**Designing of School Training Firmcurriculum at international level**

**Basic specification (Curriculum)**

Name of subject: Training Firm

**Objective and importance of the training firm**

The present situation in the field of education requires innovation, strengthening as well as introduction of more effective ways of teaching into all types of primary and secondary schools including schools for students with specific needs and grammar schools. Since 1990 world surveys results have suggested significant decrease of creative thinking within western educational systems in spite of increasing IQ score. Traditional education does not appreciate innovative and business mind satisfactorily. According to NASA test, our educational system even hampers creativity given to a human at birth. The aim of education in the field of finance is to acquire essential competence of responsible financial behaviour within long-life perspective - living wage, philanthropy, active participation in social issues.

**Entrepreneurial spirit** means the ability of individuals to implement ideas into real life, undertake initiative, acknowledge responsibility, accept risk and achieve goals. It is important within entrepreneurship as well as a job.

The key competences enhancing development of young people’s potential for their employment or entrepreneurship are financial literacy, entrepreneurial spirit, creativity and innovation.

Training firms are being established to simulate real economic practice. A training firm is furnished and equipped like a real firm - desks, cabinets, office furniture, computers, copy machines etc. Every employer requires working practice from their potential employee. Training firm graduates have an advantage since they work in the training firm in particular position, which is recognized through verbal evaluation and the training firm certificate. The unemployed do not look for a job as “unemployed” but as the training firm graduates/employees. Employers perceive training firm graduates much more positively than jobcentre candidates without any working practice. Abroad, in particular in Germany, Switzerland training firms are up 50 per cent used for requalifications. Via training firms, target groups acquire key competences within firm establishment, work and management such as ability to work in team, communication, creativity in problem solving, making conclusions, individual and critical thinking, development own abilities and stimulation others to develop themselves.

Training firm graduates learn how to work out a business plan, founding document, CV, use a computer and various applications, communicate with the trade and tax offices, social and health care insurance agencies, calculate the price of products and services, do marketing, work out a catalogue, trade with other training firms on the training firm market, invoice, keep accounts, learn how to use bank services etc.

This method of education got from Germany to the entire world, most of European countries - for instance Austria, Hungary, Ukraine, Russia, Poland, Switzerland, France, Holland, Denmark, Finland as well as to the American continent, Asia and Australia.

Tte training firm supports development of so-called key qualifications, which helps to acquire ability to orient themselves in economic practice and react instantly to a problematic situation.

Finishing a training firm course enables students to orient better in legislation and entrepreneuring itself. A graduate intimately learns the firm structure, experiences work in particular departments of the firm, learns details and specifics of the position in the firm, realizes what the relations among the departments and particular posts within the firm are, actively contributes to individual and team task solving. Based on these experiences, a student learns how small and medium enterprises work, how to work with relevant PC applications necessary for running a business or working in a firm and gets specific knowledge required in the particular post within the firm.

Training firm participants gain particular abilities necessary for their future economic practice. Within the training firm, all basic actions take place - advertising, purchase, sale, written and telephone business communication, invoice and doing accounting, co-operation with a bank, doing secretarial jobs like in a real firm. The training firm employee **experiences the process** of the firm establishment (simulation through trade business department, business register, tax office, social and health care insurance offices, bank in Slovakia via the Slovak Centre for Training Firms - SCCF), **experiences work** within the firm departments, learns about specifics of the working post and **realizes** howrelations within the firm structures and working posts work.

Training firms work with original sources from real-life economic, mock goods and mock money. For this purpose, a circulation of documents within the firm is realized. Training firms cooperate with other training firms within our country and abroad. Training firms have been being established at all types of secondary vocational schools in Slovakia. The number of training firms has dynamically increased from 35 to 654 since 1998. The reason is simple - simulation of real economic practice provides excellent preparation for students´s action within their future job or enterprise.

**Training firms improve** their graduates´ personal, specialized, entrepreneurial and social competences. **Training firms enable** them to acquire entrepreneurial skills necessary for enterprise or a job.

**The training firm establishment** consists of two parts:

**Internal matters**, which include subject of enterprise, its name, logo, slogan, business intention and plan preparation, firm structure, founding document and job interviews for the posts within the training firm.

**External matters**, which include simulated trade licence procedure, trade register record, tax office record, bank accounts opening, registration of the firm and its employees to social and health care insurance companies via training firm national central offices.

**Structure of the training firm**

Internal structure of a training firm should basically “copy” a structure of a real medium enterprise. There are various types of firms such as trading companies as well as companies providing services (travel agencies, hotels, advertising agencies etc.).

The structure of a particular training firm reflects local conditions, for instance, number of employees, subject of enterprise, used technologies within particular activities.

Each real firm and so the training firm must have its organizational structure, job descriptions and must work out the system of documents circulation.

In foreign training firms, new departments are introduced - assistant department involves technologies and IT, language department comprises experts in all languages the training firm is able to communicate in.

The following training firm structure is one of the possible solutions. Particular departments could be structured further. It depends on the number of training firm participants. On the other hand, it could be necessary to accumulate posts as it is a common practice in real companies in connection with fast development of information technologies.

