



## **Factors Influencing the Choice of the Methods and Forms of Education of Social Workers in the Czech Republic**

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### **Abstract**

The main objective of the article is to assess the influence of the factors selected on the choice of the methods and forms of the employee training in the organization. The research is focused on the investigation of the methods and forms of further education of social workers. Data used in this study were gathered by questionnaire of 219 social workers. The methods of further education used by social workers are examined in order to categorize these methods into groups that would facilitate the development of appropriate combinations of educational methods. Furthermore, the relation between the variables selected and the methods of further education is investigated by means of a dependence test ( $\chi^2$ ) and Cramer's V measurement. Results indicate that methods of further education should be used in combination to increase efficiency. The results form the basis for formulating a scheme of further education in social work.

### **Keywords**

Further Education, HR, Management, Educational Methods, Social Workers, Employee

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### **I. Introduction**

Social work is a very important activity that requires professional knowledge and skills that a social services worker must have. Further education of social workers is conditioned and stipulated by Act No. 108/2006 Coll. on Social Services. A multidisciplinary approach to work requires education in many areas of social sciences and uses various forms of work with people (Trnka et al., 2020; Lorincová et al., 2018; Adams et al., 2009; Bennett et al., 2006). An employer operating in social services is obliged to provide a social worker with further education on the scope of at least 48 hours in 2 consecutive calendar years as part of their qualification development (Act No. 108/2006 on Social Services, §111). A social worker is educated in the form of:

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- a) specialized education provided by universities or higher vocational schools following the acquired professional qualification to perform the profession of social worker,
- b) accredited educational courses,
- c) professional internships,
- d) participation in training events,
- e) participation in conferences.

Further education of social workers is thus a means of management that leads to the completion and deepening of the required competencies (Takawira, 2020; Kushnir, 2022). Given the importance of employee education, it is necessary to identify effective training methods that will lead to the acquisition of the required expertise and the fulfillment of the legal requirements necessary to perform the position of a social service worker. Recent changes in society associated with the COVID pandemic, the influx of refugees from Ukraine, and technological developments have brought about a number of changes that social work faces (Masadeh et al., 2019; Banister et al., 2020), moreover social service workers are overburdened, and high demands are placed on them in terms of performance and time. In connection with this situation, there is a change in the methods and forms of education that are used, and which must reflect the chosen goal of the educational program (Choi et al., 2020; Zakharova et al., 2017). Education should include a combination of methods allowing to respond to the current needs of social work and the individual needs of workers (Koskimaki et al., 2020; Sole, 2020; Martin et al., 2019; Tseng et al., 2020; Yadegaridehkordi et al., 2019). This situation is not limited to the Czech Republic but also affects other countries in various ways (Archer-Kuhn et al., 2020). Social workers who are well-educated and can respond flexibly to emerging problems are a resource for solving problems in society (Arnold et al., 2016; Echegaray et al., 2019).

The main objective of the article is to assess the influence of the factors selected on the choice of the methods and forms of the employee training in the organization. The sub-objectives are then:

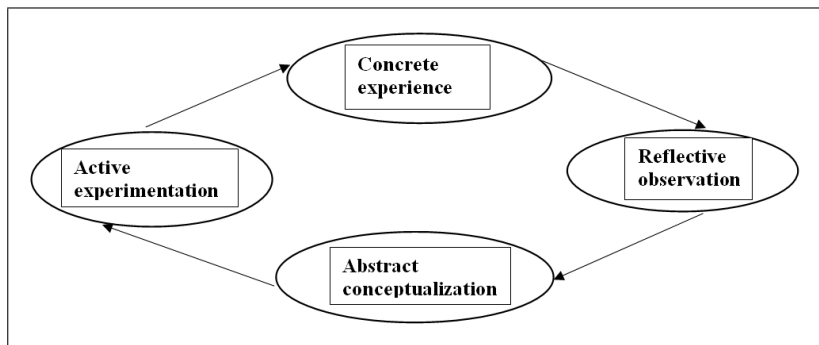
- \* categorization of the educational methods selected according to the preferences of each individual type of social workers;
- \* based on the results obtained, the objective is to formulate suggestions and recommendations for the organizations employing social workers, which will lead to improvements in the field of education of social workers.

The research focuses on determining an effective combination of methods to achieve educational goals in the social field. The results of this pilot study can be used in determining effective methods and forms of education in the social field not only in the Czech Republic, but also in other European and non-European countries, as they respond to technological progress and the time and knowledge requirements associated with the performance of a social worker.

## II. Theoretical Background

In today's knowledge society, education is becoming a lifelong process, because only an individual who is constantly educating himself is able to face the challenges that everyday life and duties bring. Education and development of workers in social services is a key area that is supported not only by the Social Services Act but is primarily necessary for the performance of quality work activities by the workers in question. The aim of further education of social workers is to acquire a certain level of competencies that are necessary for the effective performance of a job position. Current educational approaches primarily emphasize competency-based education, which allows workers to acquire appropriate professional competencies necessary for the performance of work or experiential learning, i.e. learning from one's own experience, which is irreplaceable for acquiring and consolidating new skills (Dodge et al., 2023). Experiential learning is based on the idea of J. Dewey that there is a very close relationship between experience from practical activities and effective education. However, this experience is only gained through activities where the individual does something new while building on what they already know (Mu, Hatch, 2024; Kolb, 2014). Experiential learning is excellently illustrated by Kolb's learning cycle, which is a cyclical process with 4 phases, in which a specific experience leads to observation, thinking and reflection, based on which an abstract idea of the concept is created, followed by active experimentation and testing, and so on, see Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Kolb's learning system**



