WHAT YOU GET IS WHAT YOU SEE? EMPLOYEE'S PERCEPTION OF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT IN PORTUGUESE ORGANIZATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Training and development (T&D) has become a paramount subject in the workplace and societies, particularly in today's scenario of the European crisis. T&D literature has long highlighted the benefits for employees, managers and governments of training and education strategies and systems. However, the employees' perception of the T&D process has been systematically neglected. This paper presents an exploratory study focusing on the employees' perception about the T&D rationale and initiatives and tools used by their employing organizations. A sample (n= 56) of currently employed MSc students enrolled in management courses at a Portuguese University was used to analyse their opinion about the employers' reasons to invest in training activities, the organizational instruments adopted to conduct the training needs' assessment and evaluating the training effectiveness, and the problems underlying the whole process of training within their organizations. A questionnaire was used to collect data on those issues. Results are analysed and implications for employing organizations are discussed.

KEYWORDS

Training and development; Employees' perceptions; Portugal

1. INTRODUCTION

It is widely accepted that training is a key determinant of organizational performance and competitiveness, and economic growth. Employees increasingly rely on training to enhance career opportunities and advancement, get better compensation, and job duration. The organization need skilful and updated employees to improve performance and productivity, promote competitiveness, decrease absenteeism and turnover, and improve client satisfaction. Governments depend heavily on a skilled labour force with the capacity to learn, adapt and master competitiveness in a globalized economy (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009; Tharenou, 2010; Buckley & Caple, 2000).

Statistical data produced and published by the Portuguese National Institute of Statistic (INE, 2012) shows that in 2010 only 8517 T&D actions were delivered annually by Portuguese employers. The data made available concerning T&D activities in Portugal dates back to 2005[1]. At that time the average cost of T&D courses per participant was 288.2 €. The rate of access to continuing vocational training courses amounted to 28.1%. The average duration of continuing vocational training courses (per participant) is 26.4 hours, below the amount of hours prescribed by the Portuguese labour law. According to the law, each permanent worker is entitled to a minimum of 35 hours of annual training.

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[1] http://www.ine.pt

From the employers' point of view, the reasons underlying the low investment in T&D can be summarized as follows (INE , 2012): employees qualifications already meet the organizational needs (84.4%); the organization prefers hiring workers with the necessary qualifications rather than training the current employees (53.4%); difficulties in assessing organizational needs in terms of T&D (19.5%); insufficient or inadequate offer of T&D courses (15.5%); high costs of T&D (33.6%); the fact that the organization is more concerned with initial training (5.3%); previous investment in T&D (1.7%), and lack of time for employees to spend in T&D activities (41.1%). Although 84% stated a "match made in heaven" between organizational and employees' qualifications, there are disturbing percentages, especially those figures referring to no time to be trained (41,1%), difficulty in training needs analyses (19,5%), and high costs associated with T&D (33,6%)[2].

This is even more alarming because following the deterioration of the economy and labour market indicators the Portuguese Government launched a recovery plan for 2009 including a set of measures that aimed at supporting employment retention and increasing qualifications during periods of extraordinary reduction of activities in economically viable companies (Refernet, 2011). The Refernet report (2011) highlights the effort, although not always achieved, made by the Government to increase Portuguese's qualifications. As a consequence, during the last decade Portugal has witnessed an unprecedented increase in the offer of higher education courses, with many employees applying for master and PhD degrees.

This paper grew out of the discussions that the authors had with students enrolled in masters' programmes in the field of management. It became apparent that the employing organizations of our postgraduate students face considerable hurdles as far as training and development activities are concerned. The issues pertaining to T&D have attracted much attention in recent years, but have failed to address the employees' perspective on the subject. We have then decided to dive deeply into their perceptions of the main difficulties and problems by addressing a set of questions. What is the organization rationale for investing in training activities? What instruments and tools do they use to assess the training needs and effectiveness? What major problems do they encounter in the whole training process?

