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METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR TEACHING HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN GASTRONOMY: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF PROJECT ASSUMPTIONS AND OUTCOME

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This article attempts to critically analyse the solutions, methods and tools used in the project entitled 'Methodology of teaching human resource management to current and future catering employees' for the development of students and employees in the field of human resource management.

Need for the study: Drawing attention to employee development, and more specifically to the methods and tools used to teach human resource management issues, is particularly important given the target group identified in the project. The absence of human resource management in curricula seems to be a cognitive gap.

Methodology: The critical analysis used in the project concerns two methods. The first is the project itself, and the second is a set of teaching methods applied directly to employee development.

Findings: The results of the analysis can be used by employee development specialists.

Practical Implications: The results of the analysis may be useful in the selection and use of methods and tools in the employee development process.

Keywords: Human Resources Management, Gastronomy, Project, employee development

Jel codes: M10, B 40, O3

1. INTRODUCTION

The human resource management process provides a basis for various research and design activities undertaken by both theorists and practitioners. The same applies to the individual stages of this process. Regardless of whether one considers human resource planning, employee motivation, periodic employee evaluation, or the process of employee departure, these issues are of great analytical interest to specialists in various fields. The same is true for employee development. Improving professional qualifications is a controversial issue for both employers and employees. The former – employees – generally expect their employers to systematically improve their professional qualifications, while the

latter are aware of the need to invest in their human resources, but tend to limit themselves to mandatory health and safety training and induction training, which is compulsory for all new employees.

They usually include only general and on-the-job training. Periodic training can also be mentioned here. These training courses are necessary to refresh knowledge and must be repeated at specific intervals, which depend on the position. Therefore, there is a certain misunderstanding between employers and employees. In Poland, the law imposes an obligation on employers to improve qualifications, and on employees to improve their qualifications with the employer's consent, which entitles them to certain privileges. However, this is not the only area of discourse in the field of employee development; other issues concern the most effective training methods and tools, as well as ways of applying the knowledge gained in training during professional work.

The European Community has certainly enriched the issue of improving qualifications by creating opportunities to obtain funding for training, postgraduate studies and other forms of improving qualifications. These funds can be obtained through regional programmes or the Erasmus Plus programme.

It was this programme that was used to create the project entitled 'Methodology of teaching human resource management for current and future catering employees'. The authors of this project undertook the task of creating a curriculum, developing lesson plans and preparing criteria for assessing progress in the acquisition of knowledge in the field of human resource management. The project is aimed at students and graduates of catering schools in three countries: Poland, Germany and Italy.

The aim of the article is to critically analyse primarily the human resource management issues that have been introduced into the curriculum. It then focuses on the methods and tools developed to transfer knowledge. Finally, attention is drawn to the very concept of the project's assumptions from the point of view of the employer-employee relationship, and it should also be added here that the student may undergo professional training. First, a review of the literature on human resource management, employee development methods and tools, as well as the structure of the project itself, will be conducted. In the next part, attention will be focused on analysing the solutions proposed in the project in order to critically consider the possibilities of achieving success in the project, but above all in the process of developing employees in the catering industry.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to properly grasp the essence of the article and thoroughly analyse the solutions, methods and tools for the development of students and employees in the field of human resource management used in the project 'Methodology of teaching human resource management for current and future catering employees', it is necessary to begin with a review of the literature. The main issue, a kind of guiding principle of the project, is human resource management, which is a complex issue. Human resource management is a process consisting of the stages of planning, recruitment, selection, training, motivation and retention of employees, aimed at achieving the strategic goals of the company (Armstrong, 2014). Similarly, S. Snell and G. Bohlander draw attention to human resource management as a process, which they consider to be strategic and operational activities aimed at the effective management of people in an organisation, including recruitment, training, assessment and motivation of employees (Snell, Bohlander, 2013). Perhaps the composition of the process in question is shown slightly differently, but nevertheless, it can be seen that it constitutes a complex sequence of activities. Edwin Flippo takes a similar view, defining human resource management as 'planning, organising, directing, and controlling the supply, development, compensation, integration, retention, and distribution of human resources to achieve individual, organisational, and societal goals' (Flippo, 1984). J. Stoner, R. Freeman and D. Gilbert also deal with the same concept of human resource management as a process. For them, human resource management is an organisational function that aims to recruit and retain suitable employees and create conditions conducive to their effective work (Stoner, Freeman, Gilbert, 2001). For H. Król and A. Ludwicyński, human resource management is a process that includes activities related to planning, organising, directing and controlling employment in an organisation (Król, Ludwicyński, 2006). It is worth mentioning other researchers in the field of human resource management, including G. Dessler, who claims that, Human Resource Management is the process of acquiring, training, appraising, and compensating employees, and attending to their labor relations, health and safety, and fairness concerns (Dessler, 2017), D. Ulrich describes human resource

