

3. The Enterprise Training System and Training Content Analysis of Large Companies in Taiwan

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Modern society continues to change dramatically as humankind steps into the 21st century (Toffler, 1980). Likewise, social change has shaped the new structure of Taiwanese enterprises. Visible changes include the lack of balance between labor supply and demand, increased labor costs, and the outdated character of labor organizations. To cope with these changes, enterprises are being forced to upgrade their training methods and to provide better training curricula for their workers (Stern, 1988, 1990a).

Recently, some Taiwanese companies that once created economic miracles have closed their businesses in local markets and moved to eastern Asian countries such as Mainland China, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, and Indonesia. The change is due to their inability to pay ever-rising wages and salaries (Kuo, 1990). Furthermore, industries with a high amount of pollution, such as chemical companies, and labor-intensive industries, such as electronic and shoe manufacturers, are facing new challenges (Japan Management Association, 1989).

Obviously, if no action is taken to refine production processes, to adopt high-technology equipment, or to enhance workers' skills, the traditional Taiwanese companies will soon be phased out of the international market (Stern, 1986, 1990b; Stern & Muta, 1989;). Industrial technology training thus becomes an important priority for most Taiwanese companies.

At this time, large Taiwanese manufacturing companies are shifting their enterprise training course content and adjusting their training structures (Deal & Kennedy, 1985), and this may provide some direction for the international community about human resource planning and development (Sredl & Rothwell, 1987; Walker, 1980). Interviews of enterprise training specialists and human resource planning professionals yielded several recommendations in this regard.

A SYNTHESIS OF VIEWS

Interviews were conducted with per-

sonnel at four large manufacturing companies in Taiwan: Nanchiao Chemical Company, Chiasin Food and Oil Producing Company, Tatung Electric Company, and Lux Electric Company.

Features of Enterprise Training

1. *Multidimensional design and training methods and training course content.* There was evidence of adoption of new technology and equipment to strengthen employees' professional knowledge, to improve their technical abilities, to consolidate the enterprise, and to establish an organizational culture. Companies gained benefits from an income tax reduction plan when they provided enterprise training for their workers. Additionally, three areas of training common to the companies were (a) work-related training programs, (b) fundamental skills training/technical training programs, and (c) leisure-time education programs.

2. *Use of flexible time slot and training programs.* In addition to arranging their own company training programs, large manufacturing companies also send talented workers to training programs outside the companies. A subsidy of approximately 50% is available to workers if they decide to take a training course not closely related to their job.

Usually, participants in training programs outside the companies are potential supervisors, program directors, and managers. The most popular classes are courses or degree programs at four-year universities or graduate schools.

Less skilled workers trained primarily within their own companies, and one of the most preferred training methods used to train such base-level workers is the apprenticeship system, which lasts between six months to one year. For managers, training ranges from one year to several years, depending on the characteristics of the job. In other words, training time is flexible based upon the jobs or positions.

3. *Collaboration between companies and academic units is strengthened.* Virtually all large Taiwanese companies have some collaboration with

academic programs. Three cooperative systems are used to implement this joint effort. Sending employees to contracted vocational or technical high schools to study senior high school curricula is one of the most preferred ways. In this case, workers usually study for half a day and work for half a day.

In a second cooperative system between technical high schools and industry, workers work three months in an affiliated company and take courses for three months in a contracted school. Working and studying is an effective way of collaboration at the senior high school level. Under this system, a beginning worker benefits from maintaining a full-time job and being a full-time student at the same time.

Sending college students to a contracted company for three months during summer vacation for skill practice is another form of collaboration. Companies benefit from such cooperation by obtaining new ideas to develop their new products, while college students can perform apprenticeships in industry.

4. *Systematized human resource planning departments are well established.* More and more managers believe that human resource development is an asset to their enterprises. This perception has facilitated the establishment of training centers in large manufacturing companies.

Managers believe that if an enterprise wants to better develop products, it is necessary to teach workers adequate and updated knowledge so their skills will not become obsolete. Besides, a well-designed training program can also ensure a stable and qualified labor supply, especially in a large manufacturing company.

The educational backgrounds of training professionals in large Taiwanese manufacturing companies today have been significantly improved. Most responsible persons who work for human resource or training departments are graduates from a college or university either in Taiwan or abroad.

Challenges of Enterprise Training

1. *Lack of training programs for*

trainers. Companies lack in-service training programs for their own trainers. This problem approaches a crisis for large Taiwanese companies, that is, to produce effective trainers to run training programs in their companies.

2. *Insufficient funding available for enterprise training.* Human resource development projects usually fit into a company's long-term strategy planning. First priorities usually are production or services. Thus, company training often receives only a small part of a company's resources.

3. *Evaluation about training outputs is not well designed.* In the educational systems, evaluations have been implemented for quite a long time. However, regarding training, its effectiveness is not often evaluated. Measuring the outputs of training is the only way of providing feedback and refining the content of the training.

Vocational Training Act (VTA)

Theory should be shifted into practice by enforcing Taiwan's vocational training legislation. One way to hire highly talented workers in Taiwanese manufacturing industry, especially in the high-technology companies, is to pay a higher salary than offered by

other companies. In effect, this is hiring talented people who were trained by the other companies.

The Employment and Vocational Training Administration (EVTA) is the only government agency in Taiwan that prepares budgets for training skilled workers for enterprises. However, paying training costs through private industries is reasonable because EVTA's budget is supported by all taxpayers and not by enterprises exclusively. Other legislation, such as providing subsidies for enterprise training, may be the first in making the VTA a reality.

Training Programs for Franchising

Training agencies should provide training programs for enterprises that want to franchise their business overseas. Internationalization is becoming an important component in large companies. Most enterprises have no international professionals to facilitate setting up joint ventures overseas. Programs such as international trade, foreign language training, foreign culture understanding, customs, working conditions, and the study of federal laws where the joint venture company is based are some examples of areas that large companies need to address. Pro-

viding training opportunities for these areas is absolutely necessary if companies want to either expand or set up their new businesses overseas.

Consulting Groups

Effective consulting groups organized by professional associations or government agencies may help improve both training systems and the content of these systems.

Legal specialists, training experts, academic program researchers, and government officers can be key persons who assist enterprises in their company-sponsored training. Possibly grouping these highly talented people to provide a sound systematic examination of enterprise training problems and difficulties could yield beneficial results. Comments and recommendations from subject-matter experts also might prove valuable. In fact, such groups are another vehicle of collaboration between industry and the world outside the company. With this type of assistance, enterprises that are lacking talented people to design or implement their training programs can easily set up their own training systems.

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