Competencies and Roles of Trainingand development Professionals

M. Srimannarayana
Professor, XLRI,
Jamshedpur
8310 001

Abstract:

This present study aimed at assessing the extent of importance of various training and development competencies and roles, and demonstration of them by training professionals in India. Time to time American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) conducts the studies and updates the competencies required for training professionals. The conceptual model of ASTD, 2004 is adapted in this study. Based on the data collected from127 training professionals and 194 line professionals, the study finds that there is a gap between the importance of the competencies and demonstration of them, particularly, in the cluster of business/management competencies. With regard to roles, professional specialist has emerged as the most important. Nature of business wise, the study finds that the importance of training competencies and roles is relatively higher in service sector, but training professionals in IT sector could demonstrate these competencies and roles better than service and manufacturing sectors.

Introduction

Over a period of time, training and development has evolved and matured to a substantial degree in India (Rao, Rao and Yadav, 2001).More training staff and departments have been adding value today in organizations by embracing high-impact approach to training (Burke, 2001). The effectiveness of training and development in organizations depends on the competencies of training and development professionals. That is why the field of training and development (human resource development) competencies is seen a critical factor for the survival and continuous development of organizations and countries (Rothwell, Sanders, &Soper, 1999). The present study makes an attempt to find out the extent of importance of roles and competencies for training and development professionals in India and to what extent these professionals demonstrate these competencies while performing their duties and responsibilities.

Earlier studies

American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) has sponsored many HRD competency studies over the years. The first study conducted by Pinto and Walker (1978) identified a list of training competencies. Managing professional self-development has emerged as one of the major areas of training and development professionals in this study. The second study conducted by McLagan and McCullough (1983) established a human resource “wheel”, a definition of training and development, 102 critical outputs for training and development field, four role clusters and a matrix of 15 roles/31

competencies for training and development professionals. The third study conducted by McLagan (1989) was expansion of 1983 study. Naming the field as HRD, the study identified 35 competencies for HRD and summarized 11 roles for HRD professionals. Going beyond traditional training and development, Rothwell (1996) developed models for human performance improvement (HPI) which explored the roles, competencies, and outputs of HPI work. He listed the trends in the key areas such as performance, business, learning, organizational structure, and technology. He identified 15 core and 38 supporting competencies of HPI. Piskurich and Sanders (1998) examined the roles, competencies, and outputs that HRD professionals need to implement. Rothwell, Sanders and Soper, (1999) inquired about competencies required for the success in the field of workplace learning and performance (WLP). This research developed models for workplace learning and performance. This study identified 52 competencies that are classified into six groups, namely analytical competencies, technical competencies, leadership, business competencies, interpersonal competencies, and technological competencies.

As a natural evolution of 1999 research, Bernthal, Colteryahn, Davis, Naughton, Rothwell, and Wellins (2004) conceptualized a model which includes three layers of knowledge and skill areas, competencies, areas of expertise, and roles. The model identified 12 foundational competencies for WLP professionals and classified them into three groups. Group one consisted of interpersonal competencies such as building trust, communicating effectively, influencing stakeholders, leveraging diversity, and networking and partnering. Group two covered business management competencies such as analyzing needs and proposing solutions, applying business acumen, driving results, planning and implementing assignments, and thinking strategically. Group three included personal competencies such as demonstrating adoptability, and modeling personal development. The model identified specific WLP areas of expertise such as designing learning, improving human performance, delivering training, measuring and evaluating, facilitating organizational change, managing the learning function, coaching, managing organizational knowledge, and career planning and talent management. These were positioned above the foundational competencies because they direct and supplement the foundational competencies through special skills and knowledge. All the areas of expertise rely on specialized technologies to leverage and support them. The model placed four WLP roles, namely project manager, professional specialist, business partner, and learning strategist, above the areas of expertise because WLP profession requires a certain combination of competencies and areas of expertise to perform the roles effectively. ASTD conducted another study conducted in 2013 which identified six foundational competencies and 10 specific areas of expertise (Arneson, Rothwell&Naughton, 2013). The foundational competencies are business skills, global mindset,

industry knowledge, interpersonal skills, personal skills and technology literacy, which are bedrock upon which to build 10 specific areas of expertise such as change management, coaching, evaluating learning impact, instructional design, integrated talent management, knowledge management, learning technologies, managing learning programs, performance improvement and training delivery.

