

## **The impact of building skills: effects of investing in training and life-long learning on successful business performance**

### **L'impact de la construction des compétences par la formation et l'apprentissage sur la performance de l'entreprise**

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**Abstract :**

The concept of competencies, which has been imposed during the last few years in the field of human resources management, is considered by numerous researchers as being the adequate response for many unanswered questions within the corporations by both employers and employees, within an economic context that is continuously changing.

In this context, skills acquisition and development do represent a major challenge for the employers and employees, both of which have a mutual interest in investing themselves in an approach of learning and long-life training in order to develop and improve their competence base. The corporation does have a huge role in improving the process of skills development, however, the issue that arises is how will it do so?

The main purpose of this study is to demonstrate the best way possible for the corporates to develop their employees' individual skills.

**Keywords :** Skill, training, performance, learning, competitive corporation.

**Résumé**

La notion de compétence qui s'est imposée ces dernières années dans le champ de la gestion des ressources humaines est considérée par de nombreux chercheurs comme étant la réponse adéquate aux questions posées par l'entreprise, et les salariés entre autres, dans un contexte économique en mutation.

Dans ce contexte, l'acquisition et le développement des compétences représentent un enjeu majeur pour l'entreprise, et également pour le salarié, qui ont un intérêt commun à s'investir dans des démarches de formation et d'apprentissage afin de développer leurs patrimoines de compétences. Même si l'entreprise a un rôle très important à jouer dans le processus de développement des compétences, il reste à s'interroger sur la façon dont elle peut s'y prendre. L'objectif de ce travail est de montrer la manière avec laquelle les compétences individuelles sont développées au sein de l'entreprise.

**Mots clés :** Compétence, formation, performance, apprentissage, entreprise compétitive.

## Introduction

Over the past two to three decades, there has been a great deal of work on the concept of competence and it is widely open to the disciplinary proliferation of the human and social sciences. Despite this fragmentation, we can bring together a few invariants of the concept, which we will recall by referring to it using two dimensions, the internal and the external dimension of competence.

Competence is at the heart of multiple theoretical approaches. Its definitions are numerous, and we will essentially focus on four of them, from fields ranging from sociology to cognitive psychology. We simply state that, despite changes in scales of analysis that reveal new dimensions (DESJEUX D., 2004), it is possible to bring together the invariant dimensions of competence. Competence is often defined as a quality attached to the individual who acts effectively, i.e. when he achieves the expected performance: "Operators capable of good or very good performance are considered highly competent" (RABARDEL P., SIX B., 1995). Expressed with this degree of generality, this relative obviousness would moreover mean that it is indeed easier to recognize incompetence than competence. The specific aim pursued is to give.

A definition relevant to the notion of competence, to elucidate the concept of developing skills for the company as well as for the employees, and finally to know "What is the impact of training and learning on competence development? »

This Article begins with the concept of competence, then with the development of these competences through training and learning and, concludes with its impact on the performance of the company.

## 1. The concept of competence

Observation of company practices in terms of the definition and use of the concept of competence gives an impression of great heterogeneity. This can be easily seen in the different definitions of competence as well as in the highly differentiated purposes. In other words, the introduction and subsequent development of this concept in companies has not been accompanied by any convergence of practices. Many studies have reported that there is a fairly wide variety of methods of operationalizing competence. This diversity is largely explained by the major concern of companies seeking the answer to a quite simple question: "how to define competence? ». Hence, companies are trying to work out a compromise, which implies that different economic players agree on an understanding that everyone can share, employees, their representatives, managers and executives. The notion of competence then takes on a precise meaning for the players because everyone has been able to appropriate it.

### 1.1 Notion of competence and its levels

The terminological distinction between competency management and competency-based management can be further clarified by considering how the notion of competency fits into the management of the company. Such an incorporation would be even stronger as there is a closer interdependence between practices conducted for the benefit of competence and other management practices. The way in which several practices are coordinated through the notion of competence can be expressed in different ways.

