

A Training and Development (T&D) Cycle for Non-regular Workers

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Abstract: *Non-regular workers (NRWs) deployed in contemporary organizations are becoming a significant portion of the workforce, thus making their contribution noteworthy. The performance of NRWs has been vital for achieving organizational objectives as well as for their individual career progression. However, most NRWs are not considered for organizational training and development (T&D) programs. Moreover, the typical T&D cycle, which applies to the regular workforce does not seem to be equally applicable to the non-regular workforce. Since there is a lacuna in theorizations on T&D for NRWs, the present study attempts to identify a T&D cycle for this segment of workers. Thus, this conceptual paper proposes a T&D cycle for NRWs in light of the typical T&D cycle in organizations, organizational strategy and HR practices related to the non-regular workforce. Its implications are relevant for organizational practitioners and theorists.*

Keywords: *HR decisions, non-regular workers (NRWs), training and development (T&D), T&D cycle*

1. Introduction

The increasing number of non-regular workers (NRWs) at contemporary organizations (Fu, 2012; Houseman & Osawa, 2003; Ozeki & Wakisaka, 2006) has demonstrated significant changes in organizational systems and individual careers. Such changes in organizational systems are visible through the assignment of non-routine tasks to NRWs, multiple-track personnel systems (Benson & Debroux, 2004), introduction of conversion systems (Sano, 2012; Fujimoto, 2007), hybrid systems for deploying NRWs (Hirano, 2011), and even direct absorption of NRWs to regular positions. The increase in NRWs has made a significant impact on the career development of workers and the available opportunities for skill development (JILPT Research Report, 2011). Accordingly, training and development (T&D) provided for workers even in non-regular work systems becomes important for both organizations and individual workers.

The JILPT Research Report (2011) maintains that the 'standard path of career development' is diminishing in the contemporary workplace, and thus labor policies are required for individuals to develop their careers by themselves. As evidence to this claim, individual career experiences have been theorized in the light of boundary-less careers (DeFillippu and Arthur, 1994), post-corporate careers, kaleidoscope careers (Sullivan & Mainiero, 2008), and intelligent careers (Arthur, Claman and DeFillippu, 1995), thus incorporating a variety of work-related experiences garnered throughout life into careers. Thus, the traditional linear career progression of individuals at single organizations in fixed employment (Hall & Mirvis, 1996) has been challenged both theoretically and empirically. This non-conventional wisdom proves that even the work experiences earned at non-regular work assignments have to be considered as significant stages of an individual career. Nonetheless, lack of opportunities for T&D at the workplace has become a notable issue with regard to NRWs in contemporary organizations.

Despite these issues related to the T&D of NRWs in contemporary organizations, there does not seem to be clearly identified T&D arrangements in practice and also no established theory on the T&D cycle for this

particular segment of workers. Hence, the objective of this study is to identify a T&D cycle for NRWs in work organizations. This is a conceptual paper, which draws from organizational strategy, the T&D cycle and human resource (HR) practices in the context of non-regular workers. The paper is structured as follows. Followed by this introduction, is a review of the literature on organizational strategy, performance review systems, T&D activities and human resource (HR) decisions in relation to NRWs. Then the paper identifies the milestones for establishing T&D for NRWs in a broader organizational system. It will conclude with the implications for organizational practitioners and theorists.

2. Review of Literature

2.1. Typical T&D Cycle in Organizations

In a broader sense, the typical T&D cycle consists of four stages - analysis, design, implementation and evaluation of training. Specifically, it includes establishing the training needs, developing training programs, delivering the training programs and evaluating the training programs (Tannenbaum & Yukl, 1992). Thus, the prior designing, the training climate, the environment preparation, the after training and the evaluation phases have been highlighted in the cycle (Salas, Tannenbaum, Kraiger & Smith-Jentsch, 2012). However, the currently theorized T&D cycle of regular workers seems to be insufficient for NRWs as it lacks certain important stages like the initial consideration of organizational strategy, the performance targets expected from NRWs, and respective HR decisions to be drawn on T&D outcomes.

This study outlines the stages of the T&D cycle for NRWs in line with the identification of training needs at the macro and micro level, development and delivery of training programs, evaluation and HR decision making.

