**BUCHAREST UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMIC STUDIES**

**DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION**



**CONTRIBUTION TO THE ROLE OF MENTORING AND DIGITIZATION AS AN INTEGRATED PROCESS TO ENHANCING THE ACTIVITY OF HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENTS IN BUSINESS**

**PHD THESIS SUMMARY**

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The doctoral thesis entitled "*Contribution to the role of mentoring and digitization as an integrated process to enhancing the activity of human resources departments in business*", authored by Majid Hamid Hazim Majid, represents the scientific quintessence of a doctoral internship carried out at the Academy of Economic Studies in Bucharest, in within the Doctoral School of Business Administration. From the very beginning, the topic proved to be of great interest for the nowadays market and society as the Covid-19 pandemic created favourable conditions for a large size technological-organizational changes of which companies, no matter their size, type of property or sector of activity, are in high need to implement to make the leap to economy 4.0 and get its advantages.

The modern economy and society is worldwide, in a process of fundamental transformations in the conduct of activity within all economic sectors with multiple and complex resonances.

The human resources sector, the guarantor and administrator of the most important economic-social asset - *human capital*, was not left out. Here, the transformations had, perhaps, the greatest influence, the sector assuming, sometimes even unknowingly, the biggest pretences bringing consequences and mutations related to both the institutional activity and that of the staff. Thus, the theoretical or applied training through anachronistic methods, imposed a new approach, based on effective skills and not scripturally proven, on substantiated and validated knowledge, on natural practical, on qualifications supported by official documents but also attested in practice, on skills, judgments and multiple skills, or vocational or scientific-applicative capacities promoting transformations in the work sphere.

**As recorded in the UNESCO and also in the European Commission recent reports**, this principle implemented in the systems of professional education, advanced training and retraining of specialists focuses, today, the processes of training and development of skills to work in an environment characterized by a "*constant change in economic and social conditions*".

Changes in the forms of organization, conditions and content of the labour force, methods of personnel management have led to cascading revisions of the traditional concept of professional qualification. The UNESCO Report of 2020 mentions that: increasingly there are statements from entrepreneurs who find that, from their point of view, there is no longer a need for "*qualifications, associated with the ability to carry out certain operations of a material nature*", but of "*competencies, defined as a cocktail of abilities characteristic of each individual that combine qualifications in the strict sense of the word... social behaviour, ability to work in a group, initiative and willingness to take risks*". Thus, the competence-based approach becomes the basis that allows the development of a system capable of combining business requirements, staff work and the tasks of modern education.

The spread and popularity of the new approach, based on skills, is due to several objective reasons, the main of which is the change in the sphere of production. In connection with the acceleration of innovative processes, training becomes part of the business process.

The economic rise of large corporations and the development of their training imposed new, innovative requirements on the entire economic and production process and generated fundamental changes in the portfolio of requirements for the general training of labour resources, for the education and training system as a whole.

Now, under the new demographic conditions of increasing life expectancy, by accelerating scientific and technical progress, the seeds of the self-development process are being strengthened and the need for lifelong education is becoming popular all over the world, not just in Europe. Along with them, the learning process diversifies, informal and non-formal learning presents special advantages and importance.

The skills’ assessment systems appear that become processes independent of how they are acquired; their value is formalized and reflected in personal skills cards and in the European system of their accreditation. At the national level, new educational resources are being developed to calibrate, evaluate and standardize different types of education.

Modern proficiency assessment systems are guided not only by the level and quality of education but also based on assessments of life experience, learning skills and self-education. In the context of globalization and labour mobility, it becomes necessary to use generally accepted reference criteria, criteria for professional competence levels, elaborated in large details within the European Employment Strategy. According to it, the aim of the European Union is to achieve intelligent growth (the development of knowledge through innovation); sustainable (by implementing the principles and tools characteristic of the circular bio-economy and ecology; efficient and competitive and inclusive (from the perspective of the efficient use of all types of resources; inclusive based on strengthening the employment of human capital and social and territorial cohesion. Thus, the approach based on skills becomes a reflection of changes in the nature and content of the workforce, in vocational training and in education. Its development is extremely important to combine education and training, to link them to the needs of the labour market and to ensure the mobility of the workforce. Here, we take into account not only the vertical mobility associated with career growth, but also the horizontal mobility, which allows and ensures the rotation between the sectors of the economy, within the limits of a state and at the same time on the entire world labour market.

