

# The Influence of Training and Various Forms on Increasing Employees' Qualifications in European Enterprises

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The article focuses on the training and other various methods which will increase employees' qualifications and capacities. The discussion will be divided into two parts: the theoretical background and the empirical results. These are the research results from our study in Polish and European, especially Polish enterprises. Both skills and qualifications are very popular and widely-used terms in the world of science and even government, and there has been a great increase of activities aiming towards the use of them amongst employees. The move is being supported by companies, institutions, public entities, and legislatives. According to the literature and business market reports, we can name some of the most desirable skills which are based on employers' most frequent inquiries, which include: communication, information technology (IT) skills, specialist/professional knowledge, availability, valid driver's license, required degree, creativity, and teamwork. In order to verify matters discussed above, empirical studies were carried out in December 2011. They were based on the interview questionnaires which mostly contained closed-ended questions. They also consisted of a pilot study and a pivotal study. Field research with the use of Computer Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) method was used. In order to increase the quality of the results, two questionnaires were created: one for employers and the other for supervisors. The core of the two research questionnaires was very similar, but the questions addressed to supervisors were created to discover their opinions towards employees and the influence of an educated team on the firm's condition.

*Keywords:* training, qualifications, employee, skills

## Introduction

Currently, we can observe that many European companies, institutions, public entities, and even legislatives aim towards developing and expanding the professional qualifications and competencies of their employees, especially in the Polish business market.

Employee development has been even addressed in a 1989 policy of "Standard and Professional Training in the European Union" by the European Commission, which emphasizes professional training as a priority. By thoroughly examining literature sources, we can notice certain changes that related to employee development and training. It is often to be found that the evolution relates to already employed personnel versus new graduates just entering the job market (Merwin, 1992, p. 64). Additionally, personnel investments are most likely to be found in the service sector, closely followed by the production one.

It is of a great importance that we ask ourselves several questions about the reasons of the specific changes and how they actually work? One of the challenges determining the development is unemployment. We are not

only considering the unemployment rate, but also considering the demand for certain specialists and their surplus in other branches. This issue is closely related to the need of a more flexible approach of training and creating professional skills for employees. Even some companies, being supported by the Department of Education, are making an effort to use drilled knowledge into the job market (Armstrong, 2003, p. 132). Here, we come across an obstacle due to the positioning of two opposite objectives: the first objective—training related to the existing needs of a market, and the second objective—delivering the necessary education and knowledge in the future. It has become a trend that most of the current and future employees are offered general knowledge and training of various duties, tasks, or job aspects and criteria (Dudzikowa, 1994, p. 123). Moreover, there has been a great emphasis on the cognitive aspect of an employee that is slowly replacing the old approach of strictly skill-oriented personnel by encouraging and promoting personal creativity (Żukowska & Pindelski, 2011, p. 91). Another highly valued skill is the ability to enter and create interpersonal relationships (Bendkowski, 2008, p. 32). Hence, we can speculate whether one's personality factors or temper will be considered as an important part of both job interviewing and professional development.

### **An Artificial Introduction to the Tools Increasing Skills and Qualifications**

Both skills and qualifications are very popular and widely-used terms in the world of science and even government, and there has been a great increase of activities aiming towards the use of them amongst employees. The move is being supported by companies, institutions, public entities, and legislatives.

According to the literature and business market reports, we can name some of the most desirable skills which are based on employers' most frequent inquiries, which include: communication, information technology (IT) skills, specialist/professional knowledge, availability, valid driver's license, required degree, creativity, and teamwork (Kordel, Kornecki, & Kowalczyk, 2003, p. 12). Surprisingly, independence or negotiation skills were mentioned the least. Also, foreign languages were not found on the top of the list of the most wanted skills (see Figure 1).

