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CHAPTER 3

The external and internal context

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LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this chapter you will be able to:

- explain, evaluate and critically analyse the role of external and internal factors and their impact on the design, delivery and assessment of learning plans and interventions in organisations
- outline developments in ICT and examine the opportunities and limitations they present for the design and delivery of learning
- examine barriers, inhibitors and facilitators of learning and development (L&D) approaches.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The practice of designing, delivering and evaluating learning and development occurs primarily in organisational contexts. It is therefore necessary for practitioners to have an understanding of factors influencing those contexts. This chapter will examine and analyse the role and impact of external factors such as economic, political and legislative conditions and internal factors such as organisational plans and priorities, learning climate and resource availability. Developments in ICT and the opportunities and limitations of these for design and delivery of learning and development will also be explored. Finally, external and internal barriers, inhibitors and facilitators of learning and development will be identified and discussed.

3.2 THE EXTERNAL CONTEXT

Whilst there are a number of external conditions which impact and influence the development and design of any learning and development intervention, it is important to consider the general external environment and the influences this may have upon learning and development (L&D). L&D is governed by varying conditions which if prevalent together can either inhibit investment in learning, or can facilitate it and promote its importance.

A useful method for exploring external influences is to undertake a PESTLE analysis. This is a tool for understanding the wider environment which impacts upon an organisation (CIPD 2010). Table 3.1 below uses a PESTLE analysis to provide an overview of the high level external influences impacting the design and delivery of training.

[Insert Table 3.1 somewhere around here]

3.2.1 ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

With a downturn in the economy and the impact of recession, the first cuts in budgets tend to be for training initiatives and development projects. A report by the UK Chartered Institute for Personnel Development (2009) concluded that 32% of working professionals from a survey sample of 859 had reported a drop in L&D funding over the 12 months in the midst of the recession. This creates a challenge for organisations, in particular HRD professionals, to ensure training and learning and development initiatives remain on the strategic agenda, especially those which are business critical.

During the course of a recession, organisational priorities are focused primarily on survival and the investment in training is lessened. The cultural mentality of short-term survival makes organisations more task- rather than people-focused. This shift in thinking will inevitably impact upon the future sustainability of the skills and knowledge of the workforce. As the value of learning and development during a period of competitive challenge and uncertainty is not widely recognised, it is even more pertinent for HRD to focus on strategically partnering with the organisation by offering a variety of both cost effective and innovative ways to deliver learning solutions. Engaging and influencing senior management and stakeholders to champion the continuation of training will strengthen the workforce's capability to future proof the organisation.

Economic growth also dictates the amount of investment an organisation channels into training, therefore the direction of the economy is an interesting factor to consider in the context in which training is offered. Although there has been continual growth in the service sector, the UK Government is keen to increase the economic role played by manufacturing industries. This will require a more focused view on the particular and specialist skills required for those working in manufacturing and, coupled with the developments in technology, the need to offer further product-specific and resource-efficient training interventions.

There has been a gradual shift from residential based or standard one day training sessions offered by external suppliers, towards in-house, tailored and bespoke bite-sized learning which can be more readily and instantly applied to the organisational learning climate and culture. Work-based and job-related training is not viewed as an expense as it is integrated within the workplace and seen as value adding. In addition, visible links can be made from

the learning which aligns organisational culture, values and needs. Thus there are a number of internal influences that also need to be considered.

Furthermore, work-based learning, such as the evolution of apprenticeships, is gradually increasing due to a multiplicity of reasons. The National Apprenticeship Service reveals that online apprenticeship applications have increased by nearly a third (32%) year on year, with over 1.4 million (1,403,920) applications made for vacancies in 2012 (<http://www.trainingzone.co.uk/news/news-32-increase-online-apprenticeship-applications>). One reason for this stems from the political agenda set by the government to increase work skills, lifelong learning and also the movement by both vocational and academic institutes towards continuous professional development. Therefore the design and development of any training must demonstrate a strong link to the role and include a multitude of transferable skills.

3.2.2 LEGISLATIVE CONDITIONS

Legislative influences play an important role in prioritising the need for training, and also have a bearing on how training is developed and designed to maximise its impact on performance while also adhering to protocol and set regulations. Legislative requirements, such as health and safety regulations, and the ways in which these impact and pose a risk to the organisation will be a determinant of the approach and delivery method. There are serious implications for an employer neglecting to undertake health and safety training, which can include both direct financial losses due to accidents, and the possible legal actions that might arise from potential negligence. A programme of employee training to develop a safe working environment can be both timely and cost effective.