Results are expected to shed some light on the receivers' perceptions on T&D processes, and speculate on the possible implications regarding some attitudes, such as job and training satisfaction; and intentions to leave (or not) the organization.

2. THE TRAINING PROCESS

Typically the training process can be described as having an initial stage – comprising training needs analysis (TNA), factors for participation in T&D, the antecedent conditions to training effectiveness, and training design –, the training delivery, and finally, the transfer and evaluation of T&D (Salas & Cannon-Bowers, 2001; Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009; Tharenou, 2010; Hargreaves & Jarvis, 2000).

TNA plays an essential role in the whole process. It can be considered as an on-going process where data is gathered and processed in order to detect an organizational need that can be, or not, resolved with training (Cekada, 2011; Iqbal & Khan, 2011; Salas & Cannon-Bowers, 2001). An effective TNA is a reliable indicator of whether training activities can help organizations dealing with diverse workplace problems (Cekada, 2011; Iqbal & Khan, 2011). Nowadays TNA is also

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[2]

http://www.ine.pt/xportal/xmain?xpid=INE&xpgid=ine_indicadores&indOcorrCod=0002398&contexto=bd&selTab=tab2

considered useful for deciding on non-training initiatives, performing a more strategic function in organizations. This strategic role comprises a diagnostic phase where inconsistencies among performance standards, current performance, and current competence are identified and ranked, and a second phase, where causes for the inconsistencies are found and decisions are made on using training, non-training, or both types of interventions to solve the problem (Iqbal & Khan, 2011).

During this stage, antecedent conditions to training effectiveness such as the way organizations frame the training and the nature of trainees' previous experiences are crucial to the success of the training cycle and process (Salas & Cannon-Bowers, 2001). After TNA, it is vital to define how training is going to be accomplished. The training design should be thought in terms of "learning objectives, trainee characteristics, current knowledge about learning processes, and practical considerations…" (Tannenbaum & Yukl, 1992, p. 403).

The training delivery phase points to the need of having good T&D professionals, namely trainers that can contribute to an effective learning. Training methods and trainer experience are important to guarantee a good training experience (Buckley & Caple, 2000; Hargreaves & Jarvis, 2000; Salas & Cannon-Bowers, 2001).

Evaluation of T&D activities, as Salas and Cannon-Bowers stated (2001, p. 487) "is labour intensive, costly, political, and many times is the bearer of bad news". However, it is critical to find out how effective the training has been for the organizations. Yet, this stage has been quite ignored by organizations, or poorly done (Buckley & Caple, 2000; Mathews, Ueno, Kekale, Repka, Pereira, & Silva, 2001).

3. TRAINING THROUGHT THE EYES OF THE EMPLOYEE

According to the literature on T&D, there are some employees' characteristics that play a crucial role in training effectiveness. Individual dimensions are omnipresent in every phase of the training process. For instance, motivation is important to the pre training stages of the process, as well as in the transfer of training. Furthermore, self-efficacy and cognitive ability seem to have a significant impact on both stages (Salas & Cannon-Bowers, 2001; Burke & Hutchins, 2007; Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009; Tharenou, 2010). In what concerns training delivery, it seems that employees/trainees' learning style also matters (Tharenou, 2010). As stated above, successful training transfer seems to be quite dependent on employees/trainees dimensions, specifically some personality characteristics, such as conscientiousness, extroversion, openness to experience, and *locus* of control seem to play an important role in training transfer (Burke & Hutchins, 2007; Tharenou, 2010). Other individual dimensions have the potential to interfere with pre stages of training and transfer: job and organizational commitment, career planning, and perceived utility of training (Burke & Hutchins, 2007; Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009; Tharenou, 2010). Perceived utility of training and the affective reaction to training are two individual dimensions considered in the final stage of training: evaluation (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009; Tharenou, 2010).

