

THE CURRENT CONTEXT OF PROFESSIONAL TRAINING AT THE LEVEL OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN ROMANIA

DORINA NIȚĂ *

ABSTRACT: *The training of human resources is a set of processes whereby, as a result of undertaking specialised programmes, employees develop their skills, knowledge, practices, behaviours and working techniques in which they already have a basic qualification, in order to achieve a higher level of their objectives and tasks. The present paper aims to achieve a picture of the access and participation of employees - teachers of the University of Petroșani in continuous vocational training programs comprising information on their structuring according to the forms of professional training, the type of programmes -initiation, qualification, retraining, basic training, advanced training, the main competences targeted by participants and not only. Such a snapshot of the current competences within the institution is thus obtained. In parallel, the mission and overall objectives of the institution provide an image of its profile and the role of staff within it, on the capacities and competences needed at present time but also in future. The information thus gathered allows to identify the distance between the current situation and the desired situation, revealing both the strengths and the weaknesses in the professional training of the teaching body of the University of Petroșani, while facilitating and putting forward appropriate training solutions to ensure that the existing personnel can acquire the skills needed to achieve the present and future objectives of the institution.*

KEY WORDS: *personnel, career management, professional training, higher education.*

JEL CLASSIFICATION: *A23, I21.*

1. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN ROMANIA

Due to the fact that in Romania and worldwide innovations can change technology and management from one day to the next, organisations are forced to

* Assoc. Prof., Ph.D., University of Petroșani, Romania, dorinamagda@yahoo.com

continually reconsider their human resources policy and the value of their work. Changes in the occupational structure of the population are one of the variables that have significantly affected the demand of workforce and implicitly the need to link educational programmes with labour market requirements.

The new challenges posed by the labour market with regard to the training of employees in terms of knowledge, skills, behaviours, have imposed requirements both at employment and in holding down a job, namely promotion, related to activities of coordination, organisation, management, administration, monitoring, innovation activities, identification and problem solving, computer operation, control and monitoring of the operation of new machinery, knowledge of a foreign language, etc. The new skills are mainly required for the categories of employees with a high level of specialisation, which means the academic education system must adapt continuously and quickly to the immediate needs of the labour market.

Romanian system of continuous vocational training is designed and organised according to a specific legislative framework, the analysis of which constitutes the premise of an effective approach to the various aspects of continuous training and the proposal of possible recommendations in the field.

Vocational training is considered a profitable investment in the human resources of the organization, resulting in effects that can be seen immediately and in perspective. Certain objectives of vocational training are common for several professions, while others are specific only to the staff in one branch or group of workers. Vocational training operations may differ from one organisation to another, but also within the same organisation, as the aims pursued are different: new knowledge, the development of coordination capacities, team work, adapting to the use of new work methods.

At the present time, according to Ordinance No. 129/2000 (with subsequent amendments and additions) [5] adult training has as main objectives the following:

- a) facilitating the social integration of individuals in line with their professional aspirations and labour market needs;
- b) training human resources so as to contribute to the increase of labour competitiveness;
- c) refreshing knowledge and improving professional training in the basic role, as well as in related roles;
- d) change of qualification, determined by economic restructuring, social mobility or changes in work capacity;
- e) Acquiring advanced knowledge, modern methods and processes needed to carry out job tasks;
- f) promoting lifelong learning.

The vocational training of adults comprises *initial vocational training* and *continuous vocational training* organised by forms other than those specific to the national education system (thus excluding bachelor, master, PhD programmes). The initial vocational training of adults ensures the necessary training to acquire the minimum professional skills needed to get a job, while continuous vocational training is subsequent to initial training and ensures development of professional competences already acquired or the learning of new skills.

In this context, the vocational training of adults is organised through initiation, qualification, re-qualification, advanced training, specialization programs defined as:

- a) *initiation* is the acquisition of one or more specific competences within a job according to the occupational standard or vocational training;
- b) *qualification*, i.e. *re-qualification*, is the training which leads to developing a set of professional competences enabling a person to carry out activities specific to one or more occupations;
- c) *advanced training* and *specialized training*, can develop or complete the knowledge, skills or professional competences of a person who already possesses a qualification, namely the improvement of competences within the same job, acquiring new skills in the same occupational area or in a new occupational area, learning fundamental/key competences or new technical skills.