**5.1. TF departments**

1. CEO and secretariat
2. legal and personnel department
3. sales department
4. marketing and advertising
5. finance

**A. CEO and secretariat**

**a) CEO**

* + responsibility for the departments and whole company operation
  + assigning tasks for the departments and deadlines
  + responsibility for the public relations - other training firms within the national and international, central offices of TF
  + good organizational, communicative and language skills
  + awareness of received and sent mail and its management
  + TF documents signing
  + CEO proposal is submitted by the TF leader or all participants

**b) secretariat**

* + arranging the incoming and outgoing mail - recording in the mail record under the registration number, archiving
  + responsibility to sort out the mail and proceed it to the departments to deal with; record and send outgoing mail
  + responsibility for the TF contacts with public institutions
  + dealing with telephone calls, faxes and emails
  + arranging CEO contacts with departments, recording assignments and checking their performance
    - 1. **Legal and personnel department**

**a) legal department**

* + documents necessary at TF establishment arranging (notification of a trade, application for the entry in the Commercial Register, founding document, declaration made by trustee of an account)
  + arrangements of formal records in case of changes within TF - strike off invalid data and record new data (for instance, at the change of partners, executives etc.)
  + insurance contracts arranging
  + arrangement of confrontations with business partners

**b) personnel department**

* + keeping personnel records of employment - job application
  + registration, cancellation arranging and bookkeeping of monthly statements with social and health care insurance companies and tax office
  + working hours registration per month for the needs of wage and salary registration
    - 1. **Sales department**

**a) purchase/supply**

* + purchase to provide for regular firm operation
  + providing for equipment
  + providing for supplies for production or sale
  + documents arranging (orders, receipts, notes, storage register cards)

**b) sales**

* + providing for TF sales in cooperation with the department of marketing, order recording
  + timely shipping and delivery arrangement, including documents (delivery notes, invoices)
  + collecting receivables in cooperation with legal department
    - 1. **Marketing and advertising**
  + creation of the TF offers catalogue, prices of the goods and services, discounts
  + obtaining offers catalogues of other national and foreign training firms
  + advertising campaign arrangements, discounts, materials preparation for training firms fairs
  + arranging a list of customers - contacts, seeking for new customers
  + working out sales statistics, supporting TF good reputation and satisfying customer needs
    - 1. **Finance**

**a) general accounts section**

* + bookkeeping of received and issued invoices
  + supervision of ledger accounts - purchase, sales
  + other expenses and revenues accounting
  + internal clearing document issuing for wage and salary administration
  + issuing payment orders - insurance, cashing and other medical insurance benefits
  + prepares financial statements and closing
  + bank accounts opening
  + cash and noncash payment system managing

**b) payroll department**

* wage calculation based on supporting documents from personnel department in accordance with effective regulations
* payroll sheet for each employee of the training firm
* monthly payroll accounting, payroll, payroll slip for each employee issuing
* preparation of monthly records for social and health care insurance companies and jobcentre

**History of the training firm**

First training firm founding dates back to some time in 17th century in Austria or Germany, it is not clear up to now. Both of them are considered to be the first founders of training firms. In Germany with about 700 training firms, they are used in 50% to educate adults. About 1,000 training firms in Austria are included mostly in the school system, where so-called school model operates and **the subject of training firm** is compulsory at all business schools and business academies.

Modern history of the training firm (TF) records a 50-year tradition in developed market economies. Nowadays, about 4,180 training firms operate in 42 countries within the world association of training firms the **EUROPEN-PEN International.**

**EUROPEN** is acronym for **E**uropean **P**ractise **E**nterprises **N**etwork (system of training firms). The EUROPEN was established in November 1993 in the Centre of employment promotion in Essen by representatives of Holland, Great Britain, France, Germany, Austria and Denmark.

The EUROPEN has been renamed into the EUROPEN-PEN International. Today, the system includes training firms from all over the world via their national central offices. There are several types of membership in the EUROPEN-PEN International - standard, associated and affiliated. Non-member countries which cooperate with member countries are defined as participated.

Information and national and international partners contacts are available on the web [www.penworldwide.org](about:blank). Training firms are able to communicate with other training firms worldwide via [www.penapps.penworldwide.org/](about:blank), if they are given a **login and password** by national central office. After logging in the EUROPEN-PEN Online services system, a training firm can edit their data, look for suppliers and customers as well as other services, for example Yellow Pages. Yellow Pages contain the list of training firms with standardized cores of business, therefore they must use one of the defined categories in the system in the English language. Via editing, a training firm can state their webshop contact at [https://penapps.penworldwide.org/db/EditInstitution.aspx](about:blank). A training firm must regularly update their data in the Database section: Modify Your Data. You can get detailed information on EUROPEN-PEN International databases from the English manual at [https://penapps.penworldwide.org/Docs/ViewDocs.aspx?CatId=135&SubCatId=135](about:blank).

The idea of the training firm got to Slovakia from Germany. At present, the school model adopted from Austria dominates in Slovakia. The training firm as a school subject has been taught at Slovak secondary schools since 1992.

In 1994, the State Vocational Education Institute (ŠIOV) in cooperation with the Federal Ministry of Education and mainly with the Federal Vocational Education Institute in Berlin equipped first three training firms within the Transforma project in three Slovak districts - Business Academy (BA) Račianska 107 in Bratislava, BA in Poprad and  BA in Banska Bystrica.

Cooperation of Slovakia and Austria resulted in a common project. Within the project, a series of multiplication training courses took place in 1997, 1998 and 1999 for the employees of Slovak Centre of Training Firms and teachers from 9 pilot schools in the Slovak Republic - two from Bratislava and seven from other self-governing regions in Slovakia. They form the network of multipliers for the project of training firms.

The training firm network in each country is administered by the national central office, which simulates government offices, organizes courses for teachers/lecturers of training firms, provides for vocational education projects within business education and organizes international training firms fairs for the needs of training firms.

