision of corporate health insurance contracts;
12. Packages for free hospital and outpatient medical care;
13. Reimbursement of costs for drugs and health goods.

In our opinion, a systematic approach to the evaluation and development of human resources is necessary, which starts with the regulations and conditions for the selection of personnel, with a clear definition of the responsibilities, rights and obligations of the employees. It is extremely important to achieve a match and balance between the skills and competencies of employees and their professional commitments described in their job descriptions. The correct distribution of tasks and the fair workload and payment of labor are important conditions for motivation and empathy towards the company's goals and activities. „The basis of motivating the employees of any organization is the satisfaction of their personal needs at one level or another“ (Filipova, 2023, p. 65). Employee satisfaction is also related to the opportunities provided for additional qualification and retraining. This is extremely important, given the rapid entry of new technologies and the digital transformation of

business models. Appraisal and career development systems must be regulated in writing and more importantly, implemented in practice. Modern management implies timely and adequate updating of all documents related to the issues under consideration. Digital technologies provide extremely good quantitative opportunities for objective evaluation of the work and contribution of each employee in the company.

In the digital era, when we talk about an economy based on knowledge, data and connectivity, intangible resources are becoming more and more essential for the economic, environmental and social development of society. Human capital as a set of knowledge, skills and competences is a key factor for the realization of the global goals for sustainable development, for an effective circular economy, for participation in the single digital market of Europe. Serious financial investments and organizational changes are necessary for the formation of human capital that brings added value. The advent of cloud technologies, large databases and artificial intelligence imperatively impose a correspondence between the qualification of personnel and the use of these technologies.

Conclusion

The research and analysis carried out allows the following general conclusions to be drawn.

The role of education as a continuous process is undeniable in today's world of rapidly changing technology. The sustainability in professional realization as a profile and workplace, typical of the last century, no longer exists. Retraining and upskilling are inevitable with the existing shortage of a certain type of personnel, the aggressive competitive market environment and rapidly emerging new technologies requiring new knowledge, skills and competencies. Today, those means, methods and forms of training that enable the trainee to actively participate in the process and build research and creative qualities are especially relevant today. For this purpose, it is necessary for him to be convinced of the expediency of this training, in connection with his successful future professional realization and growth. The rapidly changing market environment, the continuous efforts of businesses to gain a competitive advantage and the dynamics of the emergence of new technologies require extremely great flexibility, mobility and variability of education as content, methods and learning environment. The purpose of training and assessment should not be limited to the learner's ability to memorize and reproduce information received. The creation of skills and habits related to initiative and affinity for the new starts already at school. Key words in modern education and the learning process are: self-training; individual work or team work; solving practical problem situations; participation in project activity; building skills for adapting, modifying and sharing other people's experience in practice. This type of training in secondary and higher education will provide businesses with personnel with affinity and opportunities to carry out innovative

activities. The implementation of continuing vocational training and other forms of qualification and retraining are mainly financed by the state. The researched and analyzed quantitative and qualitative parameters in Infostat, Eurostat and other databases, including various authors' studies show low levels of value and dynamics of the Bulgarian indicators related to lifelong education. The same applies to indicators such as number of researchers, staff and R&D expenditure. Education is a strategic priority in the programs of Europe, in the EC, in the Strategic Framework for Education in Bulgaria 2021-2030 and in a number of documents of the Ministry of Education and Science. The poor results show that the transposition of the decisions and the programs for their implementation in practice are not successfully carried out. Bulgaria occupies one of the last places in terms of the relative share of people participating in continuing education and allocated funds from GDP for education.

The commitment, satisfaction, motivation and education are key aspects in defining "human capital" as a factor for competitiveness and sustainable development.

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