management as follows: human resource management is not just about managing people, it is a process that helps organizations deliver value through people by aligning HR practices with business strategy (Ulrich, 1997). John Storey writes, that human resource management is a distinctive approach to employment management which seeks to achieve competitive advantage through the strategic deployment of a highly committed and capable workforce, using an array of cultural, structural and personnel techniques (Storey, 1995), a P. Boxall and J. Purcell say that human resource management includes all those activities associated with the management of work and people in organisations. It is a process that shapes how work and people are managed to serve organisational goals (Boxall, Purcell, 2016). The authors cited above view human resource management as a process of shaping work and relationships with people in order to implement the organisation's strategy. J. Storey, quoted above, sees the strategic and multidimensional nature of human resource management, which encompasses organisational culture, structure and specific people management techniques. Dessler defines human resource management as the process of managing the employee life cycle – from recruitment to departure – and as a function that supports fairness and good working conditions. D. Ulrich views human resource management as a strategic process that integrates personnel practices with business objectives. He points out that human resource management must deliver organisational value. In conclusion, it is worth quoting M. Armstrong, who presents human resource management as a strategic process of the company (Kozłowski, 2018) and an integrated one, covering all activities related to employees – from recruitment, through development, to assessment and motivation. Therefore, ultimately referring to M. Armstrong, it should be pointed out that the human resource management process consists of the following seven elements: employment planning, recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal, motivation and remuneration, employee relations management, and compliance with regulations and ethics. All of the stages mentioned above focus on human resources, so it is worth taking a moment to consider this concept – human resources. First and foremost, it should be emphasised that people are not resources, but rather possess resources at their disposal. These resources are the characteristics and qualities embodied in them, which enable them to perform various roles within an organisation. The most important elements of human resources include: knowledge, abilities, skills, health, attitudes and values, and motivation. Additionally, it should be remembered that the owner of human resources is the employee, and it is they who ultimately decide on the degree of commitment of these resources during work (Pocztowski, 2003). Other authors have a similar view of human resources. For example, W. F. Cascio describes human resources as human capital – the unique characteristics of employees, such as knowledge, skills and learning ability, which contribute to organisational value (Cascio, 2021). He emphasises the link between human resource management and efficiency, quality of life at work and profitability. A contemporary, systemic view of human resource management as an investment rather than a cost. This approach can be found in Raymond A. Noe (Raymond A. Noe et al., 2021), J. Bratton & J. Gold (Batton, Gold, 2017).

A review of selected definitions of human resource management and a clarification of the meaning of resources reveals two important directions. The first treats people as one of the key resources of an organisation, alongside capital, technology and structure. It also emphasises that human resource management is a deliberate effort to maximise their contribution (Daft, 2018). The second shows the strategic importance of the human resource management process. Therefore, human resource management should not be overlooked in the context of an organisation's objectives. In the context of this article, it should be emphasised that each of the authors cited here highlights employee development as one of the elements of human resource management. Development is related to employee competencies. It can be assumed that competence is the ability to perform specific activities and tasks (actions that each person can undertake and perform appropriately, as well as roles that they can play), as well as a set of characteristics and behaviours necessary to perform a specific job (Whiddett, Hollyforde, 2003). It is worth noting that competencies are not static (Górska-Rożej, 2014) and are subject to change under the influence of various factors (Załoga, 2019). Assuming that competencies are knowledge, skills and attitudes (Filipowicz, 2004), it is these three areas that need to be influenced. Factors influencing changes in employees' competencies cause their development. One element of this development is improving qualifications. Examples of methods for improving employee qualifications, and thus employee development (Borkowska, 2005), include lectures, training courses, postgraduate studies, conferences, seminars, case studies, assigning tasks, participation in project work, modelling, mentoring, coaching, gamification, industry meetings, e-learning and LMS (Learning Management

System) platforms. Other methods can be found elsewhere, including lectures, reading, the use of audiovisual aids, graphic presentations, group discussions, educational games, role-playing, drama, simulation, practical activities, case studies, projects, and teaching others.

Training is considered to be the most popular form of development (Król, Ludwicyński, 2007). H. Król defines training as a set of activities (usually organised outside school) concerning employees of an organisation and (to a lesser extent) unemployed persons, providing an opportunity to broaden and deepen specific elements of individual human capital, as well as equipping it with new elements useful now or in the future (Król, Ludwicyński, 2007). Z. Pawlaka, on the other hand, clarifies the concept of vocational training. He defines it as preparation for a specific job, in a specific position and in a specific company, which is mainly carried out in extracurricular forms and covers people who are working and who are candidates for a specific position (Król, Ludwicyński, 2007). It must be admitted that training provides many benefits for the trainee, but also for the organisation in which they work. Training can contribute to a change in thinking, attitude and behaviour. In addition, training allows pioneering concepts and assumptions to be analysed and tested in a safe manner, without the risk of failure, enabling the exchange of experiences between participants and, consequently, promoting the sharing of knowledge, which is used by learning organisations. They provide new, more effective tools to achieve set goals, allow for greater independence in planning and management, and give participants the opportunity to compare new content with their own experiences, which can be a motivating factor for employees if participation in training is presented as an investment in the individual. They help to integrate and build cooperation within the company, and the interactive methods used during the training contribute to greater involvement of participants and identification with the conclusions or results achieved (Sołtysińska, Żywiec-Dąbrowska, 2001). Training guarantees that organisations and individuals move from the so-called current state to the desired state. This is accompanied by a qualitative change. The current state is the situation in which we currently find ourselves. Everyone has their goals, organisations too – this is what is called the desired state. By its very nature, the desired state must be better and more beneficial than the current state. Training is one of the most effective ways to develop an organisation and improve the competence of the entire company by investing in employees (Lanz, 2004).