**Standards of the National Central Office**

* There should be one Central Office per a country due to organizational a financial reasons
* the Central Offices support and help training firms via simulating real economic situation for the purpose of reaching high quality level
* the Central Offices support free market within training firms, which will demonstrate the possibility of this way of firm performance
* the Central Offices support TF (micro-economy), EUROPEN-PEN International market operation (macro-economy) and international relations
* the Central Offices should be financed permanently

**Minimum services provided by the Central Offices:**

Efficiency of the Central Offices is besides others determined by the range of services provided. Therefore the Central Offices should offer these services at minimum:

* Trade and Business Registers ( list of business types, company registration number)
* Banking services
* Tax services
* Social and health care insurance (insurance contributions)
* Postal services (not necessary if there is straight mail connection between TF)
* Substitution of supplier and customer in order to simulate completed trade cycle within the market
* Seminars, further education, counselling/co-ordination
* Software (hotline in case if own software has been developed )
* Information services (e.g. leaflet, magazine)

**The State Vocational Education Institute provides for the functioning of the** **Central Office in Slovakia** through the Department for Financial Literacy and the Slovak Centre for Training Firms (SCTF).

SCTF was established as a result of decision of the Slovak Ministry of Education with effective moral and material help of Austria and KulturKontakt. SCTF represents Slovakia abroad, provides for cooperation with foreign central offices and training firms:

1. Simulates government offices to make the most possible real environment for the training firms – business registry, trade office, court, tax office, customs office, social and health care office and Centrobanka bank.
2. Organizes fairs for TF – provides for participation in national and international fairs, prepares and organizes contracting days, regional and international fair of the training firms in Slovakia.
3. Prepares seminars and workshops for TF teachers, provides counselling for TF in Slovakia, manages TF projects, administers its web page [www.sccf.sk](about:blank) and provides information

**The Slovak Centre for Training Firms was an affiliated member from 2001 and since 2008 it has been a standard member of the international association** **EUROPEN-PEN International**, which enables TF to use its database, information, communication and banking software, yellow pages and other applications of the international association.

**The role of teacher within the** **training firm**

The training firm teacher has the role of lecturer and instructor at workplace. In this type of education, the number of theoretical questions decreases but the number of practical tasks increases. TF teacher plays the role of a counsellor and his task is to create the atmosphere of mutual trust within the TF team. TF teacher/lecturer must have knowledge in the field of:

* negotiation with offices, e.g. trade office, business office, court, tax office, social insurance office, jobcentre, banking institutions …,
* legal form of types of enterprise,
* how the operation of enterprise is organized,
* new information technologies,
* enterprise agenda,
* domestic and international payment system.

Since firm knowledge is required, teachers with working practice in real businesses are welcome. The teacher must be able to do all kinds of actions within the TF. The knowledge of economics should be firm. The teacher must follow all changes within laws and regulations in force.

A training firm is a specific form of group teaching so the teacher must be able to organise team work. A lesson preparation is based on incomplete given information (e.g. new mail delivered) so it not possible to prepare exact plan for the lesson.

The basis of TF operation is individual work of students divided into several groups dealing with different tasks. The tasks come out of the particular position of the training firm within their operation.

TF department employees experience periods when they are overloaded or, on the other hand, there is not enough work to do. The teacher must be prepared for such a situation and prepare work for the students.

TF teacher must be creative, able to implement his/her creativity, seek for new teaching methods, which requires good specific and pedagogic qualifications. It is necessary to be innovated and updated through further education.

On the one hand, TF participants cannot work randomly, be unorganized, On the other hand, they should not realise that is is the teacher who organizes all firm work in fact.

The role of TF teacher is really demanding. He/she cannot be directive and do all the tasks himself/herself because it has a negative impact on students - they do not learn how to act independently and actively. The teacher must not be indifferent but must check students work and bring their attention to possible mistakes. It is necessary to provide students with working space where making mistakes is possible but the mistakes will not harm the firm.

It is clear that only a teacher who can independently decide and solve problems and wants to teach it his/her students is able to lead a training firm. Along with gradual implementation of training firms into educational system in Austria and Germany, theoretical side of the subject was developed - methodology of the training firm. Austrian and German methodologists significantly influenced the development of this discipline. Their works have become theoretical and methodological basis for other European countries, where the idea of the training firm as a school subject was realised in their educational systems. Methodology of the training firm as a border scientific discipline has been included into teacher training courses for economics at Faculty of National Economy at the University of Economics. It is one of the most popular courses within teacher training for economics subjects. It also contributes to a better quality of teaching of this subject at secondary schools in the Slovak Republic.

The first specialist in the Slovak Republic to develop the methodology of the subject of training firm was A. Viskupičová (1977). In her work “Ekonomické cvičenia vo fiktívnej firme” (Economic Exercise within Training Firm), she analyses the teaching/learning process in TF in the form of practical recommendations for TF teachers. The author with the team of SCCF reacted to the changes in the TF scheme in Slovakia (establishment of the Slovak Centre of Training Firms in 1988) in their publication “Cvičné firmy na stredných školách” (TF at Secondary Schools) (1999). This work is a teacher´s book for TF teachers and has affected the quality of teaching this subject at secondary schools in Slovakia.

After the establishment of the Slovak Centre of Training Firms, more works on TF and applying of this specific organizational form in the system of education of unemployed graduates were written. A team of authors led by G. Horecká wrote „Cvičná firma – most medzi teóriou a praxou“ (TF as a Bridge between Theory and Practice)(2002) and „Cvičná firma“ (TF) (2004).The publications are used by teachers and lecturers in TF for graduates. They were followed by „Minimálne štandardy kvality cvičnej firmy“ (Minimal Quality Standards of TF)(M. Baránek, 2006) and „Cvičná firma pre absolventov“ (TF for Graduates) by G. Horecká and team of authors., 2006. It is possible to use all of the publications in adult education scheme within requalification courses of this type. They are practical and serve as teacher´s books.