The Present Study

This present study aimed at assessing the extent of importance of various HRD roles and competencies and demonstration of them by training and development professionals in India. Two questionnaires were designed for this study covering the competencies identified by ASTD competency model (2004).Questionnaire one was aimed at collecting information from training professionals to find out the extent of importance of the HRD roles and competencies. This was administered among training professionals working in different types of organizations in India with a request to answer the items on a five-point scale, one being 'unnecessary' and five being 'essential' for training professionals. Questionnaire two was aimed at collecting information from line professionals to assess the extent of demonstration of the same HRD roles and competencies by training professionals while performing their roles and responsibilities. This was administered among line professionals with a request to answer the items on a five-point scale, one being 'not at all demonstrated' by training professionals and five being 'always almost demonstrated'. A simple random sampling method was considered for administration of the questionnaires. The questionnaires received from 127 training professionals and 194 line professionals were considered for analysis. The data collected was subjected to reliability test. Overall reliability value was 0.975(Cronbach's alphavalue). Descriptive statistics such as frequency distributions, percentages are used for the analysis of demographic information of the respondents. Mean scores, standard deviations, and paired t-tests and one-away ANOVA tests were employed for analyzing roles and competencies data.

Respondents' Information:

As presented in Table 1, a single largest group (43.61%) of the respondents belonged to manufacturing organizations; 34.27% of them represented service sector and the remaining 22.12% belonged to Information Technology (IT) organizations. Work experience wise, 45.79% of them had 10 years and above years of experience; 33.96% of them had five to ten years of experience and the remaining had below five years of work experience. It is observed that the mean experience of line professionals (11.49 years) was higher than the mean experience of training professionals (7.38 years). Overall mean experience is calculated as 9.87 years. Gender wise, nearly three-fourths of the respondents were men. When compared, more women were found among the training professionals. Educational qualifications data indicates that, overall, more than half of the respondents, particularly, training professionals possessed professional qualifications such as MBA, Masters in Social Work, and HRM/Personnel management

Table1: Respondents' Information

Nature of business	Training Professionals		Line Professionals		Total	
Manufacturing	55	3.31	85	3.81	40	3.61
Services	43	3.86	67	4.54	10	4.27
IT	29	2.83	42	1.65	1	2.12
Experience						
Below 5 Years	45	5.43	20	0.31	5	0.25
5 to 10 years	55	3.31	54	7.84	09	3.96
10 and Above	27	1.26	120	1.86	47	5.79
Gender						
Male	77	0.63	155	9.9	32	2.27
Female	50	9.37	39	0.1	9	7.73
Qualifications						
Diploma	3	.36	10	.15	3	.05
Graduate	28	2.05	83	2.78	11	4.58
Postgraduate	14	1.02	17	.76	1	.66
Professional	82	4.57	84	3.3	66	1.71

Business /Management Competencies

The competencies such as analyzing needs and proposing solutions, applying business acumen, driving results, planning and implementing assignments and thinking strategically were clustered into business/management competencies.As shown in table 2, according to training professionals analyzing needs and proposing solutions and planning and implementing assignments were top most important business skills required for them. Line managers viewed that training professionals demonstrated the skills of planning and implementing assignments at relatively higher level. However, it is significant to note that the results of t-test showedsignificant differences between the required and demonstrated competencies in the same area along with analyzing needs and proposing solutions. This indicates that line managers expect that training professionals have to identify and understand business issues and create effective learning solutions, which have to be completed in a timely manner to ensure that learning goals are achieved. Overall, it is found that management competencies for training

professionals are very important and at the same time there is a significant difference between the importance and demonstration of these competencies. This would be the basis for designing an appropriate learning intervention program for these professionals.

