

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF HRD ACTIVITIES WITHIN ORGANIZATIONS IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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Abstract

This scientific endeavour addresses human resource development (HRD) within organizations. The need to address HRD within organizations is growing as the importance of employee knowledge and skills in ensuring individual and organizational performance is proven. Furthermore, the strategic relevance of HRD has been proven as a result of ensuring consistency in achieving organizational goals. As employee knowledge and skills are an indisputable asset for organizations, the HRD function must expand its activities to address all challenges and circumstances, becoming an important subdivision for top management.

The methodological approach of the present study is based on a sociological survey conducted within 350 organizations of various sizes, of which only 235 carried out HRD activities. Therefore, the results are reported for the 235 organizations that provide professional training. The questionnaire included several variables reflecting HRD-related activities. By applying the questionnaire to the respondents, we found the level of implementation of various HRD-related activities. The results are presented in three categories: large enterprises, medium-sized enterprises, and small enterprises. By presenting the results per enterprise category, we find distinctions and similarities in terms of the level of involvement in the process of carrying out HRD activities.

Key words: HRD, training, HRD function, organizational performance.

Classification JEL: M12; M53.

1. Introduction

Human resource development (HRD) has been developing at a rapid pace in recent years. Top management is becoming increasingly aware of the value of employees' knowledge and skills in ensuring organizational performance. As the primary means of maintaining the competitive advantage of organizations, HRD plays an important role in developing employee skills to meet current and future performance requirements. In this context, HRD is perceived as a strategic function for organizations because it contributes directly to increasing competitive advantage. Organizational decision-makers need to be increasingly aware of the value of this function within the organization and make strategic decisions about expanding the learning infrastructure within organizations and implementing reliable HRD policies that lead to organizational performance growth.

Given the rapid development of technologies, HRD can be relied upon as a managerial function to support a wide range of organizational initiatives that require a skilled workforce. In this context, Potnuru & Sahoo (2016), analyzing HRD interventions, found that they have an impact on the development of employee skills that helps to improve organizational performance.

Similarly, Garavan et al. (1995) observed that strategic HRD, as a managerial process, is used in many contexts and for a variety of activities. The authors argue that strategic HRD promotes practices that enhance the strategic performance of employees and organizations. On the other hand, Grieves (2003) emphasizes proactive change in management, which allows organizations to survive in an increasingly complex, unstable, competitive, and global environment. In the same vein, Bîrcă & Matveiciuc (2025) argue that as the knowledge-based economy develops rapidly, HRD must become a priority for decision-makers at all levels—national and organizational—due to the effects and benefits that human resources can create. Bîrcă & Matveiciuc (2021) also argue that HRD has direct implications for organizational performance and competitive advantage.

2. The strategic significance OF HRD

HRD is a practice with significant strategic potential for organizations (Thoman & Lloyd, 2018). The strategic significance of HRD stems from the idea that it provides strategies, training, and development opportunities to help organizations and employees achieve their goals (Tseng & McLean, 2008). Strategic human resource development practices enable organizations to improve their employee training and development outcomes. Furthermore, Garavan et al. (2015) argue that the role of strategic human resource development is to develop human capital because it is valuable in relation to the external environment, rare among current and potential competitors, difficult to imitate, and non-substitutable.

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The constant changes taking place in society and the economy highlight the importance of the strategic role of HRD for organizations. In this context, Torraco & Lundgren (2020) examined HRD's responsiveness to five factors that affect dramatic changes in the environment and reshape the future of this function: technology, economic and financial considerations, globalization, equal opportunities, and the ever-changing nature and organization of work. In response to these changes, the authors argue that the identity of HRD has evolved through adaptations and advances in the field.

However, Rao & Salunkhe (2013) argue that many organizations do not have the necessary conditions to promote the development climate they consider necessary to enhance HRD function in order to influence organizational change. The authors argue that too much time is spent assessing material and technological needs, to the detriment of human resources.

