

Internal Training of Personnel in Russia and Belarus: The Content and Effectiveness¹

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Abstract

The report presents the results of internal training analysis, conducted in 2015 and based on materials of the survey of executives and employees of industrial enterprises in Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus. The main results of the study:

1. The characteristics of the internal training organization on the contents of the formed skills and the degree of their specificity for different groups of employees were obtained. In both countries the training programs are primarily focused on the formation of professional skills. Much less attention is paid to development of cognitive and social competencies, which are relevant for executives and specialists. Most of the formed skills are universal. The degree of specificity of skills is maximum for workers and minimal for executives, while the prevalence of specific programs in Belarus is generally higher.
2. The motives for participation of personnel in internal training were identified. The main motives of Russian workers are increase of competitiveness and development, while Belarusian workers are more focused on continued employment. Continued employment is more typical for employees receiving specific training. The prevalence of the motive of increasing the competitiveness in the labor market increases considerably with the growth of universality of the obtained competences.
3. The effectiveness of internal training through the use of subjective evaluations of employees and employers was evaluated. The efficiency of competences formation depends on the size of the organization, its stage of life cycle, focusing on the achievement of strategic goals in the learning process and the decision makers about the employee training.
4. Belarusian employers more often note the non-obvious effect of training and dismissal of the trained employees as a risk of investments in human capital.

Keywords

Human capital, Internal training of personnel.

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Introduction

The scale and speed of changes in modern economy place high demands on internal training, the content and the impact of which largely affects the success of the organization. In this case, internal training of personnel in different countries has a distinctive national identity.

The focus of the present study is a comparative analysis of the characteristics of internal training in two countries – Russia and Belarus. They have

common historical and cultural roots, but they use different principles and approaches in economic and social policy over the past two decades. Obviously, this situation should be reflected in policy of additional training, because the differences in state regulation of the economy and in the educational sphere form the different structure of the demand of employers for personnel competences and methods of their formation.

The relevance of the study on the example of Russian and Belarusian companies is due to the

fact that most often this problem is deeply investigated at the level of one of these countries. The comparison will allow not only to assess the overall condition and dynamics of changes in the processes of internal training, but also to understand which characteristics of training are specific to post-Soviet economies, and which characteristics are the reflections of differences in public policy.

In addition, in both countries, the volume of internal training is at a relatively low level. For example, according to the BEEPS survey, the share of small and medium enterprises, training staff in Russia varies from 4.8% (unskilled workers) to 15.7% (non-production staff) and 25.0% (skilled workers). Similar estimates for Belarus are slightly higher: employers provide training to 9.2% of unskilled workers, 11.7% of non-productive staff and 41.2% of skilled workers (Gimpelson & Kapelyushnikov, 2011). This is comparable with rates in the countries of Eastern Europe, but it is much lower than in developed countries.

The aim of this work is the comparative evaluation of internal training of personnel in Russia and Belarus from the standpoint of the content of generated knowledge and skills, as well as the effectiveness of programs.

1. Literature review

Problems of internal training recently attracted the attention of researchers in various fields of scientific knowledge: economists, sociologists, management professionals. Considering the analysis of studies on internal training of personnel, we can distinguish two independent directions of research.

The first of them, quality direction, is devoted to the study of the functioning of systems of internal training in organizations and their impact on the quality of the workforce of the organization. Here the focus is placed on the analysis of the structures involved in the internal training, techniques and technologies to determine the need for training, its organization, providing feedback during and after the training. Often such research focuses on the search for effective methods of functioning of the internal training systems and development of guidance for companies to organize personnel training. Approaches to assessing the impact of learning generally rely on the assessment of the degree of achievement of goals and use simplified performance evaluation of teaching, which, however, are quite intuitive and

easy to use, although they do not always allow to obtain the accurate and correct assessment of the economic result.

The second direction of research examines the quantitative aspects of the effectiveness of internal training. The basis for these is the human capital theory of G. Becker. Such studies are based on econometric methods and are aimed at assessing the impact of training (usually on the basis of the equation of wages of J. Mincer), as well as the evaluation of the probability of promotion of an employee, dismissal, etc. The use of modern econometric methods allows obtaining a more accurate assessment of the impact of learning, but it does not always involve developing a detailed practical recommendations.