Table 2: Business/Management Competencies

	Business/ Management Competencies	Importance Rating	D	Demonstration Rating	D		
	Analyzing needs & proposing solutions	4.43	.67	3.63	.82	.487	000
	Applying business Acumen	3.90	.91	3.50	.90	.731	000
	Driving results	4.07	.88	3.53	.93	.243	000
	Planning& implementing assignments	4.13	.76	3.69	.84	.723	000
	Thinking strategically	3.92	.87	3.46	.87	.431	000
Overall		4.09	.85	3.56	.88		

Interpersonal Competencies

Building trust, communicating effectively, influencing stake holders, leveraging diversity and networking and partnering were considered in the category of interpersonal competences. It could be seen from table 3 that communicating effectively and building trust secured first two positions in importance rating given by training professionals. Interestingly, these two items got first two positions in the demonstration rating given by the line managers of the study. However, there was a significant gap between the required and demonstrated competencies in the areas of building trust, leveraging diversity, influencing stake holders and networking and partnering. Training professionals are expected to interact with their stakeholders much more effectively to build trust and give confidence. Overall, it is found that interpersonal competencies for training professionals are very important and at the same time there is a significant difference between the importance and demonstration of these skills.

Table 3: Interpersonal Competencies

	Interpersonal Competencies	Importance Rating	D	Demonstration Rating	D		
	Building trust	4.22	.73	3.89	.88	.328	000
	Communicating effectively	4.45	.72	3.94	.79	.730	000
	Influencing stake holders	4.06	.81	3.61	.82	.866	000
	Leveraging diversity	3.98	.80	3.62	.82	.349	000
	Networking & partnering	4.03	.73	3.57	.86	.815	000
Overall		4.15	.77	3.73	.84		

Personal Competencies

Demonstrating adoptability and modeling personal development were taken into consideration under personal competencies in this study. As presented in table4, training professionals rated modeling personal development as number one skill. This is followed by demonstrating adoptability. With regard to demonstration of these competencies, the line professionals also gave them the same rating. However, there was a differencebetween theimportance and demonstration of these skills, particularly, modeling personal development. Line managers expect that training professionals actively identify their new areas of learning. They have to learn regularly and apply the new skills on the job.

Table 4: Personal Competencies

	Personal Competencies	Importance Rating	D	Demonstration Rating	D		
	Demonstrating adoptability	3.87	.88	3.52	.88	.598	112
	Modeling personal development	4.03	.80	3.53	.87	.712	000
Overall		3.95	.83	3.53	.87		

Areas of Expertise

The areas of expertise identified byASTD (2004) are designing training, improving human performance, delivering programs, managing learning function, facilitating organizational change, measuring and evaluating, managing organizational knowledge, career planning and talent management

and coaching. As this study focused on training professionals, designing training, delivering programs, managing learning function, and measuring and evaluatingtraining were considered as areas of expertise of training professionals in this study.As shown in table 5, delivering training was the top area of expertise required for training professionals. This is followed by designing, managing learning function and measuring. It is interesting to note that there was no difference in the ranking of these areas by training professionals and line professionals. However, there was significant difference in the demonstration of these areas of expertise, especially, in the areas of delivering and designing training programs. Line professionals expect that training professionals should create training courses to meet training needs and deliver the courses in an effective manner which can engage the learner and produce desired outcomes. They have to provide effective leadership in developing employees to meet organizational goals and measure the impact of the training programs.

