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The supervision of the training: Contributions to the analysis of the transfer of learning to the Workplace – a Case Study

Abstract

Over the years, we've witnessed considerable financial investments with a view to the qualification of Portuguese population. On – Job Training was assumed as engine to productivity, efficiency, self and professional employer's development with impact in economic and social development. The evaluation performance, the coaching, management skills earn more adherents in management of Human Resources, however yet still there is no involvement of all stakeholders in the process of management. The work that we're presents result from a research-intervention project, carried out in a municipality Northern Portugal. The main goal was understand the impact that the training activities have in the productivity, development and performance of organizational goals by evaluating the transfer of learning to the workplace, through the training supervision practices for the purpose – as "a method of counseling in the professional context" (Schürkman, 2007, p.2) and expanding, in this context, the field of Education Sciences intervention that, in questions directed to the supervision, are still linked to the training of teachers. Also, we wanted to demonstrate the breadth of the field of the Sciences of education and its ability to promote knowledge and pedagogical impact and economic changes and organizational.

Methodologically we chose by methods – qualitative and quantitative – allowing us to cite conclusions resulting from an inter-metodologic triangulation, being possible to remove stronger lessons from, taking into account the variety of instruments and we reiterate the value of qualitative research as a source of information through proximity to the terrain. We started the research with the survey and diagnosis of needs of our audience – target, by conducting interviews and brainstorming, problem tree. Complete this process we transform the topics listed by subject on the list of priorities, by building an array of Severity, urgency and trend, which translated the main needs of the employees of the organization vis-à-vis the formative process. Subsequently, continuous supervision instruments have been designed for training, in order to give time and voice to employees who participated in training, logbooks were used, held Focus Group sessions, in order to achieve the overall objective of our intervention and we reach our specific goals.

1) Stimulate a more integrated and systemic approach of the processes linked to the various stages of the training cycle; 2) Increase the degree of suitability of the design of courses to the specific needs of the workplace; 3) Enhancing the comprehensive understanding of the learning transfer process; 4) Design, implement and evaluate supervisory instruments which make it possible to monitor the training evaluation; 5) Adapt the teaching methods used in the training to the target audience;

We present the main results the trainees ' recognition, training and acquisition while recycling of theoretical and practical knowledge and one whose intercession brought improvements of character relational view and rise in career; awareness of the factors inhibitors and facilitators of learning transfer; and importance of needs assessment in the legitimation of the formation.

Keywords: Supervision of training; Evaluation of training; Transfer of Learning to the workplace; Vocational Training

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The last years have required business organizations and citizens to take an active role in the regain of economic power and the development that the global economic crisis seriously weakened the last. The economic sector and its agents have encountered economic constraints which made them to perspective new forms of production and profitability of its human resources what has given rise to a vertiginous climb in unemployment worldwide, in constant intention to do “more with less” in order to ensure the financial viability of the organization. Thus, the versatility and the enlargement of the worker’s skills, makes him an asset to the organization, in a logic of rationalization of costs and resources by reducing labor, being possible for a worker to become multifaceted effectively.

In this way, faced a continuous vocational training as a driving force able to contribute to the personal, social and economic development of a society with a strong qualifying deficit, considering the [training] in a planned learning experience that is designed to result in a permanent change of knowledge, attitudes or skills. (Campbell, Dunnette, Lawler & Weick, 1970; Campbell & Kuncel, 2001, in Velada, 2007, p. 12). In recent years, vocational training was receiving hefty financial amounts under the European programmes aimed at the development and human potential, by pressing and holding the realization of effective utility of training actions within the professional skills and organizational development.

The assessment of transfer of Learning to the workplace assumes a crucial role in the reflection on the proficiency training for participants and on his return (positive or negative) being, naturally expected that this contributes to the improvement of services provided by the organization.

Throughout this article, we will address the following topics of analysis, framed in four themes: 1) Contextualization and relevance of the topic presented and their theoretical references; 2) methodology adopted in the development of the study; 3) presentation of the main results; 4) Conclusive Synthesis which makes a critical analysis of the results, the implications of the same and the disclosure of the impact that the study might have on the organizational development of the economic sector.