Source: Kolb (2017) in Mu, Hatch (2023)

The effectiveness of further education is significantly influenced by the choice of an appropriate form and method of education. When choosing a method and form of further education, it is always necessary to choose a method and form or a combination of methods and forms that will be in line with the goal of education, which is set in the employee development plan and which corresponds to the overall education strategy in the organization (Makarov and Sevastyanova, 2020; Coffey et al., 2009). An inappropriately chosen method or form of education not only negatively affects the outcome of education but often has a demotivating effect for participants in relation to further educational

activities, as they feel that education does not give them anything. The problem with the motivation of workers in social services is also mentioned by Elichová (2017), who mentions that education often takes the form of formal rather than committed participation and that it is necessary to strengthen the motivation of social workers for further education (Elichová, 2017). In the training of employees in organizations, we distinguish between training methods carried out in the workplace, otherwise known as “on the job” methods, and methods carried out outside the workplace, called “off the job” methods (Makarov, Sevastyanova, 2020; Jiménez et al., 2018). “On the job” methods include, for example, on-the-job training, coaching, mentoring, consulting, assistance, task assignment, job rotation, and work meetings. “Off the job” methods include, for example, a lecture, a lecture combined with a discussion, or also a seminar, demonstration (practical, illustrative teaching), case study, workshop, brainstorming, simulation, role-playing (management games), assessment center, outdoor training/learning, and e-learning (Dmitrieva, 2019; Hrmo et al., 2020). In connection with the current challenges faced by managers or workers in social services and in connection with the benefits of competency-based education and experiential learning, methods associated with practical experience and focused on acquiring competencies appear to be the most effective methods, which mainly include workplace education methods (Dmitrieva et al., 2019; Nemec et al., 2019). On the contrary, Mahadevan and Yap (2019) concluded that both groups of methods have a positive impact on work performance when evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency of on-job and off-job methods, and when comparing effectiveness, they rated off-job methods as more effective. Phelan (2015) just like Dmitrieva, (2019); Hrmo et al., (2020) or Hsu et al., (2020) recommend e-learning in his study of methods suitable for the education of social workers in the USA. Authors consider the effectiveness of e-learning to be equal to or higher than face-to-face education. In addition, he emphasizes the possibilities of using blended learning, which allows for the effective combination of the advantages of virtual education and education using face-to-face methods. Korneshchuk and Muzyka (2014), when examining the possibilities of methods of training social workers in Ukraine, emphasizes the use of interactive methods of education, as they allow to maximally unify the specificity of the social work activity. The possibility of feedback and the choice of appropriate tools for evaluating the educational process are essential elements (Bethere et al., 2016). The results of feedback and evaluation should serve to eliminate errors in the further educational process (Viens, 2020). At the same time, it is necessary to record which of the educational methods is more suitable for a given group of workers (Choi et al., 2020).

Next, we will take a closer look at the methods used in the further education of workers in social services. In social services, mainly methods and forms of education are used that are based on direct interaction between a more experienced worker and a worker who is learning (Lin et al., 2017; Farr et al., 2017). This is mainly a mentoring method. The main goal of mentoring is to direct the worker to a more experienced professional who takes on the role of an educator (Lin et al., 2017). Mentoring is a hybrid form of education that represents continuous guidance, the own initiative of both participants and an informal relationship (Van Rosenberg et al., 2022; Torriente et al. 2020). Progressive practice requires maintaining constant contact between the mentor and the worker, guidance

in the work process and guiding the worker to advance in his or her career (Faber et al., 2012; Corsby, Jones, 2020).

Another method used in social work is coaching. Coaching as a method of managing and training a worker requires more time and effort from the coach than other training methods (Tsai et al., 2022; Having et al., 2020). This method combines two tasks for the coach, which are training the worker and motivating him (Zhou et al., 2020; Garvey et al., 2010). Coaching leads to a change in the worker's behavior, to expanding his abilities, skills and knowledge, and also to increasing his self-confidence, which are key factors in effective coaching (Tanasescu et al., 2015). Coaching is based on constant support and encouragement from the coach in order to develop the worker's potential. Within social services, mentoring and coaching represent educational methods that serve to solve the problems of social workers themselves, e.g., if an incident occurs, an attempt at violence, an error in communication with a client, etc. (Poulter, 2005; Choi et al., 2020). Another method that allows for practical acquisition of skills is job rotation, which allows for practical experience of the demands of different job positions. The main advantage of the method is experiential learning, but the disadvantage is the need to coordinate activities within the work process, which can be challenging in the organization of the work of a social service worker. In connection with the continued technological progress and development of digital technologies, methods and forms using the internet and digital technologies, such as e-learning and self-education, are also coming to the fore. Their advantages are mainly in accessibility and time flexibility (Makarov and Sevastyanova, 2020; Knottenbelt, 2020). The e-learning method is sometimes included in the "off the job" group, sometimes it is presented as a separate method, referred to as computer assisted learning (Zakharova et al., 2017; Hertz et al., 2022). The emphasis is on learning at one's own pace, although employees may receive goals to meet and certain instructions from trainers (Dmitrieva et al., 2019). E-learning applications include simulations, quizzes, interactions and the creation of presentations, which overall lead to professional development of competencies (Dmitrieva, 2019; Hrmo et al., 2020; Hsu et al., 2020). In recent years, mobile technologies have begun to represent a new form of the learning process, which allows increasing the efficiency of the entire learning process. The above confirms that the digitalization of employee training changes the goals, principles, means and methods of educational processes, including tools for controlling (Makarov and Sevastyanova, 2020). The advantage of e-learning is the ability to train a large number of employees in a short time and the availability of these courses. The disadvantages of e-learning are that employees need to motivate themselves, as well as the time and effort required to develop and update e-learning programs, the availability of computers and the limited experience of senior employees with the e-learning method (Klug et al., 2009; Urbanaiciute 2020, et al.). For this reason, methods combining e-learning with other direct education methods are often preferred, such as blended learning, M learning etc. Given the need for lifelong education of an individual, self-education can be included among the more widespread methods, which has become part of the educational process and the basis for knowledge transfer (Dmitrieva et al., 2019; Nemec and Burak 2019) and within which digital technologies can also be used. Among the methods of non-workplace education, lectures and conferences are also used in further education

