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# THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF MANAGERS' PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT WITHIN INTRA-FIRM TRAINING: THE CASE OF UKRAINIAN COMMUNICATION COMPANIES

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**Abstract.** *The article aims the substantiation of theoretical foundations of professional competence development of managers within intra-firm training (on the examples of Ukrainian communication companies). The results of theoretical analysis of the concepts of intra-firm training, “intra-firm training and retraining of personnel”, “intra-firm personnel development”, “intra-firm qualification improvement”, “corporate training”, “corporate development of personnel” are presented; semantic analysis of the concept of “intra-firm training” is performed, its essential characteristics are revealed, the author’s definition of the concepts of “intra-firm training” is proposed. The theoretical foundations (modern theories, scientific concepts, conceptual ideas and provisions) concerning the managers’ professional competence development within intra-firm training is analysed. Among them are the group of theories of professional development (theory of mental development (G. Kostyuk), the concept of professional development of a personality (Y. Povarenkov), theory of professionalism (A. Markova), theory of professional development of a personality (E. Zeer); the group of career development theories (the trait and factor theory of occupational choice (F. Parsons), the theory of career choice (J. Holland), the theory of vocational development (D. Super); the group of theories of organization and organizational behaviour (the theory of organization (L. Gulick) (the POSDCORB theory), the theory of intraorganizational ecology (J. Pfeffer, D. Galunic, K. Eisenhardt); the theory of human capital (G. Becker, J. Mincer, T. Shults). Principles of managers’ professional competence development within intra-firm training based on results of analysis and scientific synthesis of theoretical foundations of such development are substantiated.*

**Key words:** *intra-firm training, managers of communication companies, professional competence, professional development.*

## INTRODUCTION. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The development of professional competence of the personnel of enterprises is of paramount importance for solving the key tasks of socio-economic development in Ukraine. At the enterprise

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level, effective organization of training and personnel development promotes the innovative advancement of enterprises, strengthening of their competitive positions in the market, accelerates adaptation to rapidly changing conditions of business environment. At the level of the national economy, there is an impact on the macroeconomic sustainability of the economy, the development of competition, and the creation of new jobs. In our opinion, the social significance of effective systems of intra-firm training is the formation of values and attitudes of lifelong learning, the growth of the quality of human capital, the innovative culture of society, the implementation of a philosophy of effective professional activity, and the development of client-oriented behaviour of employees.

Currently, the communication and informatization is one of the most priority and strategically important sectors of the Ukrainian economy, which provides strategic interests and needs of state administration, being a powerful source of growth for the economy, ensuring the development of entrepreneurial activity, job creation, and also stimulating an innovative component in the country's social development, as the sustainable development of information and communication infrastructure is an important precondition for entry in the global information and economic space, access to world information resources, and, consequently, improving the conditions and quality of life of the population.

The volume of the telecommunication market is over 46 billion UAH, postal communication market – almost 3 billion UAH. The investigated sectors are attractive for investment, which contributes to increasing competition on it. To date, more than 4000 operators are registered and operate within the Ukrainian market. Along with significant quantitative indicators of the development of this sector in the world (5 billion mobile network connections are recorded, thus the penetration rate is more than 90%; almost 2 billion inhabitants of the planet have permanent access to the Internet; for the period from 2003 to 2009 the level of Internet penetration has doubled) (International Telecommunication Union, 2015a) it is appropriate to emphasize some social transformations that became possible due to the development of communication and information.

In particular, it concerns the spread of the phenomenon of e-government, which promotes transparency of local government activities, democratizes the processes of interaction between authorities and citizens, adapts services to the needs and characteristics of each local community, more efficient allocation of resources, avoidance of corruption, increased transparency, accountability and effectiveness at all levels of management (International Telecommunication Union, 2015b). In addition, the development of information and communication infrastructure contributes to the dynamic integration of Ukraine into the global information, cultural and educational spaces. Thanks to access to world resources in the field of R&D, an accelerated diffusion of innovations takes place, which predetermines innovation activity and technological progress of Ukrainian society.