1. Context and relevance of the topic presented and their theoretical references

The role of evaluation and supervision of the training took over as crucial techniques for controlling and monitoring the quality and effectiveness of training contributing to the “process to identify, obtain and provide useful information and descriptive about the value and importance of the goals, planning, implementation and impact of a particular object, in order to serve as a guide for decisions solve liability issues and promote understanding of the phenomena involved” (Ventosa, 2002, p. 83). The assessment does not represent the culmination of a formative process, but rather, as Ventosa (2002) is a process of information gathering that runs through the whole process, from its conception to the evaluation of the results achieved, in turn, the supervision comes as a follow-up of the training management process contributing to the consistency of the evaluation of the results of the training. The supervisor may be a figure who acts in the “background” of the entire process for the training cycle, however, eventually, can only have direct contact with the

trainees at the end of the process for evaluation of results.

As Boeuf & Muchielli (cited by Rodrigues & Ferrão, 2006, p. 3) “the formation becomes (...) a key component of the management and mobilization of human resources within the organization. Through a strategy of global, participatory and interactive training, it is possible to build a shared and agreed vision of the future of the Organization, its purposes, means of action and of the underlying values (...) “. In this sense, “the training should therefore be regarded as a decisive factor of strategic management (...) being that glimpsed the possibility of ensuring organizational defrauding not of investment in human capital (...) “ (Rodrigues & Ferrão, 2006, p. 3).

According to Schürkmann (2007), the supervision of the training can be assumed as a way to promote continuing training, allowing “increase the degree of professionalism (...); promote transparency and clarify the tasks and objectives related to professional change processes; facilitate the self-regulation of employees (...); follow procedures for movement of people and organizations [and] help develop a deeper relationship (...) “ (p. 2). In this sense, the supervision of the formation is assumed as an asset for quality, efficiency and proficiency of quality training plans, abandoning the notion of initial and final assessment of the training and ongoing supervision of betting on fomenting a follow-up of this, as well as the enhancement of communication in training processes with emphasis to training based on the experiences and sharing. I.e. the knowledge and implementation of supervise practices allows “Dialogic communication, promotion through knowledge of experiences, interests, expectations, needs and languages in an interactive process that is characterized by a high degree of contingency, symmetry and democracy, social construction of knowledge facilitator” (Vieira, 2009,p. 6)

This study focuses on the implementation of the training Supervision practices within the framework of the evaluation of transfer of learning to the workplace referring to training “on-Job” for enterprises (IQF, 2006) and drifting away supervision while technique directed to the pedagogical practice and teacher training. The intent of this study was to determine whether the formation is assumed as effective for the range of practices and actions more satisfactory in the everyday performance of each employee and focused on the third-level evaluation of the hierarchical model of Kirkpatrick (1959) – transfer of Learning to the workplace – which aims to answer two key questions: “the extent to which the knowledge acquired/developed during the training were effectively applied?” (IQF 2006, p. 203) and “to what extent the application of knowledge acquired/developed allowed achieve the desired outcomes?” (idem).

In this way, this work becomes a chance to add something to the field of supervision as this practice and essential training and assessment, revealing this experience as an asset in the future at a professional level, since the institutions increasingly require improvements in training, boosting the work of its employees, providing a recycling of knowledge and skills to the needs of the labour market and increasing thus their potential for success and external funding, which currently is crucial in private companies and public institutions. The approach proposed by D. Kirkpatrick, in 1959, has been to date, the most applied by the entities that carry out training. The taxonomy proposed by this author endeavored to give a logical sequence of assessment interventions, constituting an important contribution towards the management of the evaluation process, dividing it into four levels, in

this intervention we focus only on level 3 which consists in assessing the behaviors in the real context of work, questioning the changes of employees with regard to their behavior and methods of work on the basis of learning they have acquired and developed based on training. The assessment of trainees' behaviour change as a result of the formative frequency is the main goal of this level, analyzing the applicability of learning in practice daily labour and may be held immediately following the training and/or a few months later, depending on the situation: seeks to answer questions: learning can be effectively applied when graduates return to work? What were the most relevant knowledge and techniques that used? Was a change in behavior and a sustained level of knowledge?