In this regard, the present doctoral thesis entitled "*Contributions regarding the role of mentoring and digitalization as an integrated process of strengthening the activity of human resources departments in the business environment*" analyzes the basic concepts and principles of the competency-based approach, the main stages of training and development, as well as the high-performance development methods applied in personnel management and the strengthening of performance via competences. The doctoral thesis comprises two parts consisting of three chapters each, structured in sub-chapters, namely:

1. The current state of knowledge in the specialized literature of the studied socio-economic concepts and phenomena analyzes the stages of formation and evolution of the approach to the success and profit of companies organized on specific capabilities and authority knowledge and also reveals the basic concepts of competence and performance, respectively and

2. Multidimensional contributions regarding the relationship between specialized skills and performance in which the focus falls on the development of a model of skills harmonized with the requirements of the quaternary sector (4.0).

Regarding the state of knowledge in the chosen research field, it can be seen that, in recent years, human resources activity has undergone a significant leap, from a transactional role to a transformative role, with a contribution of substantial strategic value to any of the companies considered in analysis. Going along the path of this evolution, the use of technology imposes an ever more important contribution.

The evolution of the development of any business has shown that each of the stages of scientific, technological and industrial development has, nowadays, reached a turning point through the leap of knowledge that has been reached. Technology is already removing, in time and space, the burden of routine processes from HR teams. Digitization and automation visibly drive performance and replace existing skill sets at increased speed.

HR professionals are aware of the need for transformation and the development of new skills to facilitate adaptation to the new occupational landscape. This fact motivated me to choose this theme. By studying the latest business, human resources, behavioural, and psychology literature, I haven’t only identified the importance of mentoring employees, but also included in the analysis over 90 studies examining the relationship between mentoring and work- or career-related outcomes.

Mentoring relationships, developed at the beginning, under an informal and group aspect, acquire extensive evolutions and acquire characteristics specific to certain fields of activity. Arranged or facilitated by various intermediaries and not just mentors or protégés, they are beginning to be implemented at the organizational level to promote important goals, performance, socialization or retention activities, and employee success.

There is a significant self-service aspect for the modern human resources (HR) activity, as well as for current and potential employees, namely the ability to manage the entire professional life, through online services that provide a higher and more complex level of satisfaction and productivity. For HR and business leaders, modern HR, aided by intelligent cloud-based tools, provides a more comprehensive picture of the employment lifecycle and helps bring together past knowledge and business work practice.

The development of this field comes with masterful changes bringing value, better working and living conditions. Recognizing the need to modernize activities and facilitating the decision-making act to acknowledge the need for change, to accept and appropriate it in work and everyday life, to implement it in current activity. Change involves: ♠ recognizing the need for additional knowledge, ♠ the desire to learn more about everything that is happening to oneself and society, ♠ recognizing opportunities as performance facilitators, ♠ accepting change and its role as a driver in future development.

Awareness of all these elements and processes allows knowing the need for learning and increasing control over one's goals, decisions and results. If they are positive, the changes, regardless of their size, come with the change, impose new responsibilities and open the windows of opportunities that will improve the conditions for fulfilling the obligations in society, the responsibilities within the community of which everyone is a part.

The approach is holistic even if it seems individual; it represents a commitment and a responsibility assumed permanently and over which everyone can exercise their control, with consequences also on the others, but above all, on the institutional value.

Paradoxically, in the current period, defined by uncertainties, insecurity and hesitations, different types of brakes appear in the way of knowledge and development, and with them new tools, new types of technologies that, when implemented, allow and even accelerate change better overall.

Acceptance of the idea of education regardless of its type, of dialogue and communication, together with the desire to build honest collaborations with society, offers the guarantee of a resilient future.

With information and communication technology always at hand, many believe that communication education and learning services are no longer useful. Thus, achievements that international society brings to science are ignored. Thus, some give up education by narrowing the flow of knowledge or confusing it with the high use of certain skills acquired informally and permanently used to the detriment of the work process. These also happen because it’s easier to pretend to work and just ask than to overcome you with every task you receive and contribute to progress. From this perspective, dilemmas of an ethical or moral nature are no longer linked to the resilient development of society.

The acceptance at the level of practical life of the need for new strategies related to the modernization of professional activity and the modernization of its monitoring, their assumption and implementation has become, at the present time, a major problem for society, for its political decision-makers, for the business environment and for all the actors involved.

The need for such strategies to cover the gap left by the non-utilization of modern technological means proves the acute need for conscious involvement, for continuous and sustained multidimensional education, of all segments of the active population with or without a decision-making role in all sectors of the economy.

This is the point where the present work takes shape as interest and necessity, through amplitude and complexity, through the dynamics of the analytical presentation and through the examples provided from the real world.