2.2. Identifying the need: Organizational Strategy

Corporate strategies are established on a comprehensive scanning of the environmental conditions as well as an analysis of past trends and future predictions in and around organizations. Thus, economic and political conditions, generational changes and even socio-cultural transformations at large are taken into consideration in this endeavor. Cost reduction has been the corporate strategy in recent times for many business organizations around the world. This corporate strategy not only directs the entire business or operations, but also guides the functional strategies like the HR strategy and the employment strategy of the organization. The HR strategy clarifies the resource requirement and its acquisition in order to execute the corporate strategy of the organization (Armstrong, 2008). Its major role is to mobilize, motivate, and maintain a suitable workforce in the pursuit of organizational goals. Consequently, the HR strategies of organizations refer to the utilization of more NRWs and attempting to retain them for the specified period (MHLW, 2005). Thus, non-regular work arrangements have become a strategic decision (Ghosh, Willinger, & Ghosh, 2009) in contemporary organizations. T&D programs in organizations claim huge investments in human capital, and thus seem to command a considerable allocation of resources in their annual budgets. Therefore, necessarily, T&D arrangements have to be in line with the corporate strategy, HR strategy, and employment strategy of organizations. Thus, the corporate strategy and the existing HR strategy will be the initial points of consideration for the T&D of NRWs at the (macro) level of an organization.

3. Identifying the need: The Performance Targets

3.1. Performance targets for NRWS

The contributions of NRWs at organizations are substantial even as the input of a contingent workforce. They prove to be the operational core (Mintzberg, 1979) of the business. Sales representatives in insurance and leasing, the sales force in a retail business, builders and helpers in a construction and engineering business, and interns or apprentices employed in diverse business settings seem to be directly involved in the core business function or come into direct interaction with customers or clients in the field. Thus, target setting, remuneration, periodic assignments, regular appraisal, termination or conversion decisions are necessarily based on their individual achievements at work.

For this reason, the work of NRWs is usually bound to targets. These targets are well communicated to them at the point of the contract or commencement of the assignment, and followed by a regular review of achievements, especially for the purposes of remuneration and retention or termination of the contract. It has been revealed that the termination of NRWs usually happens due to their failure to meet prior-assigned targets.

Seemingly, setting performance targets becomes a major HR function in the effective deployment of NRWs. Thus, this will be the initial point for identifying the T&D needs at the individual (micro) level.

3.2. Identification of performance gaps

Setting performance targets opens up an avenue for measuring individual work performance or achievements. Identification of performance gaps is usually followed by appraisals, especially in the case of regular workers in organizations. Given the high impact of the contribution of NRWs in terms of quantity (productivity), quality (service and product quality) and direct customer interaction on the overall performance of organizations, the present study recognizes the importance of identifying performance gaps and recommending remedial action where the individual performance of NRWs is concerned. It would be further beneficial to allow them to identify their own weaknesses and make requests regarding their T&D needs for further improvements. This may help to create such attitudes as worker satisfaction and organizational commitment, thus leading to motivation at work.

4. Developing and Delivering

4.1. Planning and implementing T&D activities

Upon identification of performance gaps or T&D needs of NRWs, HR departments have to plan for required T&D programs which would suit the needs of NRWs. The type of training (on-the-job/off-the-job/any other), the methods of T&D (workshops, lectures, seminars, outward-bound-training etc.), the duration and time, venue/training centers etc. have to be determined based on the identified needs and budgets and other availabilities (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009). The most frequently raised counter-argument for the T&D of NRWs is related to the cost factor. However, the programs especially designed for NRWs would not demand such expensive measures, but will be better off with the use of existing internal resources. OJT using senior employees, utilizing senior employees who are close to their retirement age as mentors or coaches, use of trusted workers for training programs and selecting a few NRWs at a time for formal training with regular employees would be some of the possibilities for the low-cost implementation of T&D for NRWs.

5. Evaluation

5.1. Evaluating T&D outcomes

Post-T&D performance evaluation is essential for ascertaining the effectiveness of T&D programs (Kirkpatrick, 1998). Thus, Return on T&D Investment (ROTAD) has been used as a quantitative measure of the effectiveness of T&D (Bramley & Kitson, 1998). The three avenues considered to cover a complete evaluation of T&D are: (a) evaluating the T&D program itself (program effectiveness), (b) evaluating the trainer (trainer effectiveness) and (c) evaluating the performance of the trainee (learner effectiveness). Organizations should not only measure the effectiveness of T&D programs for regular workers, but also that of T&D programs for NRWs. This is the point at which the organizations' future HR decisions on existing NRWs would be made possible. The JILPT Research Report (2011) stresses the need for establishing mechanisms for determining wages for NRWs based on their productivity, and thus improving productivity by developing an ability-based and performance-based wage systems for non-regular workers.

