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Resumen:

INTRODUCTION

Human capital has been highlighted in economic literature as a relevant element amongst enterprise assets, it plays an important role in the determination of productivity levels, and hence, of enterprises and the countries competitive power. That role is mediatized by technology, so the interaction between human capital and technological resources demands a balanced development of both.

Now, important changes in the production systems have occurred in the last two decades, which have completely transformed the traditional relations between labour and capital. These changes have taken place at international level, therefore, the eighties have witnessed two fundamental facts: the deep technological change, on the one hand, and the innovations in the organisational methods, on the other.

The introduction of new technologies has a direct effect upon the qualifications required to carry out a job. Therefore, availability of duly qualified manpower for the usage of these technologies becomes a pre-requirement that ensures quality and productivity standards, and access to markets other than the ones offered by them (SENKER and SENKER. 1990). The new methods of organization also reflect the enterprise strategy adopted in relation with labour force. A production system characterized by its flexibility involves a specific personnel policy, where qualification of manpower is a crucial element to carry out the productive process using new technologies. Its repercussions must be considered in two different spheres. First, in the national education systems, where qualifications of a higher level will be required which will serve to shape the labour offer adapted to the needs of the production system. Secondly, in the companies, where an increase in the training activities of the workers will be essential to avoid obsolescence and face the challenge of the new productive conditions.

In short, the productive context created by the use of sophisticated technology demands, amongst other things, a labour factor substantially different from that of previous economic frameworks, essentially characterized by its high contents of qualified work. Moreover, the worldwide relevance of this phenomenon, the growing complexity, the internationalization and speed of change in the economic context make the labour factor be of greater importance in the economic life of the company, along with the unavoidable need of its permanent updating.

The previous statements, which are generally acceptable for all productive models, have certain peculiarities in the Spanish case which, in a synthetic way, can be summarized around two elements. First, the relative lag development of the Spanish economy in industrial development, which is immediatly reflected in its dependence on foreign technologies. Secondly, an educational structure lacking the sufficient flexibility to give an immediate response to the needs required by the productive sphere. If we add up the time factor to all the aforesaid, with the advance in the project of European construction, it seems logical to expect greater demands from a more and more competitive market, whose immediate result is the inevitable need of allowing for a highly qualified labour factor.

Amongst the approaches that have been made from the theoretical constructions to point out the function carried out by Human Capital in Economy, we could speak of three extensive categories. First, from a macro-economic standpoint, brought about as a result of the search for explanations of the success of the various countries in international trade. Theoretical frameworks rooted in the classical and neoclassical theories of international trade and expressed as explanatory approaches to Leontief's paradox. Along the same line, another series of works has highlighted the importance of Human Capital for economic growth (SCHULTZ, 1980; LUCAS, 1990; BECKER, MURPHY and TAMURA, 1990).

From the consideration of the firm as a productive unit, it has been insisted on the explanatory capacity of Human Capital for the achievement of micro-economic competition (GUEST, 1987; WERTHER and DAVIS, 1982; YEOMANS, 1989; RHINESMITH et al., 1989). Finally, standing between both theoretical contexts, we find the works of the authors who insert the characteristic elements of the enterprise framework into a macro-economic sphere, by considering the company's activity within a global sphere that is the nation which, in turn, is forced to compete in the international field (BUCLEY and ARTISIEN, 1987; PORTER, 1990; DUNNING, 1993).

Starting from this conceptual framework, this article aims to present the empirical results arisen from the research on the human resources and manpower qualification strategies followed by the subsidiaries of multinational companies established in Spain. To this end the paper has been organized in three sections. The first one attempts to check whether the introduction of technological changes has meant changes in manpower qualification and if so, to detect the labour categories and the organizational spheres within the company where they have taken place.

The second section analyses the existence of training schemes in the companies, by studying the groups of employees they are aimed at. In this part, the main hypothesis used is that training schemes in companies are considered to be response to the requirements demanded by technical change; and a secondary hypothesis is that the training undertaken by companies is a way out to solve the shortcomings found in the supply of Spanish manpower. This last aspect gives way to the third section, where it is studied whether multinational subsidiaries find difficulties to hire qualified manpower in the Spanish market. When such problems are detected, the analysis is extended to the detail of the labour categories in which they have been identified. Finally, a section of conclusions synthesizes the most outstanding outcomes.