TF as a simulation within educational process presents a dynamic model of economic practice which enables its participants to realise the relations as well as particular facts of the cases. They can use the knowledge they obtained at secondary school or university. TF integrates this knowledge. While doing the tasks the participants obtain new knowledge and information. The point is not to pass isolated knowledge but specific application of knowledge obtained within other subjects. **The training firm as an educational activity partly substitutes professional practice in a firm.**

The methodological potential of the educational activity is that the participants do specific tasks in the TF surroundings, meet problems and learn how to solve them in their complexity. This would not be possible to do via traditional education. TF follows the needs of development of multidisciplinary skills.

Within TF, educational objectives are being reached in specific fields which generally reflect most working posts. In this way, TF integrates three parts of education: economic, technological and social part.

**The training and real firm**

The establishment of the training firm followed the need for practice. In real enterprise, students do not have access to important data. In the training firm students have access to personal documents, pay-sheets, balance statements, programs and other documents.

It is useful if training firms keep contact with real firms and copy their operation to certain extent so that training firm participants can be close to real economic. Practical activities within the training firm provide students for further knowledge which enlarge their theoretical knowledge. On the one hand, the training firm copies the real enterprise surroundings to provide for the best preparation for their students, on the other hand,

real firms want to recruit efficient employees. Cooperation of real and training firm enables to implement requirements of real economy into the learning/teaching process. Partnership of the training and real firms developed on this idea. It functions voluntarily and is useful for both sides.

Most of Austrian training firms have partner firm. Real firms provide training firms with catalogues, price lists etc. They support training firms financially, provide lectures and help combine work in real and training firm. Real firms select their potential employees from students during their course.

In Germany, almost all training firms have their partner real firm. This partnership is convenient for both of them. The training firm promotes the real firm via its operation at own school and domestic and international trade fairs of training firms. The real firm can sponsor the training firm via real costs like postal or telecommunication fees, real samples for trade fairs of training firms, trade fair costs or donor technology, etc. Training firms participants can get practical training in real firm.

However, it is not necessary to have a partner real firm. In our conditions, where entrepreneurial surroundings are still developing, it is really complicated to gain a real partner.

**The training firm as training for the future**

The main idea of the training firm is to prepare its graduates for their future. It means, the graduate should be able to work in an office of “tomorrow”. Having analysed training firms we found out that a number of TF leaders pass their experiences from “yesterday” to their students. It is presented within the structure of TF, which is mostly traditional, some TF structures reflect today´s criteria but none of them fulfils ambitions of tomorrow. We have to ask if this approach corresponds with our quality requirements in education. TF leaders in western Europe should not stick in their present progress when their students are able to use electronic banking communication and other modern technologies, but they should train their students to be able to manage structural and other changes which are introduced on a daily basis.

This is the reason why progressive companies are transforming themselves into a “learning organization”. They take “change management” as essential and the training firm should reflect this kind of company.

Economic recession of today is first of all a structural recession. Economic and political problems reflect insufficient flexibility of companies. They are not able to adapt to new requirements and learn. Therefore it is necessary to transform companies into “learning organizations”. Each organization is a system of relations.

**Our idea of a learning organization consists of the following:**

* receives signal from the surroundings and continually works on its own future,
* takes communication as a way of network thinking within the organization as well as world,
* reflects its surroundings in its internal diversity and complexity,
* is highly tolerant towards other ways of thinking,
* personnel and organizational structures are put in accordance with hierarchical organization,
* helps its employees view the complexity rather than partiality,
* transforms values, e.g. the concept of career acquires the meaning of team considering and solving their tasks,
* trains its employees to be able to manage change,
* trains its employees to be able to manage stress brought by change.

**Company culture**

Each organization goes through its own development, which affects formal and informal relationships of its employees as well as processes of thinking and deciding. Particularly this mechanism developed by people creates organizational culture. Each TF- like each real firm - has its own firm culture. The firm culture is created by mutual interaction of people within the company. Communication is the tool for creating the culture and medium for transferring it to new employees and further generations. The outcome of firm culture is, first of all, synthesis of opinions and values. It guarantees the ability to function as a whole, determines employees´ attitude to work, how they see themselves within the firm and surroundings and what is or should be important to them. These, mainly unwritten features of a company sustain the firm or even drive it to great success.

**International trade within training firms**

Training firms obtain international business contacts via databases and applications like Yellow Pages from EUROPEN-PEN International as well as from international trade fairs of training firms.

International trade fairs of training firms are organized in partner countries over the world. Regularly, international trade fairs of training firms are held in Germany, Bulgaria, Czechia, Slovakia, Switzerland, the USA and other countries. All upcoming fairs can be found at [https://www.penworldwide.org/events/events-calendar/](about:blank).

At cross-country sale, it is necessary to draw up a delivery note and invoice on an appropriate form in a foreign language clearly so that the customer understands it. Delivery note and invoices for foreign customers are to be sent to the national centre in an envelope with the correct address abroad. SCCF and most of national centres of training firms also has the role of postal office for foreign mail. One of the examples of such a service is ZÜF, German centre of training firms, which came up with the idea so that training firms could save finances because charges for postal services for abroad are high.

Recently, agenda has been sent via the Internet - emails, social networking sites or applications, it is cheaper. In training firms, catalogues, short presentations, orders, delivery notes and invoices are sent domestic and foreign customers via emails. It is ideal if a training firm uses own email address during its existence, which is checked by the teacher. It helps avoiding problems like lost mail or stagnation of communication, which weakens the TF credibility. The SCCF online system of registration on [www.sccf.sk](about:blank) requires own email of the training firm because the extract from the public court register and trade licence is sent by software automatically to a mailbox of the training firm. We had some negative experiences, when all training firms shared only one school address, the mail did not reach the addressee. The e shop is only a course of transactions of procurement and sales via data communication networks. From this reason, the development of technologies is faster than writing textbooks, we need to be really flexible especially in the training firm.

