Evolution of the Training Profession

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From the time that humans first populated the earth, they have found the need to learn new things. Most often, the knowledge was passed from one person to the other through some form of informal or formal training. The first person to discover how to start a fire to warm themselves and to cook their food taught other to do the same. Often in groups, there was one person who taught the lessons. This was the birth of the training profession in its simplest form. This paper describes the evolution of the training profession beginning with World War II to present day. Different theories and types of training are compared and contrasted. The types of trainings used by the CSET organization are discussed and a recent training is reviewed and evaluated.

Evolution of the Training Profession since WWII

The profession of training experienced an evolutionary catalyst in the events of the world wars. Notable WWII saw an intensified demand for existing and new products. This increased demand combined with the enormous number of skilled workers exiting the workforce for military service, fostered the need for effectual, time-saving training methods to train the new mostly unskilled labor force. According to Estep (2008, p.15) training methods had to be developed to train workers faster and more thoroughly than before. Charles R. Allen’s “show-tell-do-check” training method popularized during WWI became systemic until WWII. A major problem that arose was that there were not enough vocational instructors to meet the ever-growing needs of industry. To address this issue the “Training With-in Industry Service of the War Manpower Commission developed the Job Instructor Program, or JIT”
The purpose of the JIT’s was to develop programs that would equip “first and second line supervisors” (Esetp, 2008, p. 15) to teach the needed skills workers. In many ways, these events sparked the training and training program design as a profession that has continues to expand to this day.

**1950s to Present**

The 1950s marked a shift in training theories and methods within organizations. In response to evidence that, methods used successfully during wartime were “beginning to prove demotivating to employees (Esetp, 2008, p. 16) the introduction of “human relations training” (Esetp, 2008, p. 16) was seen. Some organization even trained managers and supervisors in psychology.

During this time companies wanted to continue training their workforce but they also wanted to contain training costs and to increase efficiency. Instruction programs became more individualized. According to Sleight (1993) as quoted by Esetp (2008, p. 17) Individualized instruction in essence replaces the teacher with systematic or programmed materials. This type of training divides instruction into small easily comprehended steps or tasks. To move from one-step to the next the learner must complete an activity such as answering a question or solving a problem. The learner receives instantaneous feedback. Correct action allows the learner to move forward. Incorrect action allows the learner to review the material and try again until success is achieved.

The 1950s also saw major development in the area of Instructional System Design (ISD) with the introduction of “Bloom’s taxonomy of educational objectives” (Esetp, 2008, p. 18).
Bloom outlined categorizations of learning outcomes. According to Esetp (2008) this paved the way for a template as to the way learning objectives are written specifying the types of learning to be accomplished. Kirkpatrick’s “four levels of evaluation” (Esetp, 2008, p. 18) was introduced at the end of the decade and presenting a new foundation in the field of measurement.

In the 1960s the training profession further broadened its focus with the adoption of Organizational Development (OD). Organizational Development is a “values-based approach to systems change in organizations and communities” (Esetp, 2008, p. 21). This comprehensive concentration on business results correlated to the “emerging field of human performance improvement (HPI) (Esetp, 2008, p. 21). This expanded the field training to included activities that “improved business results” (Esetp, 2008, p. 21). This decade also saw topics taught that addressed the social issues of the time such as diversity in the workplace. Advances were also being made in the area of learning theories and models such as the work done by Jean Piaget. Piaget’s theories “formed the foundation for the development of constructivism, which began to appear in the 1970s and 1980s” (Esetp, 2008, p. 21).

During this time, Robert R. Mager developed and proposed an archetype for the development of instructional objectives for programmed instruction. Objectives should describe the “observable behavior that the training should accomplish; indicate the conditions under which the behavior should be completed; and state the desirable level of performance” (Esetp, 2008, p. 21). This model for establishing objectives is still used today.

The 1960s brought about the development of teaching machines capable of delivering programmed instruction. Minicomputers also began to appear in this decade.
Throughout the ensuing decades, learning theories have evolved, as has the profession. Trainings focused not only on technical aspects but also on topics such as self-awareness, group dynamics, and sensitivity training. The use of the case method became a popular teaching strategy allowing individuals to learn from case studies surrounding different topics. In the early 70s Malcolm Knowles’s book *The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species*, described the differences in the way adults learn as opposed to the way that children learn which spawned the development of the constructive learning theory that sought to “create learning experiences that enable learners to discover and construct learning for themselves” (Esetp, 2008, p. 24).

The 1980s was a period of slowed productivity in conjunction with a growth of global competition. Organization responded by downsizing and “many managers found themselves without jobs” (Esetp, 2008, p. 24). Training budgets became an increasing concern with return on investment of training dollars becoming a hot topic. In addition, this time saw “women entering the field of training and development at an unprecedented rate” (Esetp, 2008, p. 25). The training profession also saw the introduction of trainer competencies creating a level field of expectation regarding quality within the profession.

A flood of new technology began in the 1990s and has continually expanded providing the training professional with unparalleled opportunities and challenges. With the advent of each introduction of new technology come new concerns to be considered and new opportunities to expand the profession. Training professionals are challenged find ways to educate in multicultur, multi – generational global business environments, while containing cost and delivering value to all stakeholders.
CSET Training

The CSET organization is a non-profit organization created to educate and train those in the community that are in need of developing skills that will make them employable. Much of the front line training is done in an environment that provides a high level of hands-on experience.

The training done within the organization for staff falls into the categories, on-the-job training, and classroom training. The primary focus at this time is on leadership training involving a series of classes covering such topics as, communication, giving and receiving feedback, conflict resolution, management styles, and other topics that equip individuals to move into leadership functions within the organization. In the beginning, there was a disconnection between learner’s expectations, and the training being delivered. The title of the program is “Leadership Academy”. The training is being delivered to two groups, those that are already in leadership roles and those who aspire to fill leadership roles. The problem arose when the martial presented to the second group was perceived as we are teaching your supervisors how to be better leaders and we are teaching those who are not supervisors how to be better followers. Many of those who want to become leaders in the organization articulated their dissatisfaction to the human resources department and the focus was quickly altered. Now the needs of the professional in the second group are being met. Learners feel like they are not being equipped with the knowledge that they need. Sessions could be improved by adding in more activities to allow for experiential learning. This training is being provided by a consulting firm. In the future those who are planning this type of program be it those within the
organizations or a consultant can support each other by more open communication and by efforts to understand the needs of the targeted learners.

Conclusion

The training profession is constantly changing. The influences of a global market, economic, and social events create have in the past and continue both opportunity and challenges for the profession. Training professionals need to be able to employ multiple training theories and models in order to achieve cost conscious, efficient, and value focused training. Effective trainers must be continuous learners to remain relevant within the profession.
References