2. IMPACT OF SPECIALIZED TRAINING ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ORGANISATION

Specialised training is a process of acquiring, developing, extending and systematic consolidation of knowledge and skills learned on the job. The characteristics of specialised training are the systematic and permanent feature, the extension and improvement of knowledge, refreshing and renewal of knowledge, multi-skilled.

Continuous professional improvement must be seen from two perspectives, both of employers and the employees involved in the process. The employee's perspective reflects employees' approaches to learning and self-development. In this case, learning is considered a personal investment in the future, facilitating personal development and the possibility to ensure permanent employment.

The employer's perspective reflects the motivations of employers to promote continuous training opportunities by signing up their employees to courses, with a view to increasing the efficiency of the organisation. Continuous training is used by employees to improve their current or future career prospects while for employers it is as a way of improving organizational performance.

There are a number of areas where organisations can expect positive results from employees involved in training or development experiences. These results include time savings, new work habits or a perfected working environment, which can be backed up by reduced staff exodus, through staff commitment and satisfaction.

Continuous training can be considered a form of economic investment. Organisational training is an investment in survival, which provides skilled employees whose skills and knowledge are used to promote organisational competitiveness.

Organizations can learn through their employees who learn. The source of the competitive advantage is the ability of an organisation to learn and promote continuous training among its own employees, and react faster than competitors. Advanced training does not guarantee the development of the organization, but without the former, the latter cannot occur.

3. ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

In order to achieve a picture of access and participation of employees in continuous professional development programmes – teachers of the University of Petroșani, information on the field of training (engineering, economic, administrative and legal, social) had to be gathered and analysed, then structured based on the forms of training (courses organized by vocational training providers, courses organized by the employer within the company, apprenticeships and advanced training in institutions in Romania or abroad, other forms of training), the types of programmes attended - initiation, qualification, retraining, improvement, specialization, and the main skills targeted by the participants.

A snapshot of current competences in the institution was obtained in this way. In parallel, the mission and overall objectives of the institution have provided an insight into the skills currently needed and also for the future. The information thus gathered contributed to the identification of the gap between the current situation and the desired one, revealing both the strengths and weaknesses in the professional training of the teaching body of the University of Petroșani, putting forward appropriate training solutions to ensure that existing staff can acquire the skills needed to achieve the institution's present and future objectives.

The gap between the current situation and the desired situation defines the training needs or requirements, highlighting the areas where performance must be improved thus facilitating the setting of certain priorities relating to staff management. The analysis of the training needs must be the basis for the elaboration of the institutional strategy in the field of professional development.

In order to gather all necessary information relating to the issue of professional development at the level of the analysed institution, the investigative approach started with a documentary analysis of the relevant regulations, reports and studies on the continuous training of employees carried out by the National Institute of Statistics (INS), the reports of the National Employment Agency (ANOFM), the reports of the National Observatory on the Social impact of continuous professional development and Staff skills and training policies in Romanian enterprises, etc., which had as objectives: gathering information on the legislative and institutional framework of the continuous professional development activity in Romania; relevant data must be taken into consideration when investigating the problem of professional training/development; investigation methods and techniques compatible with the problem subject to analysis.

The knowledge acquired by documentation was used to analyse and interpret existing data on the professional development of the teaching staff from the University of Petroșani.

At present, the achievement of the University mission (to generate and transfer knowledge to society through: basic and continuous training of students for the purpose of personal development, professional insertion in the labour market, meeting the requirements of the economic-social environment in terms of scientific competences, technical, economic, administrative, IT, managerial skills, etc.; scientific

research, development, innovation and technological transfer in the fields of technical engineering, science, economics and social-human sciences, IT technologies, etc.) is possible only with the direct help of the teaching staff, who carry out educational processes and scientific researches.

Study programmes and scientific research activities are supported by a teaching body consisting of 144 teachers with the basic norm, plus 54 associate teachers.

The chart below highlights the structure of the teaching staff at the University of Petroşani.