The trainee will be able to transfer their learning to someone else? There is awareness of the level of importance of learning for change in behavior? (Kirkpatrick in Kirkpatrick's learning and training evaluation theory, s/d). In the formation, or the assessment or the supervision of the training are regarded as a form of control, however, it is intended, in effect, that these processes can access a set of information that allows reflect on the planning and what was effectively conducted in training.

The supervision is assumed as a monitoring process that allows you to monitor and improve internal efficiency, adapt training options to existing resources and information from contribute to more balanced decision-making. Supervision underlies the action of "look and see, hear and listen, observe, record and clarify" (Afonso & Ribeiro, 2009, p.8). Supervision and evaluation are two separate processes commonly associated with, however cannot be considered synonyms of each other, i.e., although distinct, are closely linked and complementary tasks, hence the difficulty in decouples them. The supervision is assumed as a formative cycle phase that becomes a privileged source of information for the evaluation, both meet different objectives, hence cannot be considered synonyms.

This develops as an internal process that is performed by the responsible of the project and used to assess their progress at regular intervals, allowing the identification of mismatches between the level of execution and the initially planned, making constant comparisons between the ex ante and the ex-post. The indicators and methods to verify the progress are usually included in the conception phase but, to be effective, need to be understood and suitable for the team and the stakeholders the involvement of development "(idem, p. 10).

Throughout the formative process, supervision is used as an accompaniment with the goal of ensuring that decisions are made assertions regarding the management of daily processes and so that they can be given accounts responsibly and rigorously about how the capabilities and opportunities are being used. Reiterating the importance of the complementarity of supervision while monitoring method of evaluation "increasingly recognizes that the ex-post evaluations and impact of certain types of development interventions that focus on populations, are very difficult to perform if the monitoring system has not collected the necessary baseline data" (ibidem). It is also, increasingly, the value of participatory evaluations that combine the skills and the views of all stakeholders to assess interventions, however, it should be noted also that the interdependence of these two processes once the evaluation also provides crucial information to the oversight process of training through the existing studies are fundamental bases for monitoring activities.

2. Methodology adopted in the development of the study

The process of survey and diagnosis of Need ran for two months with the team of the training sector of the organization under study, in which were held Focus Group sessions, brainstormings, interviews and documentary analysis of ongoing projects, in order to obtain the greatest possible knowledge about the context. Based on the guidelines of the methodology of Project Planning by objectives (Pena, Rui & Bee, 2005), the initial phase of the intervention had as objective the tree construction problems with a view to identification of seminal issues organized according to the different stages of formation. In order to give consistency to information collected, has built up an array GUT – decision support tool built through the problems evidenced in previous instrument terminals.

This is a tool for analyzing priorities organizationally and comes into consideration for Gravity vectors, urgency and the tendency for each problem evidenced; been filled by each employee of the institution's Training Division, being established a form of calculation according to the hierarchical position of the speakers: administrative sector is 1, technician sector 2 values, top leaders 3 values, resulting these weights in the formula for calculating $G * U * T$. Thus, the severity of the impact analysis assumed that the problem will have on the process and their long-term effects if the problem is not resolved; as to urgency was considered the time to hatching of damage or undesirable results if you act/intervene on the problem; in relation to the trend we analyzed the potential growth of the problem, reduction or disappearance of this, as well as its development in the absence of intervention.

All dimensions were evaluated using a Likert type scale (from 1 to 5). Indeed, managing to prioritize actions, outlined the general objective: Implement supervisory practices that allow the monitoring of the evaluation while crucial phase formative process; and defined specific objectives 1) stimulate a more integrated and systemic approach of the processes linked to the various stages of the cycle of formation; 2) monitor the development of the grid C&F; 3) to increase the degree of suitability of the design of courses to the characteristics and specific needs of the workplace; 4) enhance the understanding of Learning Transfer to Workplace processes; 5) design, implement and evaluate supervisory instruments which make it possible to monitor the evaluation of training.

To achieve the goals, resorted to use of the logbook, populated along the training action for each form; to the questionnaire to evaluate data with regard to the process of transferring learning to the workplace, after 3 months of practical training and streamlined to focus group sessions six months after forming in order to consolidate the data collected through dialogue with the trainees.