In spite of the role of individual dimensions for understanding the training process and achieving training effectiveness, T&D literature presents some lacunae regarding the employees' perspective of the T&D process. Existing research has focused almost exclusively on the employer view of the training process, or parts of it (e.g. Smith & Kemmis, 2010). Less is known about the employees' perspective of the whole process. Santos and Stuart (2003) and of Nikandrou, Brinia and Bereri (2009) are exceptions to the general trend, since they portray the employee/trainee perception on the subject. These studies emphasize, among other things, the importance of trainees/employees'

perceptions of the work environment and training design and method in training effectiveness, namely training transfer.

Acknowledging employees' perceptions of their employer's training process is of great importance since the ultimate goal of training is to promote organizational well-being. Acquired knowledge and skills through T&D are expected to have a positive impact on organizational performance. The process of transfer is affected by a) learner characteristics; b) intervention design and delivery of the T&D; and c) work environment influences (Burke & Hutchins, 2007; Nikandrou, Brinia, & Bereri, 2009). With the current research s we expect to get additional insights relating to the intervention design and delivery of T&D, and work environment influences.

4. METHODOLOGY

Drawing on data collected from a sample of currently employed MSc students in management courses of a Portuguese University, we intend to investigate perceptions related to:

1. their employers' reasons to invest in training activities;

2. the instruments used by their employing organization to perform a training needs analysis and to assess training effectiveness;

3. the problems underlying the whole process of training in their organizations.

A self-administered questionnaire was given to 76 students attending classes during April and May 2012, of the MSc of Business Studies, Human Resource Management, and Management in Health Care. The questionnaire was filled during classes by those students willing to participate in the study, after permission of lectures, and returned immediately.

From the 76 returned questionnaires, only 56 were used in the analysis. The 20 excluded belonged to unemployed individuals, foreign students or were not correctly answered (incomplete or misunderstood).

4.1. SAMPLE

The sample consists of students enrolled in master's degree programmes at a Portuguese university. 50% were from the management MSc, 27% from the HRM MSc and 23% from the Health Care Management MSc. 59% were female, single (61%), and with no childcare responsibilities(70%). 57 % of the respondents had between 26 and 35 years of age, and 25 % had between 36 and 45.

78% of the respondents have a permanent employment contract, and 59% work at the current organization for 2 to10 years, and 24% fall within the range 11-20 years. About 60% are employed in small-medium companies, mostly from the private sector (74%). Most of them stated that their companies have a T&D or HRM department (66%).

Most respondents have management or technical responsibilities (32% and 46%, respectively), and 76% hold the current job for more than 2 and less than 10 years. The majority (89%) works in two major northern cities of Portugal.

According to the labor law, each permanent worker is entitled to a minimum of 35 hours of annual training. In our sample, 50% of the respondents obtain less than 35h/year of T&D , and 20% state that they do not receive any employer T&D. Most of the participants claim to allocate some hours to self T&D (83%).

4.2. PROCEDURES

The questionnaire was composed of three main sections. The first one (section A) was related to demographic data. Section B comprised dimensions related to the T&D process in the current employer: perceived employer's reasons to invest in T&D activities (0 = do not know; 1 = not important at all to 5 = very important), perceived utilization of TNA instruments and training evaluation instruments (0 = do not know; 1 = no utilization at all to 5 = great utilization), and perceived problems identified as constraining the success of the training process (0 = do not know; 1 = not important at all to 5 = very important). The last section (section C measured satisfaction with the current employer and job, and with the employer's training activities (0 = do not know; 1 = completely disagree to 5 = completely agree).

The measures used were developed from a teaching exercise in the classroom aimed at introducing the subject of T&D. Students were asked specific questions to set the basis for a more effective learning process. Such questions were meant to serve as a guide in subsequent class discussions. For example: 1) What are the reasons for implementing T&D activities in your organization?; 2) What problems usually come out during the T&D process? 3) How is T&D assessed?; 5) What are the benefits of implementing T&D? Since it became obvious that TNA was a problematic issue, a specific group of items was included to address it (e.g. Buckley & Caple, 2000; Hargreaves & Jarvis, 2000).

