

Transforming professional development: Reconsidering the frame of adult involvement and the transfer of skills in Latvia

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Problem: Adult education in Latvia faces challenges in promoting lifelong learning and aligning with labor market demands. An increase in participation rates does not necessarily translate into meaningful improvements in professional performance.

Framework: This study is part of the broader State Research Program "Education" project titled "Elaboration of Evidence-Based Solutions for Effective Professional Competence Development of Adults and Assessment of the Transfer of Its Results into Practice in Latvia." The project aims to develop an evidence-based framework and practical tools to support effective adult professional development and assess how the acquired knowledge and skills are applied in practice. This poster presentation brings together findings from **focus group discussions** – analyzed in the context of motivational and structural factors affecting participation in professional development – and results from a **quantitative survey** conducted among a representative sample of working adults (ages 18–65) in Latvia. The survey reflects individual perspectives on engagement or disengagement in professional development and the application of acquired competencies in their professional practice.

Focus Group Discussions: Method

Participants: A total of 129 participants took part in 14 online focus groups, representing three target groups: 28 experts, 33 providers of adult professional development services (HEI, VET institutions, training centers, SLO) and 68 recipients of adult professional development services (employers and employees represented eight economic activity fields with a higher proportion of employed individuals in Latvia, e.g., public administration and defense; education; health and social care; wholesale and retail trade; transportation and storage; agriculture, forestry, and fishing; construction; manufacturing).

Procedure

All focus group discussions were recorded via MS Teams or Zoom platforms, with prior consent from all participants. Transcriptions were carried out using MS Teams and/or Transkriptor.com transcription features. All transcripts were technically processed and prepared for analysis in NVivo. Based on the results of the theoretical research and on practical experience, an initial coding system was developed and refined throughout the direct coding process (e.g., expanded, reduced, reformulated). The final version of the coding system included 6 blocks, 31 categories and 215 codes (see Table 1). Each focus group transcription was coded by at least two members of the project team to ensure greater reliability in the coding process and outcomes.

Blocks	Categories, including count of codes and references
Block 1: Modern Adult Professional Development (beliefs and associations)	1.1. Forms of Learning Organization (7 codes) [79 references] 1.2. Approaches, Methods, Principles (12 codes) [242 references] 1.3. Growth and Achievement of Outcomes (16 codes) [217 references] 1.4. Stakeholders Involved (5 codes) [129 references]
Block 2: Framework, Priorities, Goals	2.1. Policy Framework Evaluation (4 codes) [176 references] 2.2. Policy at Various Levels (6 codes) [159 references] 2.3. Organizational Priorities and Needs (10 codes) [198 references] 2.4. External Service Providers (10 codes) [189 references] 2.5. Internal Training (6 codes) [131 references]
Block 3: Planning and Implementation	3.1. Needs Assessment (5 codes) [182 references] 3.2. Collaboration (2 codes) [70 references] 3.3. Best Practices (11 codes and 16 sub-codes) [258 references] 3.4. Support Tools and Mechanisms During Training (4 codes) [164 references] 3.5. Support Tools and Mechanisms in the Workplace (4 codes) [135 references] 3.6. Administrative Resources (3 codes) [69 references] 3.7. Financial Resources (2 codes) [114 references] 3.8. Human Resources (3 codes) [32 references]
Block 4: Quality or Effectiveness Monitoring and Evaluation	4.1. Evaluation System (3 codes) [38 references] 4.2. Employee and Performance Evaluation (9 codes) [134 references] 4.3. Training / Educational Program Evaluation (9 codes) [195 references] 4.4. Transfer to Practice (What Changes) (5 codes) [87 references] 4.5. Measuring the Effectiveness of Transfer (7 codes) [35 references]
Block 5: Barriers, Challenges	5.1. Availability and Offer of Professional Development (7 codes) [74 references] 5.2. Support System for Professional Development (3 codes) [37 references] 5.3. Engagement of Professional Development Providers (4 codes) [42 references] 5.4. Personal Learning Barriers (6 codes) [91 references] 5.5. Contextual Learning Barriers (8 codes) [157 references] 5.6. Barriers to Learning and Transfer of Its Outcomes (12 codes) [154 references]
Block 6: Improvements, Recommendations for Development	6.1. Improvements at the Provider Level (7 codes) [25 references] 6.2. Improvements at the Organizational Level (5 codes) [41 references] 6.3. Improvements at the National or Municipal Level (4 codes) [93 references]