Given the range of external influences on the design and delivery of training, how training is offered within an organisation needs to be 'fit for purpose' and a number of internal influences as discussed below will also need to be taken into account.. There is a wider shift to deliver core mandatory training such as health and safety, code of conduct and regulations such as employment law and equalities law via a more consistent approach within the workplace which can be regulated and monitored and also minimise the impact of time away from the workplace.

With developments in ICT, e-learning is one method of delivering mandatory training which often is used to update on legislative knowledge or health and safety requirements. ICT will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. As summarised in the PESTLE analysis earlier, trends such as the tightening and loosening of the labour market and the skills and competencies available will influence the extent to which an organisation invests in training. Within in a tight labour market, where the choice of candidates is limited, the costs of employing can be high. However, the level of skill and competence may be low and given the limited choice employers may not be able to recruit to the right level of competence; hence the requirement to offer more extensive training to bring skills up to the right standard. Whereas in a loose labour market, the employer is offered a wider choice and can seek a

higher level of skills and competence, lessening the requirement to offer more extensive training.

3.3 THE INTERNAL CONTEXT

3.3.1 FOSTERING A LEARNING CLIMATE

Organisational learning has gained increased attention in recent years from academics and practitioners alike. One explanation for this is offered by Maden (2011, p71) who identifies organisational learning as having the potential to offer organisations ‘increased innovative capacity, increased productivity, and higher competitive advantage’.

One particular approach to organisational learning advocated by Senge (1990) is the concept of the learning organisation. Senge (1990) identified a series of specific criteria under which an organisation could be defined as a learning organisation. However, Senge’s characterisation faced criticism in that he was accused of representing a utopian organisational state that would be virtually unachievable in its entirety (Harrison 2009); a series of ideals, criteria that could be strived for but seldom wholly achievable. For example, one of Senge’s learning organisation characteristics is the creation of a learning culture where all members are committed to learning. Harrison argues that it would be highly unlikely in reality for any organisation to gain ‘buy in’ from all of its members in this regard.

However, the concept of the learning organisation and its characteristics have since been the focus of others’ research. For example, Slater and Narver (1995) identify five characteristics of the learning organisation, two based on building a learning culture (eg creating a marketing and entrepreneurship focus) and the remaining three based on fostering a learning climate. Within their consideration of a learning climate, Slater and Narver include supportive leadership, open and adaptable organisation structure, and a shared, decentralised approach to planning. Extending these authors’ attention to adaptability, Finger and Brand (1999, p132) refer to the learning organisation as ‘one that is open to change or even more so, one that can change from within itself’, in light of the continued focus on the learning organisation as a means of achieving greater organisational flexibility and adaptability to changing environmental conditions. More recently, Örtenblad (2004) has introduced a model that includes the following four cohesive characteristics:

- *learning climate* (the creation of conditions that support experimentation and risk (Garvin 1993) that do not always fit with originally accepted behaviours and routines);
- *organisational learning* (making reference to Argyris and Schön’s (1978) single, double and deuterio loop learning, Örtenblad maintains that organisations develop their own memory and learning through rituals and routines and the production of documents that are accepted by organisational members);
- *learning at work* (or on-the-job learning that can be easily applied to real work situations);
- *learning structure* (a decentralised, flexible, flat organisation structure, supporting individual and collective decision making that is in the organisation’s best interests).

Consensus exists from all of these authors that the creation of a learning climate and culture that is open and flexible is likely to enable organisations to become more adaptable and much better prepared for facing changing environmental conditions.

3.3.2 COMPETENCY FRAMEWORKS

Garavan and McGuire (2001) observed that the world of work has seen an increase in the use of competency frameworks as a means of developing employee business responsiveness and flexibility. This trend began in the USA and more recently has become widespread within European and UK organisations. One of the factors identified by Garavan and McGuire that has made a significant contribution to organisational preoccupation with the competency to employee performance development links with the influence of national governments.

Governments' support and development of nationally-recognised competency standards (for example, the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ)) have highlighted the benefits of the competency approach in terms of the recognisability of the standards and the expectations of attainment that can be placed upon them.