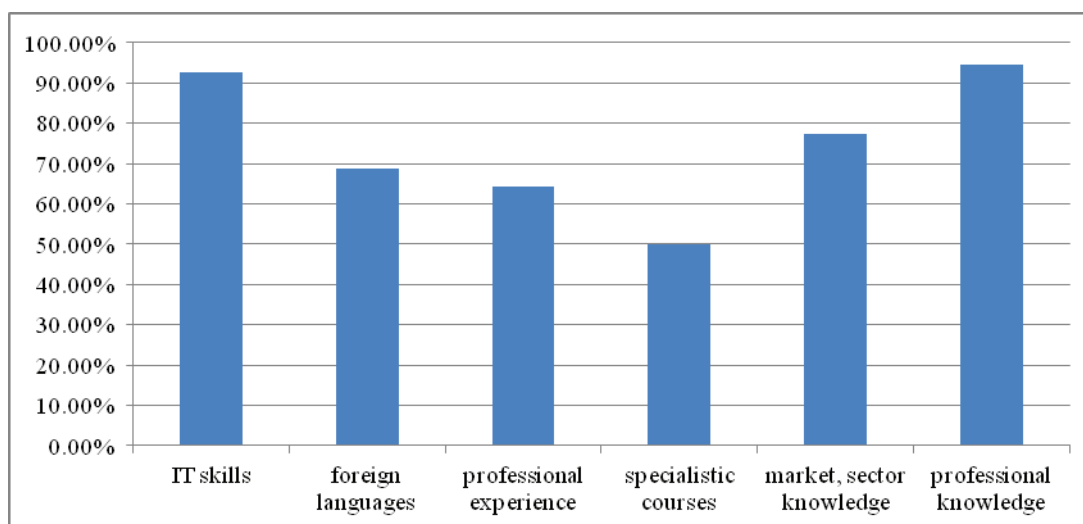


Figure 1. Competencies of ideal employees. Retrieved from <http://www.egospodarka.pl/64761Rynek-pracy-w-UE-a-polscy-specjalisci,1,39,1.html>

By observing the activities of some enterprises, we can notice that they began registering developmental goals of their employers into their companies' strategies (Sydänmaanlakka, 2003, p. 57). They aim towards

strategically planning the evaluation route of qualifications and moving away from only occasional actions. The aspect of developmental goals is frequently adjusted towards the actual needs of employees or the job position itself.

Based on current business market research and analysis, the most reoccurring forms of personal development of an employee are the following:

1. Training, workshops, and seminars;
2. Participation in projects and internships (Levy-Leboyer, 1997, p. 41);
3. Coaching and mentoring;
4. Postgraduate studies and Master of Business Administration (MBA).

In addition to the most frequent forms, we also find (Karwala, 2007, p. 54):

1. Assessment center;
2. Development center;
3. College degrees (Żukowska, 2012, p. 376).

### **Research Method and Research Practice Characteristics**

In order to verify matters discussed above, empirical studies were carried out in December 2011. They were based on the interview questionnaires which mostly contained closed-ended questions. They also consisted of a pilot study and a pivotal study. The pilot study of qualitative characteristics included a telephone interview with 15 people. It allowed for verifying the accuracy of questions included in the questionnaire, and this allowed the application of corrections and modifications. Field research (by M. Pindelski, Ph.D.) with the use of Computer Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) method was used. In order to increase the quality of the results, two questionnaires were created: one for employers and the other for supervisors. The core of the two research questionnaires was very similar, but the questions addressed to supervisors were created to discover their opinions towards employees and the influence of an educated team on the firm's condition.

A five-level rating scale, also known as the Likert Scale, was used in this research. The scale is used in measuring attitudes by responding to a series of statements about a topic. For the needs of this research, it was established as follows: Level 5—Strongly agree, Level 4—Rather agree, Level 3—Have no opinion, Level 2—Rather disagree, and Level 1—Strongly disagree.

The research practice included 90 subjects, in which 5.93% were micro-enterprises (10 employees), 30% as small enterprises (10-50 employees), 45.19% as average enterprises (50-249 employees), and 18.89% as large enterprises (more than 249 employees). The entire group included 82.59% as private companies, 3.70% as government agencies and departments, and 12.53% as foreign companies.

The research group of companies was divided into industries, 23.64% of all the companies were the production industry and 23.03% were the service industry, followed by 21.21% as the sales and 12.12% as the construction industry. Distribution was 6.06%, transportation as 5.45%, and the motor industry as 4.85%. Delivery and hospitality were 1.21% each. Both education and logistics were 0.61%.