Analyzing the existing literature on the effectiveness of internal training in Russia and in Belarus, it should be noted that most of the publications are focused in the plane of analysis of the qualitative characteristics of education and a substantially smaller part is devoted to quantitative assessments of the impact of training. Quantitative calculations were performed exclusively on the Russian data. This article discusses the main findings obtained by the researchers according to the analysis of internal training of personnel and its impact in Russia and in Belarus.

Researchers from both countries recorded a number of problems associated with the shortage of workers with the skills demanded by employers. According to cross-country studies, in Belarus among the main obstacles to doing business in the country personnel qualification was put in the second place (and for firms employing from 20 to 99 people – the first place) (The World Bank, 2014a), while Russian employers put this issue to the sixth place (businesses with more than 20 people – the third place) (The World Bank, 2014b).

The authors of the report “Developing skills for innovative growth in the Russian Federation” mention the existence of imbalance between the skills generated by the national education system and skills required in the labor market. Employers attribute the shortage not only with the quality of the actual personnel training, but also with cognitive and social skills. For employees in managerial positions such skills are the ability to make decisions (including nonstandard decisions), leadership, ability to work with people, knowledge of foreign languages, openness to new ideas. For specialists such skills are the ability to make decisions, the ability to work both independently and

in a team. The lack of skills among workers is related to professional skills, lack of good faith, the ability to solve problems (Vasiliev, et al., 2013). It is important that the deficit of skills observed by employers, is not related to the unfavorable financial situation of the organizations and, consequently, uncompetitive wages.

The researchers of the Belarusian labor market also suggest a shortage of workers with the required competencies. According to the survey of employers in the private sector of the country, one in two believes that his subordinates are lacking of professional skills, every third captures the lack of self-organization, and every fourth notes that his subordinates have the problems of communication (Soroka, 2004).

Thus, both the Russian and Belarusian employers noted the need for the formation not only professional competences, but also the need for general skills.

A number of studies have undertaken an analysis of the demand of the Russian and Belarusian organizations on the content of internal training. Most employers train their employees on general programs that are also in demand at other enterprises. Only a quarter of employers form specific human capital in internal training programs (Lazareva, Denisova, & Tsukhlo, 2006). There are two groups of problems in the analysis of the content of the training.

Firstly, despite the declared deficit of cognitive and social competencies, employers prefer to train personnel on the programs of professional skills development. The authors of the previously mentioned report noted: "the training is focused mainly on the development of specific professional (technical) skills". This task is devoted to more than 60% of the programs for specialists and workers. Much less attention is paid to training aimed at developing behavioral and social skills. Thus, less than 20% of the programs for managers and less than 30% of the programs for specialists are dedicated to the development of communication skills (ability to work with people). Even less attention is paid to the development of cognitive skills of a high order for managers and specialists. Meanwhile, less than 25% of training programs are aimed at the development of scarce skill for specialists – ability to solve problems (Vasiliev, et al., 2013). According to Soroka (2004), Belarusian employers also train mostly professional competencies. More than a half (58%) of business leaders in the private sector believe that the training should be focused on a particular practical

tasks in the specialty and a quarter of them think that highly specialized training in the workplace is the most effective.

Secondly, there is the issue of cooperation with educational organizations that are not interested in providing training programs adapted to specific organizations. Often attempts to interact with educational institutions on this subject do not lead to success. This fact forces the actively developing organization to solve the problem of the maintenance of internal training on their own, as well as to create their own training centers, corporate universities and other structures (Vasiliev, et al., 2013). When answering the question about the effectiveness of different forms of employee training, employers give obvious preference to the learning in the workplace (mentoring), and courses organized at the enterprise (Lazareva, Denisova, & Tsukhlo, 2006).

According to Russian authors, despite the development of internal training, the gap between the supply of skills and the required skills for middle career workers is even higher than for workers at the beginning of their career, which indicates low effectiveness of continuing education programs and internal development of personnel (Vasiliev, et al., 2013).