Students' responses of the last 3 academic years were subjected to a rough content analysis in order to determine the main topics for each question, thus serving as a basis for creating the questionnaire.

Due to the exploratory nature of the study and sample size, data analysis is confined to descriptive statistics. Our intention was to address T&D from the employee perspective in order to get an overall picture that might usefully be explored in future research. With this purpose in mind, we have calculated frequencies, means and standard deviation, using SPSS software.

5. RESULTS

Participants were firstly asked to give their opinion on a series of sentences concerning the organizational reasons for implementing T&D initiatives. Table 1 presents the mean and standard deviation for each item. Broadly speaking, data suggests that T&D is not intended to promote employee motivation and/or facilitate career development. According to the respondents, T&D is used in order to overcome some employee gaps or for improving their knowledge or abilities. T&D is also perceived as a means of enhancing organizational performance.

Table 1: Employees' perception of employers' reasons to invest in T&D

REASONS	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Development of knowledge, skills, … (RF3)	56	3,88	1,24
Identification of knowledge and skills' gap (RF1)	56	3,66	1,35
Need to implement new methods, services, techniques… (RF12)	56	3,63	1,12
Update of knowledge, skills, … (RF20)	56	3,61	1,29
Improvement of organizational performance (RF24)	56	3,52	1,18
Improvement of organizational management (RF4)	55	3,44	1,40
Quality certification (RF10)	56	3,41	1,41
Acquisition of knowledge, skills, … (RF23)	56	3,41	1,30
Improvement of organizational results (RF29)	56	3,39	1,44
Credibility inside the economic activity area (RF5)	56	3,36	1,34

Standardization of knowledge, skills, … (RF25)	56	3,34	1,35
Organizational development (RF28)	56	3,34	1,35
Legal Constraints (RF16)	56	3,23	1,63
Credibility among competitors (RF17)	56	3,21	1,45
Employees qualification's needs (RF15)	56	3,20	1,46
Certification's needs (RF14)	56	3,18	1,49
More visibility against competitors, regulators, … (RF19)	56	3,07	1,49
Organizational goals' alignment (RF26)	56	3,07	1,41
Getting prestige (RF18)	56	3,05	1,48
Employees development (RF27)	56	2,98	1,39
Fulfilment of previous T&D planning (RF6)	56	2,95	1,26
Reinforcement of employer-employee relationship (RF9)	56	2,84	1,28
Employees motivation (RF8)	54	2,83	1,36
Employees' integration in new assignment (RF11)	56	2,82	1,43
Integration of newcomers (RF7)	56	2,80	1,41
Employees' career promotion (RF21)	56	2,73	1,51
Promoting adjustment to corporate culture (RF13)	56	2,71	1,33
Access to state funds and others (RF2)	56	2,66	1,64
Improvement of organizational climate (RF30)	56	2,64	1,45
Employees' internal transfer (RF22)	56	2,29	1,44

Table 2 summarizes data concerning the respondents' perception regarding TNA instruments used by the organization. The mean scores of the items are globally low. This can be an indicator of the employees' unawareness of the TNA instruments adopted by the employer.

Results presented in the frequency table (Table 3) show that a considerable number of respondents do not know, or perceive the use of TNA activities and instruments as being infrequent. The item "Top management decision" stands out in the table. It seems that top management plays a decisive role in deciding T&D interventions. These results are in line with the work of Mathews and colleagues (2001). The authors found that TNA in the UK, Portugal and Finland is strongly determined by senior management decision. In contrast, inquires about organizational climate seem to be practically non-existent.