Table 5: Areas of Expertise

	Areas of Expertise	**Importance Rating**	**D**	**Demonstration Rating**	**D**		
	Delivering training	4.26	.85	3.78	.82	.987	000
	Designing training	3.99	.92	3.62	.83	.918	000
	Managing learning function	3.96	.89	3.59	.83	.730	000
	Measuring and evaluating	3.70	.90	3.37	.94	.281	203

HRD Roles

Table 6 shows the mean scores of HRD roles played by training professionals. The top most important role of training professionals was professional specialist who designs, develops and delivers training programs. This is followed by the role project manager, who plans, organizes and monitors the delivery of training programs. The business partner, who applies business knowledge in identifying workplace problems and evaluates possible solutions including training, was positioned in the third place. The fourth place was given to the role of learning strategist, who decides how learning can best be leveraged to achievebusiness goals. It is interesting to note that the line managers also rated the HRD roles in the same order. However there was a difference between extent of importance and demonstration. The difference was more significant in performing the roles of business partner and project manager. The line managers expect that training professionals should demonstrate the roles with application of business and industry knowledge and ensure effective execution of learning initiatives. They also expect that training professionals should resource effectively various learning activities which help in business success.

Table 6: HRD Roles

	HRD Roles	Importance Rating	D	Demonstration Rating	D		
	Learning Strategist	4.11	.73	3.50	.84	.336	000
	Business Partner	4.13	.74	3.50	.86	.381	000
	Project Manager	4.20	.77	3.66	.83	.650	000
	Professional Specialist	4.24	.80	3.70	.83	.555	000

Training Expenditure and Training Competencies

The respondent professionals were asked that comparing with the major competitors of their business, how they rate the spending of their organization on learning and development. They were given options such as 'at par with the competitors', 'lower than the competitors' and 'higher than the competitors'. It could be seen from table 7 that training professionals who perceived that their organizations spend more than the competitors rated importance of training competencies at relatively higher level and those who perceived that their organizations spend lesser than the competitors rated importance of training competencies at relatively lower level. The same trend continued with regard to the demonstration rating of line professionals.

Table 7: Training Expenditure and Training Competencies

	Training Expenditure	Mean Scores of Training competencies	
		Training Professionals	Line Professionals
	Lower than competitors	4.02	3.31
	At par with competitors	4.07	3.57
	Higher than competitors	4.09	3.83

Firm Financial Performance and Training Competencies

The respondent professionals were asked to rate their organizations' financial performance comparing with the major competitors of their business. They were given options such as 'as good the competitors', 'worse thanthe competitors' and 'better than the competitors'. As presented in table 8,the rating of training competencies in terms of importance and demonstration are seems to be related to firm financial performance. The respondents who perceived that their organizations were doing well in their financial performance rated the training competencies, either in importance rating or demonstration rating, relatively higher when compared to other respondents who perceived that the financial performance of their organizations was either at par with others, or worse than others.

Table 8:Firm Performance and Training Competencies

	Firm Performance	Mean Scores of Training competencies	
		Training Professionals	Line Professionals
	Worse than the competitors	3.77	3.21
	As good as the competitors	4.09	3.50
	Better than the competitors	4.10	3.76

Nature of Business and Training competencies

An attempt is made in this study to find out association between training competencies and the nature of business of the organizations. It is observed from table 9 that training professionals of manufacturing organizations rated the importance of foundational competencies (business, interpersonal and personal competencies) relatively higher when compared to the training professionals of service and IT sector. But as far as demonstration of these competencies is concerned, line professionals of manufacturing sector rated them relatively lower when compared to other sectors. Based on the mean score, it can be inferred that training professionals in IT sector could demonstrate better their foundational competencies than the training professionals in other sectors. With respect to areas of expertise, it is seen that training professionals of service sector gave relatively better scores than others. However, when it comes to demonstration of these competencies, training professionals in IT sector could get better score. Coming to HRD roles, it is found that again training professionals of service sector gave relatively higher score. With respect to demonstration of these competencies, training professionals in IT sector could maintain edge over others. On the whole, it can be stated that service sector gave the importance of training competencies and roles relative higher and IT sector demonstrated the competencies and roles better than their counterparts. The results of one-way ANOVA test shows that there was a significance difference between manufacturing and IT sectors with regard to demonstration of personal competencies and measuring and evaluating training programs