A number of studies in Russia provide a quantitative assessment of the effectiveness of training programs. Acting rationally, the employer will invest in internal training of personnel, providing that the benefits from training will be higher than the cost of it. Higher productivity of the worker after training can be the basis for salary increase and career advancement. However, the economic impact of investments in internal training of personnel is not so clear. The training aimed at the formation of general skills increases the competitiveness of the employee and makes his transition to another organization more likely. On the other hand, the acquisition (as the result of learning) of specific skills that are in demand only for that employer restricts wage growth and inter-firm mobility of trained workers.

Most works on the measurement of the training effectiveness analyze the impact of learning through the increase of the employee's salary on the basis of the equation of J. Mincer. Significant differentiation of estimates for Russia is not only due to different time periods and samples, but it is also due to differences in the specifications of econometric models (Berger, Earle, & Sabirianova, 2001; Lazareva O., 2006; Tan, Savchenko, Gimpelson, Kapelyushnikov, &

Lukyanova, 2007). One of the most accurate assessments of the impact of internal training in Russia was presented by Travkin (2014), who estimates that wages of the Russian worker after training increase by 8.3%.

In the work of Alexandrova (2014) an attempt was made to evaluate the impact of internal training on the basis of one of Russian industrial enterprises. Having high precision data on training, wages, characteristics of workers, the author was able to compare the impact of different types of training – apprenticeship, courses, advanced training and professional retraining.

The effects of internal training from the viewpoint of the mobility of personnel were identified by Berger, Earl and Sabirianova (2001).

Despite the attention paid to the analysis of internal training of personnel and its effectiveness in both countries, a number of important issues require further study. In addition, the analysis shows that the most part of research into the effectiveness of internal training was performed on Russian data, while the assessment of effectiveness of internal training in Belarus requires further study.

2. Research methodology

The empirical base of the research was the survey materials of the Russian and Belarusian experts. From the Belarusian side the team of Mogilev State A. Kuleshov University under the guidance of Professor N. Makovskaya participated in the expert survey.

The experts were the heads of departments of personnel management and experts whose functional responsibilities include organization of internal training. The authors surveyed 159 experts representing Russian and Belarusian industrial enterprises, located in fourteen regions (Moscow, St. Petersburg, Krasnoyarsk and Altai territory, Ivanovo, Kaluga, Kemerovo, Omsk, Sverdlovsk, Tomsk, Tyumen, Chelyabinsk, Yaroslavl and Mogilev regions). The training content was analyzed in the following areas: causes of learning; formed skills; the degree of specificity of skills; the duration of programs, allowing estimating the scope and depth of the formed skills.

In preparing the survey instrument, the authors took the list of generated skills as a basis (Vasiliev, et al., 2013).

The effectiveness of training was evaluated by the achievement of its objectives. In addition, experts were asked questions related to problems in the field of internal training of employees.

Processing of the results was carried out using the methods of descriptive statistics and regression analysis.

3. The results of the research

3.1. Analysis of the programs content

The experts' answers to the question about the significance of the factors determining the need for training are presented in table 1. The significance of each factor was assessed on a five-point system from 1 (absolutely unimportant) to 5 (very important).

Table 1 Average values of importance of reasons determining the need for training of personnel

Factor	The average value (standard deviation)		ANOVA	
	Russia	Belarus	F	Significance
Implementation of requirements of supervisory authorities	3.063 (1.595)	3.589 (1.289)	5.056	0.026
The alignment of workers' knowledge and changes in legislation	3.619 (1.361)	3.802 (1.240)	0.749	0.388
The alignment of workers' knowledge and requirements of engineering and technology	3.810 (1.105)	4.043 (1.128)	1.635	0.203
Training the employees to perform other functional duties	3.730 (1.066)	3.352 (1.393)	3.307	0.071
Implementation of programs determined by the development strategy of the organization	3.857 (1.390)	3.276 (1.403)	6.321	0.013

Source: the authors

The average values of all factors are located in a fairly narrow range – from 3.063 to 4.043 points. However, the priorities of the Russian and Belarusian employers are a little different. According to Russian data the leading factors are associated with the strategic development of companies and change of engineering and technologies. In Belarus, along with the change of engi-

neering and technology, the priority is the need for alignment of workers' knowledge and changes in legislation. The factor of strategic development, which Russian employers put in the first place, was the least significant for the Belarusian experts. When comparing differences using analysis of variance, statistically significant differences in the estimates of the factors are fixed at three positions of the five: the higher importance of implementation the requirements of supervisory authorities for Belarus, the higher importance of strategy of organization development and training the employees to perform new functions for Russia.

