

31. A Basic Study of Enhancing In-Plant Lifelong Learning Competency

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1. Issue Statement

The study aimed at designing an in-plant lifelong learning competency building up framework and suggesting policy alternatives for deploying the designed framework into small and medium enterprises in Korea(SME). In the process of drawing relevant framework elements, previous research done by the researcher and the five case studies including L Group Training Center, H Paper Co., LTD, S bank, and M global company were reviewed.

The task of designing the in-house lifelong learning competency framework required systematic linkage between the traditional instructional system design elements and self-directed learning principles as well as application of workplace practices observed from study of the four cases into the designed framework. The work of deploying the framework into Korean SMEs cannot be feasible without provision of government support programs since market principle doesn't work efficiently in the areas of SME learning competency building. Thus, tasks of designing and deploying need systematic interconnection between theory and practice, on the one hand, while they require Korean government facilitating and incentive supports, on the other one.

The study faced the dilemma discussed above. Solution of it was beyond the capacity and the scope of this study, however.

2. Theoretical Background

Research results completed by the researcher during the past couple of years say that lifelong learning world covers not only systems in lifelong education, but also formal, informal, and nonformal learning activities implemented on an

ongoing basis. (the Cologne European Council. June, 1999) All the relevant domains became the theoretical background. At the same time, literature review in those fields helped the researcher to reaffirm the definition of in-plant lifelong learning; to summarize the scope of lifelong learning competency; to build up the framework principle, development procedures and methods of lifelong learning program.

Based on the above, concept of in-plant lifelong learning competency enhancement was defined vis-a-vis clarification of learning organization construction competency, lifelong learning tool utilization competency, and corporate output enhancing competency thanks to efficient in-house lifelong learning. In connection with the above, rationale of the competency enhancement was justified and governing principles were suggested theoretically. Scopes as well as targeted actor focused competency was developed.

3. Contents of the Study

Program run cycle of the in-plant lifelong learning process shows the circular relationship structure from the phase of learning readiness into that of the assessment. It is a comprehensive circular system where all the elements work together. For enhancement of high functionality, diagnosis of the early phase elements including learning readiness and learning needs is critical since assurance of functional interplay by those early elements guarantees smooth lifelong learning goal setting, the results of which predict efficient monitoring and time saving for the system run as a whole.

The study suggests five in-plant lifelong competency building up frameworks described below:

Firstly, in-plant lifelong learning readiness diagnosing competency framework was shown. Learning preferences, self-check competency of in-plant lifelong learning, and learners' preferred learning style were diagrammed and discussed.

Secondly, in-plant lifelong learning need assessment guide was set up in a different way from how learner's perceived organizational need assessment is designed.

Thirdly, in-plant lifelong learning goals was set and human and material resources were identified in such a way in which these works can function as an aid to prioritize the set goals, to account for the goals set, and to select and

utilize the resources.

Fourthly, practical ways for selection and execution of learning strategies were suggested so that they can help undertake learning contract, set evaluation criteria and utilize useful in-plant lifelong learning tools.

Fifthly, evaluation guide was shown with indication of the ways in which evaluation outcomes and criteria are compared and feedback is activated.

Detailed work of suggestions mentioned above was done theoretically and practically. As emphasized by this study, the task of building up in-plant lifelong learning competency at SMEs in Korea is critical and of high value. In this vein, description of the four case studies discussed below is of significance, given the detailed in-plant lifelong learning competency guide.

4. Case Studies

Four cases were selected as ones representing big conglomerates, manufacturers, banks, and global divisions, respectively. They are LG Training Center(L Group Center), Hansol Paper manufacturing(H Paper), Shinhan Bank(S Bank), and Sun Microsystems(M Global).

L Group Center, called Human Resource University, shows excellence in corporate learning. System, execution, learner performance, evaluation, and all others are well developed. Core competency drawn from the Group's key philosophy, JeongDo management is cultivated, based on which target-based competency driven training is deployed.

H Paper emphasizes performance and changes innovations in delivering competency building up training activities. It has its own department dealing with the tasks. Level-, target-, domain-specific programs are designed and executed. S Bank emphasizes more volunteerism. Evaluation of employees' performance is strict, too. M Global adopts system and program execution designed by its headquarter in USA.

L, H, and S are originated in Korea while M is in USA. In general, qualification levels in the four remains the same except one thing. M undertakes better than the other three in ensuring seamless convergence among the five phases, learning preference identification, needs analysis, goal setting, strategy selection and execution, and evaluation and feed back.

5. Significance and Policy Suggestions

Significance of this study lies in that value of SME lifelong learning competency enhancement should be prioritized by Korean government. SMEs are reluctant in initiating the task not because management is ignorant of the importance. Human resource shortage as well as high mobility of capable workforces is the main cause. Government should provide incentives. SMEs will begin to be kin to value of in-house learning competency cultivation. It takes time. Enhancement of in-plant lifelong learning competency across the country takes time and investment, but it is of significance as long as Korea wants to upgrade SME competitiveness through in-plant lifelong learning at SMEs.

Detailed action plan should be designed by Prime Minister's Office. It should be Minister-specific one. Incentives must be tailor-made. Guideline needs to be specified but practical. Assessment of all performance should be strict but flexible execution is required since facilitation is not to be discouraged.

Cooperation among SMEs, government, R&D including universities, and communities is most critical. Input to the government initiatives and feedback from the stake holders should be utilized as key resources. SMEs should take initiatives in securing exemplar cases of increasing corporate output thanks to the corporate learning. They should be developed into the form of contents for promotion.