Facing the diversity of countries of origin of the investments on Spanish economy, and with the purpose of a deeper analysis of the aforesaid aspects, the empirical study is focused on the companies in Spain controlled by German and Dutch capital. This twofold origin of the studied subsidiaries is justified by the relevance of those two groups of capital within the whole of foreign investments on the Spanish economic system. The source of the data used in this article is a survey passed to the companies with German and Dutch capital established in Spain, within the framework of two research projects on the performance of the respective multinational firms. The survey was sent to all the companies with Dutch capital and only to the industrial firms with German capital; these facts must be considered at the time of assessing the results of both groups. The survey covered not only the Human Capital aspects but also commercial, technological and productive aspects, although this article offers the most outstanding results of the first one.

The number of valid questionnaires obtained was 23 from the first group, and 113 from the second one, which represents a response rate of 23 and 38.5 % respectively. The significance of the firms of the sample, in relation to the total of subsidiaries from the country of origin established in Spain, is 23.1 % of employment and 36.5 % of sales in the Dutch case. Percentages that reach 65.2 % and 68.1 % amongst the industrial subsidiaries of German origin. The comments from the interviews carried out with company managers of both groups have also been used as a supplement.

I. TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGES AND THEIR REPERCUSSIONS ON MANPOWER

The investments made by companies in the last years have had a direct effect upon the labour factor. On the one hand, they have modified the typology of the existing jobs and, on the other hand, they have meant significant alterations in the contents of the tasks assigned to them. Starting from this consideration, this section attempts to analyse whether the technological changes introduced by the multinational companies operating in Spain have affected labour qualification by studying where the modifications have taken place, both in professional categories and organizational areas in the company.

Taking the information in Table 1 as a starting point, the relations between technological changes and the workers' needs of qualification in the subsidiaries of multinationals established in Spain can be observed. The most relevant point is the large number of companies that declare that they have undergone changes in their workers' qualification as a consequence of technological change.

In the German case, where the larger number of companies of the group has allowed to extend the analysis up to a sectorial level, we have been able to see that the phenomenon has been more intense in the more dynamic sectors within the Spanish industrial system, they are also the industrial branches where the biggest part of the German investing flow is located. Basically they are firms belonging to Pharmaceutical industry, Manufacture of Electronic Material, Chemicals, Electric Machinery and Material, Metallic Products and Vehicles, both Automobile Building and

change have a stronger effect upon some of the categories.

On the other hand, breaking up the facts in terms of the size, (Table 3), we can note that the total of the companies on the biggest size level have been affected by the changes in the qualification of their labour force. In a parallel way, the highest percentage of companies where variations in this variable have not occurred corresponds to those smaller in size, particularly to those with a staff of less than 100 workers. Therefore, the existence of a relationship between the company size and the effect of technological changes in manpower qualification can be pointed out, although not in a strictly lineal way.

(TABLE 3)

By combining company size with professional categories, some specific points can serve to complete what has just been presented. First, the professional group with a higher qualification is a little more relevant in the smaller size strata than in the rest, which proves that the group of Directors is more affected by technological changes in small companies than in big ones. On the other hand, Intermediate Managers are the professional group most affected by changes, this fact being especially relevant in companies whose total number of workers ranges from 250 to 1,000. Finally, the least qualified professional categories become more representative as the company size is bigger.

All the aforesaid leads us to state that the size variable contains a differentiating germ in the repercussions that technical innovations have upon the qualification of the various professional categories, independently from these categories. Thus, in small companies, the degree of technical complexity introduced is possibly lower, and only the best qualified groups are affected by it, whereas technological change is deeper in large companies, affecting essentially the requirements of the professional groups with lower qualification.

II.- TRAINING PROGRAMMES IN COMPANIES

The ability to exploit technological innovations in a competitive way is closely related to the degree of labour force qualification. Therefore, training schemes in companies are not only a response to the new qualification requirements needed for the use of new technologies, but also a need imposed by the attainment of higher levels of competition.

Therefore, the aim is to analyse whether the training programmes undertaken by companies with foreign participation are a reactive method to the technical innovations introduced, attempting to consolidate or foster their competition levels, not only from a national standpoint but from an international and especially European prospective, where a good part of their economic activity develops

To this respect, one first question to consider is whether the subsidiaries have tackled efficiently the carrying out of training programmes for their workers. The results show a high percentage of companies that say they carry out training programmes. In fact, both in the group of German subsidiaries (70 per cent), and in the Dutch group (87 per cent), the accomplishment of training programmes is usual practice within their strategies (Table 1).

If we compare the previous figures with the ones related to the effect of technological change upon the requirements of manpower qualification, it is evident that the line followed by them in terms of preparation of human capital goes beyond the mere circumstantial coverage of the needs brought about by technological innovations and it is in agreement with an entrepreneurial philosophy, where worker's training is a strategic variable, determinant of competition, THUROW (1992), PORTER (1990), DALY et al. (1985) have remarked this from different standpoints in their works.

