Corporate Training Programs in Russian and Foreign Companies:

Impact on Staff and Time Challenges

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Abstract

Corporate learning is changing actively now: the global factors force companies to reform and invest in corporate learning systems. The article discusses problems and prospects of this process and describes corporate learning systems condition within Russian market companies.

Keywords: corporate learning, corporate learning system, e-Learning, online learning

1. Introduction

The traditional idea of a career, which includes an employee receiving a specialty in a higher or secondary educational institution and subsequent training to improve their qualifications when moving to higher positions, is increasingly becoming irrelevant to modern labor market requirements. Employees of many professional areas are faced with the need for continuous training to maintain professional qualifications and solve updated work tasks, while companies are forced to meet the demands of the times and reformat corporate training systems. Global processes such as increasing average life expectancy and technological progress are forcing employers not only to invest in corporate education, but also to pay more attention to the specific problems of reforming the processes of training and retraining of employees.

2. Importance of Corporate Training in the Context of Modernity

Pressure on corporate education systems is carried out mainly from two sides. Firstly, the importance of having the training programs themselves is growing rapidly. As the report of Deloitte (one of the largest consulting and audit companies in the world) about the most important trends in Human Recourse (HR) shows, in the largest countries of Europe and North America 80% of HR managers consider the problem of staff training as one of the biggest problems. In Japan, India and China, this figure is even higher (Walsh & Volini, 2017).

The growing importance of employee training is triggered by several fundamental processes in the labor market. The globalization of the economy causes the growth in the territorial representation of companies and increases the distance between employees and the management center, which increases the demand for remote and automated training formats. The increase in life expectancy leads to growth in the duration of employees' careers and the demand for continuing education and retraining courses both within and outside the companies. Technical progress reduces the obsolescence of current employee skills, and also lead to the emergence of new ones (for example, the ability to use specific digital tools). Deloitte analysts believe that under the current conditions, half of the skills of an average specialist become obsolete in just five years, and this period is even shorter in high-tech industries, such as IT industry. According to Deloitte analysts, software developers are required to update their skills pool every 1-1.5 years (Walsh & Volini, 2017).

These factors not only imply a mode of continuous training and retraining of certain personnel in large companies (for example, in many IT companies, regular training is the direct responsibility of programmers, testers and other IT personnel), but they also present new increased requirements for the training programs themselves, which should be sufficiently accessible and automated, is the second direction in which changes are being made in the corporate learning environment. For many companies from high-tech industrial complex (aerospace industry), it becomes necessary to introduce modern digital tools in the learning process and create an environment of modern "e-Learning", which includes both popular educational technologies such as online tools, and new approaches to

learning.

The formation of new approaches to training is often associated with the changed psychology of employees and new requirements for the organization of labor. Increasing the independence of new generation employees in the search and filtering of information forces companies to reformat the training processes. This problem, in particular, is regularly discussed in the framework of thematic conferences with the participation of the American "The e-Learning Guild". As one of the organization's experts points out in the published "white paper", employees do not require only to provide one-way training information from the employer or training institutions, but they need to be accompanied by the process of independent search for training materials, whose necessity arises as new work tasks are solved (Becker, 2015). The training process is increasingly being integrated into the direct work of the employee and for some specializations (for example, software developers) it becomes its direct part, carried out in parallel with work, and in such a way that it is no longer possible to separate training and work as two different processes, ability to quickly finding and learning the information you need is one of the professional qualities of programmers.

Training programs must be consistent with the organization's internal structure, for example, in a team built on the principles of flexibility and "Agile", the ability to acquire hybrid skills and horizontal movement between roles in a company is highly dependent on the availability of appropriate training programs and tools.

3. Content of Training Programs: The Correlation of Training and Labor Indicators

What indicators of employees are most affected by participation in corporate training programs? What skills does corporate training develop more efficiently and which ones does not? These questions arise for researchers of problems of corporate training systems.