EU training firms as it is in real firms try to implement mutual intra-community sales conducted within the single internal market of EU member states where the movement of goods occurs, and not import or export, which still remains towards the third countries outside the EU territory. Payments to EU member countries and European Economic Area have to contain the account number of the receiver in the structure IBAN - International Bank Account Number in a payment order, otherwise the foreign banks will charge some additional fees.

**The international trade fair of training firms**

It is a great honour for students to participate on trade fairs of training firms and to be appreciated for their effort and all activities. The student is able to try the direct communication with the customers and everything to be learnt from organizational-practical preparation of an exhibition stand and material base of presentation of an own firm via application of theoretical-professional knowledge in practice to key qualifications in marketing behaviour and actions. Irreplaceable value for participants of fairs of training firms is an opportunity to communicate directly in foreign languages: solving business situations, establishing business and partnership relations and contacts but also personal friendships, getting to know national and cultural customs of participating countries.

Students are able to practice everything in direct contact with a customer from organizational-practical training of preparation of a stand, material supply and presentation of the firm to key qualification in the area of marketing behaviour and actions. The quality preparation is the first step to participate at the fair of training firms. The algorithm of preparation for an international fair is mentioned as a tool. Before preparation of training firm for trade fair it is suitable to set the goals to be reached.

**Pedagogical objectives:**

-to prioritize mostly professional jobs which are practically orientated

-personal education

-to improve language skills in foreign language – language competences

-key qualifications (communication, team work, individual work)

**Business objectives:**

-own product demonstration

-pricing policy

-creating a design of an exhibition stand

-customer orientation

**Preparation for the international fair of training firms**

1. Choosing the right trade fair

-international trade fairs of training firms

-international trade fairs organized by SCCF

-regional fairs organized mostly by school (for example by Business Academy in Žiar nad Hronom)

1. Selection of students and their participation in trade fair

-reasons for non-participation (permission from parents, financial reasons, passport)

-measures that could be helpful (sponsors, parent association support)

3 Keeping the deadline for sending the application form to a trade fair

-payment for the exhibition stand (real by a check and virtual with money, at some fairs)

4. Equipment of an exhibition stand

a) Type of stand

-row stand (one side open) I\_I

-corner stand (two sides open) \_I

-island stand (all sides open) O

b) Equipment of stand

-the size of the stand

-equipment from organizer (chairs and tables, walls, electrical connections

-features of the stand wall (mounting options)

-customize your stand to corporate identity

-determination of style, colours, lightness and furnishing

-other exhibition items (materials from their real firm, if necessary have them insured, customs forms for transport to international fairs)

-sketch design or model of stand

-test installation of stand

c) Stand equipment

-decorations

-hospitality

-computer

-musical equipment

-tools

-cleaning stuff

-extension cord

-projection equipment

d) Office supplies and equipment

-writing tools

-tablet, laptop, calculator

-catalogue of training firm (also in foreign language)

-advertising materials- offers

-business documents (price lists, orders, delivery and stock sheets, invoices…)

-various office supplies (covers, folders, punch, ruler, adhesive tape)

-winning games (game, box, prizes) to attract customers

e) Arrangement of sales space

-exhibition zone- promotion of products

-sales interview zone, refreshment

5. Advertising scheduling

-advertisements in journals for training firms

-advertisements and presentations of training firms on websites SCCF (in foreign language and also in the Slovak language)

-targeted invitations of important customers

-brochures, offers, a catalogue, PowerPoint presentations, foreign language prospects (at international fairs), book of guests, business cards, gifts with logo of training firm, signs with the name of firm

6. Creating a catalogue for a fair

-selection from current assortment

-special offers at the time of the fair

-special rebates at the time of the fair

-pricing policy in foreign currency (at international fairs)

7. Preparation of forms for the fair

-order (or in combination with a bid list)

-receipt and expenditure documents for sale in cash

-custom book

-business cards

-delivery documents

-invoices

-check books

-stock books

-guest books (for other training firms, to stick business cards, for contacts)

-at international trade fairs – forms in the foreign language, price tags

8. Preparation of goods for trade fair (depends on the length of the fair

-to find out how many goods are available at individual offers of training firm

-to find out if it is needed to complete stock

-to find out if there is a sufficiently large warehouse before a trade

-consideration about delivery time

9. General information

-posters at school (at regional fairs)

-posters on school news boards

10. General interviews

-about uniform clothes

-business cards for co-workers

-company logo

11. Sales training – before the fair at school

-information about offered goods and services

-addressing training firm by a visitor of a fair

-attitudes in business negotiations – learn how to argument

-demonstration techniques

-preparation in foreign languages (at international fairs)

-using trade fair checks

-positions of colleagues at exhibition stand

-behaviour at the trade fair stand

12. Division and determination of tasks (share responsibilities)

-division of tasks (sales, purchase, contracting, presentations)

-creating a time schedule for fulfilling tasks

-staffing of the stand (even those who will be attracting customers to stand), services

-rules of competence and responsibility in the transport of exhibition goods, forms, office supplies, etc.