It can be assumed that there are many methods of employee development and improving qualifications, but the literature emphasises that motivation is an important factor in development, improving qualifications and transferring knowledge. According to M.S. Knowles, the main motivation for adults is internal motivation. External punishments and rewards are of little significance. (Knowles, 1972). In addition, research on motivation clearly indicates that it can be stimulated by the teacher. As part of the content they teach, they can create conditions in which trainees are ready to improve their individual skills and maintain them at the highest possible level. This does not mean, however, that external rewards (e.g. a pay rise or promotion) are irrelevant. On the contrary, they are extremely important motivators. Nevertheless, a stronger motivating factor is certainly the satisfaction of a person's internal needs, such as the desire to achieve greater satisfaction from their work, increasing self-esteem, quality of life, etc. M.S. Knowles believes that motivation to learn depends on four factors (Knowles, Holton III and Swanson, 2009):

- success – adults want to be successful in learning,
- will – adults want to feel that they have an influence on their learning,
- value – adults want to be convinced that they are learning something valuable,
- enjoyment – adults want to enjoy learning.

It is therefore important to obtain these four elements in the employee development process in order to make the learning process more effective.

The literature on the subject emphasises that effective human resource management in the catering industry has a direct impact on the quality of services provided, customer satisfaction and the competitiveness of businesses (Nowak, 2019). The difficulties in recruiting qualified staff and the need to continuously improve employee qualifications in the face of changing culinary and technological trends are not without significance (Jankowska, 2020). In turn, scientific literature increasingly emphasises the importance of education and training for the development of catering staff competencies. For example, research conducted by Kowalski showed that training programmes aimed at students and graduates of catering schools significantly improve their preparation for work in the industry and increase their motivation and willingness to work.

At the end of the literature review, attention should be paid to the term “project”, as it is the project that provides the framework for the measures taken to improve human resource management skills, which will be the subject of analysis. Specialists define a project as a temporary endeavour aimed at creating a unique product, service or result, carried out in accordance with specific objectives, a schedule and a budget, using available resources and management methods (PMI, 2021). The definition quoted above focuses on the results of a project. For K. Schwalbe, a project is a temporary endeavour undertaken to create a unique product or service, with clearly defined objectives and constraints (Schwalbe, 2015). H. Kerzner, on the other hand, proposes a different approach, arguing that a project is an organised set of activities aimed at achieving specific results within specific time, financial and resource constraints (Kerzner, 2013). The available time, financial and resource constraints provide a certain framework that guides the project in a specific way. This allows us to focus on the essence of the project. Adding to this the thesis that a project is a unique undertaking that requires planning, coordination and control to achieve its objectives within a specified time and budget (Meredith & Mantel, 2014), it therefore has a specific procedure for action. It can be assumed that this is a process with a specific structure that ensures a certain degree of success based on the achievement of the desired goal. This is all the more important from the point of view of the catering industry. The specific nature of human resource management in the catering industry is characterised by unique challenges and needs resulting from the specific nature of the sector. First and foremost, this industry is characterised by high seasonality of employment, which requires flexibility in employment planning and a quick response to changing needs (Kozłowski, 2018).

The combination of human resource management issues with the catering industry and the recognition of the need to support current and future managers working in catering organisations was the impetus for the project.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Participants

The project ‘Methodology of teaching human resource management for current and future catering employees’ was addressed to a wide range of people associated with the catering industry. The participants were mainly students and graduates of catering courses and further training courses, both those already working as chefs and those just planning to take up work in this field. The project was also joined by students and graduates from Poland, Italy and Germany, where the project was implemented. In addition, Ukrainian citizens were invited to participate in the project. This was due to the geopolitical situation. Many Ukrainian citizens reside in Poland. They study and work in Polish schools and workplaces. In order not to discriminate against anyone, they were also invited to participate in the project.

Young chefs graduating from catering schools and courses have high professional qualifications, but are often not prepared to lead a task force. On the other hand, vocational school teachers, masters and trainers in chambers and craft guilds, as well as trainers in extracurricular institutions, do not have sufficient tools, programmes or modern – including digital – methods to support teaching in the field of human resource management. The project also indirectly covered vocational schools offering catering courses, institutions and entrepreneurs providing dual education, chambers of crafts and training institutions operating outside the school system. All these entities struggle with a lack of knowledge, teaching materials and suitably trained staff in the area of personnel management education.

More than 200 people took part in the project, including all target groups, experts and multipliers.

3.2. Research Protocol and Stimuli

The project was implemented in response to specific needs that had emerged during earlier initiatives, such as the organisation of internships and work placements for catering school students. It was then that it was observed that young people, despite their very good professional preparation, have serious deficits in soft skills – especially those related to teamwork, effective communication, problem solving and dealing with misunderstandings and conflict. It can be seen that the characteristics of Generation Z in the labour market are also reflected among students and young employees in the catering industry (Gajda, 2017).

