**ADULT CONTINUING EDUCATION
AND HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT:
PRESENT COMPETITORS, POTENTIAL PARTNERS**

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Author's Note. In May 1989, this article was published in *Livelong Learning*, the monthly practitioner journal of the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (Vol. 12, No. 7, pp. 13-17). Now viewed as a reference article, it presents the relationship of adult and continuing education (ACE) and human resource development (HRD) in the late 1980s, providing both a description of the differences between ACE and HRD and the conceptual and programmatic reasons for these differences. Because it was published in an adult education journal, it discusses issues and presents recommendations for ACE to work more effectively with HRD. In an issue late this year, ACE and HRD will again be presented within the context of present programs and practices and, hopefully, with a more balanced discussion for this journal.

It was a one day seminar on the management of human resource development programs. It was well attended, with training managers and directors greeting familiar faces and welcoming new ones. With the exception of the Director of Management Development from a local community college and another faculty member and me from the two area universities, no one else from adult and continuing education was at the meeting.

Less than a month later the statewide association for adult education met for their annual conference. It was well attended, as usual, with adult and continuing education teachers and directors glad to see each other after such a long absence. Included in the conference was a session focusing on education in the workplace. Two HRD training directors had been asked to conduct this session. No one else from HRD attended the conference.

The general purpose of both meetings was the same - providing quality learning experiences for adults. The sessions focused on the skills of professionals in meeting the needs of learners, be they workers or the general public. The major differences in the two meetings were the people attending and where they worked. Both groups, HRD and ACE, have more in common than they realize, and each would benefit greatly if they would talk to each other. This is not likely to happen.

The Growth of HRD and ACE

HRD and ACE have grown tremendously in the last quarter century. ACE experienced tremendous growth in the 60s and 70s, with over 17 million attending colleges and universities, and local school and community adult education programs by the end of the 1970s. More ACE programs were started than in any other time in history. Federal funding for adult education

became a reality, as the Adult Education Act and other social legislation of the 60s and 70s required some form of education and training. To a large degree ACE had a 'corner on the market'. With increased governmental support, large registrations, and recognition by central administrators, ACE was increasingly becoming a prime provider of enrollments and revenue.

During this time a 'sleeping giant' was beginning to awaken. Organizations were realizing the important contribution of a major resource. With the decline of young people to replenish the job market, the increased investment of sophisticated and costly machines, and the increased intelligence of the work force, employers became increasingly sensitive to their employees and the need to provide systematic training and development. HRD is now the most rapidly growing program in adult learning. Some indicators of this growth:

- The 1989 Industry Report stated (Training Magazine, 1989) employers spend over $44 billion annually for the education of employees. Add to this the wages of the participants while in training, the supervision of on-the-job training, and reading and self-study, more than $200 billion is being spent for employee education.

- Nearly 36 million employees participated in training and development in 1989. They received 1.2 billion hours of training, or nearly a week of training (34 hours) per person.

- The service industries - hospitals, government, professionals, and the utilities - are, not surprisingly, the most intensive in training, with over two courses per employee. They are closely followed with highly technical industries – banking, mining, and machinery and chemical manufacturing, with over 1.5 courses per employee.

This growth resulted in a tremendous increase in the hiring of persons to provide HRD. Many large companies not only have an experienced HRD staff, but have also positioned the program centrally in the organization, with a chief executive for HRD, or a manager of HRD under a chief executive for human resources. Many further divide the training and development program into units responsible for management development, technical education, sales training, customer service, and so forth.

The growth of HRD, however, cannot be fully provided through internal HRD staffs. The joint HRD study by the Department of Labor and American Society for Training and Development found 31% of the employers buy training from outside providers. The 1989 *Industry Report* (Training Magazine, 1989) noted that $9.4 billion was spent for outside training - 21% of the total funds spent in 1989. That is four percent more for outside training than in 1988. This will increase as smaller companies are forced to provide more comprehensive HRD for their employees. Most, however, are unable to retain a full HRD staff.