3. HRD conceptualization

In 1969, Leonard Nadler first introduced the term "human resource development" at the American Society of Training and Development, renamed in 2015 as the Association for Talent Development. The increased interest in this new field of activity within organizations led several researchers to propose different approaches to HRD. Thus, Nadler (1970) defines HRD as a variety of activities carried out within a specific time frame and designed to produce behavioral changes. In another approach, Chalofsky (1992) states that HRD is the research and practice of increasing the learning capacity of individuals, groups, teams, and organizations by developing and applying learning-based interventions to optimize human and organizational growth and effectiveness. From an individual perspective, HRD can be defined as a set of systematic and planned activities designed by an organization to provide its members with opportunities to acquire the skills necessary to meet current and future job requirements (Werner & DeSimone, 2006), and from an organizational perspective, HRD is the process of developing and valuing expertise to improve the organizational system, work process, team performance, and individual performance (Swanson & Holton, 2009). The plethora of definitions related to HRD developed by researchers over time reflects different objectives, such as: behavioural change, individual performance, organisational performance, adult learning, training and development, career development and organisational development (Bîrcă & Matveiciuc, 2025). DRU is a complex concept that has developed over time and now encompasses all areas of activity. While DRU was initially viewed as a form of professional training for performing specific work tasks, it is now characterized by a high level of complexity, which is necessary in order to address new economic, societal, technological, and other challenges. Generalising on the above, Lundgren & Poell (2023) argue that DRU is the main driver

of people-centred development activities such as learning and development, organisational development and career development.

4. HRD roles and policies

HRD policy must address the development of the organization and the individual (Latif et al., 2011). Furthermore, HRD policy must clearly establish the roles and responsibilities of HRD professionals because it has an impact on its effectiveness within organizations. Tyson (1997) proposed a typology of HRD roles and responsibilities in the organization as reactive (absence of strategic perspectives), operational (training, selection), or administrative. Addressing the same topic, Lawler (2005) expanded this typology, proposing the following roles: involvement in the administration of the organization, emphasis on collaboration with other departments within the organization, and involvement in strategic contributions defined at the organizational level (Lengnick-Hall et al. 2009). At the same time, Mitsakis (2020) put forward the concept of HRD resilience, based on organizational resilience. In the author's opinion, HRD resilience considers the extent to which HRD practices could survive, develop, or deteriorate in a crisis situation, business uncertainty, and/or organizational restructuring, demonstrating a flexible, adaptive, and agile approach to any kind of internal or external forces.

Bîrcă et al. (2025) conclude that HRD helps to develop employees' skills in the labor market, a statement supported by Wallo et al. (2020). According to the authors, training is one of the essential activities of HRD, through which each employee within the organization can develop the skills and knowledge necessary to perform future work tasks. In this context, Evans & Davis (2005) described training as an extension of formalized programs for developing employee knowledge and skills. At the same time, Cooper et al. (2019) believe that HRD is not sufficient to improve employee skills to a higher level because not all knowledge and skills gained from HRD practices are transferred appropriately.

The role of HRD professionals as key stakeholders has been called into question as more and more people-centered development activities have been integrated into a wide range of leadership and oversight roles within the organization (Lundgren & Poell, 2023). Dirani et al. (2020) also consider that the role of HRD is becoming critical and emphasize the importance of human capital well-being during crises. In the context of the development of artificial intelligence and automatic management systems, the role of HRD within organizations is becoming increasingly important. Thus, Kim (2022) believes that HRD must address issues related to: employee attitudes toward robots, employee readiness for robotic technology, communication with robots, building human-robot teams, managing multiple robots, system-level collaboration, safety interventions, and ethical issues.

Taking into account the strategic importance, roles, and practices of HRD within organizations, it is necessary that this activity be carried out in a well-organized framework, covering all stages of the employee development process, namely:

- professional training planning, both in terms of the number of participants in training programs and the resources allocated for this purpose;
- analyzing professional training needs at the individual level, by job category, and at the organizational level;
- assessing the content of training programs, including the methods used during training;
- evaluating the results of vocational training in terms of both participant satisfaction and economic efficiency.

Furthermore, evaluating all HRD-related processes becomes a responsibility for decision-makers within the organization, so that HRD activities are effective and have a long-term impact on organizational activity. For HRD to be carried out effectively within the organization, it is necessary to clearly establish tasks and responsible persons. In addition, annual plans and budgets for employee development within organizations must be drawn up.