However, competency development has come under criticism for holding the assumption that employees should behave in specific predetermined ways if they are to optimise their own and organisational efficiency and productivity. This, Garavan and McGuire argue, stems from a Tayloristic (scientific management) philosophical perspective that takes a simplistic view that a perfect combination of employee skills, knowledge and attitudes can be found for each work role. Furthermore, this perspective argues that these perfect combinations of skills and knowledge should be strived for. Nevertheless, competency frameworks and competency development appeal to organisational leaders as they make possible the identification of development needs, the measurement of employee development against specified competency targets and the linking of development needs and organisational objectives.

EXERCISE 3.1

1. How and to what extent are competencies used within your organisation, or an organisation with which you are familiar?
2. What are the benefits of this approach within the context of this specific organisation?
3. What are the difficulties associated with a competency approach?
4. How does the competency approach to employee learning and development support or hinder considerations of the learning organisation?

3.3.3 WORKPLACE LEARNING

Organisations are faced with having to respond to an ever-increasing pace of technological change. As such, many leaders are focused on continuously developing their employees to equip them with the skills, knowledge and attitudes required for them to continue to positively impact upon their organisation's performance. However, the potential cost and relevance of learning and development interventions have come under increasing scrutiny from leaders intent on reducing overheads whilst optimising productivity. Workplace learning is described by Hicks et al (2007,p64) as 'a process whereby people, as a function of completing their organisational tasks and roles, acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enhance individual and organisational performance'. An important feature of Hicks et al's quote is the linkage that is made between employee development and organisational performance. Doyle and Young (2007) agree that learning is associated with enabling individuals to adapt to environmental changes. Hence, it is argued that workplace learning is likely to remain a major concern for organisational leaders seeking to optimise the adaptability and performance of their employees.

3.3.4 WORK-BASED LEARNING STRATEGIES AND GOAL ORIENTATION

Work-based learning strategies are defined by Holman et al (2001) as cognitive and behavioural strategies that are adopted by individuals in order to develop their work-related knowledge. Warr and Allan (1998) identify the following two forms of work-based learning strategies:

- *Cognitive* – this approach involves considering existing understanding in light of information gained from new learning. Decisions are then based on new understandings.
- *Behavioural* – this involves learning from colleagues, written documentation or through the application of ideas to practice.

Holman et al (2011) found the extent to which employees enjoy control over their work has a positive influence on the learning strategies adopted and consequently their idea generation. Additionally, the level of demands placed upon employees is also associated positively with the learning strategies adopted. Consequently, they argue that those in higher levels of employment with more control over their work and facing high work demands will demonstrate more positive learning strategies and generate better ideas. The implications here for organisational leaders are that by providing more senior level employees with greater autonomy and an increased workload, their initiative and idea creation could benefit. However, they do warn that higher work demands are not always associated with positive learning strategies and outcomes, and make reference to the work of Taris and Kompier (2005) relating to job demands, strain and learning behaviour to support this point.

Payne et al (2007) identify goal orientation as an important consideration in relation to the learning strategies adopted by individuals. They make the following distinction between approach and avoidance performance goals:

- *approach performance goal* – involving employees working towards higher achievement than their colleagues.
- *avoidance performance goal* – concerned with avoiding the embarrassment of employees not achieving as much as their colleagues.

This is also argued to be an important factor in understanding employee motives for engaging in workplace learning. For example, an avoidance goal orientation could be more easily linked with the negativity often associated with organisations facing downsizing or other significant change. Whereas, if the organisation is fostering a more positive and progressive learning climate as detailed earlier, then a more ‘approach’ performance goal orientation might be more evident.

3.3.5 FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

Marsick and Watkins (2001) differentiate formal learning from informal learning in terms of the former resulting from planned and structured learning interventions that are often ‘off the job’ or institutionally centred and facilitator driven; whereas the latter is more likely to be controlled by the learner, occurring ‘on the job’ and away from a formal classroom setting. Workplace learning is often considered a more cost-effective approach than traditional ‘off the job’ offerings as it usually requires fewer external resources and can be much more closely related to specific work roles and environments.