in social work, which we classify as non-workplace education methods. However, their disadvantage is the time-consuming nature and only theoretical or factual focus, as well as the passive participation of participants, while the advantage is the possibility of providing a larger amount of information focusing on a specific topic in a short time to a larger number of employees (Zakharova et al., 2017, Ivry et al., 2005, Hrmo, 2020; Monteiro et al., 2020; Safie and Dmitrieva, 2019). Other methods used include a lecture followed by a discussion, sometimes referred to as a seminar. Although it overcomes some of the disadvantages of a lecture, it is a one-way flow of information and is difficult to prepare (Antonacopoulou, 2000; Makarov and Sevastyanova, 2020; Akkermans et al., 2013). The advantage is in the discussion, which can generate new ideas for solving problems and allow participants to actively express themselves. All training methods represent a path to employee development and have certain advantages and disadvantages (Stadick, 2020). The combination of educational methods plays a key role in understanding and supporting employee development and implementing development plans (Pinter et al., 2016; Thyer, 2019). Each method should lead to a deepening of knowledge, skills and consolidation of competencies, thereby fulfilling the goals of the organization. When organizing educational activities, whether the organization has sufficient resources for education and also the size of the organization plays a key role. Larger organizations usually have an HR department, in which a responsible employee (HR manager, HR consultant) is responsible for organizing educational activities. The role of the HR manager is irreplaceable within the individual phases of the educational cycle. In smaller organizations, all HR activities are often managed by one person, who, however, is in charge of a number of activities and often cannot devote sufficient attention to the concept of educational activities. The concept of HR work in the organization is thus significantly reflected in the sophistication and effectiveness of educational activities (Armstrong, 2020, 2015; Koubek 2015, 2011).

Based on the above, the research questions for this study are as follows:

- RQ 1: What is the degree of dependence between further education and the following variables – the size of the organization by the number of employees and the existence of an HR department?
- RQ 2: Is it possible to categorize educational methods into certain areas according to preferences, or to find suitable combinations of educational methods based on the frequency of their use?

### III. Methods and Materials

Quantitative data was obtained by means of the quantitative research that was conducted using the questionnaire survey method ( $n = 219$ ). The questionnaire was set on the base of a case study. It is based on theoretical knowledge, adult education, experience learning and competence learning. The questions were designed and formulated and tested. The pilot test focused on understandability was done on 10 random respondents – social workers. Subsequently validity and reliability were considered and those questions were designed to align with research objectives. A total of 965 questionnaires were sent via an e-mail to the managers of the social service organizations registered in Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of Czech Republic with a request for social workers to complete the questionnaire.

219 questionnaires were received back, i.e., 23%. Respondents were asked to complete a questionnaire via mail and phone. Respondents are in the position of the managers, 189 (86%) of respondents are women and 30 (14%) respondents are men. 63 (30%) are in the age between 41–50 years, 57 (26%) respondents are in the age between 31–40 years, 42 (19%) in the age between 51–57 years, 29 (13%) between 26–30 years, 11 (5%) between 58–63, 10 (5%) between 18–25 and in the age over 63 are 7 (3%) respondents. 186 respondents are high school educated. The characteristics of the sample of respondents are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Research sample – social workers**

| Characteristics                                     | Category    |            |                |              |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-------------|------------|----------------|--------------|
| Sector                                              | Public      |            | Ecclesiastical | Private      |
|                                                     | 154 (70.3%) |            | 37 (16.9%)     | 28 (12.8%)   |
| Market                                              | Regional    | Local      | National       | Global       |
|                                                     | 125 (57.1%) | 43 (19.6%) | 38 (17.4%)     | 13 (5.9%)    |
| Part of a larger group of organizations             | Yes         |            | No             |              |
|                                                     | 114 (52.1%) |            | 105 (47.9%)    |              |
| Size of the organization (number of employees in %) | 1–9         | 10–49      | 50–249         | 250 and more |
|                                                     | 28 (12.8%)  | 87 (39.7%) | 81 (37.0%)     | 23 (10.5%)   |
| HR department existence                             | Yes         |            | No             |              |
|                                                     | 184 (84.0%) |            | 35 (15.98%)    |              |

*Source: Own processing (2023)*

Factors such as organisational culture, attitude of supervisors to further training, personal motivation of staff or specifics of the region are important factors, that can influence the respondents. Nevertheless in the research sample were addressed organisation across the whole Czech Republic and the education of social workers is based on the Act No. 108/2006 on Social Services, §111.

This study is valued as a pilot study of specific group of social workers in manager positions. This approach would position the findings as preliminary but valuable for generation hypotheses and guiding future research with larger samples.