Table 1. The final version of the coding system: main blocks and categories

A Quantitative Survey: Method

Participants were 517 working adults (18 to 65, $M = 43$ years, $SD = 12$) from Latvia:

- Part of the representative sample ($N = 1000$) who participated in a formal educational activity (courses, lectures, seminars) within the last 12 months;
- Representative quota sample by occupational domain, region of Latvia, age, gender, ethnicity, and education.

Measures: The inventory incorporated key indicators identified in previous scientific literature (Carvalho & Conde, 2024; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Gegenfurtner et al., 2020; Grohmann & Kauffeld, 2013; McClelland, 1961; Quesada Pallares et al., 2021; Sirota & Klein, 2014) interacting with insights gathered during focus group discussions. These indicators were organized into six subscales: 1) Need and Intrinsic Motivation (4 items); 2) Extrinsic Motivation and Utility (4 items); 3) Achievement and Growth Orientation (3 items); 4) Expectancy of Transfer (5 items); 5) Content Evaluation and Instrumentality (4 items); 6) Organizational Factors and Resources for Transfer (5 items).

Results

- Predicting the transfer of knowledge and skills, the path model (see Figure 7) demonstrated an acceptable fit: $\chi^2(260) = 580.59$, $p < 0.001$, CFI = 0.91, TLI = 0.90, RMSEA = 0.049 (95% CI [0.044, 0.053], $p_{RMSEA} = 0.657$), and SRMR = 0.083.