A study by employees of the Austrian University of Applied Sciences in Innsbruck and the Malaysian U21Global University in Kuala Lumpur on the role of corporate training in talent management showed that participation in the corporate training program has the most positive effect on the development of the following skills of talented employees: time management (the best correlation between indicators of satisfaction with training and its impact on work), analytical and communication abilities (Ellis & Kuznia, 2014). All study participants were employees of a large international company. Courses aimed at developing skills such as problem-finding and solving problems and research turned out to be much less successful as the researchers note, the reason may be that talented employees already have sufficient skills in these areas. Moreover, the development of analytical skills has the greatest impact on the quality of the work performed by employees, as well as on the satisfaction of the work done, according to the findings of the same study, the better the corporate training system develops the analytical skills of an employee, the more effective and more satisfied he is from his work. At the same time, research skills are associated with employee motivation (Ellis & Kuznia, 2014).

A study by Brown Mackie College employees in Cincinnati and Ashford University in San Diego in the USA to identify the links between e-Learning and performance in two large corporations revealed a negative relationship between employee training and their productivity and quality of work (Wong & Sixl-Daniell, 2017). This means that intensive employee training negatively affects the performance of current work responsibilities. Thus, when drawing up a training program, employers are forced to strike a balance between training and the current work tasks of the employee. Not all corporate training systems meet this requirement: as the researchers note, in the future, employees with a "high success rate in e-Learning" should show improvement in productivity and quality of work, as well as reduce staff turnover. However, as the researchers indicate, some survey participants expressed the opinion that the current work environment in their company is not suitable for e-Learning and they have to spend additional time studying electronic learning tools, which causes inconvenience and stress, and ultimately affects the work (Novikov, 2019).

4. Forms of Organization of Corporate Training in Companies in the Russian Market

Among the companies represented on the Russian labor market, approximately half of them (51%) invests in staff training regularly and has a dedicated budget for it, a survey of HeadHunter among employers and job seekers, one of the leaders in Internet recruitment in Russia, showed this information in 2017. A third of companies (33%) allocate funds for employee training only when it is necessary (Novikov, 2019). More than two-thirds of companies (69%) organize employee training both with the help of internal resources, and by attracting external providers. Only internal resources are used by 18% of companies, only external ones are used by 10% of companies (Almanac, 2017).

HR specialist or a training manager included in the structure of the HR department is most often responsible for the organization of training. This situation is common in 45% of companies. In 27% of companies there is a corporate

university or personnel training department, in 15% of companies the responsible person is the head of the training employee. In 63% of companies, all employees are trained without exception, in 18% novice specialists are responsible of it, in 25% ordinary specialists are responsible of it, in 21% line managers are responsible of it, in 9% top managers are responsible of it (Sutherland, 2019).

Among the companies that provide their employees with a particular training opportunity, the most popular mechanism for organizing the educational process is regular training based on a specially created program or curriculum, 64% of companies uses this mechanism. In 37% of companies, training is based on several standard courses that the employee selects based on his tasks and interests. In 30% of companies there is a practice of submitting an application for training on any topic necessary for the employee, after which the necessary educational course is selected and organized by the responsible persons. In 28% of companies, the same mechanism operates, but an employee has the right to apply only for training on the subject of his job profile. In 18% of companies, employees have the choice of training from those providers with whom a contract has been concluded (Thottam, 2019).

The most popular way to train employees are business trainings, they are held in 78% of companies (among those who provide employees with the opportunity to learn). Methods comparable in popularity are advanced training courses and briefing on the position (usually conducted among novices). They are conducted in 70% and 69% of companies, respectively. About half of the companies (51%) conduct project seminars and create working groups for training and integrate online courses for employees (49%). A quarter of companies (25%) support programs for personal growth of employees, and the popularity of this method of training decreases over time (Salah, 2016).

The main tasks of motivating employees to learn is to provide opportunities to study during working hours, 55% of employers do it (of those who provide educational opportunities for employees). Almost a third of companies (31%) use intangible remuneration, while the same number make training a prerequisite for including an employee in the personnel reserve. 16% of companies either motivate employees both financially and intangibly, or do not motivate at all. There are almost no companies on the market that would motivate employees only financially (1%) (Niazi, 2011).

The main tasks of training company personnel in the Russian market are to increase the competence of employees (88%), provide new knowledge (81% and increase work efficiency (79%). Other popular tasks that companies set in the process of organizing training are: motivating employees to professional growth (60%), assimilating new employees and retaining valuable personnel (55%), strengthening the corporate culture (54%), informing about the company's products (48%) (Tahir, 2014).