The overall distribution of focus of internal training in the context of the skills is shown on Figure 1.

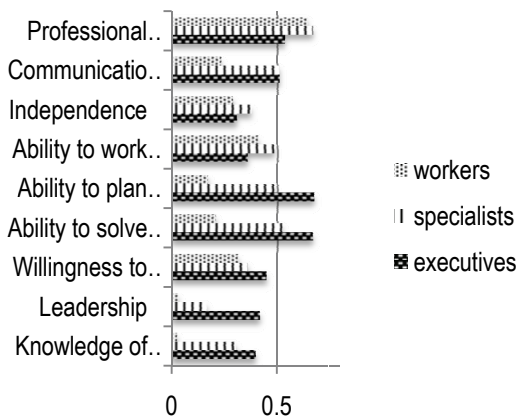


Figure 1 The frequency of the competencies formation during internal training for groups of personnel (as a proportion of the number of Russian and Belarusian experts)
Source: the authors

The structure of the competences formed in the process of internal training differs for groups of personnel. When training workers, employers give priority to professional competence, which corresponds to the output of the previously mentioned report, that these skills are the most deficient in this group of personnel. However, in the process of education there is not given sufficient attention to overcome the lack of competencies, connected with the ability to solve problems.

A large percentage of organizations form professional competences of executives. At the same time, only half of the companies and less pay attention to the formation of competencies associated with communications, leadership, and willingness to change. Also less than a half of employers use internal programs for specialists, aimed at the formation of independence and ability to work in a team.

Training programs for workers have the greatest degree of specificity, and training programs for managers have the least degree of specificity.

Table 2 Specificity of the competences formed in the process of internal training, %

The ability to use acquired competences	Group of personnel		
	workers	specialists	executives
In this organization only	24.1	14.2	12.6
In organizations of similar profile	48.1	47.3	22.4
In any organization	27.8	38.5	65.0
Total	100	100	100

Source: the authors

This structure of educational programs is due to the nature of the formed competencies, but it has cross-country differences. For all groups of personnel the Belarusian employers note much more possibilities to use competences only in the organization, and, consequently, much less the competences are universal. For example, a high degree of specificity of knowledge in Belarus was noted more often (in 3.0 times for workers, in 4.4 times for specialists and in 2.8 times for executives). In all cases, the Chi-square is statistically significant at the level $p < 0.01$. Probably, this differentiation may be caused by various reasons, such as:

- greater concentration and centralization of production in Belarus, larger industrial enterprises, which leads to a lessening of competition in the labor market for workers with certain competencies,
- a feature of the labor legislation of the countries. Unlike Russia, the resignation in Belarus has additional restrictions. It includes not only a longer period of a written notice of resignation (one month instead of two weeks), but also the possibility of voluntary resignations only if the employment contract was concluded for an indefinite period (article 40 of the Labor code of the Republic of Belarus). Fixed-term employment contract does not offer this option to employees (The Labor Code of the Republic of Belarus No. 296-z, 1999). Therefore, in the case of high variability of the external environment and the rapid obsolescence of knowledge, this restriction provides additional protection of the employer, who receives more guarantees of

the use of formed competences in the organization.

The content of the training is associated with its duration. Indeed, a longer program may not only give narrow knowledge and (or) practical skills, but it also forms a broad, integrated vision of the problems, supported by the theoretical foundation. At the same time, it is impossible to evaluate training programs with long duration unambiguously positive, because there is a risk of substitution of the formation of high-demand skills with the theoretical material, which has an indirect relationship to the objectives of the organization. The distribution of duration of training on the groups of personnel is presented in Table 3.