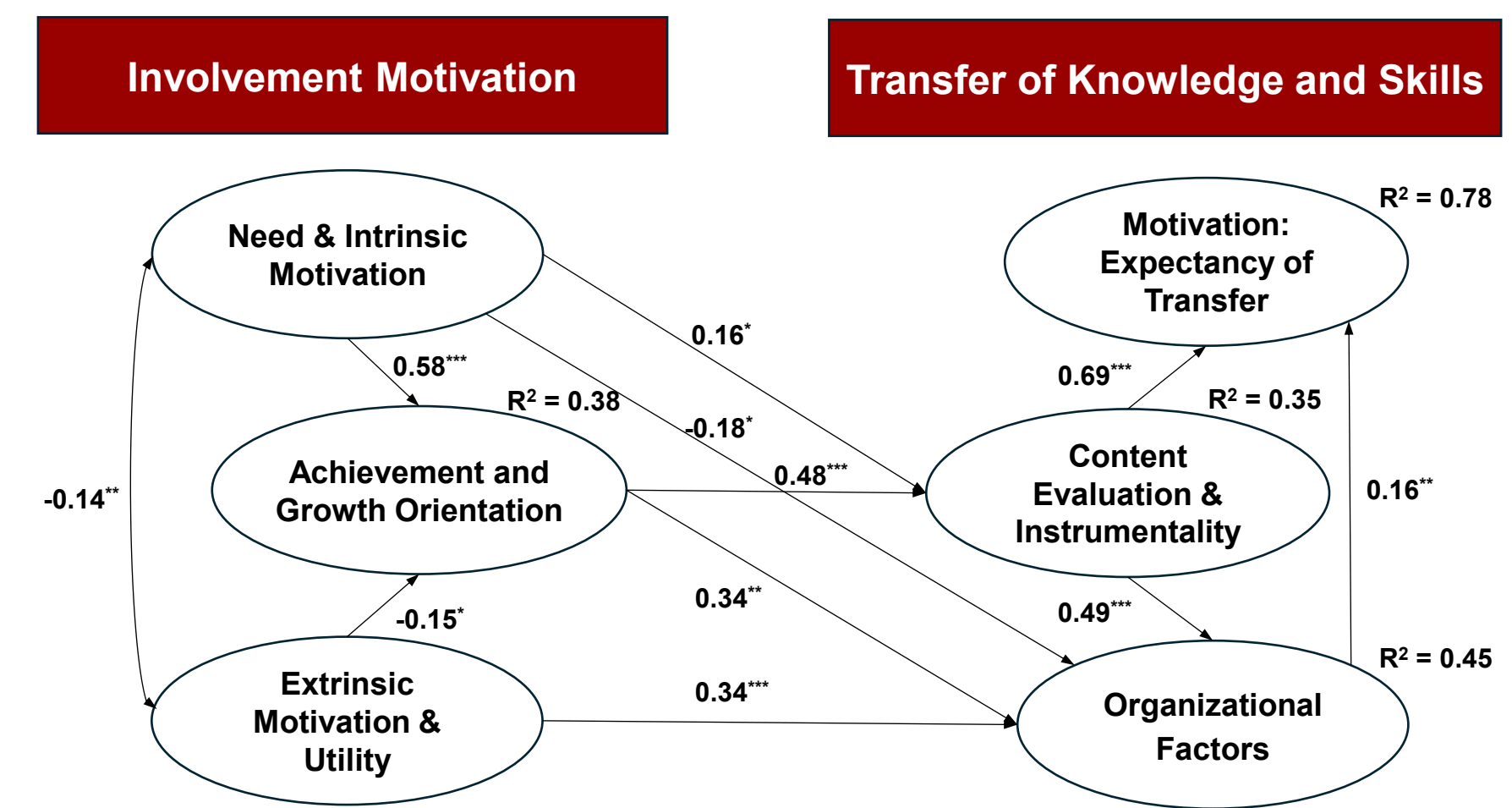


Figure 7. Path model predicting transfer-facilitating factors ($N = 517$). Non-significant links are not presented. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

Results

- All coding results were processed in NVivo using cross-tabulation, and all tables were exported to Excel for further analysis and chart creation. For the purposes of this poster presentation, the main results from six categories (see Figures 1–6) within three thematic blocks are presented. Codes are ranked by the total number of references (i.e., focus group participants' expressions) in descending order, and the percentage distribution of references across the three target groups (experts, recipients, and providers) is compared.
- According to the results from Block 1, focus group participants frequently emphasized that modern adult professional development is a vital component of lifelong learning. It must address labor market demands and offer individualized, flexible learning pathways that reflect adults' learning needs (see Figure 1). The main focus is on enhancing professional knowledge and skills – including their practical application – while also supporting personal growth, well-being and vitality, work efficiency and productivity (see Figure 2).
- According to the results from Block 3, key support mechanisms during training include the characteristics of adult learners and educators, voluntary participation, and practice-oriented methods (see Figure 3). Positive traits of adult learners include intrinsic motivation, achievement and growth orientation, curiosity, open-mindedness, initiative, a focus on transformation, and self-directedness. The most frequently cited workplace support mechanisms (e.g., before of after training) are related to organizational culture – particularly support from managers, and to some extent, from colleagues (see Figure 4).
- According to the results from Block 4, workplace observation is the most frequently mentioned method of evaluating employees and their performance (see Figure 5). The most commonly cited aspects of program evaluation include individual benefits for adult learners (e.g., salary increases, employment and business opportunities, career advancement), as well as the quality and effectiveness of the training programs (see Figure 6).