The research included 270 employees of micro, small, average, and large companies. Supervisors were 15.93% and employees were more than 84.07% of the research companies.

Two slightly different questionnaires were used in the research. One was used by supervisors and the other by employees.

For the purpose of this article, the research analysis will be based on the results obtained from the

supervisors.

Referring to companies' legal matters, 88.10 % supervisors claimed that they belong to private companies, 9.52% are government companies, and only 2.38% are foreign companies.

Describing the companies' size, 44.19% of supervisors described them as small, 34.88% as average, 16.28% as large, and only 4.65% were described as micro.

### Results

The study was initiated by verifying the fact of competence testing in companies. Only 24.23% of supervisors claimed that current employees were undergoing competence testing, and 75.77% of those questioned claimed that such testing was not implemented by their companies (see Table 1).

Table 1  
*Employees Undergoing Competence Testing in Their Current Companies*

Yes		No	
Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
55	24.23%	172	75.77%

The next step included questioning supervisors about the increase in employees' level of motivation thanks to the participation in trainings. Among the supervisors, 34.88% of them claimed that trainings have definitely increased the employees' level of motivation and 27.91% claimed that trainings increased their motivation. A very close percentage of supervisors questioned had no opinion (27.91%), whereas no one from the group claimed that they absolutely disagreed with the fact that professional training increases the employees' motivation (see Table 2).

Table 2  
*Level of Increasing the Employees' Motivation by Giving Trainings—Supervisors' Opinions*

1 (Strongly disagree)		2 (Rather disagree)		3 (Have no opinion)		4 (Rather agree)		5 (Strongly agree)	
Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
0	0.00%	4	9.30%	12	27.91%	12	27.91%	15	34.88%

The next issue was directed towards employees and supervisors about the level of employees' tendencies to change jobs due to the increase in their professional skills in past years (see Tables 3 and 4). According to employees, more than 15% answered that they absolutely or rather agree with it (7.05% and 8.37%). The highest percentage of the subjects of this study (33.48%) answered that they rather disagree, and about half of people surveyed had no opinion (25.11%) or answered that they strongly disagree (25.99%). The answers formed among supervisors were slightly different with 13.95% of those surveyed saying that they rather agree with the answer, 27.91% have no opinion, and 9.30% firmly disagree. More than a half of supervisors (48.84%) rather disagree, and the percentage of people who strongly agree is 0%.

Table 3  
*Tendencies of Employees to Change Jobs Related to the Increase in Their Professional Skills in Past Years—Employees' Opinions*

1 (Strongly disagree)		2 (Rather disagree)		3 (Have no opinion)		4 (Rather agree)		5 (Strongly agree)	
Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
59	25.99%	76	33.48%	57	25.11%	19	8.37%	16	7.05%

Table 4

*Tendencies of Employees to Change Jobs Related to the Increase in Their Professional Skills in Past Years—Supervisors' Opinions*

1 (Strongly disagree)		2 (Rather disagree)		3 (Have no opinion)		4 (Rather agree)		5 (Strongly agree)	
Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
4	9.30%	21	48.84%	12	27.91%	6	13.95%	0	0.00%

In the following step of the study, supervisors were asked about the level of appreciation towards the active employees' personal development. Supervisors that strongly agree composed 27.91% of the body while 39.53% rather agree. More than one fifth of the respondents had no opinion (20.93%). Only 9.30% of the respondents disagreed with this statement and 2.33% strongly disagreed (see Table 5).

Table 5

*The Company's Level of Appreciation of an Active Personal Development of Employees—Supervisors' Opinions*

1 (Strongly disagree)		2 (Rather disagree)		3 (Have no opinion)		4 (Rather agree)		5 (Strongly agree)	
Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
1	2.33%	4	9.30%	9	20.93%	17	39.53%	12	27.91%

The following question that asked to the respondents was about the growth rate of the effectiveness of carried out tasks by current employees related to participation in professional trainings. According to 20.93% of all supervisors questioned, they strongly agreed with this fact. On the other hand, 37.21% of those rather agreed, 39.53% had no opinion, and only 2.33% rather disagreed. No one though strongly disagreed with the statement (see Table 6).