In short, the general trend of the multinational firms present in Spain is the accomplishment of training and qualifying programmes for their manpower, going beyond a mere response to the demands derived from the use of new production and organization techniques. Therefore, it seems obvious that these firms have a dynamic personnel strategy in terms of training; they carry out activities aimed at the consolidation of a labour force adequately trained to solve not only the problems that may arise at short term from the use of new technologies, but also seeking the strengthening of competition at long term through the supply of a highly qualified labour factor.

An interesting consideration when analysing the existence of training projects in companies is to know the group of workers they are aimed at. This procedure permits us to evaluate the workers' strata on which the company strategy insists (Table 4).

TABLE 4 TYPOLOGY OF THE PERSONNEL THAT RECEIVES TRAINING PROGRAMMES IN THE COMPANY

TYPE OF PERSONNEL	German Companies	Dutch Companies	G	% D
DIRECTORS AND ENGINEERS	14	4	18	20
INTERMEDIATE MANAGERS	36	9	46	45
OTHER PERSONNEL	48	8	61	40
ALL LEVELS	18	8	23	40
UNDETERMINED	1	-	1	-

SOURCE: Vid. Table 1

NOTE: The total sum of the percentage columns is over 100, this is due to the fact that each company can carry out more than one training programme for the different groups of workers.

As regards to the categories receiving the training programmes, the profile of both groups is slightly different. Thus, the least qualified groups are the main recipients in German industrial companies; since they are the groups with greatest difficulty to become adapted to the technical change, the effort of the company must be addressed to them in order to overcome the initial difficulties of working with advanced techniques. In some of the interviews, this shortcoming of the less qualified workers to use new technologies was pointed out, due to the average advanced age of the Spanish staffs and the high degree of permanence in the company, which was an added difficulty to the use of innovating production and organization techniques. On the other side, Dutch subsidiaries present a more uniform range of the categories that receive training programmes, although showing a slight superiority of Intermediate Managers.

In short, the previous results seem to confirm the hypothesis that the less qualified categories find the greatest difficulties to become adapted to the work methods required by the use of advanced technologies in spite of the noticeable differences in both groups of multinationals, and therefore, companies direct their efforts to overcome such shortcomings through the implementation of training schemes for their manpower. However, companies do not neglect the education of the level of better qualified workers.

It is also important to stress that not a small number of the programs extend to workers of all levels, this is done by 23 percent of the German subsidiaries and in a larger extent by the Dutch ones; these facts allow us to support and reinforce the abovementioned comments.

Comparing these results with the ones brought about by the survey which was carried out under the direction of Cranfield School of Management and Price Waterhouse throughout 1989, with a sample of companies in France, Spain, Sweden, Great Britain and Germany, where a broad range of themes related to Human Resources is analysed, additional considerations can be established. In the aforesaid work is pointed out, in first place, the unanimous acceptance by companies of all countries of the central role of the Human Resources variable; according to the companies, this is so because it is one of the most influencing elements for the success of their activity.

Another common feature to the companies analysed in the abovementioned survey is the increase of their expenditure on training in the last years. The need for higher expenses on manpower training is given, to a large extent, by the shortage of qualified work observed in nearly all countries, even though the circumstances of each of them vary considerably.

The Spanish case shares the increase of the expenses made by the companies in the last years with the rest of the countries, although there is a substantial difference regarding the groups that receive the training. Thus, The biggest increases of training expenses have occurred in the categories of Technicians and Professionals, recipients of the biggest efforts made by 66 percent of the companies, whereas 46 percent of the companies confirm to have spent less on the group of unqualified workers. Likewise, a lower effect upon training of boards of directors can be observed in Spain in comparison with other countries, which serves to reinforce the fact that Spanish companies direct their training programmes to the groups of technicians and intermediate managers (this category can be assimilated to the group of professionals without higher qualification), and to a lesser extent but significantly, to the categories with a lower qualification level.

Comparing the general trend for Spanish companies presented by the aforesaid international report with what has been observed in the specific cases of the subsidiaries analysed herein, and taking into account the difficulties of the comparison derived from the different construction of the categories or companies making up the sample, the following aspects can be pointed out: In general, the multinational subsidiaries share with Spanish companies the stress on the training of the workers with intermediate qualification, even though its effect upon the group of lower preparation is a lot bigger, especially amongst the German companies, than the one presented by the Spanish group as a whole.

An explanation of this divergence can be found in the characteristic of the industrial investment of German capital in Spain, located mainly in branches like chemicals, metal-mechanics, cars, and electric products, where the effect of technical change has brought about bigger needs of preparation within the group of less qualified workers; besides, the data from the empirical analysis are based exclusively on the universe of German industrial subsidiary companies.