13. Calculation of fair costs

a) Basic costs

-space and stand fees

b) Stand equipment and costs of building

-small material

-rent for technical equipment of stand

c) Operating costs

-hospitality

-insurance

d) Advertising costs

-invitations

-catalogues, brochures, leaflets, posters

e) Transport costs

f) Personnel costs of selected participants of the fair of training firms

-travel expenses, freight

-accommodation

-catering

14. Choosing cost-effective transportation

a) Public means of transport (depending on quantity carried)

-national shipper (bus or railway)

-international shipper (railway or plane)

b) Bus rental

15. Selection and reservation of suitable accommodation (quantity discount)

a) Accommodation recommended by the organizer of the fair

b) Consideration of the choice of accommodation location

-distance from the fair

-cheap transport to the fair (Local Public Transport)

What is needed during the fair:

-use and practise skills individually

-conduct sales interviews

-pay attention to the actual sales process (filling out – receiving cash registers, checks…)

-take responsibility for running the stand

-distribute souvenirs, business cards

-demonstrate a prize competition

-take care of the stand until the specified time

-ensure dismantling (control of exhibition items, office supplies and documents of sales and purchases

Don´t forget about co-workers (students) who do not care of the stand in that period of time (get them written commission or include in the contract) and they will provide the following tasks:

-get in touch with other training firms

-practise trade purchases with training firms – coordination with management

-practise “x” purchases with “x” training firms

-practise personal purchases at training firms – exactly define the finances which are available

-practise private purchases

-monitoring competition, do market research of training firms

-take photos of own stand and other exhibition stands

-monitoring other stands and their decoration

-get payment checks and be informed how to use them

**Evaluation of participation at the international trade fair of training firms**

**-**return borrowed exhibition materials and items

**-**eventually remember to a thankful letter to the “baptismal company” – real company

**-**students´ publication activity to school or regional newspapers

**-**make a written report from a trade fair (experience, suggestions, ideas, initiative to the next fair)

**-**eventual presentation of the report in some media (newspapers, magazines)

**-**evaluation of written work agreements

**Tasks in each department**

SALE:

-clearing (check whether daily turnover agrees with warehouse evidence)

-perform a success rate check at the fair

-turnover statistics

-customer count statistics

-how would a new catalogue help to gain new customers

-processing of received orders from the fair

PURCHASE:

-perform stock accounting

-warehouse control

-information about the decrease of goods in stock

-replenishment of stock and assortment from suppliers

-order goods from new suppliers (contacts from fair)

ACCOUNTING:

-daily settlement of financial increase and decrease on the account or cash register

-clearing of received checks

MARKETING:

-processing experience from the fair (business talks, stand equipment …)

-stabilization of acquired business contacts

**Main characteristic of subject**

Training firm as a subject is very flexible to all requirements of last school reforms in the international environment. It is important to develop enterprise skills, financial literacy, and application of digital skills and implementation of new skills agenda. Financial literacy is an ability to apply knowledge, skills and experience, to manage personal financial resources and to approach self-financial, lifelong protection.

The subject is based on systemized knowledge of different subjects in very specific situation in simulated business environment. Training firm is a specialized economic subject linked with business economics, business skills, applied informatics, accounting, ethics, administrative correspondence and foreign languages.

The subject is studied in the third year, 4 lessons a week.

The aim of the subject is to simulate a real firm but in school environment. All activities are simulated as in real firm in adjusted shape/form/ and time limit. Students work in training firm as employees in specific departments. They simulate economic practice and keep Slovak legislation system in business and entities. The curricula is focused to develop key competences in business such as the basics, how to start business, planning and business finances, management, marketing human resources in business, managing skills aimed to communication in external and internal environment of firm, business ethics, self- knowledge and language skills.

Training firm develops economic awareness, working with specialized literature, new technologies, strategy of communication and social behaviour. It is a complex educational programme to gain and achieve key competences and qualifications as well as team awareness, independence, responsibility, creativity, cooperativeness.

**Educational objectives**

1. Social objectives

The objective of training firm is to provide knowledge and skills how to set up business and run business in real firms. Students learn the firm structure, work in specific departments. The training firm has five basics departments which work simultaneously but each of them has its own agenda: management and secretarial, law and personnel department, marketing and advertising, department of purchasing and selling, economic department, accounting department.

The employee of training firm has to know specific details of his job post and realise relations with each department and particular firm posts. He is also actively involved in solving individual and team working tasks. He gets the experience and conception about how small and medium-scale enterprises operate, how to work with computers, how to communicate in foreign languages, how to work in specific position. Students of training firm who want to be successful at job market can apply for similar jobs they have practised (for example: a general manager , a secretary, an assistant, a marketing worker, a sales and purchasing manager, an accountant etc.) Students can become self employed by getting some knowledge.

Training firm as a subject enables a simulation of administrative, personnel, accounting, marketing banking, tax and other economic operations which may be used by students in common practice. Training firm provides students with some competences such as independence, team-work, communication skills, responsibility, creativity, planning, language skills and other skills. Students of training firm are able to make decisions about future careers, to focus on working, private and civic life, to self-educate and self-actualization. Students of TF are skilful and flexible to meet requirements of labour market and current social and economic conditions.

1. Institutional objectives

-to know how to start business including business intention, financial planning, administration and documentation,

-to develop cultivated performance in oral and written form, to represent polite manners and perform work outcome in public,

-to develop language knowledge and skills,

-to use computing and presenting techniques in management, marketing activities, administration control and presentation,

-to focus on economic environment and legislation in the Slovak Republic.

1. Specific objectives
2. Educational and behavioural

-to educate how to self-respect and self-image

-to educate how to honour a superior and a subordinate

-to educate how to cope with conflict situation in assertive manner

-to educate to constructive problem solving

-to educate to present work and TF creatively

-to educate how to communicate

-to educate how to be precise and punctual

-to educate how to follow ethical and legal norms

-to educate how to work in a team

b) Educational

-to compile a complete documentation related to business establishment

-to develop documents related to personnel agenda, accounting, firm management, communication with offices and state institutions

-to focus on laws, regulations and norms accepted in the Slovak Republic and to apply them in specific troubled situation

-to create documents by computing technology

-to make a financial plan and analyse options of its application

-to design advertising campaign, make advertising resources, give presentations in the native language and foreign language

-to communicate with training firms in Slovakia and abroad

**An overview of educational strategies** (development of key competences such as communicative, social, personnel, working and ICT competence).

