

QUALIFICATION OF THE WORKFORCE AND PRODUCTIVITY

Lack of a skilled workforce: a limiting factor on productivity growth At the outset of the new millenium, productivity no longer means better utilisation of the muscles for work, but rather the better utilisation of the work of machines, money, time and, above all, the *knowlewdge, experience, talents and creativity - skills and qualifications of human resources*.

In the case of a specific organisation, productivity represents the volume of added value created by the effective utilisation of all resources in the field of corporate management.

The whole activity of organisation consists of all necessary partial activities through which inputs are converted into outputs. The ratio between inputs and outputs represents the effectiveness of the conversion process. This process is creating a *value* called *productivity*.

In the case of sufficient conversion process effectiveness, it is possible to produce a higher amount of output with the same inputs- higher productivity.

Through the mutual interaction of manual workers and managers, it is possible to apply or excercise the skills and qualifications needed in order to convert the inputs to outputs with desired added value. Also through this working process the skills and qualifications of workers are utilised, maintained and developed by the skills and abilities of managers; and the effectiveness of this utilisation and development has a direct (positive) impact on creation and increase of added value - i.e. the improvement of corporate productivity.

From the standpoint of the whole economy, the main requirement of its productivity improvement (good state of national accounts) is an effective utilisation and reinforcement of national sources - human and capital supported by an active national productivity policy - National Programme for Productivity and Competitvness Improvement in the Slovak Republic.

The intelligence and thought processes (mind-sets, attitudes, etc) of people, their qualifications and skills should be flexible enough to be able to create new products/services and ideas, accept new challenges and implement the necessary changes and actions. In this sense, the responsibility is not only on education (schools and teachers), but the overall topic or issue must be the main part of Slovak (national) productivity programme focusing on changes of people's attitudes, behaviour and thought processes.

In this context it is necessary to recognize that it is the invidual alone who holds the skills, qualifications and attitudes. So the employees play the active role in the chain of: *input - conversion process - output, being the process of turning inputs to desired and valued outputs*.

The higher the quality of the workforce (its skills and qualifications), the higher the ability of employees to be productive in the conversion process through all the activities of the

company, and the greater their ability to create corporate added value and improve productivity.

As result of the above, there is an increasing demand for a skilled workforce. The need at present is not only to gain new knowledge, but in many cases to renew what has already been learned, focusing on cultivating proper working attitudes and being able to avoid using useless attitudes inherited from a former society.

The major challenge for the productivity movement is to ensure the interest of the workforce in continuously improving qualifications and skills - lifelong learning. This can be achieved through progressive national scheme of education and training (on and off-the-job) based on, or supported by, national productivity policy - a holistic understanding of productivity.

A new concept of educational policy in the Slovak Republic

The National Productivity Programme which has now been drafted in the Slovak Republic supports the national concept of upbringing and education, presented in the so-called "Millenium" project. The main development objective of this project is to turn the traditional, encyclopedic and directive way of education into a creative and human approach.

That main objective is accompanied by the following 4 general goals:

1. To change the philosophy of upbringing and education, focusing on the cultivation of strong personalities, capable of coping with stress and undertaking conflicts, problems and changes of recent modern life - a national transformation process
2. To change the contents of education in order to decrease the amount of useless, non essential information and replace it by knowledge-based information
3. To change the vocational preparation of teachers and educational professionals
4. To change the methods of upbringing and vocational training

Important factors contributing to improving the level of qualifications and skills

I. EDUCATION

- A productive national education scheme based on the quality of the educational process provided by all kind of schools
- Flexibility as regards timing and contents of the educational scheme according to the requirements of the labour market

II. LABOUR MARKET SERVICES

- Flexibly working job mediation services (job matching) in order to assure the quick reemployment of jobseekers
- Good vocational counselling for jobseekers in order to improve their orientation in jobseeking and retraining processes

- Proper retraining programmes, planning and organising in order to assure the proper job and proper training for proper jobseekers ('proper skills for proper jobs') as an important prerequisite to achieve portable skills' creation and increase employability.

III. CORPORATE TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE

- Quality of the contents and extent of company training undertaken as a source of improved skills and qualifications at work - the contribution of training schemes provided by companies to productivity improvement in harmony with the national productivity policy.

IV. TRAINING INSTITUTIONS - SERVICES

- An active role in the systematic improvement of trainees' capabilities in compliance with productivity policy
- Supporting role of other professional associations in the area of quality and human resources' development on productivity policy

V. NATIONAL AND CORPORATE SOCIAL AND HEALTHCARE POLICIES

- Good labour and workplace conditions and care about human resources is a requirement for the effective utilisation and improvement of the skills and qualifications of the workforce
- Corporate business and social policy must be in harmony

VI. NATIONAL PRODUCTIVITY PROGRAMME - NATIONAL PRODUCTIVITY POLICY

- A proactive national productivity policy, and its implementation as a comprehensive tool and approach, directly supports and reinforces the approach of lifelong learning on the national level, focusing mainly on common human factor development - positive thinking, self-development, life leadership through productivity awareness in order to achieve skills portability.

Concluding ideas and suggestions for improvement

USING PRODUCTIVITY POLICY AND ITS IDEAS FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT AND GROWTH

- Development and ownership of proper working attitudes
- Productivity improvement through the following chain: *feeling - idea - work activity - work habit - skills and qualifications - added value result - productivity*
- Productivity improvement as a consequence of people thinking, their knowledge, skills and qualifications
- Lifelong learning - education as a productive motivation tool during the entire working career for qualifications, skills and abilities improvement - productivity improvement

- Using people's ideas for developing innovation and productivity within the TQM - idea management
- Effective organisation and utilisation of talents - good talents' productivity related to talents as follows: initiativeness, analysing and presentation - persuasiveness, creativity - creation of concepts and projects, problem-solving, teamwork, decision-making - leadership, productiveness.

Weak points	Measure / action
Lack of skills and qualifications	Analyze the needs for education and training in order to provide additional training to obtain lacking skills and qualifications, and identify the skills and qualifications needed in the future
Non effective services of public service training institutions	Release finance support for training institutions in public service and for building up the productivity training centre within the implementation of National productivity programme
Low quality level of training provision within companies	Start the dissemination campaign related to missing skills and qualifications of the workforce and apply tax reductions for cases of investments in training

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