5. The assessment of HRD practices in the organizations

In order to assess HRD practices within organizations, a questionnaire was administered to 350 organizations in the Republic of Moldova, covering all areas of activity. After processing the data, it was found that of the 350 organizations participating in the survey, 235 carried out HRD activities. For a more comprehensive analysis, the data was processed according to the size of the enterprise—small, medium-sized, and large enterprises. Thus, of the total of 235 enterprises that organized HRD activities, 75 were small enterprises (10-49 employees), 84 were medium-sized enterprises, and 76 were large enterprises. The objective of our research was to evaluate several aspects of HRD within organizations.

A first aspect related to HRD, analyzed in our research, consisted in determining whether the company employs a person or has a subdivision responsible for employee training (Figure 1).

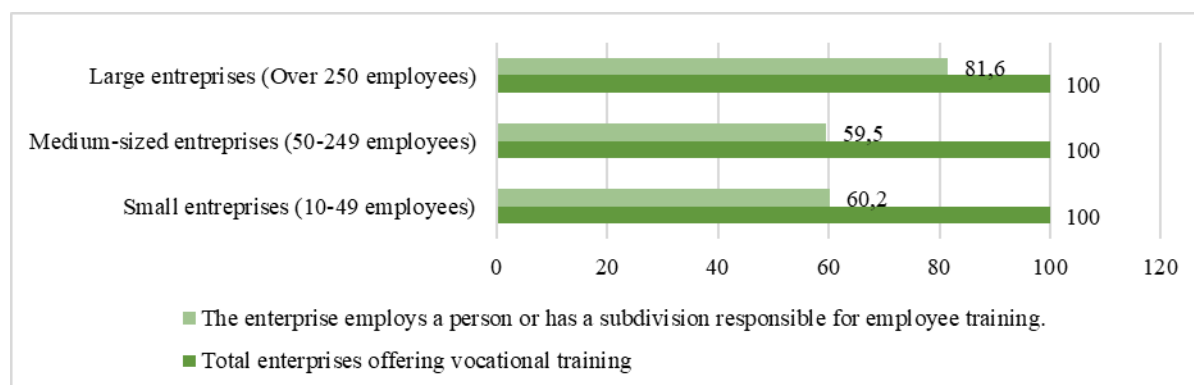


Figure 1. Presence of a person or subdivision responsible for employee training, %

Source: Developed by author.

The results show that the presence of an employee or a subdivision responsible for employee training depends on the organization's size. In the case of large enterprises, four-fifths of respondents confirmed the presence of a subdivision or employees responsible for training. At the same time, we find a very small discrepancy between small and medium-sized enterprises in terms of the presence of an employee within the organization responsible for training. It would have been expected that in the case of medium-sized enterprises, this percentage would have been higher, but the results demonstrate the opposite.

Another dimension examined concerns the involvement of organizations in the process of developing the annual professional training plans (Figure 2). It is well known that any well-developed plan ensures greater consistency in the implementation of activities.

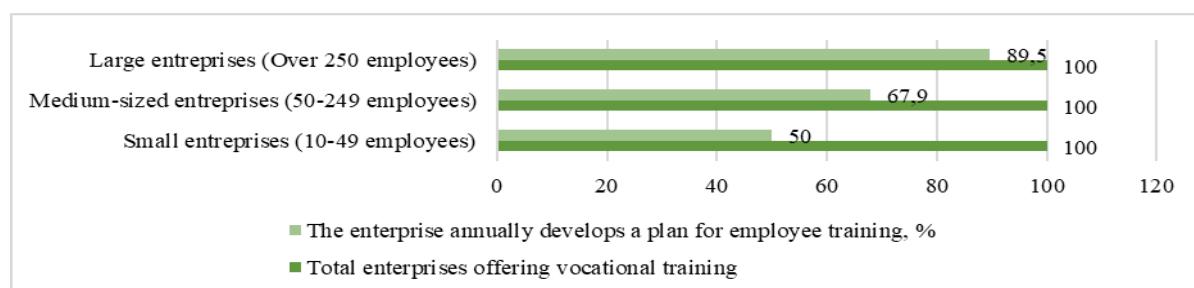


Figure 1. Development of annual employee training plans, %

Source: Developed by author.