6. HR Decisions Making

6.1. HR Decisions for NRWs

A cluster of HR decisions in relation to NRWs is made by organizations during the course of NRWs affiliations to the organization. These include promotions, conversions, compensation, transfers, rotations, extensions, and terminations. The grounds for these decisions are formed by value addition, and thus by the cost effectiveness of the NRW at the current position. Whether a transfer of an employee is successful depends on the quality and quantity of the information possessed by the respective HR department (Hirano, 2011).

6.2. HR decision making based on T&D performance

NRWs in organizations stand as a contingent workforce, which could be absorbed into the regular workforce if it shows promise or terminated if not required further. Thus, T&D evaluation results will be most beneficial in the form of establishing grounds for HR departments to see the potential within existing NRWs, and to proceed with decisions on absorbing them immediately into the regular workforce, gradually converting them into

regular workers, extending their service as NRW further, or terminating the service/contract entered into with them. The results will provide an objective criterion, which will make HR decisions more justifiable and credible. These decisions would be connected to major HR decisions in organizations such as promotional decisions, career and succession planning, extending employee conversion schemes etc. taken at the macro organizational level.

7. The Conceptual Model

Based on the above review and explanation, the T&D cycle proposed in the present study can be depicted in the following figure.

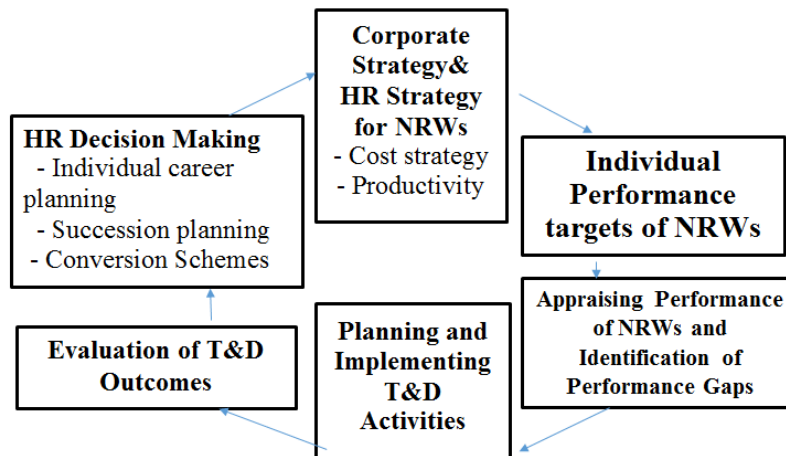


Fig. 1 The T&D cycle for NRW

The present study draws the attention of contemporary organizational practitioners and HRM theorists to the fact that T&D effort and its investments should not be confined to the regular workforce, but instead that it should be applied holistically throughout the entire workforce in the organization. The growing numbers of NRW at work, the assignment of non-routine tasks to NRW, their direct interactions and involvement with customers or end-users of products and services, and employee conversion systems in operation altogether predict that T&D efforts focusing on NRW would not yield losses, even in the short term.

The individual career, as theorized and even practiced in contemporary societies, constitutes the entire work life of a working person, thus broadly covering all sorts of work experiences gained in any work set-up. Correspondingly, the present study contends that NRW assignments have to be considered as significant components or stages of an individual career, and accordingly, T&D should be considered an essential function in the HRM process.

Organizations deploying NRW need justifiable bases for making decisions on their extension, conversion or termination. The T&D cycle proposed in this study facilitates the entire HR process for NRW, and assists important HR decisions therein. Salaries and wages administration (JILPT Research Report, 2011), conversion decisions, promotional decisions, extension decisions etc. of NRW are significant not only for individual workers but also for the organization itself. T&D will be the most effective developmental tool cum decisional criterion for making such decisions for existing NRW. The 'T&D outcome evaluation database' of NRW may even serve in future HR functions such as recruitment and selection of new employees.

T&D for individuals in non-permanent positions would benefit them immensely in improving their competencies, enhancing their networking opportunities and ultimately increasing their employability, while making them ready and suitable for gaining secure, prestigious positions in the future. This is an endeavor beneficial to society at large, and would be a fulfillment of corporate social responsibility by able organizations of the day.

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