Significant competition within Ukrainian communication markets highlights the need for operators to find sources of competitive advantage to strengthen their own positions and expand their presence in the market. Under conditions of the similarity of technological and economic factors, the main source of competitive advantages of operators is often within the framework of the business process “Sales of services and customer service”. The indicated business process is realized within the network of sale and service departments. For the successful implementation of sales plans, quality standards of customer service, customers' satisfaction with the quality of service, it is necessary to organize the work flow of sales and service departments to fulfil all of these functions. One of the decisive factors is the level of professional competence of the heads of sales and service departments (managers of communication companies). This category of employees adheres to the principle of quality service, ensures the organization of the sales process, the commitment of sales plans, implementation of training of sales and service personnel, control over their activities,

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advertising activities, promotion of communication services, assessment of customer satisfaction with quality of service, etc. (Borodiyenko, 2017). That is why the key is the design of effective educational systems for the continuous professional development of this category of managers, which in turn updates the need to distinguish the relevant theoretical foundations.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

To study the theoretical foundations of managers' professional competence development within the intra-firm training, we studied the policy documents on the development of continuing vocational education in the EU countries (European Commission, 2002; European Commission, 2010; European Commission, 2012; Federal Institute..., 2017); modern management theories (situational theory of leadership (Fiedler, 1971; Graen, 1970; Orris, 1970; Marletta, 1970), human centred paradigm of business (Capra, 1993; Ray, 1993; Ostenberg, 1993; Collins, 1993; Parras, 1993), theory of organizational culture (Denison, 1990; Shane, 1995); works of Ukrainian and foreign researchers, the subject of scientific research of which were theoretical foundations of professional training and development of personnel (Badaev, 2009; Patutina, 2013; Muhyna, 2017; Neunlyova, 2017; Gerasymov, 2016); the group of theories of professional development (theory of mental development (Kostuyk, 1989); the concept of professional development of personality (Povarenkov, 1999); theory of professionalism (Markova, 1996); theory of professional development of personality (Zeer, 2006); the group of career development theories (the trait and factor theory of occupational choice (Parsons, 1978); the theory of career choice (Holland, 1959); the theory of vocational development (Super, 1957); the group of theories of organization and organizational behaviour (the theory of organization (Gulick, 1937) (the POSDCORB theory, which stands for Planning, Organizing, Staffing, Directing, Coordination, Reporting and Budgeting); the theory of intraorganizational ecology (Preffer, 1982; Galunic, 1994; Eisenhardt, 1994); the theory of human capital (Becker, 1975; Mincer, 1975; Shults, 1961).

## **METHODOLOGY**

The validity of the scientific results was determined by the methods used in the study of theoretical foundations of professional competence development of managers within intra-firm training: at the theoretical level – analytical (in particular, such techniques as analogy, interpolation, grouping, structuring), synthetic (generalization, extrapolation), abstraction (reduction); at the empirical level – observation, study of documents, explicit methods (content – analysis, event analysis, cognitive mapping) etc.

## **MAIN RESULTS**

In management theories (situational theory of leadership (Fiedler, 1971; Graen, 1970; Orris, 1970; Marletta, 1970), human centred paradigm of business (Capra, 1993; Ray, 1993; Ostenberg, 1993; Collins, 1993; Parras, 1993), theory of organizational culture (Denison, 1990; Shane, 1995) is emphasized that, in modern conditions, the competitiveness of enterprises to a lesser extent depends on the uniqueness and quality of products and services; the main source of competitiveness is human capital, in particular its knowledge, motivation, commitment, attitudes towards the company. So modern manager has to perform some uncharacteristic functions that, for example, include: transfer (communication of company's mission, values and strategy at the level of departments and individual level); leadership (when the manager is a better role model for imitation, who supports staff in decomposing the company's strategy into individual KPIs (key performance indicators), creates an environment for continuous development and improvement);

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delegation (delegation of responsibility together with ensuring autonomy in decision-making, support subordinates in setting meaningful goals, ensuring individual responsibility of performers for trusteeship, providing feedback to them); management of staff performance (delegation of role functions (which match the competence of staff) and responsibility; assessment of time and resources needed to carry out operations; discussion of performance indicators, progress in achievement key goals; regular feedback and coaching of staff; support for innovative and risky decisions); trust building (transparency of communications and decision making; creation of a business environment and interaction without condemnation and obstruction; ensuring the necessary level of transparency and confidentiality of information); decisions making (identifying key factors that influence the situation; collecting and analysing relevant information before making a decision; a comprehensive analysis of the consequences of the decision) (Dassanayake, Hori, 2015; Borodiyenko, 2017).