Table 2: Employees' perception of the TNA's instruments used by their employer

NEED ANALYSIS	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Top management decision (LN14)	56	2,93	1,46
Employees' performance appraisal (LN6)	56	2,73	1,61
Clients' inquiries (LN5)	56	2,70	1,63
Supervisors' demands about desired T&D (LN2)	56	2,63	1,65
Direct requests for training sessions (LN8)	56	2,59	1,69
Employees' inquiries (LN10)	56	2,52	1,67
Organizations' productivity/performance indicators (LN11)	55	2,49	1,73
Pre-defined list of T&D sessions (LN1)	56	2,46	1,56
External audit results (LN3)	56	2,46	1,71
Analysis of businesses/services plans (LN12)	56	2,41	1,52
Employees' abilities, skills inventories (LN13)	56	2,39	1,59
Previous training sessions' results (LN7)	56	2,30	1,55
Internal audit results (LN9)	56	2,23	1,60
Organizational climate's inquiries (LN4)	56	2,14	1,52

Table 3: Employees' perception of the TNA's instruments used by their employer (frequencies)

UTILIZATION	LN1	LN2	LN3	LN4	LN5	LN6	LN7	LN8	LN9	LN10	LN11	LN12	LN13	LN14
DON´T KNOW (0)	7	8	11	6	6	4	7	9	10	7	7	7	7	3
NONE (1)	11	10	8	19	13	14	16	10	12	15	14	11	13	9
LOW (2)	9	5	6	10	3	6	6	4	7	3	8	9	10	9
MORE OR LESS (3)	13	11	13	8	10	10	10	12	14	11	7	16	9	10
SOME (4)	10	16	11	8	18	13	14	14	8	13	9	7	11	18
GREAT (5)	6	6	7	5	6	9	3	7	5	7	10	6	6	7
TOTAL	**56**	**56**	**56**	**56**	**56**	**56**	**56**	**56**	**56**	**56**	**55**	**56**	**56**	**56**

Table 4 shows the results of the perceived instruments used in T&D evaluation. As in the previous table, the ratings are globally low. Once again, it seems that our respondents are not made aware of the existence of T&D evaluation instruments. Another possible interpretation is that the organizational does not evaluate T&D initiatives (Table 5).

Table 4:   Employees' perception of the T&D assessment's instruments used by their employer

T&D EVALUATION	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Employees' inquiries at the end of training sessions (AF2)	56	3,38	1,68
Employees' informal feedback (AF6)	56	3,29	1,49
Knowledge tests during training sessions (AF3)	56	2,95	1,65
Supervisors' informal feedback (AF8)	56	2,82	1,51
Employees' performance appraisal results (AF5)	56	2,68	1,72
Questionnaire to employees about perception of training benefits (AF9)	56	2,59	1,68
In job observation of behavioural changes (AF10)	56	2,57	1,70
Productivity/performance indicators (AF7)	56	2,43	1,65
After training questionnaire to supervisors (AF1)	56	2,20	1,66
Comparing training benefits with costs (AF12)	55	2,05	1,67
Number of requests for new training sessions (AF13)	56	1,93	1,52
Questionnaires to clients (or others) after training sessions (AF4)	56	1,91	1,58
Estimates about number of participants and quitting (AF14)	56	1,91	1,59
Clients' informal feedback (AF11)	56	1,89	1,56

As in Mathews and colleagues' work (2001) we can infer that the informal tools and employees' opinion are the instruments mostly used for training evaluation purposes. The use of knowledge tests during T&D activities was pointed out by our participants. Besides that, they seem aware of their employers' concern about what happens after returning to job.

Table 5: Employees' perception of the T&D assessment's instruments used by their employer (frequencies)

UTILIZATION	AF1	AF2	AF3	AF4	AF5	AF6	AF7	AF8	AF9	AF10	AF11	AF12	AF13	AF14
DON´T KNOW (0)	8	4	4	9	6	3	7	5	8	7	11	12	10	11
NONE (1)	18	8	12	22	14	5	15	8	9	12	20	14	18	18
LOW (2)	6	3	5	6	4	8	5	7	10	9	3	6	9	8
MORE OR LESS (3)	11	9	8	9	11	11	13	16	9	8	11	11	7	8
SOME (4)	5	12	16	4	10	15	8	12	11	10	8	6	9	6
GREAT (5)	8	20	11	6	11	14	8	8	9	10	3	6	3	5
TOTAL	**56**	**56**	**56**	**56**	**56**	**56**	**56**	**56**	**56**	**56**	**56**	**55**	**56**	**56**

