Differences in formal and informal learning techniques education essay

When an instructor enters into a class room, he or she must know the learning abilities of his/ her students. That is how they seek information, how they process information and how the information can become meaningful to them. The first part of this report discuses the learning and development strategy and differences in formal and informal learning style in detail. This report also includes four learning style in Honey and Mumford model in detail.

The second part of the report consists of motivation theory called Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory. This report outlines the five levels of needs that are physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, esteem needs and self actualization needs. At the end there is a criticism on the theory and its implication on HR practices that top management can use Maslow theory to motivate their employees.

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Part A

Learning and Development Strategy

Learning and development is basically directed towards the alignment of training needs and career development of an employee. The basic purpose of the learning and development strategy is that you advance an employee skills and knowledge in such a way that will help in getting his job done and eventually to leads to overall organization performance. Combining both learning and development strategies, you actually create a link between them. That is you actually motivate employee to learn those skills which will help them in performing their job.

Essential elements of learning and development strategy are:

How a learner will learn the information?

Which form of information input will a learner prefer?

How a learner will draw meaning from the received information?

What will be the preferred learning style of the learner?

Differences in formal and informal learning techniques

Informal learning

Formal learning

In informal learning there is no formal instructor involved in it.

In formal learning you are directly directed by the instructor to learn a particular thing.

In formal learning has no predefined objects and end results.

Before the start of the formal learning, you have some objectives that clearly define the reason and result of the learning.

Informal learning does not take place within a structured environment. Rather it is more of spontaneous nature. Informal learning usually happens with the frequency of experiences

Formal learning takes place within a special arrangement within an organization.

In informal learning you don't get any recognition or certificate for learning that knowledge or skill

It results in achievement of special degree or certificate that actually certified that the recipient of this has learned a particular skill or knowledge.

Informal learning may not be intentionally learned. It may happen unintentionally

In formal learning, learner consciously and intentionally learns a specific skill.

It usually happens through hit and trial process; through socialization when you interact with people you tend to learn different things from them unconsciously.

Examples of formal learning are discussions, role playing, lecturers, simulations etc.

Honey and Mumford learning style

The learning ability of each individual varies from another individual. Learning styles determine the preferences of individuals in terms of how they focus on different types of information, particular ways of perceiving that information and how each individual understands that information (Sandra Penger and Metka TekavÄ¹iÄ¹, 2009).

Honey and Mumford come up with different four learning style to examine differences in learning approaches.

The four learning styles are:

Activists

Reflectors

Theorists

Pragmatists

Activists

Activist learners have short them orientation. Activist wants new experiences in their lives. Activists are more flexible and welcoming. They are more of adventurous nature and want to try anything new. They are ready to take decisions without thinking that what would be the results of that decision. They don't like to prepare before they take any action. Because of their short term orientation, they get bore easily and quickly and always look for new things as soon as pleasure from one activity decreases. They are risk taker

who want to accept challenges but without thinking the possible consequences of those challenges.

Reflectors

Reflectors are considered as good and active listeners. When learner gain experience as an activist, then there is a stage to process those experience. They seek information from people both primary that with their own efforts and secondary that is from others. That is why reflectors do not engage or participate or provide information rather they are seekers and listeners of information. They don't quickly jump to conclusion. Rather they want to have deep understanding and insight of the information and like to think over and again. There fore reflectors are slow decision maker. They resist from taking decisions immediately before pondering into the collected information. Their purpose is to collect and analyze information as possible before coming to conclusion. That is these learners focus on gathering and thorough processing of information instead of drawing conclusions from it.

Theorists

Theorists are those learners who are more attracted towards theories, logics and principles. They tend to transform the learned information, being an activist and reflectors, into theories and come up with logical reasoning. Their way of analyzing any information or solving problem is that they go step by step and draw relationships or logics to grasp the big picture. That is why they are said to be " vertical thinkers" (Frank Coffield, David Moseley, Elaine Hall and Kathryn Ecclestone, 2004). They are more of perfectionist who wants discipline in their lives. That is why they go systematically, logically and rationally. Theorists are more of objective nature. Therefore

they do not believe in subjectivity, gut feelings or intuition. They want logics and reasons to grasp the information.

Pragmatists

As theorist look for theories and logics to understand the information, pragmatists are one step forward. They want the practical implication of theories to grasp the information. As the name implies, pragmatist learners are more of practical and realistic in nature. They cannot assimilate any model theory or principal until and unless it has practical verification. Like activist they look for challenging wok and new ideas but it should be of practical nature. These types of learners want to try out the information they have learned once they get out of the learning institution.

Source: Frank Coffield, David Moseley, Elaine Hall and Kathryn Ecclestone (2004) ' Learning styles and pedagogy in post-16 learning A systematic and critical review'. Fig 11

Activities that form part of the learning and development Case study

Case study is one of the activities that form part of learning and development strategy. In this method learners are provided with situation that could be hypothetical or real. That situation or story includes the background, some supporting information and issue faced by a company or any organization around which the case study revolves. Learner has to solve the case study by providing possible solutions to the problem. Learner must be told that case study may not have one concrete solution. Rather it's the property of the case study that a problem in case can be solved by many

and different ways. Therefore each learner can have different solution for the case study. The focus on using case study as a learning tool is that how the learner approaches towards the solution, how much he understands the problem and what are the tools and techniques he has used to solve the problem.