Figure 2 shows that, practically, 9 out of 10 large enterprises develop an annual professional development plan for their employees. This proves that large companies take responsibility for HRD and want this activity to be carried out as efficiently as possible, through the plan developed at the beginning of the year. Similarly, we note that over two-thirds of medium-sized companies are involved in this process annually, raising awareness of its importance for effective professional training. In the case of small sized enterprises, we note that only 50% develop plans for employee training. The lack of an employee training plan in small sized enterprises can be explained by the fact that there is no person responsible for this area within the organisation, which makes it more difficult to involve other employees in this process.

The following aspect analyzed refers to budgeting for professional training. In this context, we set out to assess the extent to which companies approve an annual budget for employee training (Figure 3).

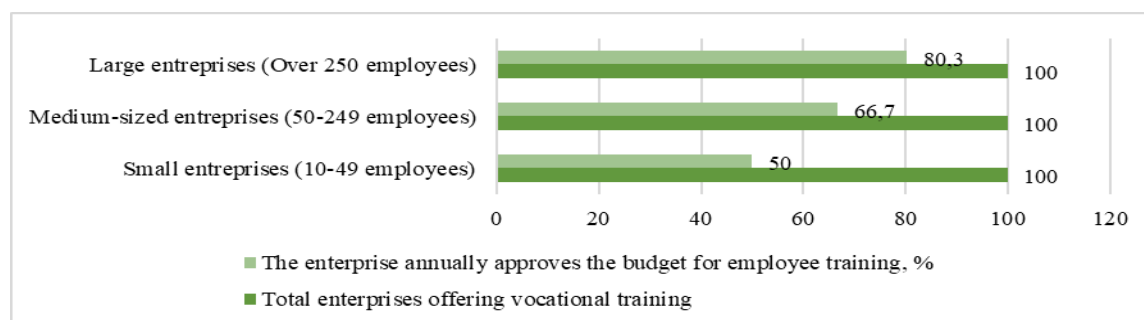


Figure 3. Enterprise involvement in approving the budget for employee training, %

Source: Developed by author.

To a large extent, the results presented in Figure 3 are almost identical to those in Figure 2, except for the results for large enterprises. This highlights that when developing a plan for employee training, the amount of financial resources allocated for this purpose is also determined. Therefore, the development of the annual employee training plan does not only refer to the number of employees who will participate in training programs, but also takes into account the financial resources allocated for this purpose.

The planning of vocational training has to start with the assessment of training needs, which is an important activity in HRD. By assessing the training needs of employees, gaps in employee skills can be identified, and the content of training programs can be established more accurately, ensuring greater efficiency at the organizational level. Therefore, one of the objectives of the research was to establish the extent to which organizations assess training needs (Figure 4).

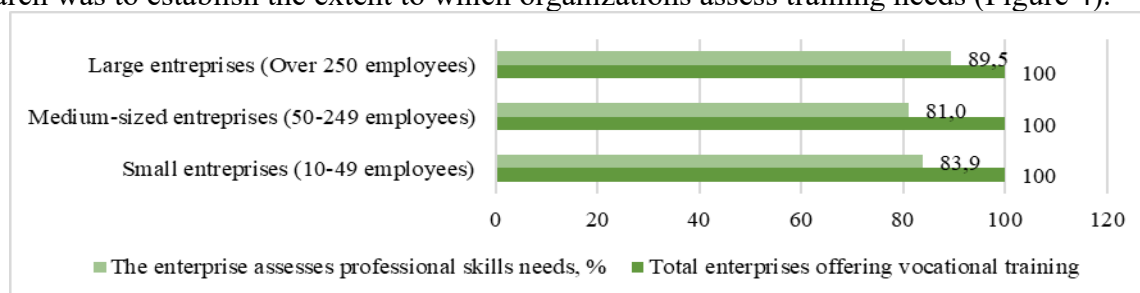


Figure 4. Enterprise involvement in the process of assessing professional skills needs, %

Source: Developed by author.

Given that employee training involves costs, organizations are aware of the need to assess training needs. Thus, there is a very high level of involvement of the organizations participating in the survey in the process of assessing training needs, regardless of their size. Even in the case of small enterprises, there is a heightened concern for assessing training needs.

Employee training is carried out using a variety of methods. In this case, four training methods considered to be the most widespread were included in the questionnaire in order to determine the extent to which they are used by organizations (Figure 5).

