Rethinking the Measurement of Training and Development in the Professions: A Conceptual Model

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ABSTRACT

The 21st century is often called the “age of talent.” Globalization has influenced both organizational processes and employee training, creating an increased need for educated, skilled, and adaptable employees. Training and development has become an integral part of most organizations’ efforts to develop and maintain competitive advantage, with an emphasis on creating learning organizations. These changes in the methods, modes and quantity of training have made it challenging to quantify the amount of training occurring across workplaces. This article takes the view that in order to understand the impact of training on organizations, it is important to conceptualize where and through whom training activities occur. We can think of the training and development profession as consisting of a series of four tiers, with the T&D function occurring less centrally within each tier. Tier I members of the training and development profession occupy jobs in which training and development are paramount to their roles and occupy the vast majority, if not all, of their time. Tier II professionals may be the primary person within the organization responsible for training and development, but the training is often limited to a particular focal area. A whole host of supervisory occupations might be considered Tier III jobs because of the close relation supervisors often have with the employees they supervise. Tier IV training and development professionals may come from any occupational background, and this is where much of informal training occurs.

Keywords: Informal Learning, Knowledge Economy, Learning Organizations, Training & Development

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INTRODUCTION

Training and development has rapidly expanded in order to meet the new demands of the workplace. Globalization has influenced both organizational processes and employee training, creating an increased need for educated, skilled, and adaptable employees. As a result, organizations have had to rethink the manner in which educational opportunities are provided in order to address their human resources development needs (Hall, 2004; Jarvis, 2001). Some changes have included the implementation of multi-site learning, offering of college credit for work-based experience, and specialized, accelerated training programs (Bash, 2003; Jarvis, 2001). In addition, larger organizations have developed corporate universities to meet their learning demands (Jarvis, 2001). The numbers of individuals engaged in workplace learning has increased exponentially along with the amount of time devoted by employees to learning (Paradise, 2007). Regarding financial investment in training, figures vary wildly. Tharenou, Saks, and Moore (2007), citing an industry report published in Training magazine (Industry Report, 2006), estimate that nearly 56 billion dollars was slated for training programs during that year whereas in 1989, it was estimated that 44 billion dollars was slated for training (Smith, 1989, 2006). If these numbers are correct, it would indicate over a 20% decrease in spending set aside for training in inflation-adjusted dollars.

The American Society for Training and Development (Paradise, 2007), however, estimates that 130 billion dollars was actually spent on training for the year 2006. If this is the case, then training expenditures are rising in line with increases in the number of people trained and the amount of time dedicated to training.

The American Society of Training and Development² (ASTD), a professional association dedicated to the needs of Workplace and Learning Professionals (WLP), has recommended adding an occupational category to the 2010 Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system to ensure greater accuracy in accounting for individuals in the profession, but who for lack of a more descriptive occupational category are often currently classified in Human Resources or miscellaneous “other” occupations. The SOC system, created and maintained by the Bureau of Labor Statistics³ and accessible through its website, refers to the workplace learning and performance profession as training and development (T&D). Knowing the count of T&D professionals would allow for a more accessible estimation of the impact of T&D as an occupation and provide the quantitative occupational information organizations such as ASTD need to determine future services, marketing, and membership strategies. It will also facilitate changes within the federal government on how it tracks occupational data regarding the WLP profession. The goal of this article is to determine the size of the work-
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