Harvard case studies are widely used in colleges and universities to improve problem solving and decision making skills of learners.

On the job training (OJT)

On the job training is especially applicable for small business. It's more appropriate when learner has to learn new technology. OJT can be done formally or informally. In formal OJT, there is a formal trainer, learners observes the teacher that what and how he is doing. Then after the demonstration, instructor will discuss the process of using orally. Then the learner will himself practice the learned skills and will get feedback and instruction at the same time. This process will repeat until the learner become master to it. Whereas in informal on the job training, there is no formal trainer, those who knows the technology can teach the learner whenever he requires. There is no formal practice of the learned skills or proper feedback of the performance of the learner.

Men's Wearhouse is practicing formal on the job training in which they have trained trainers and they are responsible for the development of their trainees.

Part B

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory

Maslow hierarchy of needs theory was proposed in 1943 by Abraham Maslow in a paper A theory of human Motivation (William G. Huitt, 2004). Maslow points out five levels of need that are the sources of motivation for every individual. This level of needs is presented in a specific sequence. If one level of need is satisfied, then individual will move towards another level of need. An individual will not move forward to another level of need until and unless the existing level will be satisfied. And this process will continue until a person reaches to most upper level. Different people will be motivated by different level of need at the same time.

The five levels of needs are

Psychological needs

Safety needs

Social needs

Esteem needs

Self actualization needs

Psychological needs

This is the primary level need of Maslow hierarchy of needs. It includes basic necessities of an individual that are food, shelter, water and other physical requirements. This level of need is the basic requirements of every individual and it must be met to move upward in need pyramid.

Safety needs

Safety needs includes protection, security both physical and emotional. Safety needs include financial security, health care, justice, personal security etc. If the physiological needs of an individual is satisfied then he will move for safety needs. For an employee safety need would be job security, justice in distribution of rewards by the company.

Social needs

Social needs include need for friends, relationships and belongingness. Every individual needs love and love by others.

Esteem needs

Esteem needs includes need for self respect, achievement, recognition, status, reputation. All individuals have tendency to engage themselves in such activities that results in recognition and value to enhance their reputation and gain a status among the group.

Self actualization needs

Self actualization needs includes need for growth and to satisfy the drive of becoming what one has capacity to become. This is the most upper level of need hierarchy. Any individual will reach to this stage, when the lower levels of needs will be satisfied. If pervious level of needs will be satisfied, then an individual will realize its inner potential and will try to become what he can be.

Critical analysis of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory

The crux of Maslow hierarchy of needs theory is that each level in hierarchy must be satisfied before you go to the next level.

In business world, managers adopted this theory to motivate their employees. Motivating employees is a big challenge for managers in any organization. Managers not only motivate their employees to get their job done but they motivate their employees to perform their job in such a way that leads to both employee and organizational productivity. So Maslow theory gives basis to how to motivate employees. Managers have to determine that which need level is more important to an employee. Sometimes managers only focus on physiological and safety needs to motivate employees in terms of salary and job security. But manager must keep in mind that if you want outstanding performance from the employees, then you have go upward and focus on upper level of needs like esteem and self actualization need. Merely monetary incentives are not sufficient to motivate employees but recognition in public, raising status, promotions, career advancement also encourage employees and wok as a token of appreciation for the employees. It also gives signal to the employees that company value the contribution of employees.

Criticism on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory

Maslow hierarchy of needs theory is based on intuition and has no scientific reasoning behind it to support the argument.

Maslow hierarchy of needs is not applicable in all culture. For instance, some culture gives importance to esteem needs than social needs. Some culture

emphasizes social needs then over self actualization. According to Nevis (1983), China's primary need is belonging need and there is no esteem needs in need pyramid. Moreover self actualization need for China in not realizing ones own potential, but being collectivist country, the meaning of self actualization for them is to serve the members of the society.

Implication of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory

Apart from criticism, Maslow hierarchy of needs theory has an implication on HR practices. Through this theory, managers can design the framework to determine how to motivate employees for better performance.

For instance you can arrange lunch breaks, define rest hours and enough salary and wages so that employee can have their basic necessities of life to fulfill their physiological needs.

In safety needs, managers must provided safe and sound working conditions in which workers can work easily and there is low level of hazards. Managers must design pension plans, retirement plans and gratuity to help employees after their retirement age.

In social needs, managers must design groups or teams to which employees can associate them.

In esteem needs, managers must recognize the contributions of their employees not only by giving them monetary rewards. But employees must be rewarded on basis of total reward management concept which includes intangible rewards as well like recognition program, certificates, gifts etc

In self actualization need, managers can give career advancement opportunity to employees by giving them more challenging work, sponsoring them for higher education etc.