When it comes to the potential problems with T&D, the majority of the pre-defined situations present high ratings (mean scores above 3). The limited availability of employees/trainees for the training activities (readiness, schedules, motivation…) presents the highest mean. Another drawback regards the transfer of training in the workplace. This evidence suggests the lack of opportunity for applying the acquired knowledge and skills). Another problem identified is the resistance of managers/supervisors to T&D process. Dimensions concerning trainers, namely their abilities and experience, were also found to be problematic (Table 6).

Table 6: Employees' perception of their employers' training problems

T&D PROBLEMS	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Limited availability of trainees to the training (PF2)	56	3,59	1,33
Low quality of TN process (PF13)	56	3,59	1,44
Poor acceptance of the after-work schedule of training by trainees (PF3)	56	3,55	1,41
Low receptivity of employees to the topics of training (PF1)	55	3,40	1,44
Inaccurate adjustment of training topics to real needs (PF28)	55	3,29	1,52
Impossibility of applying the learned content at the workplace (PF17)	56	3,23	1,50
Difficulty in transferring learning to work (PF16)	56	3,21	1,44
No perception of cost benefit ratio by the trainees (PF15)	56	3,18	1,49
Inappropriate selection of trainers (PF30)	56	3,18	1,57
Lack of experience of trainers on the topics covered (PF14)	56	3,16	1,66
No perception of cost benefit ratio by the organization (PF10)	56	3,13	1,49
Resistance of managers to release staff for training (PF21)	56	3,13	1,57
Difficulties in scheduling training actions (PF20)	56	3,11	1,46
Poor quality of the overall evaluation of training (PF22)	56	3,09	1,54
Poor pedagogical quality of trainers (PF33)	56	3,09	1,85
Poor quality of the trainers' knowledge (PF26)	55	3,07	1,57
Poor acceptance of the after-work schedule by the organization (PF12)	55	3,05	1,56
Supervisors' lack of interest in T&D (PF31)	56	3,02	1,57
Lack of knowledge of the training sessions' objectives (PF6)	56	2,96	1,50
Peers' lack of interest in the acquired knowledge (PF23)	56	2,91	1,60
Insufficient instruments for evaluating T&D (PF27)	56	2,89	1,51
Low employees' attendance to T&D sessions (PF9)	56	2,88	1,58
No expectation for transmitting the learned contents (PF32)	56	2,88	1,44
Lack of resources adjustment (PF4)	56	2,80	1,42
Insufficient amount of capable trainers (PF24)	56	2,79	1,49
To many diversity employees (PF25)	56	2,79	1,42
Inaccurate selection of employees for T&D sessions (PF18)	56	2,77	1,63
No expectation, by the supervisors, of transmitting the learned contents (PF19)	56	2,77	1,60
No compensation of the costs with travel arrangements (PF5)	56	2,73	1,61
No availability of resources (PF11)	56	2,70	1,50
Inaccurate number of employees in T&D sessions (PF7)	56	2,54	1,46
Excessive "red tape" processes in T&D (PF29)	56	2,52	1,43
Insufficient number of T&D evaluation stages (PF8)	56	2,38	1,36

Some stages of the process are also mentioned as being challenging: low quality of TNA and training evaluation. These findings are consistent with the previous empirical results, since they suggest low awareness or use of TNA and evaluation instruments. Both the respondents and their employers do not seem to believe on a cost benefit ratio, suggesting the importance of quantitative indicators to assess the T&D process.

Despite the problems identified in the previous results, these respondents seem fairly satisfied with their organization/job, but exhibit less satisfaction with training issues (Table 7).

