

Training need analysis



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This paper investigates the literature on Training Need Analysis (TNA). The theoretical underpinnings of TNA and the various approaches used in firms are discussed in this paper. The different levels of analyses of training needs and the need for TNA in a firm are also discussed in this paper. The paper also throws light on the limitations of the conventional measures and approaches of TNA. Hence, the paper directs scholars towards the characteristic requirements of a TNA approach more suited for today's world of work.

1. What is Training Needs Analysis (TNA)

Needs assessment, or needs analysis, is the process of determining the organization's training needs and seeks to answer the question of whether the organization's needs, objectives, and problems can be met or addressed by training. In addition to this TNA should include the determination of tasks to be performed, behaviors essential to the performance of those tasks, type of learning necessary to acquire those behaviors, and the type of instructional content best suited to accomplish that type of learning.

An illustration of the various steps involved in training need analysis was given by Lawrie and Boringer : 1) Use all possible internal and external sources of training need information, 2) Generate a large pool of items describing the trainee on the job behavior, 3) Administer the checklist to trainee behavior, 4) Cluster the training needs, and 5) Obtain information from training feedback. Influence of theory in understanding training needs.

Motivationtheory

According to Campbell , Campbell, Weick, Dunnette, and Lawler have cited evidence for the motivational influence of an individual's self efficacy on the

perceived training needs. General systems theory Odiorne , describes the eight systems found in training. These also include the systems view on training needs as the cybernetic system view and the organism system view. The cybernetic system view says that the needs will be identified from within the organization itself and the organism system view says that the information centers at the extremities of this organism, provide the training need information to its brain stimulators.

2. Different approaches to TNA

2. 1. Conventional TNA, The O-T-P model

The conventional TNA approach adopted in organizations usually includes analysis at three levels, the organizational level, task level and person level. This was suggested by McGehee and Thayer . The organizational level training needs describe the needs of the organization as a whole, taking into consideration future business opportunities. The task level analysis considers the basic training needs of particular tasks at hand in each job. The person level analysis, considers the training requirements of each person to surpass their skill deficiencies to perform the task at hand satisfactorily.

2. 2. Task Analytic Approach to TNA

Technical trainings deal with jobs or tasks being done by human beings. Such training should produce qualified task performers. So, a technical TNA encompasses three activities: need detection, task identification and collection of task performance. Training needs are detected when new equipment is brought into use or the performance quality falls below industry standards. The task identification is done with the help of a task

identification matrix (TIM). Similarly a basic task information record (BTIR) is used to collect the task performance data.

2. 3. Performance appraisal approach to TNA

Rumler and Brache , were of the opinion that if training was to make any significant contribution to an organization; it should be in the form of effective performance enhancement for each individual. Hence their idea of gauging training needs, sprouted from understanding the variable that went into defining the performance systems of each individual employee. Mager and Pipe, suggest analyzing training needs by first differentiating a lack of performance due to skill deficiency, from that due to lack of motivation.

2. 4. Integrated Approach to TNA

Leat and Lovell, propose an approach to understand training needs by combining the various levels of analysis and integrating it into one model.

Figure : Integrated approach to TNA

Source:

Taylor and O'Driscoll, also attempt to provide an integrated approach to TNA. This includes an integration of the O-T-P and performance appraisal approaches to TNA.

Figure : Integrating OTP and Performance appraisal models to TNA Source:

2. 5. Competency based Approach to TNA

An interesting study by Agut, Grau and Peiro , suggested that managerial competency needs and technical needs are completely different from each other in the same sample. This study also indicated that the sample did not demand training to meet their need of generic managerial competencies.

From this we can understand that a dichotomy does lie between competency needs and technical training needs. Therefore a competency based approach to TNA might not be suitable for all kinds of jobs. It might be more suitable for managerial or executive level jobs where the technical demands are lesser.