The most noticeable divergence lies on the fact that training appears as a response to a problem of insufficiency in the supply of qualified manpower in the Spanish case, whereas in the Dutch and German subsidiaries the training programmes are the overcoming way of the bigger demands for workers' qualification required by the technological innovations introduced in the production processes.

The consideration from the sectorial side shows some differences among industries when selecting the groups of workers the training is aimed at. For instance, the Chemical sector directs its training programmes to the two extremes, the one with higher and the one with lower labour qualification, whereas others like Car Components and Accesories concentrates essentially on the category with lower qualification. Other sectors like Car Construction or Pharmaceutical Industry extend their programs to all categories.

If we introduce the size variable into the consideration of the theme, the most outstanding element is the existence of a direct relation between both questions (Table 3). Thus, the companies with more than 1000 workers carry out projects in 91 percent of the cases whereas the companies with less than 100 employees do it only in 58 percent of the cases. Therefore, it seems clear that training is a generalised practice in bigger companies, and its importance grows along with the growth of the company size.

By relating this result to the one obtained with regard to the connexion between the company size and the changes in manpower qualification brought about by the use of new techniques, some supplementary notes may become clear. Thus, for the group of companies with a smaller number of workers, the training schemes seem to respond only to the requirements demanded by technical changes; they are, in all cases, training programmes meant to tackle new demands in the levels of manpower qualification. On the contrary, in companies of bigger size, the efforts made for training have a greater scope than the mere response to the demands originated by the use of new technologies.

III.- DIFFICULTIES WITH THE SUPPLY OF SPECIALISED MANPOWER IN SPAIN.

The relation between the education system and the needs of the production system has been the object of concern in the last years, which has affected the preparation of a large amount of specialised research works. It seems adequate within this context a study in depth on the perception that the two groups of foreign multinationals studied here have about the capacity of the Spanish supply of specialised work to meet the requirements of their economic activity.

One first aspect to consider is that less than half of the German subsidiaries have answered that they had found difficulties in the hiring of specialised work in Spain, and only 22 percent of the Dutch subsidiaries (Table 1). This fact makes evident that the disagreement between the supply and the demand of qualified work, even when it exists, does not seem to be very big, and the Spanish education system as a whole is not so inadequate to supply the required qualifications for the productive needs, even though certain shortcomings are perceived that must be overcome.

From a sectorial standpoint, the biggest number of difficulties has been detected in the electrical and metal-mechanical branches. This is due, in the first place, to the technological complexity of these sectors, and to the processes of modernisation they have undergone in the last years. The companies belonging to these industries say they have hiring problems within the Spanish supply in more than half of the cases.

On the contrary, in other sectors like Car Building and Manufacturing of Equipments and Components, most companies confirm they find not problems to recruit qualified personnel in the Spanish supply. We must point out equally the case

of the Pharmaceutical Industry in which all the companies of the sample say they do not have any problems to recruit specialised manpower. An identical situation is given in the Textile Industry. Finally, the affirmative answers were slightly above the general average in the Chemical Industry, which was confirmed in the interviews in depth carried out in four of these companies.

As regards labour categories, the two groups of multinational studied agree to point out that the greatest difficulties are found in the spheres of less qualification (Table 5). The assesment carried out by both goupms amongst the employees with higher qualification varies considerably. German companies do not seem to find serious problems in the Spanish market, whereas the problems are more important in the Dutch case.

Now, the small number of Dutch companies that confirmed they had experienced difficulties to hire specialised manpower in the Spanish market makes us be careful to consider these results. In any case, it does not seem risky to state that, in general, not an excessive number of problems to recruit qualified manpower in the Spanish market are observed amongst the surveyed subsidiaries, and that, when difficulties exist, they are more noticeable in the group of workers with intermediate and low qualification levels.

TABLE 5.- TYPOLOGY OF THE PERSONNEL WHERE DIFFICULTIES ARE FOUND IN THE SPANISH SUPPLY.

TYPE OF PERSONNEL	German Companies	Dutch Companies	G	% D
DIRECTORS AND ENGINEERS	13	2	25	40
INTERMEDIATE MANAGERS	24	2	46	40
OTHER PERSONNEL	33	3	64	60
ALL LEVELS	1	-	2	-
UNDETERMINED	2	-	4	-

SOURCE: Vid. Table 1

NOTE: The total sum of the percentage columns is over 100, due to the fact that one company can find difficulties in more than one personnel category.