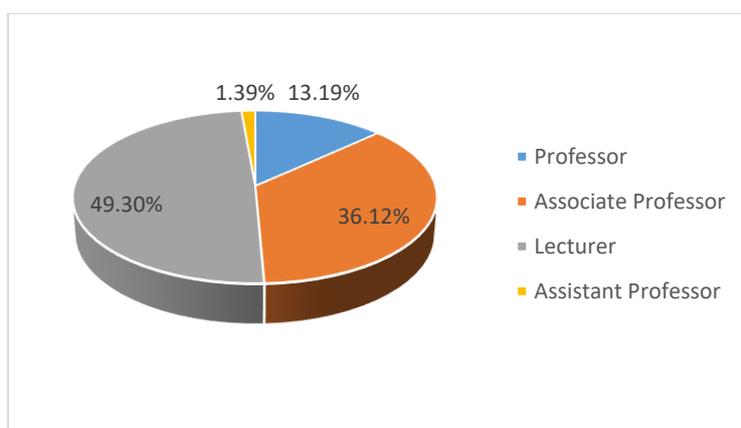


Figure 1. Structure of the teaching staff at the University of Petroşani

Table 1. Structure of the teaching staff based on training and qualification level

Qualification	Engineering	Economics	Law and Administration	Humanistic social science	Sciences
Professor	17	1	0	0	1
Associate professor	34	12	0	5	2
Lecturer/ Head of works	43	2	3	12	12
Assistant professor	1	1	0	0	0

Teachers from the Faculty of Mines carry out didactic and research activities within 7 bachelor's degree programs in 5 distinct areas, 7 Master degree programs in 3 distinct areas and within the school PhD in the field of mines, oil and gas. The university curriculum is complemented by the inclusion of 4 postgraduate courses of continuous professional training and development - *Evaluator of risks for occupational safety and health; Wastewater treatment; Waste management; Quality management of products and services.*

The Faculty of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering (IME), with the support of teachers, provides 8 Bachelor degree programs in 7 distinct areas, 10 Master degree programs in 7 distinct areas and areas such as Systems engineering, industrial

engineering and Engineering and Management in the doctoral school. Within the Faculty of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering there are 4 *postgraduate courses of vocational conversion*, especially intended for teachers from pre-university education who want to supplement their chair with subjects included in the curriculum of these programmes: *Electronics and Automation; Computer Science; Electro-mechanics; Technological Education*.

The *Faculty of Sciences*, where there are 52 tenured professors within the 3 departments, currently manages 7 bachelor studies programs in 7 fields of study. There are 6 Master's degrees in 5 distinct fields of study. Postgraduate programs organized at the faculty level include:

- ✓ 5 *Postgraduate courses of continuous professional training and development*, aiming to acquire new competences, complementing those acquired after graduating from Bachelor's and Master's degree studies – Management of services in public institutions; Management of human resources; Educational management; Management of sporting activities; Management of health services;
- ✓ 2 *postgraduate vocational conversion* courses for pre-university teachers, which have as their purpose the gaining of new competences in other fields and/or the granting of academic positions other than those that could be held, based on their initial training – *Economics and entrepreneurial education; Trade, tourism, services*.

The aspects related to the professional development of the teaching staff of the University of Petroșani on which an image was intended to be obtained, also required some information on:

- data for identification of the teaching staff (teaching degree, speciality attested by Bachelor's Degrees, Master's Degrees, PhDs, subjects taught, etc.);
- types of professional development programmes they have participated in;
- the types of skills developed through training courses (specific areas of activity, in the field of IT & C, social studies);
- training areas (engineering, economics, law and administration, social sciences);
- the specifics of the skills perfected (professional, managerial, social – communication, networking, teamwork, or basic skills – use of computer and Internet, foreign languages, etc.);
- motivations (intrinsic/extrinsic);
- the initiative of participation in professional training/development;
- the financial support for taking part in professional training/development courses;
- the impact of training courses on career management (promotion, gaining of new skills, improvement of efficiency at the work place, better time management, etc.);
- the training provider;
- duration of training;
- the level of satisfaction after taking part in professional development courses;

- the effects generated as a result of participation in professional development courses;
- the degree of appreciation of the didactic strategies used in the professional development programmes;
- the perception of the teaching staff of the continuous training programmes;
- the top competences that will be required in the future, according to the teaching staff.