Table 6

*Growth Level of the Effectiveness of Tasks Carried out by Currently Employed Related to the Participation in Professional Trainings—Supervisors' Opinions*

1 (Strongly disagree)		2 (Rather disagree)		3 (Have no opinion)		4 (Rather agree)		5 (Strongly agree)	
Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
0	0.00%	1	2.33%	17	39.53%	16	37.21%	9	20.93%

Subsequently asked question towards employees and their supervisors was about the growth rate of commitment to work by employees affected by participation in professional trainings. The supervisors who definitely agree composed 11.63% of the body, whereas 32.56% rather agree. More than a half of respondents had no opinion (44.19%). Only 9.30% of respondents disagreed with the statement and 2.33% strongly disagreed (see Table 7).

Table 7

*Growth Level of the Commitment to Work by Employees Affected by Participation in Professional Trainings—Supervisors' Opinions*

1 (Strongly disagree)		2 (Rather disagree)		3 (Have no opinion)		4 (Rather agree)		5 (Strongly agree)	
Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
1	2.33%	4	9.30%	19	44.19%	14	32.56%	5	11.63%

In the next phase, the supervisors were asked about the amount of days spend on training in the last year.

The majority 28.97% spent 3-4 days, then 19.63% spent 9-10 days (see Table 8).

Table 8

*The Amount of Days Spent on Training in the Last Year—Employees' Opinions*

1-2 days		3-4 days		5-6 days		7-8 days		9-10 days		Above 10 days	
Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
15	14.02%	31	28.97%	19	17.76%	6	5.61%	21	19.63%	15	14.02%

In the next phase, the supervisors were asked about the level selection of their employees who take postgraduate studies. The majority 72.09% answered that they did not send their employees to take postgraduate studies, 20.93% agreed, whereas 6.98% did not know if employees are being sent to postgraduate schools (see Table 9).

Table 9

*Employees' Secondment to Take Postgraduate Studies—Supervisors' Opinions*

Yes		No		Do not know	
Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
9	20.93%	31	72.09%	3	6.98%

The following question directed to supervisors was about the growth rate of employees' effectiveness at work related to participation in postgraduate studies. According to the supervisors, 10% of people interviewed strongly agreed with this statement, 70% of them rather agreed, and 20% had no opinion (see Table 10).

Table 10

*Growth Level of Employees' Effectiveness Related to Participation in Postgraduate Studies—Supervisors' Opinions*

1 (Strongly disagree)		2 (Rather disagree)		3 (Have no opinion)		4 (Rather agree)		5 (Strongly agree)	
Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
0	0.00%	0	0.00%	2	20.00%	7	70.00%	1	10.00%

Employees being selected to participate in international internship also underwent the analysis. According to supervisors, 4.65% claimed that their employees were sent to participate in international internships, 90.70% denied, and 4.65% did not know (see Table 11).

Table 11

*The Selection of Employees Participating in International Internships—Supervisors' Opinions*

Yes		No		Do not know	
Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
2	4.65%	39	90.70%	2	4.65%

Subsequently, respondents were asked if the growth rate of employees' effectiveness at work increased due to involvement in international internships. one hundred percent of the supervisors strongly agreed (see Table 12).

The supervisors were also asked about employees being assigned to internships with different branches of their companies. According to the data, 20.93% confirmed sending their employees to intern with different branches within their own company inside the country, 74.42% denied, and 4.65% did not know (see Table 13).

Table 12

*Growth Level of the Effectiveness of Employees' Current Positions That Increased by Participating in International Internships—Supervisors' Opinions*

1 (Strongly disagree)		2 (Rather disagree)		3 (Have no opinion)		4 (Rather agree)		5 (Strongly agree)	
Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	1	100.00%

Table 13

*Assigning Employees to Internships With Different Branches of Their Own Companies—Supervisors' Opinions*

Yes		No		Do not know	
Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
9	20.93%	32	74.42%	2	4.65%

In the following phase, respondents were asked about the growth rate of effectiveness of employees' current positions related to participating in internships with different branches of their own companies. According to supervisors, 22.22% strongly agreed with the statement, 33.33% rather agreed, next 33.33% had no opinion, and 11.11% rather disagreed (see Table 14).