Educational strategies applied in the subject will help to develop key **competences of students**

1.Communicative competence

**-**to make clear and fluent ideas, to make correct sentences in written form, to follow language and stylistic strategies and specialized terms

**-**to make texts with specialized context

**-**to be actively involved in discussions, to give opinions, to respect other opinions

**-**to comment in oral or written form with restrain to discussion or communicative situation

**-**to capture ideas from texts and speech

**-**to create presentations with brief and clear structure

**-**to promote a training firm at international trade fairs, events in appropriate way

**-**to lead a business dialogue

2. Personnel competences

-to apply economic thinking

-to learn effectively, to gain new information and skills

-to improve student´s education by other people´s experience

-to focus on evaluation of results and to react properly, to accept advice and criticism

-to study independently

3. Social competences

-to work in team and fulfil tasks

-to perform given tasks in a responsible manner

-to support a team with own ideas

-to consider other ideas without prejudice

-to be constructive and creative

-to take responsibility for your action

4. Working competences

-to have knowledge about business from economic point of view, about advantages of business and employment

-to know how to apply at labour market

-to react properly to different working conditions

-to have general knowledge and skills to develop business activities

5. Competences in the area of information-communication technologies

-to work with computing technology

-to work with software and Microsoft Office package program

-to communicate via e-mail

-to use presentation technology

-to search information on the internet from economic and business area, to know web-pages of state authorities and public administration institutions

**Education strategy**- methods and forms

**Methods**. Training firms are based as simulation of real economic practice in real firm so we can exclude such methods as a lecture or explication. The main method is learning by doing. Simulation as the method offers and develops alternatives, it implicates consequences of making decisions, and it helps to solve problems in different situations, to know how to react to certain situations without causing damages. If there is a need to complete theoretical knowledge it is recommended a dialogue with an expert or a lecturer, reading specialized literature or self-studying of laws, regulations and instructions. Other methods are used such as receptive-explication; reproductive - guided interview; heuristic-dialogue; moderate discussion; problem solving and brainstorming.

When teaching economic subjects, the popular teaching methods are based on solving a problem or a case which require individual work of students. On the base of generally acknowledge psychological studies of J. Freedman, it is claimed that an average human being can remember approximately 10 % what he reads, 20 % what he can hear, 30 % what he can see, 50 % what he can see and hear simultaneously, 70 % what he can hear and actively produce and 90 % what he reaches by his own experience and activities. The training firm is a specific form of active teaching where are used either elements of problem-group learning and also integrated teaching.

**Simulation** as a method provides opportunities to develop and realise alternatives, to be able to predict consequences of various decisions, to solve different situations without any problems and to recognise reactions of systems by a change of certain situations with no damage by making mistakes. In the case of need of completion of theoretical knowledge it is recommended for example, an interview with a specialist or a lecturer, or work with a specialised literature – self-study of laws, norms and regulations. Self-study enables a man to be gradually adopted to a basic method of acquired new knowledge which will be used to start his real practise. As in simulated business environment of training firms trade is made by fictional goods and fictional money, the whole process is safe and a participant of a training firm can learn by his own mistakes. Knowledge and experiences acquired by simulation method in a training firm are easily transformed into real situation. The simulation method enables to achieve several objectives:

* to acquire knowledge and skills by processing orders, delivery certificates, invoices, by payment transactions and so on,
* self-reliance, determination to further studies, team work,
* ability to look into complex business cases and to be able to take responsibility that results from group work,
* -optimal preparation for employment.

**Staging method** is also used in a training firm. Each participant working in a training firm is categorised for certain position and situated into certain actual situations which he has to solve individually and he has to be involved in task to be posted. These are specific features of a staging method. The more is the participant involved into his task the more successful he becomes and therefore the motivation is really important. Motivation can be connected with an effort to be successful in a firm as well as with an effort to know better certain work and thus be better prepared for practice.

**Dialogue methods** are widely applied in a training firm. The ability to avoid conflicts is a prerequisite of survival of an individual in constantly changing environment. The training firm works on the assumption of the development of each personality of its employee- participant. Each person has the right of co-determination and is taken seriously. The dialogue is realised at all levels and at all departments. Participants perceive themselves as team members with a high level of tolerance. Potential conflicts are even accepted as a necessary result of cooperation to achieve the same goal. Therefore we do not suppress emotions in the training firm. Emotionally courageous participants are often the ones who put things in motion in a training firm. They just need to be managed to encourage their co-operation and teamwork.

Operational meetings are a specific form of a **discussion method** in a training firm. The heads of departments inform the director of a training firm and a teacher on the accomplishment of the tasks and mutually consult on further plans for the future. The director of the training firm leads the operational meeting, receives information and assigns new tasks. The teacher/lecturer is an advisor in the background. He interferes minimally in the operational meeting, possibly in the navigation and coordination of activities in the training firm.

**Motivational methods** in the training firm are used for example as a motivational dialogue, motivational talking and motivational demonstration. Continuous motivational methods are also important such as presenting examples from practice, in particular by encouraging participants by challenge and praise.

The biggest motivational element in the training firm is a feeling of contribution to success. It can be experienced by participants and a teacher. The mistakes made in the training firm are realised as a chance to learn not as a failure of an individual.

**Brainstorming method** in the training firm is used as a spontaneous discussion when seeking new ideas, e.g. setting up a training firm and discussion about business in the training firm , about the logo of the training firm, about an advertising slogan in preparation for a trade fair etc. Brainstorming is a basic method of marketing work in the training firm and brings a lot of original ideas which are used by participants in presentation techniques.