Table 7: Nature of Business and Training competencies

Importance Rating						Demonstration Rating				
Foundational Competencies	Mfg.	Serv.	T	f-Statistics	Sig	fg.	erv.	T	f-Statistics	Sig
Business Competencies	.14	.12	.95	1.408	.249	.48	.62	.75	2.596	.077
Interpersonal Competencies	.16	.17	.03	0.689	.504	.68	.73	.84	0.793	.454
Personal Competencies	.01	.90	.91	0.503	.606	.40	.61	.81*	5.671	.004
Average	**.10**	**.07**	**.96**			**.52**	**.65**	**.79**		
Areas of Expertise										
Delivering programs	.19	.34	.29	1.12	.33	.75	.76	.90	0.931	.396
Designing programs	.02	.02	.90	0.348	.707	.59	.61	.80	1.557	.213
Managing learning function	.02	.95	.86	0.57	.567	.54	.67	.61	0.865	.423
Measuring and evaluating	.77	.76	.49	1.508	.225	.22	.48	.70*	5.432	.005
Average	**.00**	**.02**	**.88**			**.52**	**.63**	**.77**		
HRD Roles										
Learning strategist	.14	.08	.06	0.201	.818	.45	.51	.63	0.648	.524
Business partner	.20	.14	.94	1.469	.234	.45	.52	.64	0.869	.421
Project Manager	.15	.28	.15	0.575	.564	.54	.65	.64	0.481	.619
Professionals specialist	.23	.40	.04	1.668	.193	.64	.71	.89	1.13	.325
Average	**.18**	**.22**	**.05**			**.52**	**.60**	**.70**		
Overall	**.09**	**.11**	**.97**			**.52**	**.62**	**.74**		

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

*Manufacturing organizations # Service organizations

Conclusion

It may be concluded from the analysis of foundational competencies that interpersonal competences were the most important for training professionals. This is followed by business/ management skills and personal competencies. The most important specific skills within these three clusters of foundational competencies were communicating effectively, analyzing needs and proposing solutions, and skills of planning and implementing assignments. The mostly demonstrated sills were communicating effectively, which is within the cluster of interpersonal competencies. The significant gaps were identified in the skills of analyzing, needs and proposing solutions, planning and implementing assignments, building trust, driving results, thinking strategically, and leveraging diversity. The major areas of gap between importance and demonstration of the competencies were from the cluster of business competencies. Therefore, it may be recommended that training professionals need to undergo a rigorous training on business/management competencies and start applying the skills in discharging their functions.

Coming to the areas of expertise, it may be concluded that delivering trainingemerged as the most important area. This is followed by designing training. However these are the major areas of improvement because significant gaps were identified between importance rating and demonstration rating on these two areas. With regard to HRD roles,professional specialist role emerged as the most important. Significant gap was identified between importance and demonstration with respect to business partner role. Training professionals could not demonstrate application of business and industry knowledge while performing their duties as expected by line professionals. This might be because of the lack of sufficient business competencies. If they get training on these competencies as suggested earlier, training professionals may discharging their business partner role effectively.

It may be also concluded that the perception on training expenditure and firm's financial performance were associated with the rating of training competencies. Nature of business wise, it may be concluded the importance of training competencies and roles was relatively higher in service sector, but training professionals in IT sector could demonstrate these competencies better than service and manufacturing sectors. In the ultimate analysis, it can be stated that it is imperative now for training professionals to build business/management competencies and contribute effectively to improve organizational performance,

Limitations

Though the study provides meaningful insights into training competencies in India, there are certain limitations to this study. The limited size of the sample is one of them. The conceptual framework and questionnaire adapted in this study are from the research 2004 originated in other countries. Some of the items might not be appropriate on account of cultural differences. In spite of these limitations, the study has made an attempt to identify current postion of training competencies covering different sectors of organizations in India.

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