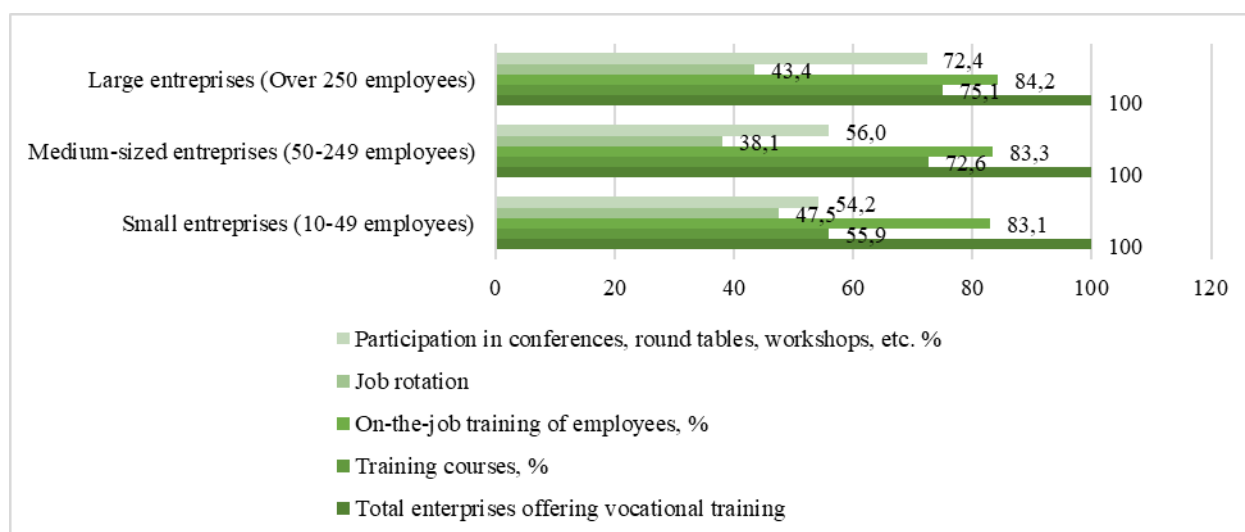


Figure 5. Training methods used by enterprises, %

Source: Developed by author.

In the case of organizations participating in the survey, on-the-job training is used most frequently, regardless of the size of the organization. This is because it is a less costly method for the organization and can be used whenever there is a need to improve the skills of the job holder. Training courses, which are considered more expensive, are used less frequently by organizations. In the case of small enterprises, only 55.9% use training courses as a way to enrich the knowledge and skills of their employees. A similar situation can be observed in the case of training through participation in various meetings (conferences, workshops, etc.). Job rotation is not so well known in the Republic of Moldova as a training method, which is why companies use this method less often. The results show that there are no major differences in the application of this method, regardless of the size of the organizations.

Starting from the idea that vocational training requires a substantial financial effort on the part of the organization, it is necessary to evaluate it in order to assess its effectiveness. Moreover, by assessing the results of the training, it is possible to ascertain the extent to which the vocational training program has contributed to the achievement of organizational objectives. The research results show that organizations are not indifferent and actively participate in this process (Figure 6).

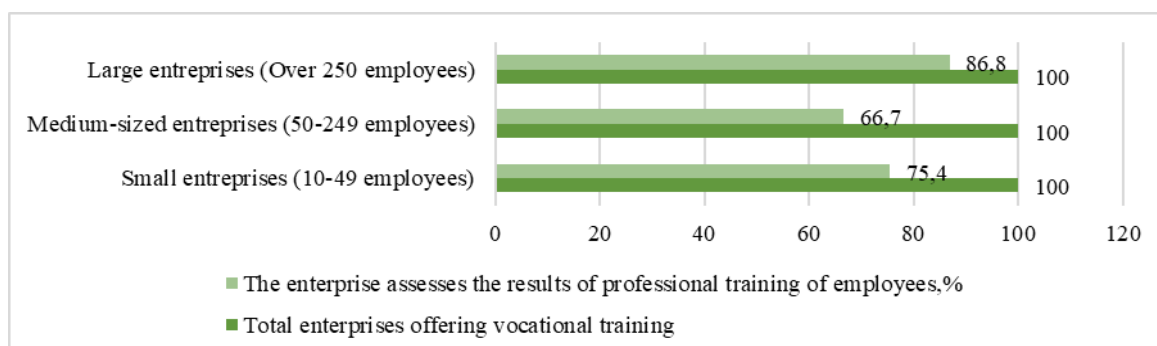


Figure 6. Enterprise involvement in the process of assessing training results, %

Source: Developed by author.