Crouse et al (2011) also pay particular attention to ‘incidental learning’, learning that occurs by chance and the learner may not even be aware that learning has taken place. However, Billet (1995) notes that under these completely unplanned and unregulated circumstances it is possible that learners may adopt behaviours or attitudes that are unwanted by organisational leaders. Matthews (1999) maintains that workplace learning strategies include a mix of formal and informal learning approaches. Crouse et al (2011) highlight nine workplace learning strategies that were identified from their review of relevant research. Table 3.2 details these learning strategies and makes reference to associated literature.

Crouse et al. (2011) carried out an extensive literature review in order to identify the strategies adopted by people in work to develop themselves and acquire new knowledge. These workplace learning strategies include the following:

- Taking up opportunities for attending taught courses that are often delivered off-site or away from their normal work places;
- Taking on new tasks and duties. This could be within existing work roles or as a result of taking on new job roles;
- Working with and learning from other colleagues/co-workers;
- Learning from the observation of others at work;
- Learning by making mistakes – trial and error;

- Carrying out reading or research;
- Creating opportunities for reflection upon experience, either individually or collectively;
- Learning from feedback and the insights of others.

A more detailed overview of the literature reviewed regarding workplace learning strategies is available from Crouse et al. (2011) original paper.

Contextual issues also influence workplace learning strategies in that employees from larger organisations tend to participate in more formalised learning opportunities, as opposed to employees from smaller organisations who are more likely to participate in more informal learning. In addition to the explicit goals leaders have regarding their learning interventions (ie agreed specified learning outcomes), Rowold (2007) also makes reference to implicit goals. These implicit goals are associated with creating more positive work-related attitudes and improved commitment etc.

3.3.6 ANALYSIS OF ORGANISATIONS' INTERNAL CONTEXTS

As discussed earlier in this chapter the creation of an internal organisation context that is supportive of individual and collective learning and growth is a key contributor to the organisation's overall development. Therefore, it is crucial for organisation leaders to establish the extent to which the transfer of any learning intervention or experience has taken place. Tannenbaum and Yukl (1992, p240) define transfer as '... the extent to which trainees effectively apply the knowledge, skills and attitudes gained in a training context back to the job'. It is important, therefore, to identify individual and collective learning and development needs and establish the extent to which the interventions introduced to address these needs have been successful. The identification of learning needs will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4. However, it is worth noting at this point that the creation of an organisational infrastructure (including leadership, supervision and support systems) that is conducive with supporting a learning climate will be critical to enabling effective learning needs analysis to take place.

3.3.7 THE PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (PDP) – A STRATEGY FOR THE TRACKING, NURTURING AND EVALUATING EMPLOYEE PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Continuous employee learning and personal development are seen by organisations as crucial if their members are to be ready for and successfully adapt to technological developments and changes in their business environments. Creating internal organisational contexts that foster and nurture personal development are considered an important factor in achieving this. One means of encouraging employees to focus on their continuous development is by incorporating PDPs into their working lives. PDPs provide employees with an opportunity to

document their personal development and make plans for future development. They are seen by some as an effective way to monitor and evaluate the relative benefits gained from training and development activities that have been undertaken. PDPs can, according to Beausaert et al. (2011), be used in the following ways:

- to provide an overview of competency development, detailing those competencies that have been achieved and those that the employee is planning to develop
- be developed by the employee in consultation with their supervisor(s)
- to form the content of personal development conversations that take place between the employee and their supervisor (for example within a structured developmental performance management process)
- to form the basis of employee, joint or management decision-making in determining the most suitable training upon which to embark or to consider the potential for advancement or promotion.

In addition to the uses detailed above, it is also argued that the PDP can be used to evaluate the longer-term impact of learning interventions that have been undertaken by employees. In line with Kirkpatrick's four levels of evaluation this level of learning evaluation takes place at level 3 and possibly level 4. Evaluation of learning is discussed further in chapter ? of this book

3.4 DEVELOPMENTS IN ICT

Returning to developments in ICT and their impact on L&D within organisations, this section will provide a broad overview of their nature and scope, then go on to discuss e-learning as a specific example. Finally the opportunities and limitations of ICTs will be discussed. ICT refers to information and communication technologies, although there is no general consensus on how ICTs are defined. This is probably because the nature of information, communication and technology is constantly and rapidly changing, as well as varying greatly within different organisational contexts. Nevertheless, the term ICT has been used to describe a myriad of communication and technological devices (or hardware) such as mobile telephones, televisions, radios, audio and video players, computers, tablets and satellite systems. However, the term also refers to the programmes or applications (software) which run on these devices such as word processing, spreadsheets, databases, mobile apps, etc.