**Illustrative demonstration methods in the training firm are used** in the implementation of administrative, business and evidence operations, graphic and illustrative works, and work with a computer, office and telecommunication technology, work with modern information technologies, economic software and so on. Individual work of participants in the acquisition of information (e.g. via the Internet), to study specialized literature and also during control activities is permanently combined with teamwork in solving complex tasks and practicing communicative and cooperative techniques.

**Economic games** in the training firm belongs to attractive teaching methods. They may take the form of training sessions and situational games. They are focused to practice ability to make decisions. They allow the representation of practice in dynamic, mutually interconnected systems with different variables and in different situations. Participants included in working group have to survive the consequences of their decisions, they have to endure wrong decisions and if it is possible to change them by the ideas they consider are right.

**CLIL method** (Content and Language Integrated Learning) represents both content and language integrated teaching. In the broadest sense it indicates teaching of non-language subject using foreign language as the means of communication and for sharing educational content. Content of non-language subject is developed by using a foreign language and at the same time the foreign language is used in mediation of the given educational content. This type of integrated teaching sets two basic objectives:– content and linguistic which is often supplemented by the third one. This defines which skills and strategies will be developed and in what way.

**Forms:**

Students work individually

Students work in groups

Frontal teaching

Working with documents, magazines and newspapers

Working with Microsoft Office package program

Excursion

Workshop with a professional consultants

Mind map

Role plays

Output

Economic Game

Participation at domestic and international Training Trade Fairs

**Evaluation in the training firm**

Evaluating a graduate of the training firm we have to accept some preferences of graduates which can influence his work:

1. intelligence
2. experience
3. psychological state
4. classification into a group

The performance of graduates is not equal and neither their outputs are the same quality, therefore it is not possible to have the equal rating. The starting point should be a detailed analysis of their work which should be evaluated not only individually but also in groups. It has to be taken into consideration such a fact how a student formulates the given task or accepts the task without any objections, whether he works systematically, how he takes an advantage of time, how long it takes him to carry out entrusted work, his creativity, independence as well as the ability to communicate, to perform results of his work and also his willingness to work in benefit of the whole group.

Employers of EU countries are accustomed that the future employee shall present not only his school report but also the verbal evaluation with the letter of recommendation where are verbally described his qualities, strengths and weaknesses of the graduate of the training firm.

**Criteria for evaluation of work in the training firm**

These basic criteria should be evaluated within a training firm:

1. social relations
2. organizational prerequisites (competences)
3. results
4. documentation
5. presentation of results
6. **Social relations**

Itis an ability to cooperate, teamwork and communicative skills. Within teamwork it is evaluated: ability to advocate for group goals, to motivate others, to bring new ideas, to accept other opinions and also to help others. In terms of communicative abilities it is an ability to transform some information, to listen actively, (to feel empathy to a co-worker), to express thoughts clearly and comprehensibly and solve potential conflicts.

1. **Organizational prerequisites (competences)**

Thiscriterion assesses whether the participant can formulate tasks clearly, whether the formulations are factually correct, whether the tasks are accepted with no objections, whether his work is systematically planned as a framework but also in terms of partial tasks, whether the deadlines are determined and controlled.

1. **Results**

The results are evaluated in terms how well the participant worked, whether his solutions are usable practically, whether the solutions are complete and correct, whether the solution is appropriate and original, whether the way to the solution was economical and rational and whether the student worked rationally and fulfilled required deadlines.

1. **Documentation**

This criterion evaluates documentation which the participant worked with in the stated department of the training firm. It is evaluated whether the documentation is properly structured, whether it is processed completely and accurately, whether the particular steps from documentation are clear and made in the right order, whether the documentation is formally and linguistically correct, whether it is original and the required deadlines have been observed.

1. **Presentation of** **results**

In this criterion, we evaluate performing of students at presentation of results. Apart from arranging a presentation, we assess its content, application of audio-visual means, presentation performance (oral presentation, formulation, gesticulation, performance).

If the teacher wants to evaluate objectively, it is necessary to evaluate departments and the individual after each block of the training firm. Resulting evaluation will be an average achieved by the student in the school year. It is possible to change, complete the specified criteria but they basically contain the most important activities which can be described and evaluated by the teacher of the training firm. Verbal evaluation is similar to evaluation of employees in real companies. The graduates of the training firm submit their work evaluation to their future employers as the letter of recommendation attached to application form for a vacancy. From such a processed evaluation, the future employer can get better and more concise overview about a future employee comparing to the traditional school classification.

**General instructions of evaluation:**

- Students will be evaluated for produced materials and documents of particular departments, for active participation of working in TF, for presentations of projects for meeting the deadline of stated tasks, for presentations of TF at Business Academy and at different events. The evaluation will include opinions of other students and their ability to assess others.

Evaluation criteria:

- a) oral language skills, communication, correct usage of professional terms, general knowledge, ability to apply knowledge from other subjects, language fluency and comprehensibility, cultivated manners in public

- b) written form- proper and precise filling of forms and documents in particular departments, correct usage of specialized terms, individual and team work, following norms for text- proofing, information processing

- c) developed presentations- gaining information, appropriate processing, harmony of oral and written presentation, ability to reply to public questions, work creativity, public performance

- d) fulfil tasks

- e) active involvement of working in TF

Evaluation of performance will follow stated criteria in TF and final grade will include student´s activities and his outcome.

**Sources:**

**Specialized literature**- economics, business, marketing, communication, commercial code, trades licensing code, labour code and different state legislations

**Didactic technology** - data projector, Interactive white-board, PC, tablet

**Learning tools** - questionnaires, case studies, economic games, practice forms, daily press and other sources the Internet.

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