Table 3 The distribution of duration of internal training programs, %

Duration of program	Group of personnel		
	workers	specialists	executives
Up to 15 hours inclusively	46.7	44.6	47.0
From 16 to 40 hours	38.0	35.1	22.4
From 41 to 249 hours	14.6	16.2	21.6
Over 250 hours	0.7	4.1	9.0
Total	100	100	100

Source: the authors

Almost half of personnel of all groups have been trained on short-term internal programs for up to 15 hours inclusively. Both in Russia and Belarus the volume of such programs does not allow issuing after the training the document of the established (state) sample. These programs are not counted in statistics of Russian additional professional training and professional education as well as in Belarusian statistics of adult education. Taking into account such short-term programs, in fact the coverage of personnel of industrial enterprises by training in two countries is about twice higher than the official.

The second on the prevalence of training programs are programs lasting from 16 to 40 hours. According to the Russian legislation their volume allows issuing the documents certifying professional development. In Belarus, in order to obtain a similar document it is required to pass the course from 36 to 80 hours. Long programs of professional retraining (more than 250 hours in Russia) are demanded by employers rather weak, although the demand for them increases from workers to specialists and then to the executives.

Programs that form specific skills and not associated with a high risk of dismissal of a trained employee, as a rule, have a smaller length in comparison with programs aimed at the formation of general competences, and associated with high risk of dismissal.

There are some differences between countries in duration of internal training programs. Russian employers are more likely to train executives and specialists on programs with duration from 16 to 40 hours, and Belarusian employers use programs of a longer duration. So, for example, training of executives and specialists on programs from 16 to 40 hours is practiced in Russia, respectively, in 1.9-2.2 times more often than in Belarus. On the contrary, the programs of longer duration in Belarusian organizations are used in 4.7 times more often for specialists and in 2.0 times more often for executives. The differences are probably explained by formal national requirements to additional professional training (adult education).

Evaluation of the training programs effectiveness

The formation of the majority of the competencies, formed in the result of internal training, experts estimate on average level (Figure 2). The exceptions to this are professional competences with the highest percentage of maximum estimates (38.5%) and knowledge of a foreign language with dominating minimum estimates (37.5%).



Figure 2 Expert evaluation of the effectiveness of internal training programs (percentage of respondents of Russian and Belarusian experts)
Source: the authors

Only between a quarter and a third of the experts assess the result of the formation of such in-

demand competencies as communication skills, independence, ability to work in a team and willingness to change as high. High evaluation result of the formation of leadership is even lower (17.0%).

Cross-country comparisons do not capture the essential differences in efficiency of formation of communicative competences, independence, work planning, ability to solve problems and leadership. But Russian employers evaluate the formation of professional competences (Chi-square is significant at the level $p < 0.1$) and foreign language skills ($p < 0.01$) higher.

To analyze the factors determining the success of internal training aimed at the formation of each of the selected competencies, it is necessary to turn to regression analysis. In built probit models the result of training on the formation of each of the competencies (1 – high, 0 – medium and low) was used as a dependent variable.

As independent variables the authors used:

- variables reflecting characteristics of the organization (ownership, development stage, size of organization) and purpose of personnel training,
- resource characteristics of the organization (financial regulation, availability of the training center and training professionals in organization),
- actors making decisions about the education, competence of which affects the correct assessment of training needs and selection of methods of its satisfaction (organizational heads, line managers, HR managers),
- the country in which the organization operates.

A long list of dependent variables in a case of a small sample leads to a decrease in the number of degrees of freedom and statistical significance of the obtained results. Taking into account this fact, the authors give estimates that are significant at 1%, 5% and 10% level. The main results of the study show the following.

High level of formation of professional competences is associated with the presence of own training center in the organization ($p < 0.05$). The efficiency of formation of communication competences is positively related to training organized by own employees of the organization ($p < 0.1$) and presence of the organization at the stage of stability ($p < 0.1$).

A higher level of formed competence in the field of independence is also positively associated with training organized by own employees of the organization ($p < 0.05$) and with the involvement of HR managers in the decision-making process about the training ($p < 0.1$).

Ability to work in a team is successfully formed in large organizations ($p < 0.1$), which are at the stage of dynamic growth ($p < 0.05$). Evaluation of the effectiveness of development of this competence for Russian employers is higher ($p < 0.1$).

The success of the formation of problem solving skills in the process of internal training is positively related to favorable financial situation, presence of the organization at the stage of dynamic growth (for both $p < 0.05$), and with the involvement of the HR manager and line manager in the decision making about the necessity of training of the employee (for both factors $p < 0.1$).