The first research question focused on identifying the relations (dependencies) between the identified variables such as the size of the organization, the existence of an HR department and the training provided using the methods and forms of further education. Two separate tests were conducted to answer the question. The mutual relations between variables could be investigated by multi-dimensional analysis, which would reveal other relations and could be the subject of further follow-up research.

**Table 2: Overview of the quantities investigated**

| Basic variables              |
|------------------------------|
| Size by number of employees  |
| Existing of an HR department |

*Source: Own processing (2023)*

To answer the question, research conducted by means of a questionnaire survey among employees ( $n = 219$ ), which focused on methods of further education, was used. During the research, ethical research codes were followed, and the anonymity of the respondents was maintained. Respondents were addressed by e-mail with informed consent and data protection measures. By this way were full ethic aspects of the research.

The results were analyzed using statistical tools – the dependence test ( $\chi^2$ ) and Cramer's V measurement. The significant value level was chosen as  $\alpha = 0.05$ . The strength of dependence was calculated using Cramer's V measurement, which is within  $0 \leq V \leq 1$ . Used descriptive analysis and  $\chi^2$  test ensure that the results are robust and interpretable within the constraints of the sample.

In cases where the determined p-value was below the significance level  $\alpha = 0.05$ , the null hypothesis was rejected because the research demonstrated statistical dependence between the qualitative variables. In these cases, the strength of dependence was determined using Cramer's V coefficient. The results of the strength of correlation were interpreted in accordance with the categories in De Vaus (2014). For the purposes of the dependence test performance, the answers in the questionnaire were formulated into the structure required. To answer RQ 1, the following hypotheses were formed and tested:

- H<sub>0</sub>1: The education provided using the methods and forms of further education does not depend on the existence of an HR department.
- H<sub>0</sub>2: The education provided using the methods and forms of further education does not depend on the size of the organization.

To answer RQ 2 focused on whether it is possible to categorize the educational methods into certain areas according to the preferences or find suitable combinations of the educational methods on the basis of the frequency of their use was performed a factor analysis. The aim of the factor analysis was to explore combinations of the educational methods and forms and to reveal the factors that influence the behavior of the research sample. In order to identify the interrelations between the variables, the results obtained by the descriptive statistics were further processed by the factor analysis. In the factor analysis (after performing the correlation analysis and the principal component analysis), the Varimax method and the Kaiser-Guttman rule were used to select the main factors (Anderson, 2013). The data was processed only when the value of the significant factors was higher than 1; the values exceeding the 0.3 threshold were considered significant. The data were processed and evaluated using IBM SPSS Statistics 26 statistical software.

Based on the results of the case study, the literature review and the professional articles in the WOS and Scopus database, the following methods and forms of education were determined as the subject of the research:

- \* Self-education
- \* Work on projects
- \* Coaching
- \* Mentoring
- \* Internship in a foreign facility

- \* E-learning
- \* Outdoor learning/training
- \* The internet
- \* Video conference
- \* Job rotation
- \* Professional lectures

The disadvantage and limitation of the questionnaire survey is considered to be in the fact that the theories used by the researcher may not correspond to local customs, furthermore, he may omit some phenomena due to the fact that he focuses only on a particular theory in his research. Last but not least, the knowledge acquired may be too general for application in the local conditions (Hendl, 2005). The fact that the return rate of the questionnaires was lower than was assumed within the research can also be marked as a limit for the conclusions. The questionnaire was designed using the Survio platform and the link to the questionnaire was included in the cover email. The level of response was extremely low, the respondents were asked repeatedly. For next studies it will be convenient to involve a larger number of social workers and choose other research methods such as focus group, interview, mini interview are. Non respondents could not affect results, respondents are members of social work community, and this study is based on results of respondents. Low level of responses can skew results, nevertheless the results are gathered in all organization within Czech Republic, and it is possible to note, that non respondents were busy and overloaded.

#### IV. Results

As part of RQ 1, statistically significant dependencies between the further education and the characteristics of the organization that implements the education and development of employees were determined. The dependencies were evaluated (Table 3) and the characteristics of the organization, such as the sector of operation, the fact whether the organization is part of a larger group of organizations, the market of operation, the existence of an HR department and the size of the organization, were tested.

**Table 3: Results of the dependence test**

| Characteristics                                                 | HR department      | Size     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|----------|
|                                                                 | p-value/Cramer's V |          |
| Education provided using methods and forms of further education | 0.0216/0.155       | 0.469/ – |

*Source: Own processing (2023)*

Considering the results achieved, it can be summarized that:

- \* The education provided using the methods and forms of further education of workers depends on the existence of the HR department in the organization (the dependency strength of 0.155 is low).

- \* The education provided using the methods and forms of further education of workers does not depend on the size of the organization.

The results can be attributed to the fact that the activity of the organization in a particular market influences the choice of the training methods that the organization implements. The organizations with an international scope of activity will make more use of the internships abroad and the conferences, while the organizations with a local scope of activity will use more, for example, the job rotation, the mentoring and the self-education. The impact of an HR department existence can be seen mainly in the planning and incorporating of new methods into the further education, in the feedback creation and the effectiveness evaluation, see Table 3.

The RQ 2 aimed to categorize the methods of further education according to the frequency of use of the further education methods. The factor analysis of educational methods was used to answer this question.