A synthetic analysis of the professional development courses attended by the teaching staff in terms of participation rate, types of developed skills, motivation, initiative of participation in these courses, financial support, duration and impact on career, etc. highlights the following:

- throughout their professional career, 95.84% of teachers have attended at least one training course;

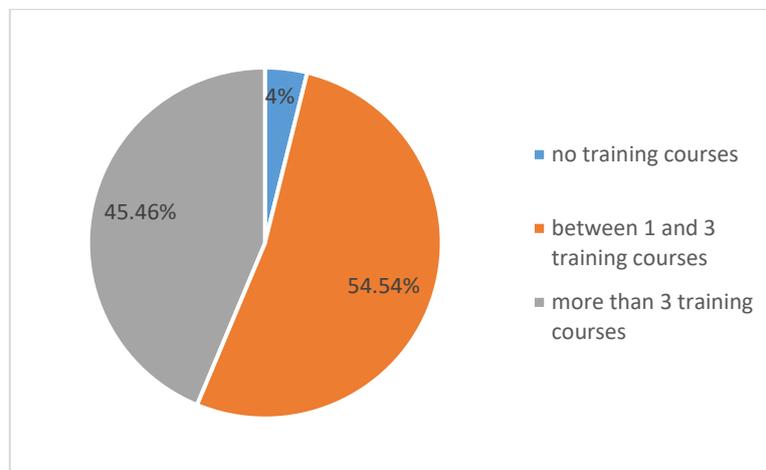


Figure 2. Participation in professional development training

- the structure based on the academic degree of those who attended professional training shows that all those who hold the degree of University professor are graduates of at least one professional development course; 98.11% of the associate professors and 95.84% of lecturers, head of works respectively, have attended qualification courses and only 50% of assistant professors have a certificate following a professional development course;
- among the training courses, 100% of the staff have attended professional development courses; the participation of the University of Petroșani in the Erasmus+ programme allowed participation in yearly training programs of at least 21 professors in the academic year 2011-2012 with a maximum of 61 in the academic year 2014-2015 [7];
- the intention of the staff to sign up for new professional development courses is not relevant considering their length of service; the personnel is open to participation

in other qualification courses, as long as they are considered beneficial both professionally and personally;