During conversations with chefs, it also turned out that the recruitment process for catering teams was often random. New employees were sometimes hired on the basis of a short, superficial interview, without analysing their professional CV or actually checking their skills and competences. Many chefs, despite being excellent craftsmen in their field, lacked knowledge and tools in the area of personnel management. Their approach to working with the team was based mainly on intuition and personal experience, which often led to organisational problems and unsatisfactory results. The most frequently mentioned shortcomings were difficulties in motivating employees, resolving conflicts and establishing effective communication in the kitchen.

In order to better understand the needs of the industry, a survey was conducted among students and teachers of catering professions in Poland, Italy and Germany. A total of 172 respondents took part in the survey. The results confirmed the previously identified problems and clearly indicated that interpersonal skills are just as important as professional skills. In addition, individual interviews were conducted with chefs, in which they emphasised that they did not feel confident enough in communicating with their teams, which often led to tensions and hindered their daily work.

On this basis, the main objective of the project was formulated: to strengthen interpersonal skills in the area of human resource management among students and graduates of vocational schools and people learning the profession of chef in the craft system, as well as to improve their digital skills in parallel.

Specific objectives were also set as part of the project activities, which included:

1. Improving the digital and methodological competences of vocational instructors, teachers and trainers providing education in vocational and industry schools.
2. Increasing access to modern, practical knowledge on human resource management in the catering industry.
3. Improving the chances of catering school graduates and students on the labour market by expanding the educational offer to include issues related to social and digital competences.
4. Providing schools, educational institutions and industry organisations with innovative methods and curricula for teaching personnel management in the catering industry.

The project was implemented as an international partnership involving institutions from Poland, Italy and Germany. Representatives of vocational education, craft chambers and research institutions participated in the work, which allowed the problem to be viewed from many perspectives and solutions to be developed that respond to the needs of different environments. Thanks to international cooperation, it was also possible to compare practices and challenges in the three countries, which significantly enriched the results of the project and gave them a universal character.

Thus, the project not only contributed to improving the quality of vocational education in catering, but also helped to raise working standards in the industry by offering both students and teaching staff specific tools for better human resource management.

3.3. Research Apparatus

When analysing the research method, it should be noted that in this case, two types of methods can be applied at two levels. The first method used is the project. It was used to achieve the objective that was implemented as part of the Erasmus+ programme entitled: 'Methodology of teaching human resource management for current and future catering employees', No. 2023-1-PL01-KA220-VET-000167215. When describing the project method, it should be mentioned that it included various activities. These included surveys as well as individual in-depth interviews. The survey questionnaire and interview questionnaire tools were used to diagnose the level of knowledge and needs of catering school students and graduates in terms of human resource management knowledge and skills. In addition, study visits to individual project partner institutions were organised as part of the project. The topics focused, among other things, on the opportunities, procedures and legal regulations in force in their countries in the field of vocational education. The aim was to ensure that the materials developed were universal in nature and could be used in various formal or informal education systems. In addition, methods and tools related to the development of educational materials were discussed. The project involved the implementation of work packages in partnership, thanks to which all project partners were involved in the work. The packages formed a logical whole. Not all packages will be discussed here, but the focus will be on educational materials. These materials include, first and foremost, a human resource management curriculum based on five modules: employee selection, team building, task delegation, conflict resolution, motivation and lesson plans. Each of the developed products was

prepared in Polish, English, German and Italian. The project provided for the development of a research tool to verify the knowledge of those participating in human resource management classes. The programmes and lesson plans for students include various teaching methods and tools. D. Kolb believes that learning is a process of constantly modifying previous experience through subsequent experience. New ideas are not written down like marks on a 'clean, white sheet of paper' in the learner's mind, but interact with ideas that the learner already had. According to the author, the educational process takes place primarily in interaction with the environment, and knowledge is acquired through the transformation of experience - thanks to the opportunity to experience different situations and exchange experiences with other participants in the educational process, one can learn most effectively. This is because successive experiences enrich and cause new information to be assimilated more quickly than is the case, for example, when acquiring knowledge through passive listening. D. Kolb proposed that the learning process should be viewed as a cycle in which the main function is performed by the individual's experience and its analysis. This cycle is extremely complex, but the author has identified four stages in the process of learning through experience:

1. concrete experience, consistent with the learner's views, in which the learning process
1. begins;
2. reflective observation, when the experience is analysed and viewed
3. from different perspectives;
4. abstract conceptualisation, when the learner continues to analyse the data and begins to
5. draw conclusions from the experience in which they participated;
5. active experimentation – the final stage, which begins when learners change their behaviour and start experimenting with new knowledge to see if their newly developed theories are useful in solving problems and making decisions.