Having regard to the variety of techniques, it was considered that this investigation would not fully in objectivism and neutrality of the positivist paradigm, nor on the interpretative paradigm subjectivity marked, positioned itself therefore socio-critical paradigm as a basis for the development of a case study based on theory of action-research in education. Indeed, the option for this eclectic position aimed at "removing the greatest possible information from the context of the investigation, proceeding to the crossing of different methodologies, regardless of its epistemological assumptions" (Sousa, 2005, p. 33).

Denzin (1989 in Duarte, 2009) presents a proposal for a theory that allows us to see clearly the added value of methods through the triangulation of data, with the possibility of the collapse through various sources, even if we have in mind the same object of study (transfer of learning to the workplace), or the methodological triangulation which consists in the option of placing each method in confrontation in order to maximize its validity with reference to the same object of investigation. It was assumed as primary objective that the combination of methods would be the convergence in the results of research, and these will be considered valid when they lead to the same conclusions.

With regard to the processing of qualitative data, we opted for the “content analysis the data analysis is the process of systematic organization and search transcripts of interviews, field notes and other materials that have been accumulated, in order to increase their own understanding of these same materials and allow him to present to others what he found (Bogdan & Biklen, 1994, p. 205), in its genesis, content analysis assumes a form of the pursuit of knowledge through what the subject broadcast, the analysis consists in search of explanation and understanding about which arise subsequently, concepts and theories. Under qualitative, the questionnaires to transfer learning’s were categorized and analyzed using the statistical analysis program Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), at the end were integrated the information collected through the different methods and listed the main results.

3. Presentation of the main results

The whole process of investigation described allowed was possible to analyze and compare the results obtained with the objectives initially proposed, either with the existing literature.

Of the results obtained, it was noted that despite training promoted by the organization be considered valid and pertinent on the part of employees, the fact that some of the issues concerned have sporadic use is seen as one of the major inhibitors to transfer of learning, so that it was possible to suggest strategies that this particular embarrassment, in particular through the Simulacra to put into practice the knowledge acquired in particular with regard to civil protection and natural phenomena, as well as, presented a series of content which would make it possible to build a new training plan, in accordance with the objectives and actual practices of employees having contributed to the construction of an array of competence and functions that allowed prioritize different sector of the municipality regarding your training needs as well as its employees.

The development and understanding of the processes of transfer of learning was, effectively, one of our goals achieved more effectively, since the subjects were quite participatory in logbooks, either in the “Focus Group” sessions, making it possible to infer conclusions that, through their written reflections and discussions generated allowed perceiving the trainees ‘ point of view on the procedure for the transfer of learning. In these two supervisory instruments of transfer to the workplace we consider as focus of the formative evaluation issues participation with central focus on relationship between Formative and participation processes of transfer of Learning to the workplace, so we focus the instruments in the register of shares, transfer obstacles and possible changes to make the return to the workplace. It

should be noted that through, only, use of the questionnaire would not be possible to understand, in depth, the link between the activities carried out and the impact of training for the same, since the subject is not open closed to responses showed characteristics of this instrument, however, were clear, when the same question is raised openly and during group discussion.

From the theoretical point of view the results of this investigation does not deviate much from what revealed the theory about learning transfer, however, this differentiates itself by the fact that use entirely different instruments. Many investigations into the process of transfer of learning (Velada 2007, Diogo 2008, Marques, 2007) used the already validated Learning Transfer System Inventory of Holton (1996) which consists of a list that enables you to make a diagnosis of learning transfer. This investigation had markedly the option to bring out the importance of qualitative research in the evaluation of training.

Muchinsky (1991 by Diogo, 2008) considers that the transfer occurs in three different ways: is positive when results in improved professional performance – the analysis of the results has shown that, in its generality the transfer of learning has been achieved in a positive way, once the trainees stressed that the training had contributed to an improvement of performance, to increase the quality of the functions performed and contributed positively to increase trainees ‘ labour roles adaptation, something you can infer whether through questionnaires Learning transfer’s or through the analysis of the “Focus Group”. However, we must stress that the positive transfer of training also depends on the maintenance of knowledge gained during a relatively long period of time (Baldin & Ford, 1998 in Diogo, 2008).