While all this growth in HRD has gone on, what has ACE been doing? ACE continues to primarily offer courses for the individual learner. While notable successes are reported in the development of contractual relationships with companies and agencies, the attempt to provide contract courses for the most part have not been widely successful.

Why? Why did the growth and recognition in ACE in the 60s and 70s not evolve into the

development of a good working relationship with employers as they began to look around for help in providing HRD? Three basic reasons can be examined: the perception of education by business, the preference for using consultants, and the marketing of ACE.

The Perception of Education by Business

ACE gets bad press from business. Because of their affiliation with schools, colleges, and universities, ACE is perceived to be in the 'ivory tower' and insensitive to the needs and functions of business. The key differences between education and business in how they view time, their cultures, the use of theories, and new knowledge (products) as described in Table 1 below. Collectively, these differences illustrate why the perception of education by business prevents HRD staffs from viewing ACE as a supportive friend. (It would be interesting to determine how many business leaders view HRD in the same framework, i.e., the "ivory tower" people.)

The Central Role of Consultants in HRD

If 40% of all HRD programming is provided by outside vendors and if HRD is not inclined to look at ACE, the only other source is consultants. In 1984, 4000 providers received two billion dollars from employers for training and development. While some of this went to ACE in the form of tuition reimbursement and contract programming, the large majority went to private consultants. Most of the companies are small companies. There are no IBMs or GMs in HRD. Of the 4000 providers, 40 received half of the two billion dollars, with each averaging 2.5 million dollars. The use of consultants will continue. By 1990 consultants will be paid 4.5 billion dollars for their work with HRD (Munger, 1987).

The Marketing of ACE

In a recent article (Smith, 1987), I took the position that ACE should be a revenue producing business, a profit centered enterprise within the school, college, or university. If this frame of reference is accepted, the central role of marketing can be understood. It is because most ACE programs have viewed themselves as nonprofit, break-even programs that marketing is, at best, haphazard, ill-planned and poorly done. Rare is the ACE program that commits 15 to 25% of their budget to marketing. The result is a collective image of ACE as being an extension of the school or college, with low budget programming of the usual courses, and a smattering of 'trendy' courses, and little sensitivity to the intended target population. It is not an image that attracts HRD staff that is deluged with slick advertising from consulting firms promoting custom designed programs.

Table 1

Differences Between Education and Business

Education	Business
Academic culture is a 'let's study, talk, think about it' culture; a world of ideas.	Business is a world of action; the 'let's do it' culture.
Time is not threatening; it's an ally. Schedules are adjusted to individual preferences.	Schedules/deadlines make time an enemy, where getting ahead means moving ahead as quickly as possible.
The present has little value. It's a passing phase. The past is ageless wisdom, and the future is a lab to explore.	Business exists in the present, where current trends, markets, demographics and social needs influence decisions.
Theory, not practical answers, is the main concern. Experimenting, searching, and testing.	Business people want practical answers. Problems are analyzed to find an applicable solution.
Discoverers of new knowledge present their work. Notoriety is gained through sharing work.	Businesses guard their knowledge from competitors. Presentations by professionals will be carefully reviewed.
Emphasis is on general principles and their application to universal situations.	Business wants specific guidelines that apply to certain situations and times.
Academics prefer uncertainty because it is the incentive for research.	Uncertainties are dangerous in business. The environment must be as controlled as possible.

Note: Adapted from "The Twain Shall Meet: Bridging the Gap between the Academic and Commercial Worlds," by D. M. Brethower, 1983, August, *Performance and Instruction Journal*, 10-16.

The Strengths of ACE

To provide balance in this examination of ACE and HRD, the differences between the two in five categories - purpose and mission, programming, participants (learners), instructional resources, finance (payment of fees), and major players (roles in ACE and HRD) are listed in Table 2. While the differences are noted, from the table five unique strengths of ACE for HRD can be identified.