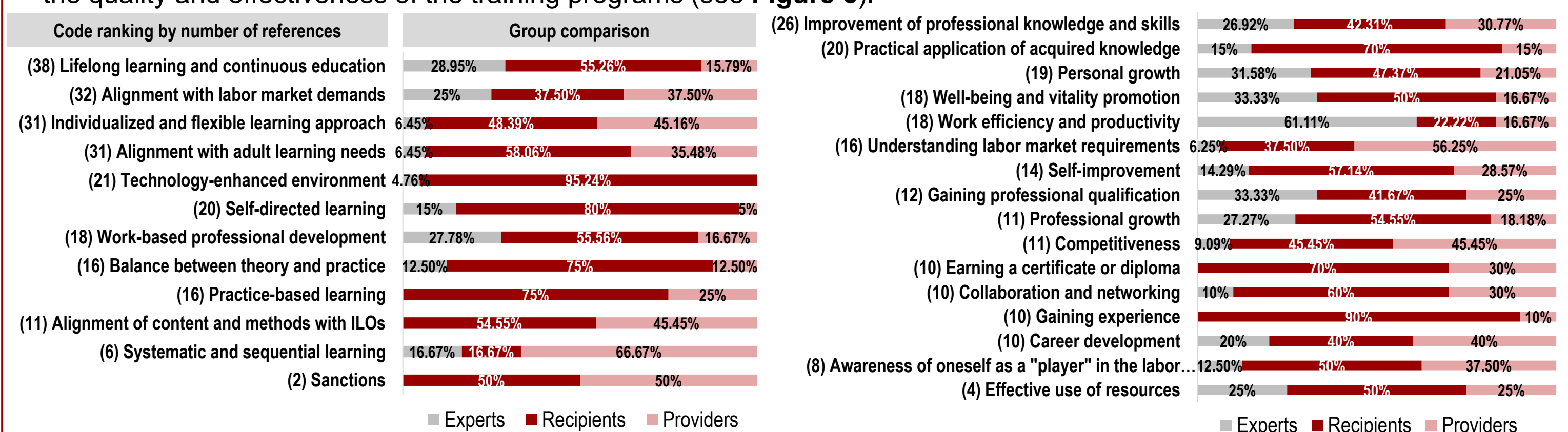


Figure 1. Results within the Category 1.2: Approaches, Methods, Principles

Figure 2. Results within the Category 1.3: Growth and Achievement of Outcomes

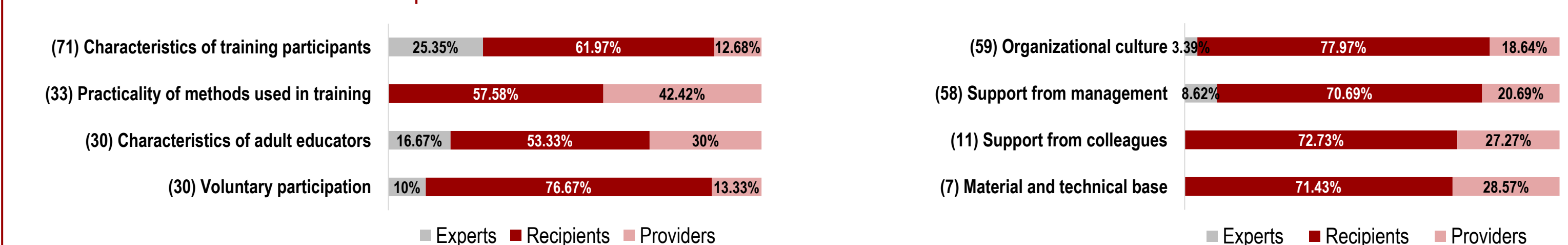


Figure 3. Results within the Category 3.4: Support Tools and Mechanisms During Training

Figure 4. Results within the Category 3.5: Support Tools and Mechanisms in the Workplace