Learning a foreign language is more effective in a stable profitable organization, which trains the employees in order to achieve the strategic goals and in cases when the head of the organization is involved in decision making process (in all cases $p < 0.05$).

The effectiveness of the formation of leadership competence is due to the presence of the organization at the stage of dynamic growth ($p < 0.01$). In addition, this competence is formed more successfully in large organizations ($p < 0.05$).

The experts of the enterprises of both countries were also asked to choose from a proposed list of problems those that can potentially occur during training, as well as the problems that occur in their organization in training workers, specialists and executives (Figure 3).



Figure 3 Problems of internal training of personnel (as a proportion of the number of Russian and Belarusian experts)

Source: the authors

The prevalence of problems occurring in the process of training is significantly different. The most commonly for all groups of personnel the experts note the limited financial possibilities of the organization – lack of financial resources and the impossibility of distracting employees from work during the period of training. At the same time, Fig. 3 gives a visual representation of that the prevalence of problems is largely associated with the group of trainees. With the general lack of financial resources the urgent priority is the training of workers, and the possibility of distraction from work for the period of study is more often sought for employees who do not occupy managerial positions.

Most experts point low motivation of personnel in training of workers, but in groups of specialists and executives the importance of this problem decreases rapidly. This result has an explanation associated with a gradual increase of opportunities of employees to influence the decision making process about training. Thus, 42.2% of experts noted the formal character of educational programs for workers and only 29.0% - for managers. The formal nature of training may be caused by the presence of requirements for periodic training in both countries. However, in general, the problem of low motivation of personnel is quite serious. According to survey results, 38.9% of the experts of both countries find it important to consider the motivation of the employees, and 42.0% think that it is important in some cases. The differences between the evaluations of Russian and Belarusian experts are statistically insignificant.

About 30% of the experts link the problem of internal training with a not obvious result of the training. This problem with the same frequency is observed in the training of all groups of personnel.

The dismissal of trained workers is another challenge facing employers in both countries. For managers it is less critical because of the information asymmetry of this segment of the labor market, not allowing other employers to adequately assess the abilities of the worker, but for groups of workers and specialists its value is significantly higher (32.6% and 30.1% respectively). The risk of loss of investment makes 33.3% of employers consider the possibility of dismissal of the trained employee very important and 38.0% consider this fact important in some cases.

In the group of specialists, the presence of differences with respect to the issue of the dismissal of trained employees was reported. Belarusian

employers perceive it more sharply (36% versus 22%). The reason is that the Belarusian labor legislation, unlike Russian, does not provide for the possibility of concluding the apprenticeship contract with the employee under which he is obliged to work for a set period in the organization after graduation, or to compensate the expenses of the organization on training (Chapter 32 of the Labor code of the Russian Federation, 2001). Apparently, the combination of a relatively large level of generality of the acquired competences of specialists and the lack of legal capacity to retain the employee after training, leads to such differences in the estimates of the Russian and Belarusian experts.

Indeed, according to Russian sources, 40% of employees who received training, signed apprenticeship contracts with employers. The probability of concluding the contract is directly associated with the nature of the program.

In the formation of specific human capital apprenticeship contracts were concluded only in 12.5% of cases, in the training on programs that are in demand in organizations of similar profile apprenticeship contracts were concluded in 37.2% of cases, and in the training programs, the results of which can be used almost everywhere, apprenticeship contracts were signed in 46.3% of cases.

Conclusion

Thus, the study showed that the formation of relevant for today's labor market skills of workers of industrial enterprises of Belarus and Russia requires an integrated approach.

High demand for training general skills in combination with deficit of cognitive and social skills means that the emphasis in their formation must be transferred to the level of general education, including professional education.

Overcoming formalism and low effectiveness of the training requires a serious effort, not only by employers but also by the state. To some extent it is connected with the necessity of the passage of employees of certain professions and positions of periodic training. The regulatory authorities take into account not the result of education, but the presence of the document on its passage corresponding to the requirements.

The study has documented the differences in the formal national institutions and training practices in the firm-level in two countries, which may be of mutual interest (for example, the Russian practice of concluding the apprenticeship agreements). **SM**

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