**Table 4: The methods used for the employee further education**

| Variables                             | Number of responses | Share         |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| <b>Self-education</b>                 | <b>181</b>          | <b>82,60%</b> |
| Outdoor learning/training             | 2                   | 14,60%        |
| Coaching                              | 47                  | 21,50%        |
| Mentoring                             | 58                  | 26,50%        |
| <b>Internet</b>                       | <b>109</b>          | <b>49,80%</b> |
| Conference/Video conference           | 32                  | 14,60%        |
| E-learning                            | 49                  | 22,40%        |
| Job rotation                          | 49                  | 22,40%        |
| <b>Professional lectures/seminars</b> | <b>190</b>          | <b>86,80%</b> |
| <b>Work on projects</b>               | <b>64</b>           | <b>29,20%</b> |
| Internship in a foreign institution   | 13                  | 5,90%         |

Source: Own processing (2023)

The frequency results showed (Tab. 4) that professional lectures and seminars, self-education and the Internet are the methods used the most. Subsequently, the combination of training methods used by workers was surveyed.

For this purpose, a total of 3 factors were identified, which explain 55% of the behavior of the sample examined, see Table 5.

**Table 5: Factor analysis results**

| Factor | Total variance value | Variance value in % | Total percentage variance in % |
|--------|----------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1      | 3.299                | 29.987              | 29.987                         |
| 2      | 1.726                | 15.694              | 45.681                         |
| 3      | 1.050                | 9.547               | 55.228                         |

Source: Own processing (2023)

The first factor groups the variables (the educational methods used) of the video conferences (0.377), the e-learning (0.324) and the mentoring (0.245), with this factor explaining almost 30% of the sample's behavior (Table 6). The coefficient values for the first factor range from 0.377–0.245. The first factor is called “Self-development”. It explains the behavior of a sample of almost 30% of organizations and is made up of variables such as the conference (0.377), the mentoring (0.345) and the e-learning (0.324). The second factor, called “Employee development within the organization” explains the behavior of almost 16% of the sample surveyed and is made up of the variables of the internship in a foreign branch (0.506), the professional lectures (0.392) and the job rotations (0.310). The third factor, called “Increasing knowledge by means of self-study”, explaining the behavior of almost 10% of workers, includes the variables of the self-education (0.433) and the Internet (0.428) (Table 6).

**Table 6: Detailed results of the factor analysis**

| Variables                      | Factor 1         | Factor 2                                     | Factor 3                                    |
|--------------------------------|------------------|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Self-education                 | 0.024            | −0.029                                       | <b>0.433</b>                                |
| Outdoor learning/training      | 0.074            | 0.238                                        | −0.164                                      |
| Coaching                       | 0.191            | 0.151                                        | −0.009                                      |
| Mentoring                      | <b>0.345</b>     | 0.042                                        | 0.059                                       |
| Internet                       | 0.094            | −0.069                                       | <b>0.428</b>                                |
| Conferences/Videoconferences   | <b>0.377</b>     | −0.191                                       | −0.002                                      |
| E-learning                     | <b>0.324</b>     | −0.108                                       | 0.149                                       |
| Internship in a foreign branch | −0.205           | <b>0.506</b>                                 | 0.012                                       |
| Job rotation                   | −0.343           | <b>0.310</b>                                 | 0.236                                       |
| Expert lectures/seminars       | −0.100           | <b>0.392</b>                                 | 0.043                                       |
| Work on projects               | 0.034            | 0.284                                        | −0.321                                      |
| Total in %                     | 29.922           | 15.615                                       | 9.590                                       |
| Factor                         | Self-development | Employee development within the organisation | Increasing knowledge by means of self-study |

Source: Own processing (2023)

The most statistically significant factor is the factor 1, called “Self-development”, which explains the behaviour of 30% of employees. In this case, the variables of the video conferencing, the mentoring and the e-learning are explained. The advantages of video conferencing are in the narrow, professional focus, the time saving, the opportunity to join in a subsequent discussion and establish contact with the lecturer and other professionals of this area. In social work it is a mean to create a community of experts and to establish international cooperation. E-learning represents a significant advantage especially for the achievement of educational goals that have already been determined in advance (Torriente

et al., 2020). The participant of an e-learning program can choose courses that correspond directly to the objectives set in the personal development plan. Another advantage is in time flexibility (Makarov and Sevastyanova, 2020). Disadvantages include mainly the absence of a lecturer or a speaker and the difficulty in establishing a discussion or contact with other attendees (Yadegaridehkordi et al., 2019). Next education in Czech Republic is given by low and e-learning is one of the methods to save time and also it is a mean to education aim reach. Disadvantages also include the evaluation of the educational effectiveness, which has been the subject of much research in e-learning programmes. Mentoring, on the other hand, is an educational method where interaction between the learner and the mentor is necessary (Persaud, 2020) and in social work it is one of the most important methods to present knowledge. It is a guidance, a transfer of experience that is directly targeted to the given area of education. The choice of mentor could represent an important part of management, mutual cooperation should be satisfactory to both sides (Choi et al., 2020). This method is mainly used for new workers training or for training the existing workers for new positions. It is concerned with sharing work experience leading to the acquisition of skills and practices required. This method is very narrowly targeted and focused primarily on professional development (Safie et al., 2018). The education by means of mentoring and coaching is implemented in many professional positions in social area, the importance is in the transfer of knowledge and experience from the person of a mentor or coach to a specific person. The mentoring method is also applied in the area of training new social workers this method enables immediate feedback and, moreover, it requires from the trainee to pay attention throughout the whole lesson or course.