Table 14

*The Growth Level of the Effectiveness of Employees' Current Positions, Increased by Part Taking in Internships With Different Branches of Their Own Companies—Supervisors' Opinions*

1 (Strongly disagree)		2 (Rather disagree)		3 (Have no opinion)		4 (Rather agree)		5 (Strongly agree)	
Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
0	0.00%	1	11.11%	3	33.33%	3	33.33%	2	22.22%

The respondents were also asked about the growth rate of company's competitive advantage due to internships with different branches within their own companies. From the data, 44.44% of supervisors rather agreed with this statement, 44.44% of them had no opinion, and only 11.11% strongly agreed (see Table 15).

Table 15

*The Growth Level of the Company's Competitive Advantage Due to Internships With Different Branches Within Their Own Company—Supervisors' Opinions*

1 (Strongly disagree)		2 (Rather disagree)		3 (Have no opinion)		4 (Rather agree)		5 (Strongly agree)	
Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
0	0.00%	0	0.00%	4	44.44%	4	44.44%	1	11.11%

The supervisors were also asked about the participation of their employees in assessment center. Only 9.30% claimed that employees were participating in the assessment center, 88.37% denied, and 2.33% did not know (see Table 16).

Table 16

*Employees' Participation in the Assessment Center Within the Past Two Years—Supervisors' Opinions*

Yes		No		Do not know	
Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
4	9.30%	38	88.37%	1	2.33%

The respondents were also asked about the growth level of the effectiveness of the employees' current



positions related to participation in the assessment center. Seventy-five percent of them strongly agreed with this statement and 25% rather agreed (see Table 17).

Table 17

*Growth Level of the Effectiveness of Employees' Current Position Related to Participation in the Assessment Center—Supervisors' Opinions*

1 (Strongly disagree)		2 (Rather disagree)		3 (Have no opinion)		4 (Rather agree)		5 (Strongly agree)	
Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	1	25.00%	3	75.00%

Next, the supervisors were asked about the participation of their employees in the development center. Only 9.30% claimed that the employees were participating in the development center, whereas 90.70% responded "No" (see Table 18).

Table 18

*Employees' Participation in the Development Center in the Past Two Years—Supervisors' Opinions*

Yes		No		Do not know	
Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
4	9.30%	39	90.70%	0	0.00%

The respondents were asked about the effectiveness of the employees' current positions related to participation in the development center as well. Forty percent of them strongly agreed and 60% rather agreed (see Table 19).

Table 19

*Growth Level of the Effectiveness of Employees' Current Positions Related to Participation in the Development Center—Supervisors' Opinions*

1 (Strongly disagree)		2 (Rather disagree)		3 (Have no opinion)		4 (Rather agree)		5 (Strongly agree)	
Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	3	60.00%	2	40.00%

Additionally, the respondents were asked which forms of employee's competence development in their current positions are the most relevant. They were presented with eight forms. While referring to trainings, 4.65% answered that they strongly agreed, 2.33% rather agreed, and 20.93% had no opinion. More than 72% of the respondents answered that they rather agreed (34.88%) with it or strongly agreed (37.21%).

The following response refers to taking postgraduate studies. Only 4.65% claimed that they strongly agree, 2.33% rather disagree, 20.93% rather agree. More than one fourth of the respondents had no opinion, 18.60% rather disagreed with this statement, and 30.23% strongly disagreed.

The third most relevant form was coaching. According to the supervisors, 44.19% of those surveyed answered that they strongly disagreed with this statement because this is the most relevant form of competence development, 16.82% rather disagreed, and 13.95% had no opinion. More than 18% of respondents (18.60%) answered that they rather agreed with this statement and 6.98% strongly agreed (see Table 20).

The fourth part was mentoring. From Table 20, 4.65% of the supervisors answered that they strongly agreed that this is the most relevant form of competence development, 6.98% rather agreed, whereas 27.91% had no opinion, 13.95% rather disagreed, and 46.51% strongly disagreed.