Theoretical analysis of the concepts of “intra-firm training”, “intra-firm training and retraining of personnel”, “intra-firm personnel development”, “intra-firm qualification improvement”, “corporate training”, “corporate development of personnel” (Badaev, 2009; Patutina, 2013; Muhyna, 2017; Neunylova, 2017; Gerasymov, 2016) makes it possible to draw the following conclusions: the concept of “intra-firm training” is the most often used to describe the phenomenon of “training, retraining and qualification improvement of personnel of enterprises”; semantic analysis of the concept of “intra-firm training” in the works of Ukrainian and foreign researchers makes it possible to determine its intrinsic features (covers all categories of company’s staff and all forms of training (training, retraining, advanced training), provides development of specialized skills (corresponding to strategic goals and business processes of the enterprise); is a continuous process aimed at eliminating the discrepancy between the current and desired levels of personnel professional competence; theoretical analysis and scientific synthesis make it possible to design an author’s definition of the concept of “intra-firm training” for personnel: “the process of the advanced continuous elimination of the discrepancy between the current level of development of professional competence of employees and the requirements of the enterprise, which provides the development of personnel specialized knowledge and skills that meet the peculiarities of business processes and provide highly performance professional activity”.

An unconditional scientific interest is an analysis of modern theories, scientific concepts, conceptual ideas and provisions concerning the development of professional competence of the investigated category of managers.

The results of the study of policy documents on the development of continuing vocational education in the EU countries (European Commission, 2002; European Commission, 2010; European Commission, 2012; Federal Institute..., 2017) make it possible to define conceptual ideas for the development of professional competence of managers within intra-firm training: the target orientation of the pedagogical system should ensure the implementation of the general objectives of professional activities – sales of communication services and customer service; the development of professional competence should focus on the development of its components, as well as on the development of professionally important personal qualities and values; in the process of designing the content its worth to take into account the principle of contextuality; to ensure a high level of adaptability of training programs, the possibilities of duplication of knowledge and experience to the individual level; to use the forms and methods of remote interaction (including ICT); substantiation of criteria and indicators of evaluation of levels of development of components of professional competence, as well as appropriate diagnostic tools for its measurement. In addition, the theory of continuous education, the theory of adult education, the theoretical and methodological foundations of professional pedagogy, as well as the theory and practice of learning based on productive activity (work-based learning), are fundamental to solving the scientific problem of professional competence development of the category of managers under study. It is

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also expedient to analyse modern theories of personality development, in particular the theories of professional development.

In the theory of mental development, which has developed by outstanding Ukrainian scientist G. Kostyuk, features of the influence of external and internal factors, in particular pedagogical influences, were revealed. The external and internal conditions of mental development were considered on the basis of materialist dialectics as opposites, which, however, have a close connection and pass into one another. The scientist believed that knowledge, skills, value orientations, which are acquired by the subject, become the basis for its further development and determine the parameters of perception of further external influences. In his view, the psychological development of the individual depends not only on the pedagogical influences, since they are only part of the influences of the environment. The action of external influences is mediated by the present level of development (which is derived from the previous influences and the state of the “material substrate of the psyche”, the degree of maturity and efficiency of the nervous system). In addition, mental development is not limited by the assimilated from the outside, it covers its further processing. Consequently, G. Kostyuk considered inherent contradictions of the subject as the determinant of the person’s mental development, as “the differences between the new needs and aspirations of the subject and the present level of mastering by means of their satisfaction; between the level of development reached by the subject and the functions that he has to perform; between tendencies to inertia, constancy, on the one hand, and to mobility, change – on the other” (Kostyuk, 1989).

The group of theories of professional development of the person was enriched with the concept of professional development of personality (Povarenkov, 1999), the main ideas of which are: professional development of the individual – is the process of structural and dynamic development of the subject, which leads to formation of professionally oriented substructures and professionally important qualities that correspond to the form of professional activity of the individual, social and professional requirements and opportunities and aspirations of the individual; the level of professional development of personality is characterized by indicators of productivity, identity and maturity; the process of professional development of the personality is characterized by stages, periods and phases, the content of which is determined by the peculiarities of the social situation of professional development, the leading forms of professional activity, a set of professionally important qualities and specific types of new professional substructures; professional development of the personality is characterized by unevenness and heterogeneity (different stages of development of various substructures of the individual, different speed and depth of their transformations, discrepancy of the dynamics of changes and the criteria of professionalism).

The results of the analysis of the concept of professional development of a personality (Povarenkov, 1999) give an opportunity to enrich our concept with such ideas: the process of professional development of managers should be comprehensive and aimed not only at the development of professionally oriented substructures of the individual, but also on the development of professionally significant qualities; the process of professional development should be based on the requirements of the enterprise to the level of development of components of professional competence; in the system of development of professional competence of managers, both external regulatory mechanisms (specific organizational and pedagogical conditions), as well as influences, which determine the level of self-awareness about individual goals of professional development, must be integrated; criteria of professional development should be those that describe the performance of the subject (in particular, the dynamics of the level of its effectiveness in the performance of job functions, which is derived from the pedagogical influence to the subject).