The most popular way to measure success in training an employee is to simply check the results of his work in dynamics, this is done by two thirds of companies (67%) that train their employees. Tests on the basis of training are conducted by 54% of companies, 45% collect feedback from colleagues and managers, 34% monitor the emergence of new employee competencies. A quarter of companies (25%) check the relationship of training and the main key performance indicators of an employee related to his professional activities. Only 16% calculate employee productivity before and after training, and only 13% carry out an objective assessment of competencies. Such an expensive tool for verifying learning outcomes as an assessment center is used by 4% of companies (Khan, 2011). As will be shown below, the assessment of results is the main difficulty that employers face in organizing training, regardless of its format (Akhmetshin, Kuderova, Ryumshin, Gayazova, Romanova & Erzinkyan, 2019).

5. Online Education as a Tool for Staff Training and Its Place in the Russian Labor Market

Online education tool is one of the main components of modern corporate training programs. It allows universalizing access to training programs for employees from various departments or branches and significantly reducing the distance between the employee and training materials, saving company money. The above-mentioned study by employees of Brown Mackie College in Cincinnati and Ashford University in San Diego showed that among the participants in corporate training programs of two large American corporations, 80% of employees study using online tools, 38% do it remotely (Becker, 2015).

Every second company uses the online training of employees in the Russian market, 50% of the surveyed employers said that they combine online and offline approaches to education. In other companies, either only offline education is practiced (21%), or it is not practiced at all (29%) (Walsh & Volini, 2017).

At the same time, online training is far from being the most preferred form of education among applicants, 36% of employees prefer it, while 65% choose traditional advanced training courses. Representatives of creative professions (40%) and young employees without work experience (41%) more often choose an online form of training. Moreover,

the attitude of applicants to corporate education can be described as positive, but optional, 70% of respondents believe that each company should have its own personnel training system, while 96% are ready to work in a company that does not have this system (Elnaga & Imran, 2012).

Most often, online education is chosen as the preferred form by representatives of professions from the field of information technology (51%). Also, the popularity of online education turned out to be above the average level in the following professional areas: medicine and pharmacy, marketing, advertising, public relations, banks, investment leasing, art of entertainment, mass media, purchasing (Mehrdad, Mahdi & Ali, 2009).

The attitude to the features of online training among applicants and employers in general is similar. Both groups of respondents consider the main features of online format to be cost savings, as well as greater accessibility compared to offline forms of training. Applicants and employers equally disagree that online training will replace offline one soon, and that it is a competitor for business trainers within companies. Almost half of applicants and employers believe that online quality education is inferior to offline one. Despite the similarity in the ranking of answers, the attitude of employers towards online learning is more skeptical, employers tend to choose fewer positive statements about online learning and more negative than job seekers (Kum, Cowden & Karod, 2014) (Figure 1).
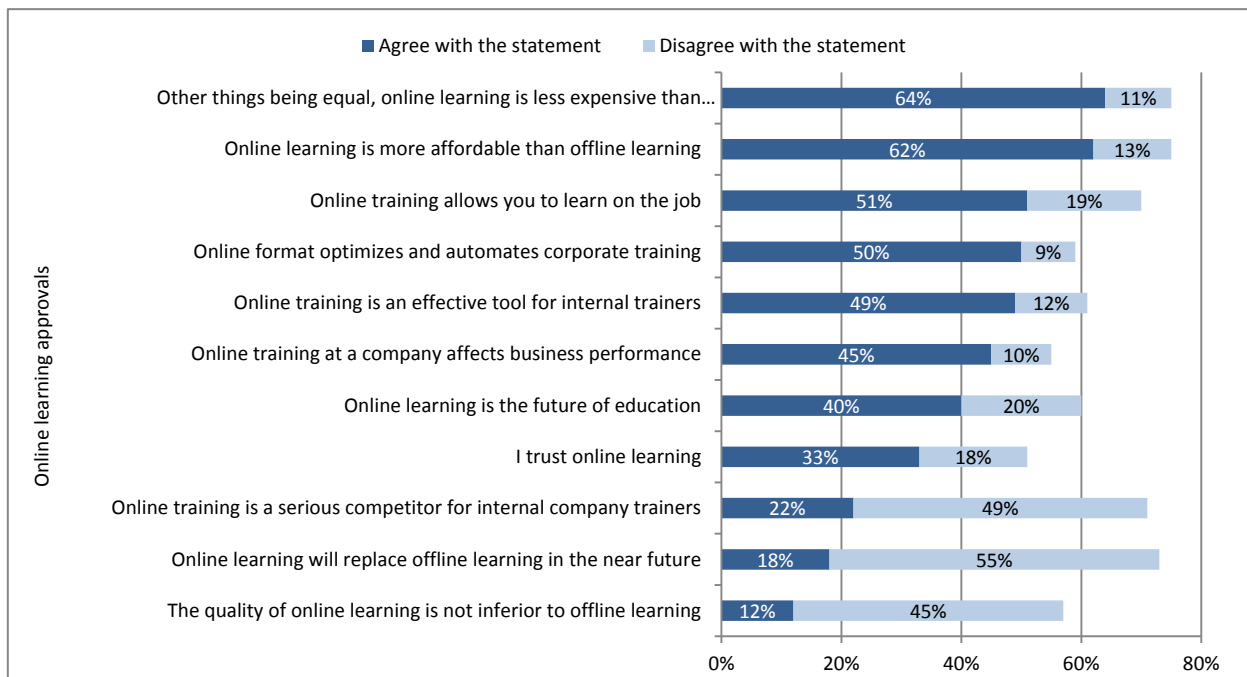