The use of ICTs to support and facilitate learning and development is not new, indeed the Open University has been utilising such methods since the late 1960s. However, in the succeeding 50 years the application and scope of ICTs has transformed considerably; a most notable example of this being the emergence of the Internet, which has provided a platform enabling global, 24-hour access to, and sharing of, a range of information, products and services.

EXERCISE 3.2

How has the use of ICTs in the facilitation of learning changed and developed since you began employment?

3.4.1 E-LEARNING

The broad scope and widespread availability of ICTs has enabled flexibility and choice in terms of both the hardware and software available to support learning and development initiatives. However, the development of e-learning has revolutionised the way in which organisations design, deliver and evaluate workplace learning and development. Just as in the case of defining ICTs, there is no generally accepted definition of what constitutes e-learning. However, the CIPD (2013) provide a definition of e-learning as ‘learning that is delivered, enabled or mediated using electronic technology for the explicit purpose of training, learning or development in organisations’ (www.cipd.co.uk/-resources/factsheets/e-learning.aspx). An alternative definition provided by DeRouin, Fritzsche and Salas (2005) describes e-learning as an instructional strategy for imparting knowledge, skills and attitudes in organisations through the use of technology. What does seem generally accepted is that e-learning usually requires access to a device (whether this is a computer, laptop, tablet or mobile phone etc) in order to access learning materials.

E-learning as a training medium existed long before access to the Internet was widely available. In its early days (late 1970s to early 1980s) e-learning would have been accessed on computers, floppy discs and more recently via CD-Roms.

EXERCISE 3.3

Read the case study below: *E-learning for language training in India* and answer the following questions:

1. What were the challenges experienced when attempting to set up e-learning for language training?
2. How did these challenges influence the design of the learning programme?
3. What methods would you employ to evaluate the success of such an initiative?

[INSERT CASE STUDY 3.1 LEARNING LANGUAGE THROUGH E-LEARNING NEAR HERE]

Today, many e-learning packages are available to download from the internet, or can be operated interactively online. Just as ICTs have developed at a phenomenal rate over the last 20 years, so too have the capabilities and scope of e-learning. The CIPD (2013) identify three main types of e-learning: formal, informal and blended. Formal e-learning utilises technology in a fairly passive way to deliver training to individuals or groups, eg a PowerPoint presentation, or an instructional video. Informal e-learning on the other hand, involves a more participatory approach and is aimed at supporting informal learning in the workplace and encouraging collaboration, eg online communities, chat rooms and social networking sites. The third type encompasses blended, or supported, e-learning. In this case, e-learning is combined with other forms of learning such as traditional classroom-based learning, one-to-one tutorials, coaching, group work and so on. However, the key aspect here is that information, materials and other learners are accessed online. Recent trends have seen expansion in social media such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn; virtual learning environments and networked e-learning; web and video conferencing; increased integration with mobile apps and games and the development of artificial intelligence and virtual assistants.

EXERCISE 3.4

1. Think about the ways in which your organisation uses formal, informal and blended e-learning.
2. Which of these have you found to be most effective in supporting individual learning?
3. Why do you consider this to be the case?

3.4.2 OPPORTUNITIES AND LIMITATIONS OF ICT

Fink and Disterer (2006) suggest there is a common acceptance that ICT provides organisations with many benefits which enable them to become more effective, efficient and competitive. However, they go on to argue that much research in this area has been focused on ICT practices in large organisations and the impact within SMEs is largely under-researched. They found that while ICTs were used in micro and SMEs their use is emerging and mainly focused on systems with the potential to facilitate interactions aimed at developing customer relationships. In terms of delivering learning, a great advantage of e-learning is its immediacy, coupled with 24-hour flexible access. There is also the potential to reach large numbers of employees in multiple locations across the globe. A knock-on benefit here is the relative cost efficiency in reaching such big numbers of employees, as well as saving time and ensuring consistency of information. From an individual perspective, learners can work at their own pace and tailor learning to their own specific needs.