Significant contribution to the theory of professional development of personality was made by A. Markova, who considered the phenomenon of professional psychology, in particular, the psychological criteria and levels of professionalism of the individual, the stages of the formation and development of professionalism, its indicators, age and individual characteristics, as well as factors

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that affect the decline the level of professionalism (Markova, 1996). It was defined components of professionalism: the state of personality's motivational sphere (which motives the individual are driven by, what is the level of significance of professional life, what level of his/her satisfaction with professional activity, how professional activity is integrated into his/her personal goals etc.), and the state of the operational sphere (by which techniques the individual reaches the goals set, which technologies are used, what means – knowledge, thinking operations, abilities – he/she uses). The key motivational factor that leads to a high level of professionalism, is “the spiritual filling of the profession”, the desire to remain in the profession, the person's motivation for high achievements in his/her profession, the desire to develop himself as a professional, a meaningful professional goals, the harmonious passage of all stages of professionalization, the absence of professional deformation in the motivational sphere, the internal loop of professional control (Markova, 1996).

To provide the operating sphere with the aim of achieving a high level of professionalism, it has been proposed to pay attention to the so-called technological support for the spiritual filling of the profession – awareness of the full range of qualities and characteristics of a professional, advanced professional consciousness, real fulfilment of professional duties on the basis of high requirements and standards, reliability and the stability of professional results, self-development of the individual through professional activities, self-compensation of scarce qualities, enrichment of the profession by personal experience, contribution to the development of a professional community, conscious deliberate formation of public interest in the results of the individual's professional activities (Markova, 1996).

The results of the analysis of the theory of professionalism give us the opportunity to conclude that the following principles should be taken into account: professional development of the individual is the result of the integrated purposeful influence on the motivational and operational spheres of professional activity; the self-awareness of the individual about the significance of his own professional activities, the direction and pathway of his own professional development have significant influence on his/her motivational sphere; the presence of corresponding values, skills and experience regarding the purpose of professional development and the performance of professional functions are important; the condition of professional development of the personality is also the creation of the company's culture, values and environment for exchange of professional experience.

At the same time, psychology of professional development of personality E. Zeer considers as regularities of development in the process of vocational education, professional development and fulfilment of professional activity, mechanisms and driving forces of professional formation of the person during the period starting from design of professional intentions to the completion of a professional career (Zeer, 2006). The psychological barriers that give the process of professional development the meaning and determine the professional career are considered as necessary prerequisite for the professional development of the individual. According to E. Zeyer, the absence of such barriers means evolutionary, linear development, which leads to personality stagnation.

The most common psychological barriers (defined as “a psychological state that manifests itself in inappropriate passivity of a person and prevents him from performing actions” (Soczka, 2013) are: contextual (when “there are discrepancies in the understanding of requirements, orders, and obstacles to their mutual understanding and interaction”) and communicative (“which occurs in the absence of empathy, lack of flexibility of interpersonal social values”) (Soczka, 2013). The results of the analysis of the theory of professional development of personality makes it possible to substantiate that the professional development of the individual must be directed towards the development of knowledge, skills and competencies through the implementation of non-typical, complex functions and tasks in simulated or real job situations. The overcoming of such difficulties (which serve as psychological barriers) gives impetus to conscious and effective professional development.

The theoretical foundation for the development of managers' professional competence

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within intra-firm training can also serve as the so-called career development theories, which are aimed, along with the definition of the factors of choice of the profession, to find out the conditions for high motivation to professional activity. Thus, F. Parsons substantiated the trait and factor theory of occupational choice, according to which the level of motivation for professional activity is influenced by three main groups of factors: a clear individual's understanding of himself, his/her values, abilities, interests, aspirations, resources and restrictions; knowledge of conditions, requirements for professional activity, its advantages, disadvantages, opportunities, prospects of various career pathways; awareness of the causal relationship between the above factors (Parsons, 1978). In our opinion, this theory contains such leading ideas, which are complementary to the research of the scientific problem of managers' professional competence development within intra-firm training: the need to carry out facilitating coaching interaction with managers in order to increase their subjectivity; contextualization of training with a view to in-depth knowledge of the specifics of their professional activities.

In the theory of career choice (Holland, 1959) it has been conceptualized different career models in terms of the types of personality and types of professional environment. Different types of occupational environments are acceptable for different types of personality, which determines the level of its satisfaction with professional activity and, consequently, its effectiveness. Holland regarded the development of a professional career as a consistent change in the stages of interaction in the system of "personality-professional environment", which are caused by factors of essential action. We believe that the theory of career choice can be productive for the development of the theoretical foundations for the development of managers' professional competence within intra-firm training in the context of the implementation of individualized approaches to this kind of activity, as well as the creation of an appropriate interactive environment to share experience.