Figure 1. Attitude of employers to online education (Russia, 2018) (Almanac, 2018)

Most applicants for new knowledge agree that the cost of online education is much less than with offline education (69%). The greater availability of online mode is noted by 68% of training participants. A great advantage for employees is the option that online education can be obtained without interruption from the main job (56%). 42% of participants trust modern corporate online learning systems, and 38% consider this form of training as the most progressive and promising. The author notes a noticeable tendency towards the ever-increasing role of e-education, which defeats traditional forms of classes with internal and external teachers and business trainers (Figure 2) (Almanac, 2018).
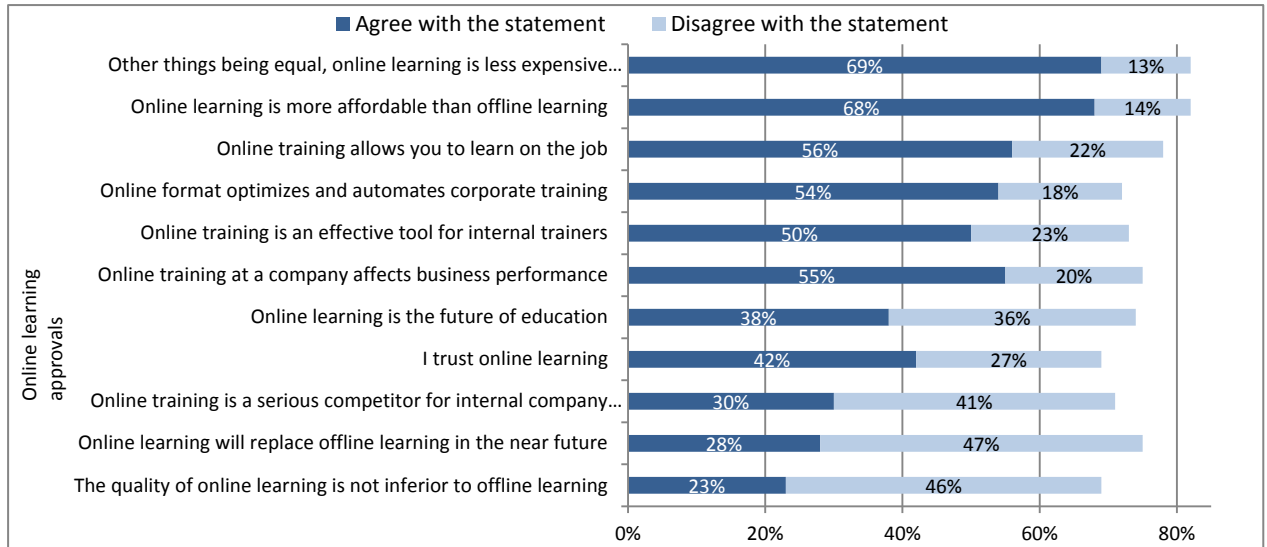
Figure 2. Attitude of applicants to online education (Russia, 2018) (Almanac, 2018)