The PhD thesis gains substance through its focus on identifying weaknesses, clarifying the elements left in the fog and hindering information resilience and digital implementation that could support, where it exists, the institutional-political determination needed by the transition and mainstreaming of effective environmental modernization social and economic.

The analysis of specialized literature facilitates the presentation of the state of knowledge of the concepts of competence and performance, allows the establishment of connections with the field of education, mentoring and digitization and opens the way to use the new opportunities identified.

Before becoming a sustainable business model, the studied elements are used to create a theoretical model of a practical guide type, applicable as an institutional strategy.

Beyond the chronological foray into the scientific value of the concept, the influence of education on activities and behaviours at work, the importance of knowing attitudes and interactions, the power of using decision-making in awareness and the retention to use new technologies as the most appropriate tools are exposed here for valorisation of business performance and increasing societal resilience.

The internship of documentation holds a praxeological truth – any scientific and technical discovery is worth studying, knowing closely, implemented in practice on a large scale with the aim of bringing real profit.

The objectives assumed in this doctoral thesis are analyzed with the care of becoming fulfilled at the end of the work. Thus, the conclusion is reached that: • HR professionals can also dedicate themselves to other types of activities related not only to business but also to the socio-psychological side and mentoring, which influences the entrepreneurial culture, communication, the use of incentives and offers wide opportunities for improvement through educational programs and employee support; • the range of personal HR solutions – from cloud services to electronic signature technology – has an immediate impact on performance, increased productivity and overall corporate growth.

In accordance with the fundamental objective of the research, two types of results with specific relevance emerge, obtained from: ♠ documentary-transversal research and ♠ from case studies identified in real life. Both types of results generate reflections and allow a specific model to be offered as an educational tool.

Estimated and final results focus on: • analysis of the transition to the full integration of digital resources and the positive consequences of this transition for providing practical strategic guidance in business; • creating a database (key terms and concepts, case analyses, and publishing partial results in internationally recognized specialized journals; • presenting the partial results of the research study in national or international seminars and conferences. It raises an alarm signal and provides a punctual regulatory solution for improving business activity and restoring job satisfaction to both economic operators and their employees. From this perspective, the thesis doctorate is not only a scientific, doctoral, formal adjunct, related to the fields of education and mentorship, economics and business economic operators as well as their employees.

Conceptually, the doctoral intervention takes into account: a) the evolution of the main development indicators, such as competence and performance, with their less known sides related to their phenomenological-methodological evolution and b) the understanding the intricacies of correct-argumentative implementation for supporting the advantages of using digitization as a fundamental support for resilient socio-economic and societal development.

Each idea is pivoted by the author's conviction, in relation to those studied, by the need not only to identify the true necessary path but also by the certainty that, without a correct and multi-criteria implementation of the need for digitalization, the full *aggregate performance* cannot be achieved. By introducing the idea of ***standardised* *aggregate performance***, the work focuses on identifying the means of understanding as fully as possible the notions related to obtaining the right skills, building through permanent education a structural base of professional training suitable for each job, and putting what has been learned into reality according to real needs and not just some scholastic meanings generated by an education or a precarious adherence to the complexity of concepts and their role in the economic, human, societal mechanism.

From this key, the work represents the effective-innovative contribution of the author as it starts, epistemologically and paradigmatically, from the analysis of the area to be researched and ends with an effective mentoring model that defines not only the path of the field but transforms into a useful, profitable tool and worthy of interest at the operational level from the perspective of mentoring and educational training that underlines the advantages of the widespread implementation of digitization for people, the market and society.

In other words*, human resources (HR)* portrays the core, the heart of any establishment/ organisation// company/ institution, no matter the property, the size, the domain and place of activity. How human resources and related activities are perceived, approached, understood, managed, standardized and mentored is vital to the survival, development and success of any organization in market competitions. In the era of digitization, HR activities and related departments contribute to maintaining the safety and efficiency of any company, sharing part of assets, investments and profits.

Professionals working in the human resources department (HRD) are witnessing a profound transformation in mindset and technological change as the main challenges in the great process of finding the right specialists and keeping the best employees. In the development of research, there are also research studies on how the coming years will influence the top management of companies and the activities of their personnel so that their profit and market share are not diminished or lost.

The phenomenon is worth noting especially that its convergence towards the doctoral thesis conclusion, as a reasoning of what has been studied and argued: the human resources activity will be fully modernized and altogether useful when the phenomenon of digitization will be intertwined with that one of a standardised mentoring for the formation of a DNA of skills and performances.