These three variables – training methods – will be chosen by the employees who want to improve their knowledge and skills and are interested in passing on their experience. The first factor characterizes employees who prefer such educational methods in further education, which are based on subjective choice, possibly correspond to the employee development plan and strategic plan of the organization. By means of these methods (the video conferencing and the e-learning), the social workers are able to reflect the requirements in their plan and, at the same time, they perceive mentoring as the most effective method that will lead them to the goals set. On the contrary, these employees do not use methods that show a quantitative aspect of education, such as the job rotation and outdoor learning/training. These are primarily educational methods that lead directly to the goals set in the worker's development plan. Considering the nature of the predominant educational methods, it can be concluded that the factor 1, which is mainly focused on the self-development, affects especially those workers who have a set personal development plan, receive feedback from their direct supervisors, discuss their plans with a mentor and are motivated to educate themselves systematically,

For these three variables, which characterize the first factor, i.e., the video conferences, the e-learning and the mentoring, time flexibility can be mentioned as an advantage, as the implementation directly reflects the requirements of the learner, followed by the accessibility and comfort. Current research predicts an increasing trend in the use of e-learning and the Internet teaching methods (Li, 2020; Lin et al., 2017). Based on their research, Urbanaviciute et al. (2020) state that the new generation of millennials, called

the digital generation, shows different approaches to education, using especially social networks and the Internet, and due to their influence, these teaching methods enter the educational processes at universities (Urbanaviciute et al., 2020).

The second factor, which explains the behavior of 16% of employees, called "Employee development within the whole organization" operates with the variables of the internships in a foreign branch, the professional lectures and the job rotations. All three learning methods are characterized by gaining experience outside the workplace. These are the methods that lead to gaining experience from another environment and then implementing it in the existing workplace. These methods are characterized by a common requirement for effective implementation, namely the pedagogical support of the institution where the education is implemented (Viens et al., 2020). It characterizes workers who prefer educational methods that have a specific quantitative aspect. These are the internship in a foreign branch, the professional lectures and the job rotation. On the basis of the prevailing educational methods, it is possible to conclude that the workers are characterized by a work activity that is based on practical experience and is, to some extent, quantifiable and measurable, possibly comparable across different departments (the job rotation) or branches of the organization (the internship in a foreign branch). It follows from this that the subjective insight of the superiors, the sharing of work experience or the team evaluation of education are important for these educational methods. Training methods focusing on the practical experience and the acquisition of specific professional/practical knowledge in a particular area can have a significant impact on the motivation, the integration into the team, the teamwork and the cooperation between branches. They enable the vocation of each employee individually within the section or branch, where he is the greatest contribution to the team, considering the knowledge acquired and the knowledge newly gained. They also allow the manager to further estimate the given employee's potential and talent, and to work out the career plan or the employee development plan. Therefore, it is appropriate to implement these educational methods in the workplace where teamwork, monitoring from the direct superiors and sharing of the work experience prevail. At the same time, it is necessary to evaluate motivation, the career growth, the teamwork and the position in the collective from the point of view of the educational management. These steps should lead to the employees' development and turnover elimination.

The third factor called "Increasing knowledge by means of self-study" operates with the variables of self-education and the Internet. Both teaching methods are characterized by the acquisition of knowledge that directly corresponds to the requirements of the job position and its subsequent implementation into practice. The disadvantages are in the absence of feedback, the absence of the evaluation method and the absence of the support from the trainer or the pedagogical support from the institution that would organize the education (Van Rosenberg et al., 2022). The third factor, which affects the behavior of 10% of the sample, contained the educational methods of the self-education and the Internet. Both of these methods have significant positives and negatives. The positive benefit is primarily in time flexibility, and the possibility of choosing a study subject. However, the absence of feedback, the absence of a tutor and the absence of an evaluation method that would assess the effectiveness of these forms of education brings a significant risk of unsystematic,

haphazard education. This conclusion can also be confirmed by the absence of another variable, or the low value of these variables in the factor three, such as the mentoring or the coaching, which would guarantee that the training is guided in the right direction. Overall, based on the educational methods covered, it can be concluded that this factor describes the employees with the absence of any development or education plan.

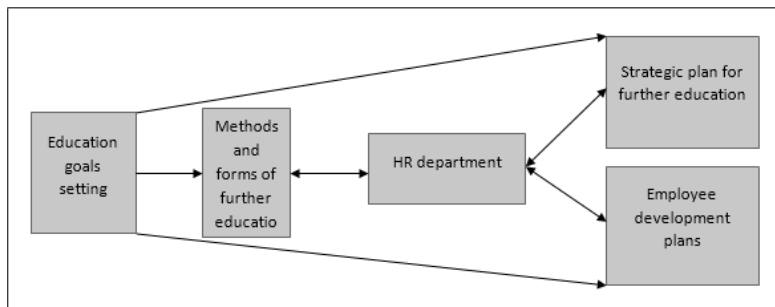
It is possible to state that the education of employees by means of the methods and forms of further education is a key point from which the subsequent planning of the employee education and the development of the whole organization further develop. There is important the role of HR department or HR manager and this statements is confirmed by this pilot study.

For an organization, the implementation of education is a high-cost investment, however, the strategic development of human resources is closely related to the growth of the entire organization and the reduction of the turnover rate. However, the research results confirmed that *the combination of methods and forms of further education is important*. The combination of the methods and forms of further education enables more effective education, and its implementation is important above all for the development of the whole organization and its the overall strategy. The results confirmed both *the relation between the further education and the role of the HR manager* in the company. This fact points to the absence of the HR management in social services and confirms the importance of working with the employee development. In the Czech environment, for many years, we have been witnessing such practicalities that the human resource management, and therefore also the management of further education, are dealt by the social workers themselves, who perform this activity within the social worker position, although they are not equipped with sufficient knowledge in the area of the HR management. Further education increases the motivation and willingness of workers to further participate in the running of the whole company.