2. 6. Individual or Customized Approach

Guthrie and Schwoerer , found that the self assessed training needs were positively influenced by perceptions of training utility, self efficacy, managerial support, and p of control positively and negatively influenced by educational level. A study on the individual training needs of music teachers and vocal trainers revealed significant differences in the training demands of the sample. This study also revealed significant differences in the target behaviors to be assessed, and assessment statuses needed by the various participants .

2. 7. Economic approach

The economic approach to training advises managers to select and prioritize training needs based on three criteria: the profit improvement they can bring to the organization, the addition to human capital and the investment in human capital to meet future contingencies.

3. Need for TNA

To develop a healthy and vital long range human resource plan, an organization must first understand the training needs of the firm, the people and the future of the firm in conjunction with cooperative strategic planning. Organizational meeting, personnel review and position review are some of the ways in which an effective training need assessment can be carried out

in a firm. 4. Different levels of analysis suggested in the various approaches to TNA McGehee and Thayer, considered three levels of analysis; organization, task and man.

Morano , suggested looking at the organization's training needs at two levels i. e. organization and man. The three levels suggested by Taylor and O'Driscoll include, organization, inter organization and man. Rather than levels of analysis these are actually various categories of training need content. For example, the training needs that arise from a man, a task or the organizational content, can all be analyzed at individual, group or organizational levels. Ostroff, Ford, and Goldstein have described this level-content dichotomy in their study. Their level-content framework to assess training needs gives a better picture of the levels of TNA.

Table : Level Content Framework of TNA

Source:

5. Limitations of a conventional TNA

Leat and Lovell, questioned the competency of a traditional TNA in determining training and development needs effectively. They say that a traditional TNA lack the ability to combine the training need analyses at different levels. A few authors have been quoted to say that the traditional TNA is a mechanistic process and its antecedents can be traced back to the industrial revolution over 200 years ago.

The rigid behavioral objectives of conventional TNA are antipathetic to current notions of competence . Knight , says that the conventional TNA is not suited to meet the needs of different unique environments i. e. the different patterns of workforce, different cultures, organizational objectives,

strategies and resource constraints. Oatey , criticized the conventional approaches to TNA in their lack of ability to distinguish the specific and general skills requirements of a firm.

6. Conventional measures of training needs

Four major approaches were suggested by Kirkpatrick , to gauge the organization's training needs. These included performance appraisals, supervisor tests, supervisor surveys and forming advisory committees with key personnel. Kirkpatrick , gives eleven approaches to determine the training needs in an organization. They include looking at an organization's processes and supervisory behavior, analyzing the problems, supervisory actions, and performance appraisals and asking supervisors, superiors and subordinates. As can be seen on closer inspection, these are specific methods to measure training needs rather than approaches.

Management appraisals, survey, critical incidents analysis, job analysis, assessment centers, psychological tests, skills inventory and data obtained while coaching had been some of the conventional methods used by organizations till that time, to understand the prevalent training needs. Otto and Glaser , suggested certain general guidelines to understand the organization's training needs. These included, talking to the staff, gathering opinions from all levels in the firm, talking to other department and organizational heads, and reading a variety of the industry literature.

Conclusion

In today's world the concept of a job itself has become blurred. Today's jobs include concepts as broad banding, multi skilling and path planning. The organizations of this age require a results oriented and deliberate

organization strategy. Hence, the TNA in such organizations should also follow suit and be strategic and integrated in its approach. TNA should have direct and unambiguous results. Training should be designed to build on what employees already know. The present age TNA emphasizes on assisting the employees in their work and careers and helping them achieve greater future proficiency and satisfaction at work.

This paper investigates the literature on Training Need Analysis (TNA). The theoretical underpinnings of TNA and the various approaches used in firms are discussed in this paper. The different levels of analyses of training needs and the need for TNA in a firm are also discussed in this paper. The paper also throws light on the limitations of the conventional measures and approaches of TNA. Hence, the paper directs scholars towards the characteristic requirements of a TNA approach more suited for today's world of work.