Figure 6 shows that medium-sized enterprises have the lowest level of involvement in the process of assessing training outcomes (66.7%). Unlike medium-sized enterprises, small enterprises are more frequently involved in assessing training outcomes. Around three-quarters of small enterprises carry out this activity.

The vocational training has implications at both the organizational and individual levels. Thus, the results of training at the individual level can be taken into account in the process of individual career development planning. However, the organizations participating in the survey use the results of training less for the individual career development planning of employees (Figure 7).

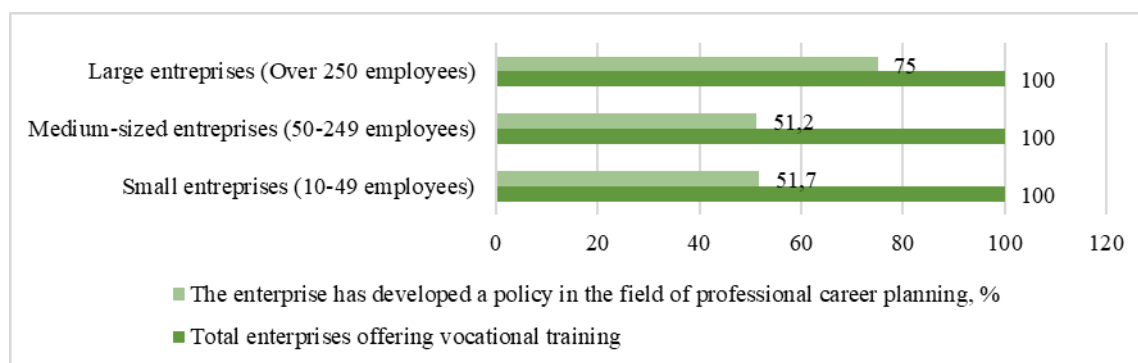


Figure 7. Enterprise involvement in the process of developing the policy on employee career planning, %

Source: Developed by author.

Figure 7 shows a large gap between large enterprises on the one hand and small and medium-sized enterprises on the other hand in terms of taking training results into account in the individual career planning process of employees. Under conditions of increased economic and geopolitical uncertainty, small and medium-sized enterprises are more exposed to such vulnerabilities, becoming more reluctant to develop individual career development plans for their employees.

5. Conclusions

Given that professional knowledge and skills play an obvious and significant role in the work of organizations, the HRD function proves its value and impact in achieving short-, medium-, and long-term goals. The HRD function must act as a link between senior management and the managers of organizational subdivisions in the process of planning and carrying out HRD activities. However, HRD cannot be carried out unilaterally, only by the specialists of this subdivision, but requires the involvement of all categories of managers within the organization in order to achieve the desired result.

It has also been proven that HRD has direct implications for organizational performance. The coherent planning of all HRD-related activities can contribute to ensuring the long-term performance of the organization. Taking this into account, the research focused on evaluating various aspects of HRD in order to ensure a high level of organizational performance. The results show that organizations are concerned with the assessment of HRD activities, regardless of their size. Even small businesses, which have fewer capabilities in this area, are concerned with HRD. Organizations are aware of the significance of having a subdivision, in the case of large enterprises, or a specialist, in the case of small and medium-sized enterprises, for the more effective operationalization of HRD activities. Also, developing and implementing plans in the field of HRD are important and useful for its coherent implementation.

The assessment of HRD activities has become a concern for all organizations. The results show that there are no major gaps between organizations in terms of assessing professional training

needs. Some more obvious gaps in the assessment of HRD activities can be found when we refer to the annual planning of employee training, as well as the elaboration and approval of the HRD budget. The constant concern of top management in organizations for HRD gives more confidence to this function in terms of its implications for organizational performance, regardless of their size.

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