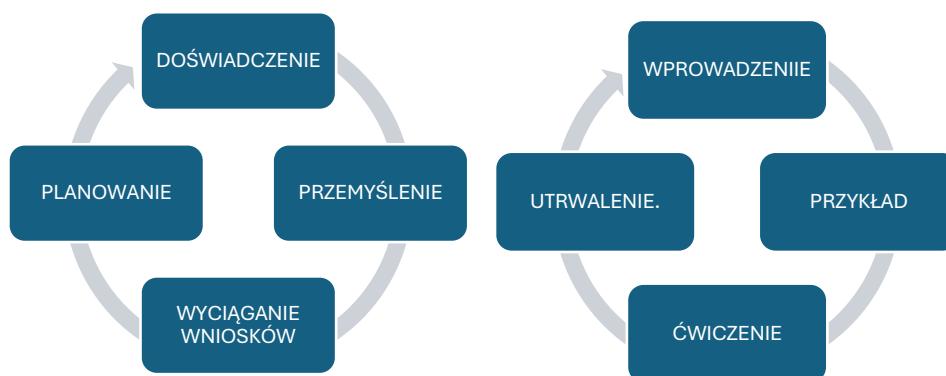


Figure 1. Kolb's cycle

Source: own study based on D. Kolb, op. cit.

When considering this model for training, we must reject the traditional approach to teaching, which presumes that a certain theory must be presented first, and only once learners have mastered it can they move on to practical exercises. D. Kolb's concept presents the exact opposite. Learners can generalize observed patterns to other situations and relate experiences to broader theoretical concepts, allowing them to better understand them. This means that theoretical knowledge is neither distant from personal experience nor alien, and therefore less acceptable. Furthermore, each subsequent experience can provide the learner with an opportunity to draw conclusions and can initiate the next learning cycle.

The developed materials utilize D. Kolb's teaching method. The second method employed in developing the educational materials is the use of ICT. The development of digital technologies and mobile tools is playing an increasingly important and supportive role in the adult learning process, as they allow them to access knowledge at a convenient time and place, and also allow for the individualization of their learning path. The project leveraged this potential by creating a set of educational videos that students can independently watch on computers, tablets, or smartphones – both during and outside of classes. This type of solution not only promotes knowledge retention but also

allows for repeated re-reading of the material, which is particularly important for learners who learn at different paces.

The educational film development process was enhanced by the use of artificial intelligence-based tools, which supported content creation, development of teaching scenarios, and adaptation of the material to the audience's needs. As a result, the educational films are characterized by a modern format, visually appealing content presentation, and a high level of substantive content, which increases their educational effectiveness and motivates students to independently deepen their knowledge. Selected photos from the developed educational films are presented below.



Figure 1. Photo from an educational film on human resources management

Source: ‘Methodology of teaching human resource management to current and future catering employees’, no 2023-1-PL01-KA220-VET-000167215.

Educational films feature a narrator who discusses a human resources management topic. In addition to presenting theory, the video depicts a real-life "kitchen" scene where the discussed topic might be applied or encountered. The educational films also presents a best practice—a solution that can be applied in similar situations.



Figure 2. Photo from an educational film on human resources management

Source: ‘Methodology of teaching human resource management to current and future catering employees’, no 2023-1-PL01-KA220-VET-000167215.

The solution proposed in the project – educational videos using artificial intelligence – offers the opportunity to increase the attractiveness of classes, but also to encourage independent learning and, above all, the introduction of digital solutions.

It is important to note that preparing teachers to impart knowledge and use educational materials based on artificial intelligence requires them to acquire skills in this area. By using such materials, teachers disseminate knowledge among their students about how to use AI tools and the benefits of its application.

The methods used seem to guarantee educational success.

3.4. Analysis of Measurement Data

Taking into account the analysis of the educational materials developed for the project, attention will be focused on the curricula and their substantive content, and on the sample lesson plan.

As mentioned earlier, the human resources management course curriculum covers five topics: 1. employee selection, 2. team building, 3. delegation, 4. conflict resolution, and 5. motivation. Each of these topics consists of three lessons. The human resources management (HRM) curriculum was developed based on the needs of the restaurant industry and provides a practical tool for developing interpersonal, managerial, and digital skills among students, graduates, and teaching staff. The program is structured around several thematic blocks that logically introduce participants to the concepts of personnel management.

The first module focuses on workforce planning within organizations. It discusses the principles of selecting employees for task and project teams, demonstrating how thoughtful planning impacts work efficiency. Participants acquire knowledge and practical skills in workforce planning and become aware of the consequences of personnel decisions.

The next part of the program is dedicated to employee recruitment and selection. Participants learn the essence and process of recruitment, learn how to construct job advertisements – both internal and external – and analyze common mistakes and their consequences. They then move on to topics related to candidate selection, including conducting interviews. Particular emphasis is placed on the ability to ask questions, interpret answers, and make informed choices.

The second part of the program covers team building. Participants learn the differences between a group and a team, types of teams, and the characteristics of a good team from the perspective of the organization, the employee, and the manager. The stages of team development according to B. Tuckman and team roles according to M. Belbin are analyzed. Developing managerial attitudes appropriate for different stages of team development and developing communication skills are also important. Principles of formulating messages, providing feedback, and conducting constructive conversations and employee severance packages are discussed.