In the theory of vocational development (Super, 1957) it is emphasized that phenomena of career development and satisfaction with professional activity are in constant development and depend primarily on professional values, level of maturity, experience of previous professional interactions, inherent role models and previous professional experience. Since the determinant of professional development, according to the scientist, is inherent personal Self-concept, then it is important to appeal in the process of development of professional competence to its values, existing experience, individual characteristics for comparing personal motives and goals of professional activity.

Another group of theories for substantiation of theoretical foundations of managers' professional development are the group of theories of organization and organizational behaviour. So, in the theory of organization (Gulick, 1937) (the POSDCORB Theory, which stands for Planning, Organizing, Staffing, Directing, Coordination, Reporting and Budgeting), the following ideas are fundamental: the foundation of organization is the division of labour between its employees, their (employees) nature (differences in potential, competencies), time and environment; management of an organization can be carried out in two ways – organizational way (by creating interaction between structural subdivisions and giving certain persons the power and function of management) and by consolidation around a particular idea (unifying for a team may be existence of a common purpose and motivation to achieve it); the main functions performed by the manager are planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordination, reporting and budgeting.

In the theory of intraorganizational ecology (Preffer, 1982; Galunic 1994; Eisenhardt, 1994) an organization is seen as an organism that is constantly changing, moving from the state of its equilibrium to the state of imbalance under the influence of external circumstances. That is why scientists consider an organization's ability to adapt as the main factor of its effectiveness. In the contingency theory of organizations (SARFIT) (Donaldson, 2001) it is considered processes of organization transitioning from a state of structural equilibrium, which enables to demonstrate high performance, generate growth, deepen innovation, and diversify activities, to the state of the

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imbalance that is called external factors. In the process of adaptation to changes, the organization is in a state of equilibrium for a short period, and the state of imbalance requires the change of the existing structure, reorganization of business processes, changes in the paradigm of the organization's development.

The results of the analysis of the group of theories of organization and organizational behaviour make it possible to highlight key ideas that are complementary to our research: in the structure of managers' professional competence, it is necessary to identify the components that will enable to effectively perform the functions of management of the structural subdivision; the content of training has to include modules and themes that will enable to create a knowledge base for the effective performance of management functions; forms and methods of professional competence development should provide the possibility to guarantee the effective development of skills which enable the commitment of key managerial functions; the development of professional competence should be considered as a business process, one of the characteristics of which should be adaptability, therefore, the corresponding pedagogical system should ensure the specified attribute.

In the theory of human capital (Becker, 1975; Mincer, 1975; Shultz, 1961), the potential of personnel for professional development is considered as a resource that can be compared with the resources through which the enterprise functions (funds, financial resources, etc.). Investing in the development of human capital contributes to increased productivity at the individual level and at the organization level; consequently, the constant development of professional competence of personnel through training is a factor not only in improving its (staff) performance, but also in the high loyalty of staff to the organization. Considering the economic component of investing in the development of human capital, G. Becker suggests that at the organizational level, it makes sense only if the competence, specific to such an organization is improved. On the other hand, at an individual level, it is expedient to invest in the development of more general competencies that will create opportunities for career advancement and higher compensation (Becker, 1975). An alternative is the assertion that investing is needed in the development of those components of professional competence that influence directly the creation of profits of the organization (Toffler, 1985). In our opinion, key ideas that are appropriate to incorporate into the concept of managers' professional competence development are: the need for complex development of specific components of professional competence; the identification and purposeful development of those components of managers' professional competence which directly affect the performance of their activities and generate profits.

## CONCLUSIONS

The results of the analysis of the theoretical foundations (theories of professional development, career development theories, theories of organization and organizational behaviour, theory of human capital) makes it possible to state that the main principles of managers' professional competence development within intra-firm training are polyfunctionality, continuity of training and the creation of an "environment of interaction", ensuring the effectiveness of the implementation of functional responsibilities, innovation, diversification of enterprise policy in the field of personnel development, the use of the model of competencies for design the system of managers' professional competence development, the systemic development of professional competence, development of leadership skills. Instead, the systems of development of professional competence of the analysed category of managers in the Ukrainian communication companies are inherent in the principles of diversification of forms and methods of pedagogical influence, duplication of experience within the enterprise, compliance of the strategy of managers' professional competence development and the actual strategy of the enterprise. The results of the scientific analysis of the theoretical foundations make it possible to state that one of the conditions for

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design an effective pedagogical system for managers' professional competence development should be the implementation of such principles as systematic, complex, scientific, contextual, continuity, integration, value orientation, multiplication of experience, self-development, multifunctionality, diversification, performance.

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