Table 2

The Differences Between ACE and HRD

ACE	HRD
Purpose and Mission	
Primary focus is on individual development and personal growth.	Primary focus is on organizational development and the role of employees in that development.
Education is the primary means for changing people (e.g., classes, courses, workshops, and individualized instruction).	Education is one dimension of organizational change. Others include job rotation/enrichment, organizational restructuring, incentive plans.
Programming	
Programs are primarily marketed for the general public.	Programs are for employees only. Some may be marketed, but on a space available basis.
Program identification is community-wide, with needs analysis tapping a wide variety of groups and organizations.	Program identification is within the organization, with intensive needs analysis of management, employees, customers, competitors, and environment.
Participants (Learners)	
The learner's usually select the program to meet personal needs and goals.	The learner's performance is evaluated, and training and development identified.
The learner is the primary client. The learner's employer is secondary to the learner meeting her/his own goals.	The needs of the organization are primary. The employee's needs are met within the needs of the employer.
Instructional Resources	
Resources are primarily from education, as use of faculty is desired, if not required.	Resources are from any source (expertise in or out of the organization) that meets the organization's needs and can be afforded (bought).
'Certification' is often required, and ranges from a teaching certificate to approval by a faculty department.	The 'test' of acceptance is, can the person/program meet the present needs of the organization. Accountability is driven by the bottom line.

Table 2 (continued)

Finance (Payment of Fees)	
Payment for the program is by the participant.	Payment is by the employer, and this usually includes salary while in training.
Payment by his/her employer is usually through tuition reimbursement.	Employee selected courses must be approved by the employer.

Major Players (Roles)	
Directors/Deans of ACE under a chief executive for instruction/ academic affairs, Coordinators, Instructors (full/part-time).	Chief executive for human resources, Director of HRD, Instructional and Content Specialists, Trainers, Consultants.
Prefer experience is ACE, with coursework in adult education desired. Increasingly, people with content expertise are being hired and "trained" in adult education. Terminal degree (masters/doctorate) preferred to relate with others in the school/college.	Prefer people from the organization, or HRD experience in base industry (banking, manufacturing, retailing, etc.) Coursework in adult education is not considered necessary, but coursework will be paid if desired. Performance is required; terminal degree is optional, but becoming increasingly a plus.

Career development is becoming an integral part of HRD. As shown in the Table 1, business will not look to education for specific product development. What they do need, however, is a continuing supply of educated employees that are trainable for current positions and promotable to other positions. The press of training to meet immediate needs limits attention to career development. While many large organizations indicate career development plans (the depth of many of the plans can be questioned), most medium and small organizations have never developed career plans.

The demographic fact of a smaller pool of new employees and the increased pressure of affirmative action regulations are forcing many companies to develop career ladders for employees they want to keep. ACE can provide a wealth of resources in such areas as the basic development of supervisors, managers, technicians, and the office staff's transition to the automated office.

Organizational restructuring requires special expertise. Buyouts and mergers are no longer infrequently occurring. They are an ongoing reality for both healthy and unhealthy organizations. It is also a phenomenon of the public sector, with cutbacks, reduced budgets, and the restructuring of agencies. All of this result in disruption of the work force and the need to identify professionals to assist employees in the transition and, for those displaced in the change, outplacement counseling. With few exceptions, HRD staff are not equipped to handle these

situations. ACE has the potential of providing the needed organizational development expertise.

Individual development is on the rise. Thanks to the educational system that ACE is a part of, today's employees are well educated and highly sensitive to their personal needs. These needs go beyond the needs of the organization, and the growing organizations are aware of this. They are supporting and providing a wide variety of short-courses and seminars desired by employees. Examples would include wellness programs, arts and humanities, personal finance, personal growth, family education, and hobbies. Organizations want to provide an environment that employees view as meeting their personal as well as corporate growth.

Recognition of the special needs of employees. Organizations are becoming sensitive to employees with minimal education and with personal and family problems, and to the transition of older employees into retirement. Few organizations are equipped to adequately serve these people. Few have the staff or time to develop the needed programs.