The third block focuses on task delegation. Participants learn what delegation is, its benefits and principles, and how to properly select employees to carry out tasks. Both concerns about delegation—on the part of both the supervisor and the employee – are analyzed, as well as ways to overcome them. A strong emphasis is placed on proper communication during the delegation process and avoiding common mistakes.

The final block of the program covers issues related to employee motivation. Definitions of motivation and motivation, types of motivation, and various approaches to building motivational systems are discussed, including Maslow's hierarchy of needs and the importance of salary and non-salary motivators. Particular attention is paid to conducting motivational interviews – their structure, stages, and practical techniques for supporting effectiveness.

As a result of the program, participants gain comprehensive knowledge of human resources management in the restaurant industry, develop practical skills in planning, recruitment, selection, team building, delegating tasks, and motivating employees, and understand the consequences of personnel decisions. The program was designed to meet the real needs of the industry and prepare students for the role of team leader in a dynamically changing work environment.

The second material analyzed in the project is the lesson plan. It is a detailed plan of educational activities that precisely defines the objectives, content, working methods, teaching materials, and methods for monitoring and assessing student progress. Unlike an outline, a lesson plan is a more flexible document – it allows for changes to be made during the course of the lesson, and its main function is to plan the course of each activity step by step.

The scenario includes a detailed time schedule, including the start and end times of individual tasks (e.g., 8:00 AM–8:03 AM, 8:03 AM–8:08 AM) as well as the duration of each activity (e.g., 3 minutes, 5 minutes). Each activity also has a specific goal – for example, explaining the workshop rules or familiarizing participants with the rules for constructing feedback.

The work methods and teaching materials that should be used at a given point in the session are also a crucial element of the scenario. For example, the instructor writes proposed rules on a flipchart and gives them a title, which they then place on the wall in the form of graphics, such as icons, for everyone to see. Similarly, participants write their expectations on sticky notes, which are then collected and discussed. Another example is an individual presentation by the instructor combined with a multimedia presentation – slide 1 presents the training title, and slide 2 presents its objectives.

Instructor notes, providing practical tips for the instructor, are also a key element of the scenario.

These might include, for example, emphasizing practical skills for training purposes, and only then emphasizing cognitive values (knowledge). The instructor is also responsible for monitoring time and informing participants that a detailed discussion of the content of individual modules will occur within subsequent sessions.

Thanks to this structure, the lesson plan becomes not only a planning tool but also a practical support for conducting classes. It allows the instructor to maintain the dynamics of the work, better organize their time, and adapt teaching methods to the learning objectives, while ensuring clarity and active participation in the learning process for participants.

4. RESULTS

Based on the above considerations, two types of results can be identified – positive and negative. First, we will focus on the positive outcomes. These include:

- Improving the interpersonal and managerial skills of students, graduates, and employees in the food service industry.

This is a crucial outcome, as the food service industry requires not only technical skills but, above all, teamwork. Increasing interpersonal skills strengthens the ability to collaborate and positively impacts the workplace atmosphere.

- Developing digital skills through the use of modern tools, including educational videos and artificial intelligence.

The introduction of technology into the learning process responds to the needs of the modern labor market. Participants gained the opportunity to learn in a flexible manner, which increases the accessibility of knowledge and facilitates self-education.

- Development and implementation of a human resources management curriculum.
- The program systematizes knowledge and provides practical tools for personnel management. It is the first material of its kind aimed directly at students and teachers in vocational education in the catering industry.
- Creation of detailed lesson plans.
- These lesson plans support teachers and trainers, structure the teaching process, and enable the use of proven methods. This increases the effectiveness of classes and provides instructors with a sense of methodological certainty.
- Increased teaching competences of teachers, trainers, and masters of the profession.

Thanks to the project, educational staff have enriched their work with new tools. This facilitates the transfer of knowledge in a modern and engaging way for young people.

- Improved quality of vocational education in culinary schools in Poland, Italy, and Germany.

This result underscores the international nature of the project. The exchange of experiences between countries has enabled the development of universal solutions and raised standards of vocational education.

- Increased opportunities for graduates in the labor market thanks to the acquisition of team management skills.

This is a practical result – graduates are more competitive and better prepared to enter the job market, especially in industries with high employee turnover.

- Equipping schools and educational institutions with programs, tools, and teaching materials on human resources management.

The facilities received specific, ready-to-use resources. This increases the sustainability of the project's results and allows for their continued use after its completion.

- Strengthening management staff in the catering industry.
Chefs, often excellent professionals, gained knowledge and tools in personnel management, which positively impacts the functioning of entire teams.
- Involvement of over 200 participants from various countries.
Such a large number of participants allowed not only for the verification of prepared materials but also for the exchange of good practices and the building of a network of international cooperation.
- Involvement of Ukrainian citizens in project activities.

The integration of refugees within the project provides added value – it supports their professional development and facilitates their adaptation to a new cultural environment.

