

Training, L&D, OD, HRD—What's in a name?

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This article describes the various aspects of human resources development and highlights the intersections and the differences between what are often mistakenly viewed as interchangeable concepts. It argues that, while it is generally accepted that developing staff is fundamental to good organisational health and business outcomes, a clear understanding of how this should be achieved is often hampered by an identity crisis in the field itself.

The education industry contributes 5.8% of Australia's national expenditure (ABS 2009). A total of 2.6 million Australians are currently enrolled in formal qualifications and 61% (5.3 million) of the Australian workforce are engaged in some form of training at work each year (ABS 2008). This is up from 30% in 1990 (ABS 2005) and includes increases in all categories of workers and all age groups. Education and training in all its forms is now big business and a

significant part of the Australian organisational landscape. However, the field of adult education is still relatively new and continues to evolve. While attempting to keep pace with the desire to skill, up-skill, re-skill and develop the nation's workforce, this field of HR has not been able to properly define itself and confusion often surrounds even the basic nomenclature which is used.

This identity crisis has at its core a range of titles which are used interchangeably but remain largely undefined and unaligned to what individual organisations are trying to achieve. The basic terminology assigned to these sections in organisational structures is often confusing to outsiders and includes: training; learning and development; human resource development; workplace learning and performance; organisation development; and professional development. While they are all oriented towards building organisation capacity through individual and team development, all of these things mean something different.

Perhaps the best way to understand this shifting landscape is to examine what is meant by the various ways we have come to define these processes.

Training

Adult learning and the concept of work-based training has its origins in the mid-twentieth century with the creation of the American Society for Training Directors in 1944 (later re-named the American Society for Training and Development), the Institute of Personnel Management in the United Kingdom in 1946 (now the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development) and the subsequent work of Malcolm Knowles, Paolo Freire, John Dewey and Carl Rogers.

Training is learning provided by employers to employees related to their present job (Smith 1993). It has a job-skills orientation. Training generally aims to improve specific knowledge or skills that

can be achieved in the short term that will show benefits in the short term. Formal instruction in how to do a particular job is regarded as training. Learning outcomes are normally set and action taken to achieve them.

There are three components to good training. The primary component is the actual instruction provided to the person concerned — this is readily accepted and understood. Beyond this, there is a requirement which is not as well understood, to motivate the person who has been trained to want to change his or her ways and adopt new methods. The former is the responsibility of the trainer, while the latter is a shared responsibility between the trainer and the operational management of the business concerned.

After sending a person to a training course, two further activities are necessary to complete the desired behavioural change process — close supervision and relentless follow-up, until the new behaviour becomes normal.

It is no longer a sufficient outcome to report on how many staff members attended training, and instead we must gauge the ‘transfer of learning’ to the work role and the return on investment which requires a skilled and rigorous approach to evaluating the training or development activity.

Training is also quite distinct from education. Education relates more broadly to an individual’s future career and about lifelong and life-wide learning. It is not concerned with the particulars of a training event but rather the experience, application and outcome in a format that makes sense to the individual and can be applied.

Learning and Development (L&D)

Individual employee learning and skill development needs, once seen to be solved by training alone, now demand a complex range of development solutions and most of these are based in the workplace

and not the classroom. Development is a more fluid concept than training, and generally has longer-term aims. Development activities harness existing roles and the process of observation and reflection on real world situations. Examples of development activities can include buddying, coaching, mentoring, shadowing, action learning and immersion experiences.

It is not directly related to a job but instead emphasises personal growth and aspirations of individual employees. Development concentrates on general soft skills. Examples of such skills would normally include personality traits, leadership skills, self-awareness, confidence and communication styles. It may also include more advanced exposure to techniques of performance appraisal, goal setting, and policy and procedure development. Development can be process-oriented, to the individual (personal development) or to groups of employees such as developing people to work effectively in teams.

An important distinction must also be made with the concept of professional development, which refers to an organisation's ethical responsibility to encourage staff to meet their personal, academic and professional needs. This can occur by optimising the quality of working life and promoting excellence by building on existing strengths. It provides a critical link between individual career needs and organisational strategy. Many professions (law, architecture, engineering, medicine) have long-established developmental processes and frameworks which their members follow to maintain registration or professional association.

Organisation Development (OD)

OD focuses on organisational behaviour and first emerged conceptually as part of the human relations movement in the 1950s. It was founded on the principle that organisations can be understood and the way they should operate can be measured, adjusted,

influenced and improved. According to Gallos (2006), in the post-World War II environment of both the UK and the US, separate and unrelated projects were taking place which shaped the emerging theory of organisation development. Both projects focused on what was initially referred to as organisational health. In the US, Kurt Lewin at MIT had set up what was called sensitivity training using T-groups, a far-reaching, influential educational vehicle which was being adopted as a form of education in a range of industrial settings.

At the same time in the UK at the Tavistock Institute, Eric Trost and Ken Bamforth were working with the British coal mining industry to move from an employment model that involved productivity pay based on teams to one which rewarded individual output and efforts. This work reflected a trend in industry at that time to move away from group work to recognise the efforts of individuals and the emergence on the use of technology in the production and manufacturing process.

Psychologist Rensis Likert was also undertaking influential studies within organisations for the first time, diagnosing group dynamics, employee morale and attitudes and, in turn, using these data for organisational improvements.

From these beginnings, OD evolved to focus on organisational change, building the capacity of teams, and on organisational communication channels and processes. It is underpinned by a concern for organisational effectiveness. OD's role is to work on a process of organisational renewal to ensure environments are safe, efficient and satisfying places to work.

It can be defined as the use of applied behavioural science in a systems context to effect change and enhance organisational performance and capacity. The OD operative works with the organisation to effect change, create systems and help it solve its own problems. The role of the OD operative is not analysis, design and

delivery (the traditional province of learning & development). The focus of OD is the system or organisation as a whole and working with teams or groups on interdependencies, systems and culture, not on working with individuals.

Effective OD interventions would include improved communication, better decision making, enhanced and defined leadership style and behaviours, conflict resolution mechanisms, evidence of effective, functional teams, and interpersonal and group processes.

Unlike training and development, it focuses on both employees and their work in recognition that both may need to be changed simultaneously to sustain effective changes in individual and organisational performance.

Human Resource Development (HRD)

Human Resource Development is the broadest of all of these concepts. Contemporary models of HRD describe it as integrating learning and development, organisation development and career development. According to Sofo (2000), American academic Len Nadler is generally credited with creating the concept of HRD. HRD tailors learning to individuals in various real world settings and promotes social aspects of learning in the context of learning contracts, action plans and performance measures. It ensures people have the competencies to meet their current *and* future job demands. HRD involves organised learning experiences provided by employers within a specified time with the aim of improving performance and of personal growth.

In this context, it is responsible for building long-term, work-related learning capacity at the individual, group and organisational levels. It encompasses knowledge, skill and values bases. HRD has the capacity to simultaneously build organisational and individual capacity.

HRD shares the desire to build organisational and individual productivity and the principles of adult learning with these other concepts. The notion of 'development' includes both change and growth. It is tied to a systems approach and to the model of the learning organisation.

Conclusion

The advent of strategic management has re-positioned organisation learning and development to become an enabler for business goals. Leveraging learning and development to influence attitudes, behaviour and organisational culture is also seen as a powerful lever in the change management process. Over the past two decades, most Australian organisations have moved beyond the basic training model and the concept of staff training in organisations has had to contend with a range of fundamental shifts in focus. This aspect of human resources demands a clear identity so we can promote a greater understanding of the intersection of all of these concepts and when they are best applied

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