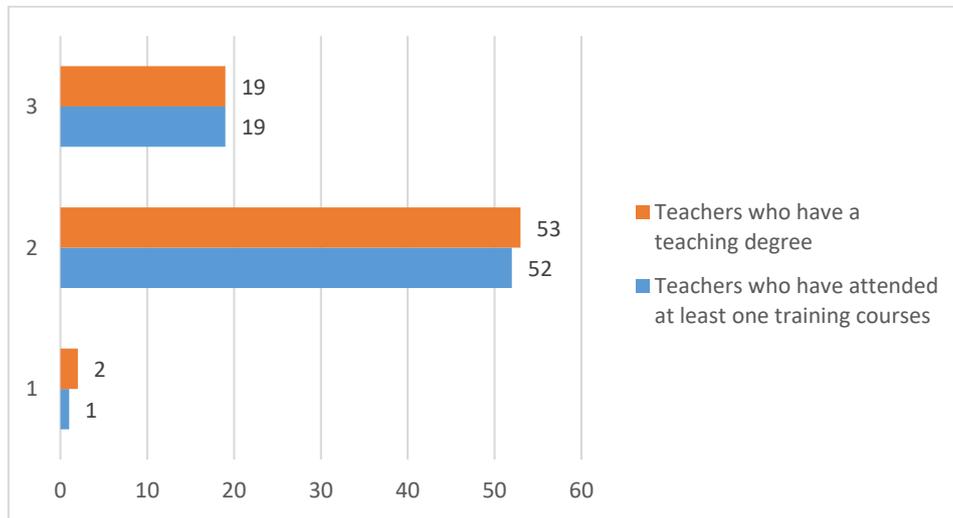


Figure 3. Participation in professional development training

- If we consider the fields of training, which is related to the initial training of the teaching staff (certified by Bachelor's degrees, Master's or PhD's), 47.06% of the professors have attended qualification training in their field of activity/skills; the training courses in the field of computer and Internet use have been very popular as well with 82.35% of professors attending them; 41.17% of the teaching staff have attended qualification courses through which they acquired/developed managerial skills while 29.41% have attended courses that developed their teaching, social skills;
- with regard to the type of professional training provider all teachers have attended professional development courses with suppliers from the private sector, authorised in the field of professional training; training courses organised in university centres within Romania and abroad have been attended by 35.3% of the teaching staff;
- moreover, 88.23% of the teachers have attended professional development courses organized at the University of Petroșani;
- almost a quarter of the teachers have attended professional development courses in other university from abroad (Austria, Germany, Spain, Turkey, Poland, France, Italy, Greece, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, etc.);
- the duration of professional development courses varies between 30 and 180 hours;
- as far as funding is concerned, around 30% of teachers have paid themselves for the training courses; of all the professional development courses, at least one did not require payment from the participant as it was organised and carried out through European non-refundable funding programmes;

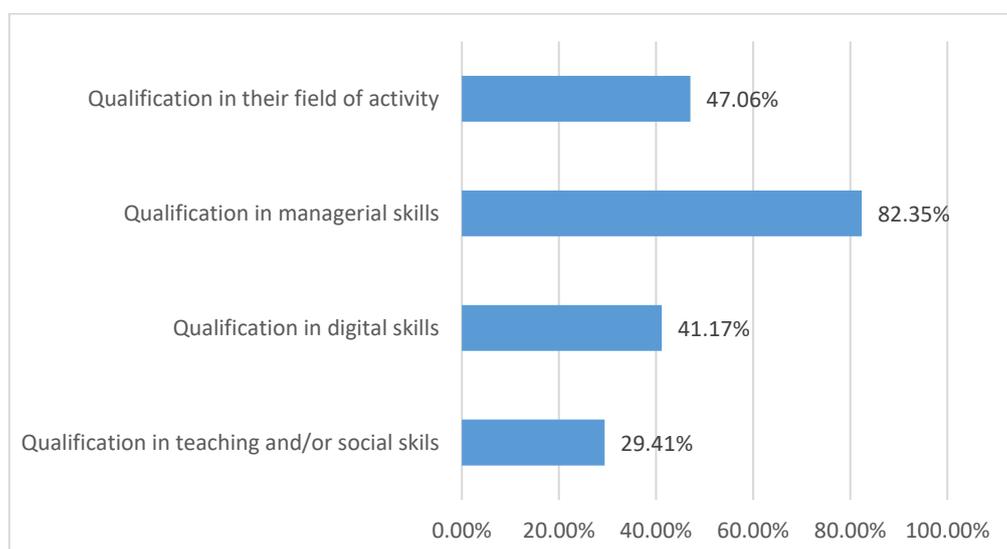


Figure 4. Competences acquired/developed

- Participation in the continuous professional development training of teachers is influenced by a number of motivational factors. In light of the motives for participating in professional development courses, this is overwhelmingly intrinsic – 92% (related to the desire for personal improvement and development, a specific feature and compatible with the principles of lifelong learning). From the category of external factors, specific to extrinsic motivation, with the highest frequency one can find the motivations related to the general characteristics of the course. The least invoked reasons are related to: ensuring job stability or finding a new job;
- the level of satisfaction achieved through the completion of various professional development courses is very high (82%) or high (18%) if the analysed aspects relate to the competences acquired. The opinion of the participants reveals that any training activity leads to the development of skills and has an impact on academic activity and personal development. Therefore, the results of training courses in terms of skills are positively appreciated by the participants, even less successful training experiences are considered learning opportunities. More than three-quarters of the employees participating in the training courses are said to be “very” or “greatly” satisfied with the professional competences acquired. Also, almost two-thirds of them appreciate, at higher levels, other types of skills acquired through training which are relevant to their personal development: communication skills, organisation of activity, self-knowledge, negotiation, learning to learn, etc.;
- in light of the effects arising from participation in professional development courses, of the impact on career respectively, the most frequently mentioned results relate to acquiring/developing new/already acquired skills, improving workplace efficiency, better time management, improving communication with colleagues/superiors, taking on new responsibilities at work, improving teamwork

capacity, etc. Analysing the skills that have been developed through training programmes it was found that they had taken into consideration not only strictly professional competences but also social skills (communication, networking, team work) and new basic skills (computer use etc.). It is noted that more and more participants in training are aware of the need for developing types of skills other than strictly professional ones, social skills in particular. From the employer's point of view, in our case the University of Petroșani, the participation of the teaching body in continuous professional training has led to an increase in the quality of the staff, with beneficial effects on the future strategy for the development of the institution;