Among the negative outcomes that also pose challenges are:

- Lack of prior programs and teaching tools for teaching HR management.
This posed a significant obstacle during the preparatory phase, but it also demonstrated that the project filled a real educational gap.
- Teachers and trainers lacked sufficient competencies in teaching personnel management.
This challenge necessitated intensive staff support and the creation of additional support materials. This, however, made the project even more valuable.
- Limited readiness of some participants to work with modern digital tools.
Additional instruction and exercises were necessary. However, as a result, participants overcame barriers and acquired new competencies.
- Differing levels of knowledge and experience among participants.
- This challenge hindered the delivery of consistent classes and required individualized work, but this allowed the materials to be tested across different target groups.
- Additional time and resources were required to prepare the materials.
While this extended the implementation process, it also allowed for the refinement of the content and ensured its high quality.
- Language and cultural barriers.

These were a challenge, especially during international collaboration, but ultimately strengthened the project team's communication skills.

- Difficulties in ensuring a consistent level of quality in program implementation.

Differences in education systems between countries led to uneven implementation but also provided an opportunity to adapt materials to different realities.

5. DISCUSSION

The “Methodology of Teaching Human Resources Management to Current and Future Catering Employees” project, implemented as part of the Erasmus Plus program, is an example of an effective response to the real needs of the catering industry, which requires employees to possess not only high technical skills but also well-developed soft and managerial competencies. The competency gap identified in the diagnosis – particularly in teamwork, communication, and conflict resolution – was confirmed by both practical observations and empirical research. Data triangulation (interviews, surveys, observations) strengthens the reliability of the findings and ensures that the project is based on real needs, not merely on the assumptions of its authors.

At the methodological level, the project utilized two complementary approaches: a project-based approach (typical of Erasmus+ programs) and research methods based on surveys and interviews. Another valuable element is the use of Kolb's experiential learning cycle. His choice aligns with current trends in vocational education, which are moving away from traditional teaching models in favor of more interactive, engaging, and practical forms of work. This is particularly important in the catering industry, where experience, observation, and experimentation are the foundation of the learning process. Combining this model with ICT tools, including artificial intelligence-assisted educational videos, gave

the project a modern and engaging dimension for participants. It's worth noting that such solutions not only enable individualized learning paths but also increase the accessibility of knowledge across time and space, which is crucial for young people accustomed to flexible learning methods.

However, the effectiveness of this approach requires reflection. On the one hand, incorporating active and digital methods increases participant motivation and addresses the needs of Generation Z. On the other hand, the difficulties some participants have encountered in using modern technologies demonstrate that the process of digitalizing vocational education is not uniform. It requires additional training and support to equalize competency levels. This problem, if not properly addressed, can lead to digital exclusion.

Another aspect worth emphasizing is the international nature of the project. The partnership between institutions from Poland, Germany, and Italy enabled the exchange of experiences and comparison of education systems and personnel management practices. This undoubtedly added value, giving the developed teaching materials a more universal and transnational character. On the other hand, systemic differences and linguistic and cultural barriers posed a significant challenge that could have limited the effectiveness of the collaboration. Although participants declared that these barriers were overcome, it is worth asking to what extent they influenced the uniformity of the program's implementation across countries. The diversity of educational systems can lead to discrepancies in the interpretation and application of materials, limiting the full consistency of results.

When analyzing the results, it's important to emphasize their multidimensionality. The project contributed to the development of participants' interpersonal and digital skills, as well as to enriching the teaching skills of teachers and professional mentors. The curriculum, encompassing five key modules (employee selection, team building, task delegation, conflict resolution, and motivation), provides a valuable tool for systematizing knowledge and practical skills. Lesson plans and other teaching materials support teachers in organizing the educational process and facilitate the introduction of modern working methods. Another significant achievement is the creation of the first comprehensive human resources management curriculum in this industry, aimed directly at vocational schools. This increases the sustainability of the results and allows for their continued use after the project's conclusion.

At the same time, it's important to emphasize that the project faced challenges typical of this type of initiative. The lack of prior teaching materials on human resources management in the restaurant industry, varying levels of participants, and the need for additional time and resources to develop the materials were factors that could have delayed implementation. On the other hand, such difficulties point to the project's feasibility and authenticity – it filled a real educational gap.

The study sample is also worth noting – 172 respondents in three countries constitute a relatively small number, limiting the possibility of broadly generalizing the results. The results provide a picture of needs and problems, but their representativeness should be considered with caution. In the longer term, research involving a broader group of students, teachers, and employers is needed.

The project also brought a social dimension – the inclusion of Ukrainian citizens in educational activities fostered their professional and cultural integration. This is an example of how educational initiatives can simultaneously support social goals and address current social and demographic challenges.

In summary, the project should be assessed as innovative and valuable in both its educational and practical dimensions. Its main strengths include: a reliable needs assessment, the use of modern methods (Kolb, ICT), the universality of the materials, the international dimension, and the multiplicity of the target audience (students, teachers, and masters of the profession). Limitations primarily concern the scale of the research, digital and cultural barriers, difficulties in implementation, and the lack of previous models. Nevertheless, the project represents an important step towards the professionalization of vocational education in the catering industry and can be a starting point for further research on the effectiveness of the methods used, the updating of teaching materials, and the expansion of their application to other professional sectors.