Another way of looking at this is that training may be negative, i.e., results in a deficit in relation to the previous performance, which was not evidenced in any of the results obtained. Finally, the transfer may be neutral, when has no effect on employment performance, when the trainees considered that the formation only served to these recall some concepts and skills added. Throughout this investigation, was also stressed by the trainees the need for proximity between training and the real context, what translates in need practical component in the training. Laker (1990 in Velada 2007) stands next transfer concerning the proximity between what is learned in the context of training and the situations that exist in the real context of work and far transfer which refers to a situation in which the contents of the training are different working context. These two different ways of looking at transfer and training have been taken into account in all instruments used in this training, and, only one of qualitative nature achieved collect the opinions of trainees that turn out to be positive, since it can make parallels between the formation, the contents of this and their daily functions. However, if we were to follow Holton & Baldwin (2000 in Velada 2007), considered to be facing a transfer next for this short-term results and far transfer imply long-term results.

The contents of the training, demonstrate have extreme importance to the implementation of the learning process, it should be noted that, in this investigation, the factor “lack of fit between the content and the function”, along with “lack of opportunity to apply the learnings” appear as the main factors that hinder the transfer and the study of Baldwin & Ford (1988 in Velada, 2007) demonstrates that even considers that the generalization and maintenance of contents are influenced by three main factors 1) characteristics of the learners; 2) working environment

through support and opportunities for application and 3) the retention of learning which is directly influenced by the design of the training that encompasses learning principles, sequence and content of training. In fact, in this study, we can also observe that “the way training is designed contributes significantly to the success of a training action, providing the forming, or not, the ability to transfer training for the workplace” (2007, p. 36).

Holton et.al (2000 in Velada, 2007) in its investigations suggests the lack of validity of content as an important factor in the context of transfer of learning, “the validity of content is defined as the degree to which the trainees consider that the content of the training reflects adequately the requirements of their function and that the methods and materials used in the training are similar to those used in the workplace” (Veiled2007, p. 37). However, and despite several authors affirm the relevance of the contents in the transfer of training (e.g., Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Garavaglia, 1993), few are those who are able to demonstrate empirically the relation between these two variables (born 2007), as it was not possible to assess effectively which correlation between variables that analyze the contents of training and effective improvements in the workplace; the statistical level, however, we were able to infer the importance of content using the instruments of supervision.

4. Conclusions

In summary, are the key elements, indicators of the impact of the study. Thus, we consider that the objective: to stimulate a more integrated and systemic approach of the processes linked to the various stages of the training cycle was hit as it was possible to collect data that would allow us to infer and generalize about the different phases of the training cycle, and to enhance the use of tree problems that allowed us to do a review of all stages of the cycle of formation and from the field beginning our intervention.

With this work, it was possible to increase the degree of suitability of the design of courses to the characteristics and specific needs of the workplace, as was noted in the analysis of “Focus Group” the logbooks it was also possible to contribute to the design of some course and, since the logbook was an instrument adopted, even after the termination in the intervention in the institution. A systematic analysis of the Journals allows effectively tailor the courses to roles, expectations and objectives of the trainees.

Indeed, once achieved the objectives initially proposed, it is concluded that it is more advantageous to understand the processes TPT by crossing of quantitative and qualitative data as it was reiterated that the questionnaire, by itself, does not allow to realize in full the process of transfer of learning, qualitative research has allowed to realize further the process that leads to results that emanate in the questionnaires.

Overall, it was possible to implement supervisory practices that allow the monitoring of the evaluation while crucial phase formative process that was the primary goal and, indeed, to promote supervisory practices in vocational training, intending, although acknowledging some ambition in this statement, this work also serves to motivate all those who wish to explore a new path in this area.

In conclusion, it is suggested that organizations to analyze the impact of training in the professional development of its employees will be favorable and evaluation training Enhancer conducting periodic Focus Group, in selected samples in order to continue to collect data on the perceptions of the trainees in greatly contribute to the success of training activities;

In the context of transfer of learning to the workplace, it would be ambitious, but could also bring added value to the institution the deepening of level three evaluation using the inventory of Holton (1996), the aforementioned LTSI. As would be expected if the suggested continuity of Supervision while this practice in monitoring and evaluation of training, at a most basic level achieved by monitoring logbooks, betting, finally, in the evaluation of return and financial investment proposed by Phillips (1991).

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