The three preferred methods of education – the professional lectures and seminars, the self-education and the Internet point to the absence of feedback after the educational event implementation. In the long term, this result may be a problem in connection with the effectiveness of educational methods measuring. The overall impact on the organization can be negative from the point of view of both the increasing costs and the absence of such training methods that would, for example, lead to an increase in competences.

Altogether, the problem can therefore be seen primarily in the gaps in the management of further education, which should further focus on the effectiveness of each individual method and form of education and the assessment of further education from the point of view of the employee development plans and the strategic plans for education set in the organization. The diagram proposed in Figure 2 shows very close interdependence of the educational goals, the methods of education and the strategic plans for education and development. The human resources department plays a key role in the entire process at the same time, (Fig. 2).

**Figure 2: Choice of the further education method**



Source: Own processing (2023)

The figure 2 presents the link among education goals setting, strategic plan for further education and employee developments plans. The results showed that in the education process is strong bond between methods and forms of further education and work of HR department.

The factor analysis results showed that the preferences for each individual educational method differ according to the focus of the given employee within the given workplace and work role.

Employees preferring the self-development tend to use the methods of video conferencing, e-learning and mentoring, which guarantee them education according to a clearly defined and set plan.

On the contrary, the workers who work in organizations where further education is based on practical experience prefer the job rotation, the internship in a foreign branch or the professional lectures.

The third factor revealed a group of employees who prefer a combination of the self-education methods and the Internet, i.e., they prefer such education methods that allow the self-study, therefore this factor was called the self-study. However, these methods lack any feedback and possibility to evaluate the effectiveness of the educational method, which can cause a problem in meeting the educational objectives.

## V. Discussion

As stated by Andreev (2018), effectiveness can be assessed from the point of view of the professional, pedagogical and economic effectiveness. The results from the case study indicate an absence of the professional effectiveness, which could have enabled constructive feedback, which is lacking in the social services. Employee training is a long-term strategic plan that requires both changing work behavior and motivating employees (Urbancová et al., 2018; Azzouzi et al., 2020). Banister et al. (2020) also state that the motivation is related to the workers' participation in the training itself. The results of the dependence tests clearly confirm the relation between the evaluation of further education and the employee motivation plans, as well as between the evaluation of further education and the strategic training plans.

The factor analysis revealed three combinations of the educational methods and forms that explain the behavior of the workers participating in further education. The first combination of methods and forms is the combination of the conferences, the mentoring and the e-learning. The results of the research conducted demonstrate a strong “self-development” factor, which corresponds with the results of the research by Makarov and Sevastyanová (2020) also confirming the increase in the use of the teaching methods mentioned and their connection with the identification of the educational needs and the influence on the tools for controlling the effectiveness of education (Makarov and Sevastyanová, 2020). This agreement can be also seen in the study by Hrma (2020), who deals with the development of competences by means of the identification of the learning needs. The results of the research agree with the increasing incidence of the E-learning method, which is also pointed out in the research by Liu et al. (2020) and Parks et al. (2020), who points out the connection with the arrival of younger generations and the changing preferences in educational methods. Urbancová and Vrabcová (2023) also emphasize the need to differentiate educational plans, forms and methods according to particular groups of employees, their preferences and individual needs.

Another group consists of workers who focus on their own development by gaining experience within the organization, possibly in its branch and primarily use the methods of the job rotation at the workplace and the internship in a branch or a foreign branch (Tanasescu, 2015). This group of workers prefers acquiring knowledge and experience from another environment and then implementing the acquired knowledge in their practice. At the same time, it is possible to see a common element in both training methods, and that is the pedagogical or professional support of the organizations implementing these educational methods, as well as the existence of feedback. The element of pedagogical and professional support is also mentioned by Klug and Hausberger (2009) in their study; moreover, the research revealed feedback to be an important element in the area researched.

The third group characterizes workers who improve by means of the Internet and the self-study, and the absence of further education planning and the feedback can be assumed here. The results correspond to the conclusion of the study by Lorincová (2018) and Kouriantagis et al. (2019), who state the absence of feedback to be a significant deficiency in the self-study.

The survey results show that the professional lectures, the self-education and the Internet belong among the methods and forms of the employee education used the most. The research confirmed the same conclusion as did the authors of Kourgiantakis et al. (2019) which is that the social workers further education needs are highly individual and should not reflect only the organizational goals. The importance of the HR manager’s role lies in an accurate estimate of the abilities and talents of each social worker in order to utilize their potential. The methods and forms of further education are an important means ensuring the further education implementation. However, as shown in the study (Jefferies et al., 2023) the education of social workers should be realized at high school and reflect developing global standards for the education and training of the social work profession (Sewpaul et al., 2005). The results of this study are in agree of study of Raheja (2015), where is training and development taken as a function of human resource management concerned

with organizational activity aimed at bettering the performance of individuals and groups in organizational settings. It has been known by several names, including “human resource development”, and “learning and development”. Given that the results proved the methods and forms of professional lectures and seminars, the Internet and the self-education to be the methods used among employees the most, it is possible to observe a certain level of participation in further education. In this conclusion, we can agree with the findings of the studies by Hrma (2020), Makarova and Sevastyanova (2020) and Safie, Dmitrieva (2019) and Karim (2018). Based on the results, it is also possible to presume a learning direction leading from the expert interpretation to completing the necessary knowledge by means of the self-education and the subsequent search on the Internet. This direction in further education corresponds with the results of studies by Li (2013), Thierman (2016) and Dmitrieva (2019).