Table 20

*Most Relevant Forms of Employee's Competence Development—Supervisors' Opinions*

	1 (Strongly disagree)		2 (Rather disagree)		3 (Have no opinion)		4 (Rather agree)		5 (Strongly agree)	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Trainings	2	4.65%	1	2.33%	9	20.93%	15	34.88%	16	37.21%
Postgraduate studies	13	30.23%	8	18.60%	11	25.58%	9	20.93%	2	4.65%
Coaching	19	44.19%	7	16.28%	6	13.95%	8	18.60%	3	6.98%
Mentoring	20	46.51%	6	13.95%	12	27.91%	3	6.98%	2	4.65%
Internship in different branch of the same company	29	67.44%	2	4.65%	6	13.95%	3	6.98%	3	6.98%
International internship	34	79.07%	3	6.98%	3	6.98%	2	4.65%	1	2.33%
Assessment center	31	72.09%	4	9.30%	3	6.98%	2	4.65%	3	6.98%
Development center	33	76.74%	2	4.65%	3	6.98%	4	9.30%	1	2.33%

The next part referred to internship in a different branch of the same company. A high percentage of 67.44% of the supervisors answered that they strongly disagreed with this statement, 4.65% rather agreed, 13.95% had no opinion, and a little over 13% of respondents answered that they rather agreed (6.98%) or strongly agreed (6.98%) with the statement above.

In reference to the sixth part, the supervisors answered by impressive number of 79.07% that they strongly disagreed with the statement that this is the most relevant form of competence development, 6.98% rather disagreed, the same percentage number (6.98%) had no opinion, 4.65% rather agreed, and only 2.33% strongly agreed.

The seventh part contained the answer to the assessment center. The supervisors answered by 72.09% that they strongly disagreed with the statement that this is the most relevant form of competence development, 9.30% rather disagreed, 6.98% of the supervisors strongly disagreed with the statement that this is the most relevant form of competence development, 9.30% rather disagreed, 6.98% of those surveyed had no opinion, only 4.65% of the supervisors rather agreed, and 6.98% strongly agreed with the statement.

The last thematic part was the development center. The supervisors, just like in the previous part, claimed that they strongly disagreed (76.74%) with the statement, only 4.65% rather disagreed, 6.98% had no opinion, whereas slightly more than 11% of the supervisors rather agreed (9.30%) or strongly agreed (2.33%) with the statement.

### Conclusions

Considering the collected data above, we can state that the employees' development, along with trainings, is registered in a company's strategies. Interestingly enough, competence testing is not quite popular among companies functioning on the Polish business market, whereas 75% of those hold descriptions of the job positions.

The supervisors observe that trainings positively influence the motivation of their subordinates. They also create higher involvement in work performed.

They are also aware of the results reached by the role of trainings. The vast majority of those surveyed claim that they are directly affecting the effect of their employees' results.

Particularly noteworthy is the fact that while trainings are being commonly recognized in relation to other forms, methods, and increasing skills.

As an example, only as few as 15% of respondents participated in postgraduate studies, from which, only every fourth one was being delegated by their employers which naturally means that the education was being financed by the company. Interestingly enough, more than 70% of the supervisors claimed that thanks to the enrollment in postgraduate studies, the efficiency in the workplace greatly increased.

Similarly enough, the postgraduate studies were not the direction of investments or delegations for employees.

However, national or international internships were not being received positively, considering both facts, the delegation itself and their effectiveness on work. On the contrary, frequent answers stated that they have no influence on the effectiveness whatsoever. The supervisors were very reluctant towards this form of education. Interestingly enough, despite such reluctance towards internships, the vast majority of respondents stated that they have a positive influence on a company's competitive advantage.

Both the assessment center and the development center were developmental tools questioned. A marginal group of employees participated in them, yet, the respondents are greatly aware of their roles and believe that they majorly improve the effectiveness of employees' current position. A very similar approach was taken towards the question of mentoring and coaching.

Analyzing the perception of the accuracy of mentioned educational tools, both surveyed groups gave trainings the highest ratings, while the rest of the forms became secondary.

The supervisors notice a very significant influence of trainings on the organization's competitive advantage.

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