Table7: Employees' satisfaction with the employer

SATISFACTION	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
I feel satisfied with my co-workers (FS4)	55	3,75	1,09
I feel satisfied with the organizational climate (FS11)	56	3,30	1,25
I feel satisfied with my current wok (FS9)	56	3,20	1,38
I feel satisfied with my current employer (FS1)	56	3,13	1,36
I do not intend to leave my employer, in a near future (FS8)	56	2,88	1,65
The received training allow me to improve my performance (FS10)	56	2,88	1,49
The received training is suitable to do my current work (FS7)	56	2,80	1,41
The received training is useful in other work contexts (FS12)	56	2,70	1,48
The received training provides me leverage in the current labour market (FS2)	56	2,63	1,53
The received training makes me competitive in the current labour market (FS5)	56	2,57	1,46
I feel satisfied with my employers' T&D process (FS6)	56	2,55	1,41
I feel satisfied with the amount of T&D received (FS3)	56	2,50	1,44

6. CONCLUSIONS

Training and development issues are not new and have attracted much attention from human resource researchers and practitioners. Prominent literature on T&D has relied almost exclusively on the organizational perspective. So far only a few studies such as Santos and Stuart (2003) and Nikandrou, Brinia, and Bereri (2009) have looked at employees' perceptions.

We have then addressed some important questions related to training based on the employees' opinions. This new perspective has provided us with important insights on how employees perceive the process, and the organizational rationale underlying it.

Compared to previous studies, our data suggest little or no increase in the use of instruments for needs assessment and evaluation of T&D. As far as TNA is concerned, results are in line with the study of Mathews and colleagues (2001). Top management appears to play a privileged role in training, followed by the views of supervisors and employees. This strong predominance of top management, as pointed out by Mathews and team (2001), can potentially undermine TNA, by adding an undesirable subjectivity. Besides that, strong influence from top managers can be perceived as coercive and compulsory. Although the studies present some overlapping findings, a major difference is found in use of skills inventories. In the study conducted in 2001 (Mathews et al, 2001), they seemed to be much more commonly used than in our study.

When analyzing the instruments used in T&D assessment, our study reveals, as portrayed in Mathews and colleagues (2001) work that the benefits of training seem to be a question of faith. It seems that those involved in T&D have not yet understood the fundamental truths concerning its evaluation. Another finding suggests that informal tools take precedence over formal instruments for evaluating T&D. The instruments perceived as being less used are the clients' informal feedback, and cost-benefits comparisons.

According to this study, the underlying reasons for implementing training are the need to fill some employee gaps, or to improve their knowledge and skills. Training is also considered a means of enhancing organizational performance. Surprisingly, T&D is not often used to improve employee motivation or facilitating career development. One can wonder why these MSc courses are filled

with employees. Perhaps they are trying to improve their curricula by themselves in order to get ahead, thus overcoming their employer's lack of investment on T&D. In fact, collected data clearly shows the low number of hours delivered to employees - 50% obtain less than 35h/year of T&D, and 20% argue that they have never received T&D. Additionally, 83% claim to allocate some hours to self T&D. This is consistent with the current organizational discourse of employability and employees' responsibility in their self-career management (e.g. Leschke, 2009; Chambel & Sobral, 2011).

Our respondents have identified some problems with the training activities. They feel that the organization is not truly concerned with T&D. The problems encountered affect the training process as a whole: from the dubious quality of TNA to its implementation, ending in evaluation.

Despite the picture presented above, data concerning satisfaction (mainly satisfaction with work/employer) suggests a positive evaluation from the employees. But this figures can be inflated or present some distortion. In today's climate crisis, with high unemployment rates, employees may believe that any job is better than no job. Consequently, this perception of few opportunities in an increasingly anemic job market can inhibit them from expressing their real feelings towards the present job and organization.

Some caution is necessary in interpreting the findings given the exploratory nature of the research, and the small sample size. Besides that, our sample comprises post-graduation students enrolled in master courses from a specific region. This work in progress aims to overcome such limitations by enlarging the sample and surveying individuals from other locations.

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