Based on the tests conducted, the dependence between the HR department and the further education, and was confirmed.

The results are in line with those of Urbancová and Vrabcová (2023; 2020); Bethere et al. (2016) and Tomuletie (2009), Mahadevan et al. (2019) i.e. that the task of HR is to formulate educational goals and choose forms and methods of education in accordance with the plans for education and the strategic goals of the organization and building a skillful and knowledgeable workforce is one of the most vital activities in an organization to ensure high level of competency. An important task of the HR worker or the HR department is to check whether the educational goals are in line with the strategic goals of the organization and to help to fulfill them.

The results of the study showed that it is necessary to develop tailoring educational plans to individual and organizational needs and strengthen the role of HR departments in aligning education with strategic goals.

The results confirm the importance of HR department in the form of feedback, planning of the education, realization and identification of needs of education. The new finding out in the process of social work education is using of on-line form and using of digital technologies, what can be determined by the various causes, for example due to time constraints, high level of demands on social workers, high costs and reduces budget for social area. It is necessary to focus on evaluation of education process, competency in social area, identification of education goals and education needs in next research.

## **VI. Conclusion**

The main objective of the article is to assess the influence of the factors selected on the choice of the methods and forms of the employee training in the organization. The sub-objectives are then:

- \* categorization of the educational methods selected according to the preferences of each individual type of social workers;
- \* on the basis of the results obtained, the objective is to formulate suggestions and recommendations for the organizations employing social workers, which will lead to improvements in the field of education of social workers.

The results of the dependence test showed that the existence of the HR department have influence on the further education. Then, the aim was to find the appropriate combination of the educational methods used within the further education in social services. The results show that the factor analysis of the educational methods used to train and develop social service workers helped to support and describe and characterize the choice of the training methods and their combination.

The influence of the HR department on further education is also confirmed by Bethere et al. (2016) and Tomuletie (2009) in their study. The results confirm the importance of HR department and the role of HR managers in setting of combination of education methods for example blended learning approaches e.g., pairing mentoring with online courses. The further education management has to also reflect the development in educational methods, where the research conducted confirms the direction towards the digitalization of the educational methods. The same shift is proved by Makarov and Sevastyanova (2020), who confirmed the shift to the methods using the digitization and the Internet. They also pointed out that the digitization changes the goals, principles, means and methods of teaching processes, including the tools for controlling (Makarov, Sevastyanova, 2020). The methods of the further education evaluation are addressed in the research studies (Karim, 2018) exploring a new approach to the further education evaluation.

In view of the results obtained, the following recommendations can be summarized and proposed:

- \* When identifying the training needs, it is necessary to proceed from the organizational level through the team level up to the individual level, i.e., to the training plan of each employee, and to select training methods or a suitable combination of training methods. The identification of the educational methods is a key element in the educational process, or more precisely in setting educational goals and planning educational activities. An appropriate combination of training methods leads to the effective achievement of the objectives set out in the training plan and should reflect the organizational strategy, the team culture and the training needs and goals of the employee.
- \* Considering the results of the research as well as the findings presented in professional sources and publications, it is possible to recommend that organizations focus on a combination of educational methods and methods using digital technologies, with e-learning or blended learning – pairing mentoring or coaching with online courses appearing to be ideal. Thus, this combination of training methods will reflect the individual needs and preferences of a wide range of employees, which is in line with the results of the factor analysis, which showed that the preferences for each individual training method differ according to the focus of the given employee within the given job and job role. The combination of a wider spectrum of educational methods thus reflects the needs of both workers and the organization. The three identified factors self-development, organizational development, and self-study and implicate methods combination for educational planning.

Organization oriented to self-development should use the combination of education methods as video conferencing, the mentoring and the e-learning. Organization oriented to organizational development should use the internships in a foreign branch, the professional lectures and the job rotations and organization where workers prefer self-study should combine self-education and the Internet.

This research adds to existing knowledge, particularly in the context of social services or HR management described combination of education methods, that can be an instruction for managers in other organization. The study identifies specific organizational characteristics that influence training choices, which can guide tailored educational strategies.

The study confirms the growing importance of combining digital and face-to-face training methods, especially in aligning with individual employee needs.

Organization should use blended learning approaches e.g., pairing mentoring with online courses.

HR departments should integrate feedback mechanisms into self-study methods or evaluate educational effectiveness with tools as questionnaire, tests, self-evaluated forms and interview are. HR managers should set education evaluating at regular intervals.

- \* The results of the research conducted showed that one factor plays a key role in the choice and use of the educational methods and forms, namely the existence of a personnel department. The task of HR department is to set the strategic goals (Fig. 2), plan education process, set the combination of education methods and evaluate the strategic goals and personal goals of education to be in agreement. This fact should be reflected in the approach to education and its methods in all types of organizations. An important outcome of this research is that the choice of methods must reflect the organizational goals, as mentioned above, and the needs of the organization.

The limits of the research can be seen in the specificity of the set of organizations on which the research was conducted, which were the organizations in the area of social services. Further research should focus on the effectiveness of education evaluation and the extension of competences by means of further education. Specific future research should investigate the role of employee demographics (age, gender, education) in shaping educational preferences, compare the effectiveness of educational methods across different sectors or countries and incorporate qualitative methods to explore the subjective experiences of employees with different training methods.

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