We are therefore led to distinguish levels and types of integration:

Integration within the human resources function: discussing integration within the human resources function, is to consider the link, via the notion of competence, between various human resources management processes, particularly its key processes (recruitment, integration, compensation, career, etc.).

Peripheral integration: A central public administration has set up skills reference system that has been meticulously drawn up with the help of a faculty-researcher, a specialist in evaluation methods, in order to serve as a support for annual assessment reports conducted by the management team. This approach has no direct impact on HRM processes. However, it does facilitate the expression of training needs, the satisfaction of which promotes adaptation to the position and its requirements.

Partial integration at the GRFI: The concept of competence was introduced to allow mobility within work groups through the development of versatility. The employee is no longer paid

according to the position he or she occupies on the chain, but on the basis of his or her versatility, i.e. the number of positions he or she is capable of holding on the chain. Competence is taken into account in a very global way, it has not suppressed the existence of "positions" in the organisation and structuring of human resources management. The logic of competence is combined with the logic of position. Pursuant to a joint agreement of 14 May 1992, social security bodies may now adjust the remuneration of employees at the same classification level according to the increase at an individual skills level.

Integration between several functions of the company: If the integration of the concept of competence can be considered from an internal point of view of HRM, it can also be considered in the correspondence between the management of human resources and other functions of the company (strategy, work organization, etc.).

## 2. the issues of jurisdiction over companies

If the practices commonly expressed through the term "skills management" refer to various areas of HRM, it is also because they are a way for companies to respond to major challenges.

### 2.2. The requirements of economic performance

It has become commonplace to recall that the past two decades, under the impact of profound changes in global economic conditions, have marked an important shift in the conditions for economic performance. In other words, the acceleration of trade and the changes in the terms of competition, which are increasingly focused on the quality and variety of products, are now reflected in changes in the corporate strategies. The place given to "human resources" in the definition and implementation of these strategies is also tending to change.

### 2.3. The challenge of professional adaptability

Correlatively to the question of individual and collective performance, the question of professional adaptation arises: in a rapidly changing environment, the issue is how to ensure that employees are ready at all times to respond to challenging requirements that are, more over, often unexpected. The scale of economic changes and production conditions, against the backdrop of the employment crisis in the 1990s, have made the adaptability of people to constantly changing jobs one of the major challenges for companies. Today, the return of sustained growth is a reminder, if one were needed, of just how pervasive this concern is and how it goes beyond a simple economic framework. However, the issue is not an unknown fact. There is a recurrent debate on the relationship between the "educational apparatus" and the "productive apparatus". At the level of companies, as seen before, the first experiments in skills management appeared in the 1980s and were already in line with this concern: the aim

was to develop mechanisms enabling enterprises to have the necessary manpower at their disposal at the right time. More specifically, the aim was to define the characteristics that the workforce should have within a given timeframe. Initially, companies tried to predict what their needs would be in terms of activity or, to use strategic terminology, in terms of product/market pair, in order to deduce future jobs and put them into perspective with the characteristics of individuals. The work of the human resources manager then consisted in considering all the measures necessary to match needs with resources.

### **3. Concepts and main forms of skills development**

Skills development can take place through various means, through professional training, but also through conferences, coaching, professional forums, trade fairs, formal or informal events and in all situations conducive to the exchange of good practice.

Skills development is an important topic for all professionals, but also for unemployed person who wish to broaden their field of opportunities. It is also strategic for companies and organizations seeking to capitalize on their internal knowledge and optimize their overall performance.

By investing in skills development, partly through its training plan, the company increases its efficiency and the motivation of its employees. Thus, by focusing on the individual, the collective is positively impacted.

#### **3.1. Skills development and career management**

Skills development and career management are not separate, and build a single activity, because mobility decisions are not only about the individual's ability to fulfil a completely new function, but also about enabling him or her to gain experience in order to develop skills considered necessary.