As it was mentioned above, the main difficulty in organizing corporate online education for companies is the assessment of its effectiveness, 28% of companies face this problem. The same occur in online formats, but in general, online training is easier to organize than offline education. This is especially true for the creation of a training program, here employers are much less likely to experience difficulties using the online format (Fedotova, Tikhonov & Novikov, 2018). The second most important problem is the lack of motivation of trained employees (15% for online training and 16% for offline format). The problem of providing quality online learning is estimated at 15%. In offline learning 19% of participants say that quality is more difficult. As for the creation of a training program, employers are much less likely to experience difficulties using the online format (4%). The approval of new educational offline programs causes much more problems for the organizers (at the level of 13%) (Figure 3, 4) (Almanac, 2018).
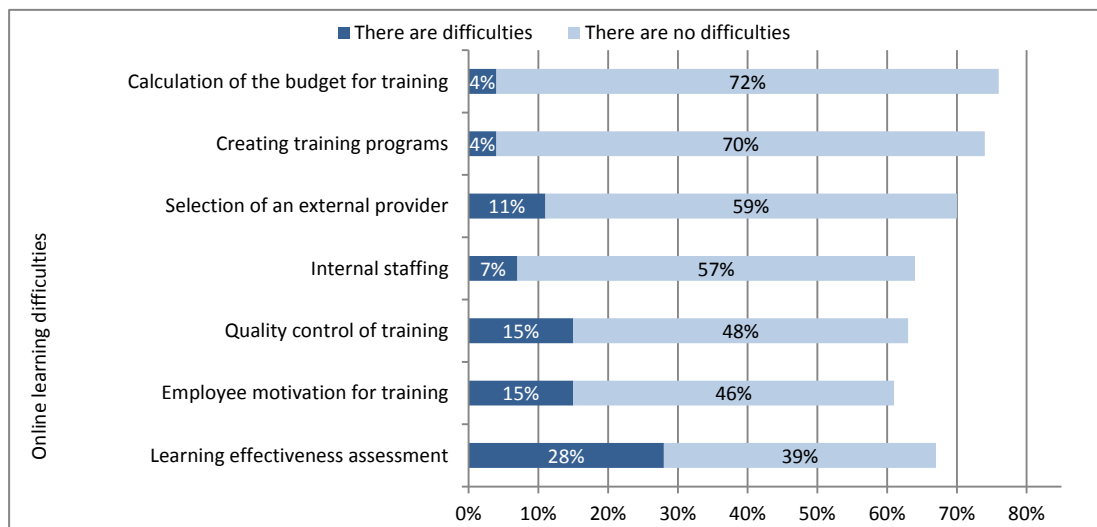
Figure 3. Assessment of employers regarding difficulties in organizing online training (Russia, 2018) (Almanac, 2018)
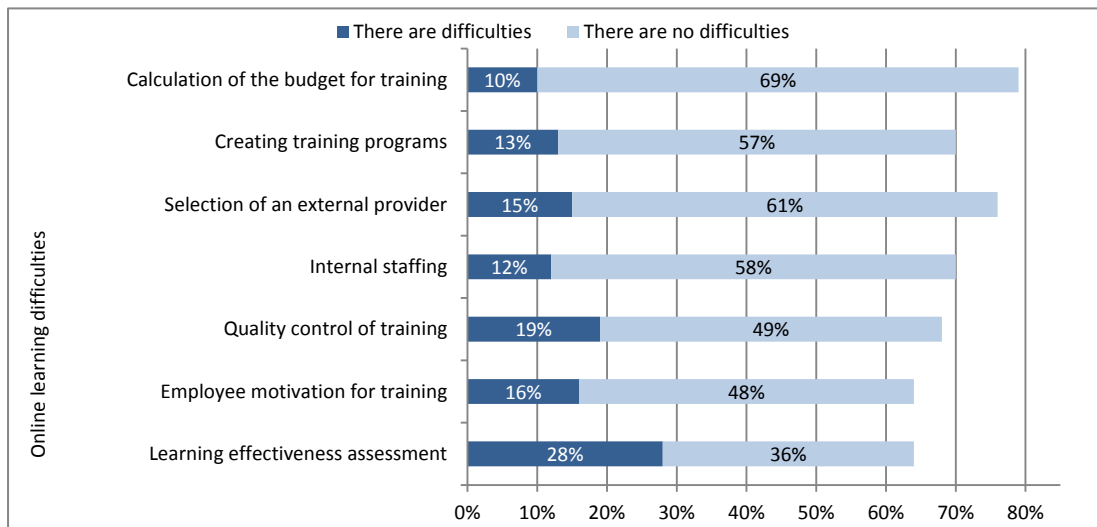
Figure 4. Assessment of employers regarding difficulties in organizing offline training (Russia, 2018) (Almanac, 2018)