Yet, with all the acknowledged benefits and opportunities afforded by e-learning, it is important to recognise potential pitfalls. In order for e-learning to be effective at both an individual and organisational level learners should be prepared and supported in its use. There is often the assumption that employees are IT literate, with 24-hour access to computing facilities, but this may not necessarily be the case. Therefore, access to IT equipment and facilities also needs to be considered, and whether this is available on or off-site. Furthermore, organisations' IT infrastructures need to be capable of supporting e-learning systems both on-site and remotely. Although e-learning can be time effective, management buy-in and time still needs to be made available in order for learners to engage with the technology, otherwise it can just become something that is squeezed in with other work demands. Just as with any other learning intervention, the quality of material must be relevant and fit for purpose and should be aligned with identified training needs. Individual learning preferences may mean that e-learning is not a one-size-fits-all and it should not, therefore be used in isolation, but encompassed as part of a wider blended learning approach. Finally, individual motivations for learning require consideration. E-learning is often (but not exclusively) undertaken as a solitary activity which, for some, has the potential to cause isolation and detachment. In such instances a high degree of self-motivation is necessary. Making use of social networking to encourage team and collaborative working could be one strategy to overcome this.

EXERCISE 3.5

Listen to the CIPD (2011) podcast *Learning and development in a socially networked age* – podcast 54 Available at the link below:

<http://www.cipd.co.uk/podcasts/articles/learninganddevelopmentinasociallynetworkedage.htm>

How do the issues and topics discussed compare and contrast with your experiences of learning and development in a socially networked age?

3.5 BARRIERS, INHIBITORS AND FACILITATORS OF L&D

3.5.1 BARRIERS TO LEARNING

Whilst organisations are striving to develop a high performing culture and remain competitive in their field and industry, they still feel the strain of investing in training unless they have a clear belief and can see a visible link to how training will impact the bottom line. One of the biggest barriers is the cost of training and translating this to the return on

investment. From an external perspective, the cost will be a decider of the design of the training and whether it will be delivered in house or externally by an approved supplier. The economic climate and competitive industry will also have a bearing on the extent of any training delivered. There is a growing shift from residential training to in-house work-based training. A major cause of this shift is the cost and also the time employees are away from the workplace.

EXERCISE 3.6

1. What do you consider to be the internal and external barriers to learning and development for your organisation?
2. How can you eliminate or minimise the impact of these barriers?

Hicks et al (2007) defined barriers to learning as ‘those factors that prevent learning from starting, impede or interrupt learning or result in learning being terminated earlier than it might have been ordinarily’ (p64). Crouse et al’s review of relevant literature identifies a comprehensive list of barriers to learning that exist within organisations, as detailed in Table 3.3. Different barriers to learning are often evident within different professions and organisational contexts.

(Insert Table 3.3 somewhere around here).

3.5.2 NEGATIVE OUTCOMES OF BARRIERS TO WORKPLACE LEARNING

Sostrin (2011, p14) highlights the following three potential negative outcomes of barriers to workplace learning for organisations:

- *1st order impacts on workers* – resulting in employee lack of focus, motivation and disengagement; potentially causing work related stress and a reduction in performance.
- *2nd order impacts on teams* – resulting in the eroding of communication processes, collaborative decision-making and morale, thus undermining the potential for effective teamwork.
- *3rd order impacts on the workplace* – resulting in a rise in employee turnover, absenteeism, and presenteeism; detracting employees from working towards strategic goals and objectives.

3.5.3 FACILITATORS OF WORKPLACE LEARNING

There are a number of external influences which facilitate the direction and approach of training. Some of these have been discussed earlier and include:

- customers (both internal and external)
- suppliers
- competitors
- government initiatives
- labour market.

Customers – Whether internal and external, customers are key players in supporting the design and development of training and can act as critical friends. Their requirements and expectations for customer service and quality would drive the agenda for training. From an external customer perspective, and to ensure the organisation is seen to offer customer excellence in what it offers, it needs to continuously develop and up-skill employees to develop new knowledge and competences to remain market leaders and competitive in their field. Standing still not is an option. Organisations need to stay ahead of their competitors.

Suppliers – Suppliers also support the facilitation of learning through maintaining an ongoing dialogue about new and differing products and services which an organisation needs to recognise. Suppliers, like customers, are a catalyst to learning and development, feeding the organisation with new market information such as emerging trends, keeping the organisation aware of its competitive arena, and enabling the organisation to prepare its workforce accordingly through training.