It is no coincidence that the concept of development has replaced that of training. Competency management requires training plans and is based on the principle of mobility of the individual throughout his or her career. This mobility enables him or her to acquire and benefit from this experience, and therefore to develop his or her skills. From this point of view, the development of skills requires a renewal of attitudes towards the role, modalities and means of training.

#### **3.2. Skills development and learning**

J. Brraud, P. Kittel, M. Moule (2000), were able to establish a scheme for the acquisition of skills, based on the general scheme of D. Camusso's learning process. It is quite necessary to face a complex situation, which has not been faced before, and which is conducive to the

implementation of the competence, The individual must possess quite a few resources, which are knowledge, expertise..., to help him/her face the situation encountered, It is necessary to have sufficient cognitive capacity to combine the different resources, and consequently produce a competence.

### **3.3. Skills development and training**

Training is also positioned as a powerful lever in the company's overall strategy. It is closely involved in R&T. Staff training enables companies to increase the skills and productivity of their workforce while improving the quality of their products and services. In order to master the skills required to carry out the activity, it is a requirement for improving the quality of work as it increases the qualifications of employees and ensures competitiveness. "Training plays an active part in the production of the skills needed in the work activity. " Jean Clenet.

## **4. Improving the company's performance in terms of skills management**

### **4.1 The foundations of the notion of performance**

The survival and development of companies has always been the major concern of managers. To this end, they have adopted several strategies and used different resources. Because HR can give a competitive advantage to the company and contribute to the creation of shareholder value. To this end, it is now recognized that the employee plays a central role in the development of the company and that HRM practices are evolving, particularly in the areas of knowledge and skills management. As a result, in order to answer the question "how to understand and apprehend the relationship between HRM and performance or rather competence and performance?" the authors postulate that ILRM plays an important role, not only because it allows the management of skills but also of knowledge and promotes managerial innovations that are in favor of developing the company. Among these resources are the skills that are a major asset in maintaining the company's positioning.

For their part, Bayad, 2001 considers that the competitiveness of organizations can be explained by the IUi competencies.

### **4.2. Skills management as a lever for business performance**

The relationship between competence and performance is not always clear, especially when the process is too complex. Cavestro and Sonzogni (1999, p.77) point out that "competence requires the evaluation of individual performance or aptitudes, particularly on the basis of cross-cutting references to professions". Performance consists of achieving a predefined result. However, competency management approaches do not directly address the result. They only take into account the knowledge, know-how and interpersonal skills which are, in fact,

the resources used to obtain the result. They are, moreover, centred on the individual because performance consists into achieving well-defined outcomes.

### **5. Methods of assessing competence and performance**

The evaluation would be based on the notion of interactional representation between two actors, a kind of staging in the theatrical order, with the HR decision-making processes being upstream of this perspective. This interactive staging could have different realities.

It could take the form of an interview where the formal would have its place and courtesy would preside over the exchanges, knowing that reality would be managed elsewhere (career development, salary, training, etc.). The interview would therefore be overdetermined by the will of both parties: one of the actors (the assessor) by the different forms of constraints (budgetary, quota, etc.), the other (the person being assessed) by the stakes and the existence of a potential deep disagreement that could jeopardise the employment relationship.

### **Conclusion**

The development of skills has nothing to do with the development of qualification, because if the development of qualification is done through training, training alone is insufficient to develop professional skills "Training has neither the exclusivity nor the monopoly of the production of skills". (Mébarki, 2002, p229) but it can nevertheless participate or contribute to this construction.

Training can fully contribute to the construction of skills and the development of professionalism. In this sense, initial or vocational training can play an important role as long as it can enable individuals to possess the brainpower, and it is up to them to develop it throughout their career paths, "people, first of all, have a qualification and then, in addition, they have a skill that can be experienced in the company" (Mébarki, 2002, p229). (Reynaud, 2001, p8).

Thus, the training will aim to develop intermediate skills and it will be up to individuals to take care (without neglecting the role of the environment), to develop skills in work situations (professional skills). The development of skills is not done before entering the world of work, nor at the same time, but directly through professional activity.



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