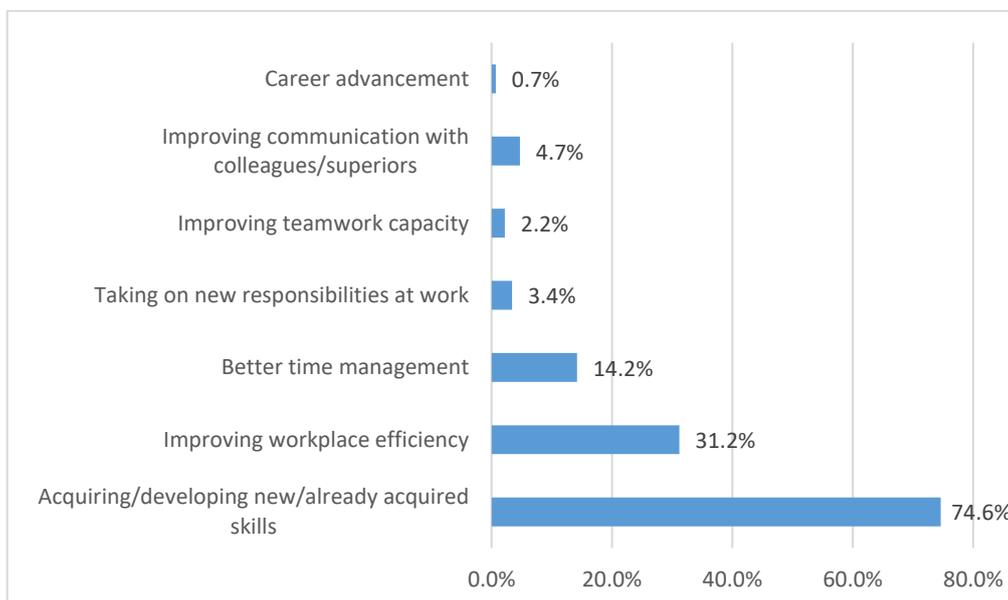


Figure 5. Impact upon career

- the degree of appreciation for the academic strategies used in the training programmes is pursued by means such as: facilitating learning by returning to previous knowledge, using appropriate methods for the achievement of objectives, use of innovative methods to facilitate learning, opportunities to transpose theoretical knowledge into practical applications, opportunities to share experiences and practices with colleagues, etc. Most frequently, employees are satisfied with the extent to which training methods are appropriate to achieve the objectives of the courses, registering scale values between 25-30% for “To a very large extent”, namely between 40-45% for “to a large extent”. The most criticised issues refer to: the use of methodologies that provide insufficient context for transposing theoretical information into practical applications; the use of classical, less innovative methodologies;
- the participation in continuous training programmes may be the result of the employee's initiative or employer's recommendations, in either case the aim is the

development of professional or transversal competences, depending on the company's needs correlated with personal needs and interests. In light of the initiative of teachers to participate in training programmes, it can be noted that there are courses organised by the institution itself (in this case the University of Petroşani) in partnership with private training providers (contracted trainers), which are addressed to all teachers irrespective of their specialty (engineers, economists, sociologists, philologists, lawyers, etc.), like the courses aimed at acquiring/developing skills in digital and didactic areas (Data and Image Operator or Training the human resources in higher education in the use of the E-Learning system) or the participation of the teaching staff if their own initiative, expressing their interest and desire for development. For an effective continuous professional development, the employer's support must be convergent with the employee's willingness to improve in his field of activity or to develop those skills that improve relationships, boost dedication and initiative;