Most ACE programs can readily address these needs. Adult Basic Education (ABE) has a long history of success in dealing with minimally educated adults. ACE could develop Employee Assistance Programs (EAP), in cooperation with the counseling department, and/or student services. Retirement education is readily programmable by ACE, with resources available through many organizations and academic programs in adult development and aging.

Tapping the Resources of ACE

The present structure and orientation of most ACE programs is one of competition with other programs, including HRD, for the education of the adult learner. Because of the attitude of business toward education, the collective force of consultants, and the mediocre marketing of ACE, schools, colleges, and universities are losing the race.

Many ACE programs are walking backwards into the 21st century, looking at what they did so successfully in the 60s and 70s and not willing to turn around and acknowledge that orientation no longer works. Unless a substantial reorientation is made, many programs will be minimal providers or even terminated before the end of this century.

What can ACE do? Following are ten recommendations to be considered.

1. Acknowledge the growth of HRD. It is, and will, continue to be the fastest growing program in adult learning. Employee education will be the driving force in the continued growth of ACE.

2. Establish an effective and realistic political base with the parent organization school/college/university. The ACE staff must know how they stand with central administration because as these recommendations are implemented, they are going to be risking their occupational necks!

3. Clearly identify the business ACE is in - providing educational services to adults. Like banks (financial services), brokerage houses (investment services), and retail businesses

(goods and services), education in general, and ACE in particular, should consider themselves as full service providers of educational services.

4. Get out of the 'schooling business.' Because of the attitude of business toward education, ACE must not view themselves as a direct extension of the school/college. This attitude results in the development of a catalog of fixed resources (courses and instructors) and the continuous attempt to apply them to all requests and inquiries. Too often ACE is viewed as having solutions looking for problems!

5. View ACE as a consultant to HRD. Develop a consultative frame of reference, ready to meet with HRD staffs in a joint venture to serve the employee (adult learner). Look at their problems from their perspective and develop well designed, well packaged proposals directed to resolving their problems. The individual learner will be better served because of the cooperative effort.

6. Develop programs, not courses. The emphasis here is on flexible programming. Courses denote a fixed catalog of prescribed answers (topics). Programs denote custom designed instructional services that accommodate the organization and the learner.

7. Develop the strengths of the school/college/university. The ACE staff should view themselves as coaches and developers of the unique resources of the institution. Few instructors or programs are instantly ready. A well designed plan to facilitate and develop instructors will reap immediate rewards when they are finally ready. If the instructors are good, then contractual provisions should be designed to limit them from going out on their own until ACE has recovered their investment.

8. Plan the ACE program from a marketing prospective. Develop a solid, realistic marketing plan that identifies the target population. The instructional resources could be viewed as products with a fixed lifespan and product cycle. The need for the product (resource) will ultimately diminish. It should then be terminated, or redesigned, to accommodate current market needs.

9. The ACE program should be viewed as being on the cutting edge of instructional delivery and technology. Few consultants have the vast resources available to ACE, and at the lower costs that most of these resources are available to ACE. While being on the cutting edge is not likely in all areas, committed focus on those areas that are readily available, and needed by HRD, can be done. Possible areas would include career development, individualized program instruction, computer based training, adult basic education, general managerial development, technical education, and arts and humanities.

10. Become known as a pragmatic futurist. Have the feet of ACE solidly on the ground, but have its head ever looking into the future. Know the environment, and trends and issues that will impact the personal and occupational growth of the adult learner. Use this information to work with the HRD staffs to fully serve their organization and their employees (learners). These recommendations should be viewed as guides for further identification and development of quality ACE program and staff. Individual program strengths, and areas

needing strength, should be clearly identified. The ultimate goal is to position ACE as a viable participant in the education system. That system includes other ACE programs, HRD programs, consultants, and other providers. The ultimate recipient of this system is the individual learner. The ultimate benefit is quality learning experiences. This will be more likely achieved if ACE and HRD become partners rather than competitors.

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