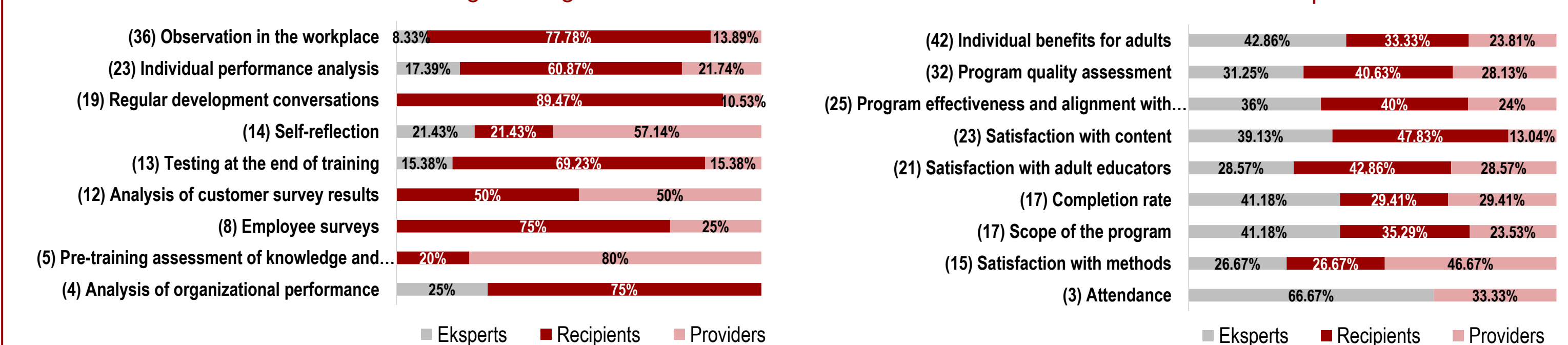


Figure 5. Results within the Category 4.2: Employee and Performance Evaluation

Figure 6. Results within the Category 4.3: Training / Educational Program Evaluation

- Centrality of individual achievement motivation and growth orientation:
 - Links to a more positive evaluation of instrumentality and content of education;
 - Indirectly supports the individual expectancy of a successful transfer;
 - Facilitates the identification of organizational resources for the successful transfer.
- Significance of evaluation and instrumentality of the educational content.
- Invariance of the model:
 - Strict invariance (including regression coefficients) for gender, living place, occupational domain, organization size, working over 40 h, having higher education, and language used in family;
 - Metric invariance (the level of factor loadings) was found for self-employment. Therefore, the study revealed stable relationships among variables.
- The model can be applied to develop implications for educational practices in a broad population of employed adults.
- Demographic variables had effects on extrinsic motivation, orientation towards achievement and growth, intrinsic motivation (all from the motivational domain), and organizational resources (transfer domain) (see Table 2).

Variable	Gender F – females M – males	Education H – higher O – other	Mother tongue L – Latvian O – other	Self-employed Y – yes N – no
Intrinsic Motivation	-	H > O	-	-
Extrinsic Motivation	-	H < O	L < O	Y < N
Achievement and Growth	F > M	-	-	Y < N
Transfer – Motivation	-	-	-	-
Transfer – Content	-	-	-	-
Transfer – Organization	F > M	-	-	-

Table 2. Significant differences in demographic groups (all differences are significant at $p < .05$).

Discussion

- Transfer of knowledge and skills is a complex process of interaction between individual motivation and organizational environment (Colquitt et al., 2000; Kauffeld et al., 2025).
- Our study confirmed the role of interaction among achievement motivation (e.g., Van Yperen et al., 2014), the assessment of the educational program (e.g., Colquitt et al., 2000), and organizational factors, facilitating the transfer of knowledge (Argote, 2024; Colquitt et al., 2000; Kauffeld et al., 2025).

Limitations and Future Directions

- Qualitatively-driven mixed sequential exploration of the problem presented contextually significant challenges for Latvia and limited an extensive theoretical overview of the constructs under investigation.
- The motivational domain should be examined in both groups of employees – those involved in professional development programs and those not involved.
- The effects of knowledge transfer remain an open question and require investigation through a longitudinal study.

Practical Implications

- Monitoring employers' and employees' professional development needs through regular interviews can form an updated view of current demands in professional education.
- Promoting the transfer of knowledge and skills at the organizational level could be more effective than organizational pressure on employees to participate in professional development formally.
- Designing professional development programs with strong practical value tailored to specific fields.

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