- the way teaching staff feel about continuous qualification training programmes has been analysed using items, such as: 1. A duty to meet the requirements of the workplace; 2. Personal need to progress in career; 3. Useful if one wishes to be up to date with the new developments in the field or for personal development; 4. Less important for personal development. More than 75% of the persons questioned see professional qualification courses as necessary in order to be up to date with new developments in the field or for personal development; Personal necessity to progress in the career recorded values of about 32%, while the other items are below 5%;

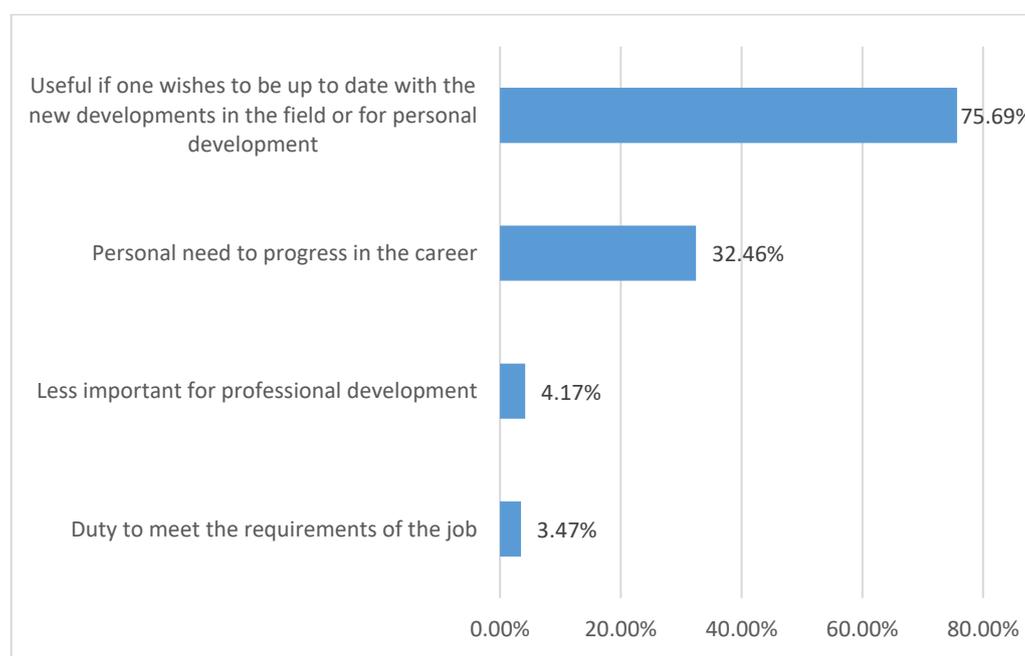


Figure 6. Teachers' perception of the continuous training programmes

- managerial, digital, academic and social competences (writing/delivering projects, the use of new technologies/methodology, management of human resources, language use and communication/interpersonal relations) are among the top competences the development of which is considered important for the future by most of the teachers questioned, whether or not they have participated in continuous training in the last 3 years.

The analysis of vocational training at the University of Petroșani has tried to highlight the following aspects:

- the training needs within the institution;
- the main types of professional development programmes (theoretical and/or practical) which can ensure success at work (improving work, skills and competences) for a university teacher.

It should be noted that if the improvement or development of knowledge, abilities and skills of teachers, as a result of qualifications and training, does not lead to the elimination of deficiencies or to increased performance in the work of these employees, this kind of training loses its meaning or purpose. Therefore, the start of any qualification and training process for teachers in higher education institutions within the country is a great waste of time, energy and resources (especially financial and material resources) lest the training requirements and needs are taken into consideration in advance.

From the point of view of the purpose pursued, for the University of Petroșani, the objectives of qualification training reside in the following:

1. contributes to the development of individual skills, knowledge and competences of the teaching staff;
2. contributes to meeting the current and future needs of the organisation in the field of human resources and staff;
3. contributes to increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of activities within the institution and by implicitly increasing the performances of the institution.