Both groups coincided in remarking the lack of personnel with some command of foreign languages in the Spanish supply. This aspect was stressed in the case of the German subsidiaries facing the small number of workers with some command of German. Since the use of foreign languages is accepted as a key tool to tackle the challenges of a growing competition (HIDALGO, 1994), there is an area left in need of attention by the educational policy.

From a sectorial standpoint, we can see that the problems of recruitment of highly qualified personnel are more relevant in the sectors of Chemical and Construction of Machinery and Electrical Materials. Also, the greatest gaps to hire Intermediate Managers are detected in the sectors of Construction of Machinery and Mechanical Equipment, Manufacturing of Electronical Material and Manufacturing of Equipment, Car Accesories and Spare Parts. Finally, the jobs of lowest qualification present recruitment problems in a wide range of sectors, but mainly in Cars, both manufacturing and auxiliary services, Construction of Machinery and Mechanical Equipment, as well as Manufacturing of Metallic Products.

By relating the possible difficulties that companies have to hire specialised manpower in the Spanish market to their size, it is possible to analyse whether this variable is a differentiating element, both regarding the perceived difficulties and the categories where they take place. Thus, the companies' difficulties to have specialised manpower are bigger in large companies. Nearly 73 percent of the firms with more than 1000 workers declare they have hiring problems in the Spanish supply of specialised work, whereas only 42 percent of the small ones answer affirmatively to a similar exposition. (Table 3).

On the other hand, the noticeable differences make evident that the degree of complexity in the productions of big organisations requires a higher qualification of their work factor and, therefore, the shortcomings of the Spanish market to meet the specific demands of these organisations are bigger.

By establishing a connection between the size of the companies with the typology of the workers where recruitment

problems are perceived, the previous comments can be completed with some notes. For instance, the difficulties of higher qualified personnel are more obvious in big companies. Shortcomings in the Spanish work supply are more evident for big companies in the categories of Directors and Intermediate Managers. Likewise, smaller companies find the biggest problems in the recruitment of personnel of lower rank and Intermediate Managers.

IV.- CONCLUSIONS

The growing degree of internationalisation of economies, the progressive increase of competition, and the evident technological change can serve as characteristic notes of the worldwide economic background in the nineties'. In this context, and as a universally accepted fact, human capital becomes an essential resource for enterprise competition which extends to each country.

From this starting point, and in the Spanish scope, the analysis of some of the central cores around which an enterprising strategy in terms of human capital is articulated was considered relevant. For this reason, and due to the strong imbrication of the foreign company in the Spanish economic substratum, the analysis focused on the groups of German and Dutch subsidiaries that operate in our country.

In general, the empirical evidence brought out some interesting facts. First, the technological innovations introduced by companies in the eighties' involved substantial changes in work methods that brought about new requirements in workers' qualification; those needs were more compelling amongst the workers with lower levels of professional qualifications.

Secondly, less than half the companies studied have found difficulties to recruit specialised manpower in the Spanish market, difficulties that were bigger amongst employees with lower qualifications. This fact reveals certain weaknesses in the Spanish education system which must be overcome. To this purpose, it seems advisable to think of a design of an educational project according to the demands of technological change, which is able to provide workers with a broader and more polyvalent formation. These aspects are directly connected with the need of the educational policy to tackle an intense reform of secondary education without delay, especially of vocational education, in order to integrate it fully and efficiently in the national productive system.

Finally, training is taking shape as a key element for the defence of three flanks: the demands of qualification brought about by technological change; the overcoming of the existing gaps in the Spanish specialised supply, and the response to the challenge of an ever increasing competition. Consequently, the hypothesis presented in the beginning of the article seems to consolidate, which stated that the training schemes in the analysed subsidiaries are established to tackle both the changes in qualification caused by technological innovations and, to a lower degree, to overcome some of the shortcomings which exist in the Spanish market for some specialised jobs. However, again through the explanatory information obtained from the interviews, we can state that training programs are adapted to specific posts in most situations; this training line is coincident with the general trend observed in the whole of the Spanish market.

ABSTRACT

By accepting the relevance of human resources in the determination of the levels of productivity in the company, in this article some aspects of enterprising strategy concerning human capital are tackled, studied in two groups of multinational firms: German and Dutch; both groups have an important presence in the Spanish economic framework. The outcome underlines that the technological changes of the last years have affected significantly the qualification levels of manpower in general. Training schemes appear as a company strategic response to tackle the requirements brought about by technological change, on the one hand, and to fill the gaps detected in the recruitment of specialised work in the Spanish supply, on the other. Evidence points towards the jobs that need less preparation as the most affected ones by the introduction of technological innovations.

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