Competitors – Similar to customers, competitors drive organisations to continuously develop skills and knowledge to remain sustainable and keep their position in the marketplace. Whilst the irony is for competitors to stay ahead of all the market leaders, this push for success drives organisations to continue with training interventions so as to ensure they maintain their place as a market leader.

Government initiatives – Government-funded programmes and initiatives promote and set the agenda for learning and development by offering training incentives and funding for organisations who invest in their workforce. This enables organisations with limited funds to provide learning opportunities to their employees which may not otherwise have been possible. The government is keen to ensure people are equipped with the rights skills and are employable through the development of vocational qualifications and work-based learning. The driver for the government is to ensure growth in the economy and that people remain employed, therefore investing in learning is essential.

EXERCISE 3.7

1. What do you consider to be the internal and external facilitators of learning and development for your organisation?
2. How can these facilitators support your organisation to maximise the role of learning and development?

Crouse et al's (2011) third list (Table 3.4) details the results of their review of literature associated with the facilitation of workplace learning. It is recognised that the majority of these learning facilitators are associated with the creation of a learning climate, as discussed earlier.

[Insert Table 3.4 somewhere around here]

EXERCISE 3.8

Reflect upon one of your own experiences of workplace learning and consider the following:

1. Which of the barriers or facilitators identified by Crouse et al featured within this experience?
2. What factors did you consider to be out of your control?
3. How could the organisation go about addressing the factors that you identified in answer to the above question?
4. What did you learn from this experience?
5. What, if anything, might you do differently next time?

3.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter has considered the external and internal factors which influence the design and delivery of learning and development initiatives within organisations. A PESTLE analysis was used as a technique for identifying a range of external factors such as government policies and practices, the current economic climate, legislative constraints and developments in ICT. It is clear that any consideration of external influences has to be set within the

prevailing political, social and economic context. Internal organisational influences were also considered in detail and a key element here is the need to foster an organisational learning climate. Developments in ICT were discussed and this is an area of rapid development and growth. There are many opportunities for organisations to embrace and incorporate this technology into their design, delivery and evaluation of learning. However, for this to be successful there is a need for effective technological infrastructure, access to facilities and equipment and buy-in from all levels of the organisation.

Finally, barriers, inhibitors and facilitators to learning were discussed. From these discussions it is clear that a range of complex factors, both from outside and within the organisation have a bearing on the design and facilitation of learning interventions within organisations, and indeed their level of success. As such it remains crucial for practitioners to have an understanding of these factors in relation to their own, and wider, organisational contexts.

(Insert Case Study: Brand value and retail learning at Murrays. somewhere around here).

EXPLORE FURTHER

BEEVERS, K. and REA, A. (2013) *Learning and development practice*. London: CIPD.

Contains practical advice and theoretical perspectives on learning and development practice.

CIPD (2009) *Annual Survey Report 2009* [online]. London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. Available at:

<http://www.cipd.co.uk/NR/rdonlyres/FFC9C11E-20A6-4E30-9F50-8E58BC9FFA1B/0/Learnanddevsur2009.pdf>

CIPD (2010) *Factsheet: PESTLE Analysis*, available from: <http://www.cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/factsheets/pestle-analysis.aspx>

CIPD (2010) Podcast: *Pushing the boundaries of leaning and development – podcast 42*, available from: <http://www.cipd.co.uk/podcasts/articles/pushing-the-boundaries-of-learning-and-development.htm>

CIPD (2011) Podcast: *Learning and development in a socially networked age – podcast 54*, available from: <http://www.cipd.co.uk/podcasts/articles/learninganddevelopmentinasociallynetworkedage.htm>

CIPD (2013) *Factsheet: E-learning*, available from: www.cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/factsheets/e-learning.aspx

GOLD, J., HOLDEN, R., ILES, P. and STEWART, J. (eds) (2013) *Human resource development: theory and practice*. 2nd ed. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

MAYO, A. (2004) *Creating a learning and development strategy: the HR partner's guide to developing people*. 2nd ed. London: CIPD.

This book explains how to plan, create and implement a learning and development strategy that is aligned with your business's goals and objectives.