From the point of view of the specific objectives, the main activities specific to the qualification of teachers aim to:

1. to help, as much as possible, the teaching staff within the institution, so that future needs in the area of human resources be resolved within the organisation;
2. to develop teachers' knowledge, skills and competences so that they can improve their individual performance;
3. to reduce the time for study for those recently employed and ensure that they become responsible and efficient as soon as possible.

Training teachers without encouraging them to refresh their skills, attitudes and professional behaviours, the institutional future would be questioned. The development of human resources involves the development and implementation of specific strategies for improvement and development meeting the requirements of the organisation and the individual needs.

4. CONCLUSION

Creating a competitive, dynamic and prosperous economy requires that investing in human capital be tackled in terms of its contribution to the increasing productivity, alongside investing in productive capital.

The strategic vision for qualification and training in Romania is to provide all individuals with the possibility of acquiring high-level skills relevant to the labour market and society.

The efficiency of a system, in our case of the University of Petroșani, is considered to be greatly influenced by its ability to understand and adapt to the environment, and the efficiency of management involves planning, organizing, controlling and working procedures.

The objectives, principles and directions of action to ensure quality education in the field of continuous training must subsequently be based on an analysis of both the education and training system applied at national level, and at the local, institutional level, as is the case with the University of Petroșani, always concerned about the major role of training, whether it is in the form of qualification, requalification, or refresher/specialization course, in the economic and social development of local communities, regions and of Romania.

The fact that the University of Petroșani considers the quality of the workforce a key element in increasing competitiveness reveals a high level of awareness of the importance of investing in human resources. Employee participation in training programmes benefits both those directly involved in the development of skills and the employer. The reasons for supporting this participation in professional development are multiple and equally extrinsic and intrinsic.

Regardless of their nature and share, age, teaching degree or length of service, participation in training programmes is a practice towards which employees show more and more interest.

REFERENCES:

- [1]. **Mathis, R.L.; Nica, P.C.; Rusu, C.** (1997) *Managementul resurselor umane*, Editura Economică, București, p.124
- [2]. **Pânișoară, I.O.; Pânișoară, G.** (2016) *Managementul resurselor umane. Ghid practic*, București, p. 83
- [3]. **Institutul Național de Statistică** (2011) *Ancheta formării profesionale în întreprinderi (FORPRO)*, București [Online], Available at: [file:///C:/Users/Sas2/Downloads/Metodologie_ancheta%20formarii%20profesionale%20in%20intreprinderi%20-%20FORPRO%20%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/Sas2/Downloads/Metodologie_ancheta%20formarii%20profesionale%20in%20intreprinderi%20-%20FORPRO%20%20(1).pdf) [Accessed 12 September 2018]
- [4]. *Legea nr. 53/2003 Codul Muncii*, republicată în Monitorul Oficial, Partea I, nr. 345 din 18 mai 2011, [Online], Available at: www.mmuncii.ro [Accessed 16 September 2018]
- [5]. *Ordonanța nr. 129/2000 privind formarea profesională a adulților (cu modificările și completările ulterioare)*, republicată în Monitorul Oficial, Partea I, nr. 110 din 13 februarie 2014
- [6]. *Plan strategic 2016-2020* (2016), Universitatea din Petroșani, [Online], Available at: <https://www.upet.ro/documente/2016/Plan%20strategic%202016-2020.pdf> [Accessed 6 September 2018]

-
- [7]. *Raportul de activitate al biroului Erasmus+ pentru anul 2018*, [Online], Available at: www.upet.ro [Accessed 9 September 2018]
- [8]. *Studiu privind importanța și beneficiile formării profesionale continue*, "Calificarea – o șansă pe piața muncii!", Proiect cofinanțat din Fondul Social European prin Programul Operațional Sectorial Dezvoltarea Resurselor Umane 2007 – 2013 „Investește în oameni!” [Online], Available at: <https://www.brahms.ro/files/proiecte/Studiu.pdf> [Accessed 10 September 2018]
- [9]. *Strategia educației și formării profesionale din România pentru perioada 2016-2020*, [Online], Available at: www.edu.ro [Accessed 10 September 2018]
- [10]. Centrul Național de Dezvoltare a Învățământului Profesional și Tehnic, [Online], Available at: <http://www.tvet.ro> [Accessed 7 September 2018]