It should be noted that the project's results clearly indicate that all assumptions have been met, and the intended goals – both general and specific – have been achieved. This is undoubtedly a success, especially given the project's international nature. International projects bring together diverse institutions and professional communities, which is particularly important, as it demonstrates the high quality of partner collaboration and effective management of the implementation process.

Looking further, we see many opportunities for further development and practical application of the project's results. The developed products have real potential to become a permanent element of the educational offerings of schools and catering facilities. The interest they generated, both during the project's implementation and its dissemination, suggests that in the long term, they could be permanently incorporated into everyday teaching practices. International cooperation is also a significant advantage, as it can serve as a foundation for future initiatives, foster the exchange of experiences, and contribute to further improving the quality of vocational education in Europe. Furthermore, the growing demand for innovative solutions in education – particularly in the catering and hotel sectors – creates favorable conditions for implementing the developed materials and tools.

However, potential threats cannot be ignored. The most serious of these is the risk of failure to implement the results in practice, stemming from the reserve and caution of some recipients. If educational institutions and industry decide not to implement new solutions, there is a risk that they will remain merely theoretical proposals. Furthermore, changing socio-economic conditions, reforms to the education system, and the emergence of competing educational initiatives may weaken the relevance and significance of the achieved results.

In summary, the project can be considered a success, with high educational and social value. Its greatest strengths include the extensive network of collaborations, international reach, and the variety of dissemination tools used. Identified weaknesses—such as the lack of immediate acceptance by all recipients or difficulties in measuring effectiveness—do not negate the success achieved, but rather point to areas requiring further work.

Long-term success will depend primarily on the willingness of institutions and the industry to accept and consistently apply the results. Therefore, it is recommended to undertake additional measures to support the adaptation process, such as organizing implementation training, presenting examples of good practices, and building trust among teachers, trainers, and representatives of the catering sector. These actions may determine the sustainability and full utilization of the project's results in the future.

6. CONCLUSION

The completed project confirmed the importance of a reliable diagnosis of educational needs as a foundation for creating innovative solutions in vocational education. Addressing identified deficits in soft and managerial skills in the catering industry, the project provided teaching materials that not only fill the gaps in curricula but also introduce new standards in vocational education. The results indicate that incorporating engaging methods, experiential learning (Kolb's cycle), and ICT tools can significantly increase the effectiveness of the teaching process, particularly in sectors requiring intensive professional practice.

The project's products – the curriculum, lesson plans, AI-powered teaching videos, and a package of materials for teachers and masters of the profession – have the potential to become a permanent element of the educational offerings of vocational schools and catering establishments. Their attractiveness and practical usefulness were confirmed by participants during pilot and dissemination activities. In the long term, they may contribute to the standardization of education in the field of human resources management in the catering industry and serve as inspiration for other service sectors.

The project's international dimension is also noteworthy. Collaboration between institutions from Poland, Germany, and Italy enabled the comparison of different educational systems and organizational practices, which translated into the development of transnational solutions. This gave the project's results a broader universality, and the initiative itself laid the foundation for subsequent programs and long-term activities aimed at improving the quality of vocational education in Europe.

Despite the successes achieved, potential threats related to the sustainability of the results must be considered. The greatest risk is the lack of implementation of the developed tools into educational practice, resulting from caution or a lack of trust on the part of some institutions. The volatility of the socio-economic environment, dynamic reforms of education systems, and the emergence of alternative initiatives may further limit the relevance and attractiveness of the results. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the processes supporting the adaptation of the project's products – through implementation training, creating a space for teachers to exchange experiences, and presenting best practices that build trust and facilitate implementation.

The practical implications stem primarily from the potential use of the developed materials in the daily work of teachers and trainers, as well as their potential to improve the quality of educational services in catering schools. They can facilitate the process of preparing students for leadership roles, support the development of interpersonal skills, and increase the attractiveness of the educational offer for future employees in the sector. Furthermore, the project contributed to the integration of Ukrainian citizens, demonstrating that educational initiatives can also fulfill a significant social function.

Theoretical implications, in turn, support the effectiveness of activating and digital methods in vocational education and demonstrate that their implementation requires systemic institutional support. The project demonstrates that international cooperation and the transfer of best practices foster the creation of solutions applicable in diverse cultural and educational contexts. It thus makes a significant contribution to the discussion on the role of teaching innovations and ICT tools in modernizing vocational education.

In summary, the project should be viewed as a model initiative that has made a significant contribution to the development of vocational education in the catering industry and opened new perspectives for further research. It demonstrates that combining needs assessment, innovative teaching methods, and transnational cooperation constitutes an effective strategy for addressing the challenges of the contemporary labor market. Further research should focus on analyzing the effectiveness of implementing the developed tools in various educational contexts, assessing their long-term impact on the development of professional competencies, and exploring mechanisms that promote the sustainability and widespread dissemination of results.

It is worth adding that the presented example of good practice will be available after the completion of the project 'Methodology of teaching human resources management for current and future catering employees', no. 2023-1-PL01-KA220-VET-000167215, which is implemented under the ERASMUS plus program, on the website of the Erasmus + Project Results Platform: <https://erasmusplus.org.pl/platforma-rezultatow-projektow-erasmus>.

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