According to the degree of satisfaction from the applicants, online training does not stand out relative to other popular formats, if you do not consider continuing education courses.31% of the interviewed applicants consider online training organized by an external company absolutely satisfactory, another 43% are more likely satisfactory (Akhmetshin, Ilyina, Kulibanova & Teor, 2019). The most widespread format of corporate training for applicants recognized advanced training courses in an external instance. This form absolutely satisfies the largest number of trainees (47%). 32% of applicants are satisfied with external internships funded by the employer. Short programs with the invited teacher are the least successful (only 26% approve them) (Figure 5) (Almanac, 2018).
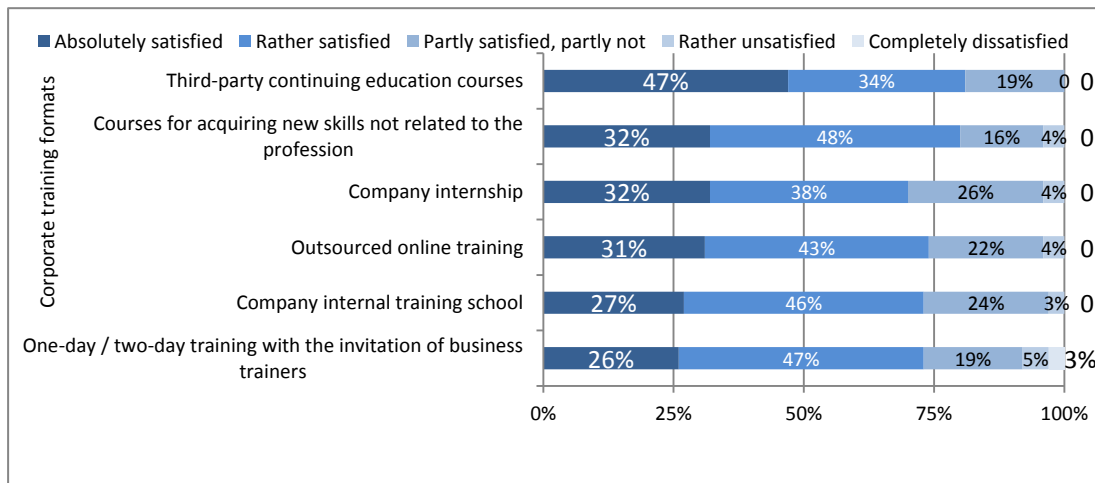

Figure 5. Degree of satisfaction of applicants with various formats of corporate training (Russia, 2018) (Almanac, 2018)

6. Conclusions

Conducted studies show that just investing in a training system by a company may not be enough for a successful outcome. Employers are required to approach the construction of a training system of the staff in a comprehensive manner, creating feedback channels with employees to evaluate learning outcomes, as well as a favorable electronic learning environment in order to maintain a balance between education and work.

It is the assessment of the outcome of training that is the main problem in organizing education within companies in

the Russian market. In Russian realities, the simplest and cheapest methods of assessing the results of staff training prevail. This also applies to mechanisms and methods of employee training (albeit to a lesser extent), the most modern and relevant training tools and mechanisms in the Russian market in the context of current requests are less popular than traditional ones. So, online education and training on applications from employees are not one of the leading forms of organizing and conducting the educational process, although it is they that are best suited to the demands that present to corporate training formats in modern realities.

Thus, there is a certain lag in the Russian market in the process of introducing best practices of corporate training in working with personnel. Employers from the most technologically advanced industries (for example, aviation and space industry), which will be able to close this gap earlier than others, will receive a competitive advantage in the labor market in retaining and growing the most talented employees.

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