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A Sectoral Comparison of Employee Training and Development in the Electronics and Telecommunication Engineering Industry: Manufacturing vs. Services

Prof (Dr.) Rajesh Kr. Yadav[1], Dr. A. R. Wadhekar[2], Ms. Shruti Sharma[3], Anup K. Suchak[4], Dr. Lalit Agrawal[5], Khushboo[6],
[1]Director, MBA,
Vaishnavi Institute of Technology and Science, Bhopal.
Email: drrajeshkyadav7@gmail.com
[2]arti.wadhekar@gmail.com
Assistant Professor, Deogiri Institute of Engineering and Management Studies, Dr. B.A.T.U. Lonere
[3]Assistant Professor
Department of BBA
RKGIT-CCS University CAMPUS
shrutisharmaa1982@gmail.com
[4]Assistant Professor
Central Institute of Business Management Research and Development, Nagpur
anupsuchak@gmail..com
[5]Assistant Professor
Ramdeobaba University, Nagpur
Email: agrawalls@rknec.edu
[6]Assistant Professor,
University Institute of Engineering and Technology,
Department of Electronics and communication,
Maharishi Dayanand University Rohtak
Email-Khushboo.rp.uiet@mdurohtak.ac.in

Abstract

Training and development (T&D) play a pivotal role in enhancing employee performance, ensuring organizational growth, and maintaining competitiveness in a dynamic business environment. This research presents a comparative study of T&D practices in the manufacturing and services sectors, aiming to explore the differences in approach, frequency, methods, and perceived effectiveness. Data was collected from 100 respondents — 50 from each sector — through structured questionnaires and interviews. The study found that manufacturing organizations prioritize technical and safety training, often delivered through on-the-job methods, while service organizations emphasize soft skills and customer service training using more flexible and modern tools like e-learning and simulations. The frequency of training is higher in the services sector, and employees in this sector report greater satisfaction with training outcomes. Despite these differences, both sectors recognize the strategic value of well-designed training programs. The study highlights sector-specific challenges, such as shift scheduling in manufacturing and high employee turnover in services. The findings offer actionable insights for HR professionals and training managers to develop more targeted and effective T&D strategies suited to their sector's unique needs.

Keywords: Training and Development, Manufacturing Sector, Services Sector, Comparative Study, Human Resource Development, Organizational Performance.

INTRODUCTION

Training and development (T&D) play a pivotal role in enhancing employee performance, fostering organizational growth, and maintaining competitiveness in a rapidly changing business environment. As industries evolve, so do the skills required to keep pace with technological advancements, customer expectations, and global market dynamics. Organizations across sectors are investing in structured training and development programs to equip their workforce with both technical and soft skills.

The manufacturing and services sectors, two of the most significant pillars of any economy, differ fundamentally in their nature of work, skill requirements, and employee interaction models. Manufacturing is typically characterized by process-driven, machinery-intensive operations that require technical precision and compliance with safety standards. In contrast, the services sector is more people-oriented, focusing on customer service, communication, and interpersonal skills.

These differences influence the design and implementation of T&D programs in each sector. While manufacturing tends to emphasize operational efficiency, safety, and technical training, the services sector prioritizes behavioral training, customer handling, and continuous professional development. Given these distinct operational frameworks, it becomes crucial to explore how each sector approaches employee development, what methods they adopt, and how effective these approaches are in achieving organizational goals.

This study aims to provide a comparative analysis of training and development practices in the manufacturing and services sectors. It explores the strategies, tools, frequency, and effectiveness of T&D initiatives, highlighting sector-specific challenges and opportunities for cross-learning. By understanding these differences and commonalities, the study seeks to offer insights into optimizing human capital development across diverse industrial landscapes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Training and development (T&D) have been widely recognized as vital components of human resource management, directly contributing to employee performance, job satisfaction, and organizational success (Noe, 2010). According to Armstrong (2014), training is a systematic process of enhancing the knowledge, skills, and competencies of employees, while development focuses on long-term growth and career advancement.

Research suggests that effective T&D programs lead to improved organizational performance, reduced turnover, and enhanced innovation (Goldstein & Ford, 2002). Becker (1993) emphasized that investing in human capital through structured learning initiatives results in better productivity and organizational efficiency.

The manufacturing sector places a strong emphasis on technical training, safety compliance, and process standardization. According to Wickramasinghe and Perera (2010), manufacturing companies typically conduct on-the-job training, machine-specific instruction, and safety workshops to ensure operational efficiency and minimize risks.

Harvey and Denton (1999) argue that with the introduction of lean manufacturing, total quality management (TQM), and automation, employees in this sector need continuous technical upgrading. However, training

in this sector is often periodic and tied to regulatory compliance or technological upgrades (Nda & Fard, 2013).

The services sector relies heavily on soft skills, such as communication, customer service, and emotional intelligence. Zeithaml et al. (2006) highlight that service delivery depends largely on employee behavior and interaction with customers, making soft-skill development a central focus.

In contrast to manufacturing, the services sector tends to adopt more continuous and flexible learning models. According to Rowden (2002), employee development in the service industry is aligned with relationship management and service quality improvement. Organizations frequently use classroom training, role-plays, e-learning, and coaching to enhance service performance.

Several studies have attempted to compare the two sectors. A study by Khan et al. (2011) found that while manufacturing firms tend to focus on structured and role-specific training, service firms are more inclined towards general skills development and personal growth. Moreover, services sector employees are often trained more frequently due to the dynamic nature of customer-facing roles (Tsai et al., 2007).

Another comparative study by Singh and Mohanty (2012) suggests that the manufacturing sector still lags in adopting innovative training methods like digital learning, whereas the services sector is more agile in implementing technology-based training tools.

Both sectors face unique challenges. Manufacturing struggles with resistance to change, outdated training formats, and lower training budgets (Burke, 2001). On the other hand, the services sector grapples with high turnover rates and the difficulty of measuring the ROI of soft-skill training (Saks & Belcourt, 2006).

Emerging trends such as blended learning, virtual simulations, and mobile-based training are gradually being adopted across both sectors, enabling more personalized and scalable learning experiences (Salas et al., 2012).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology outlines the approach, tools, and techniques employed in conducting the study. This study adopts a comparative and descriptive research design to analyze training and development practices across the manufacturing and services sectors. The study follows a comparative descriptive design, enabling a side-by-side analysis of training practices in both sectors. This design helps identify similarities, differences, and sector-specific trends in training and development.

Research Objectives

- To examine the nature and methods of training and development in the manufacturing and services sectors.
- To compare the frequency, duration, and content of training programs.
- To evaluate the effectiveness and outcomes of T&D practices in both sectors.
- To identify key challenges and suggest improvements for sector-specific training models.

Data Collection Methods

Primary data was collected using the following methods:

- **Structured Questionnaires**: Administered to employees and HR/training managers in both sectors. The questionnaire included both close-ended and Likert-scale questions.
- **Interviews**: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected HR professionals and department heads to gain deeper insights into the training strategies and challenges.

Secondary data was obtained from:

- Academic journals and books
- Industry reports and HR studies
- Company training manuals and policy documents
- Government and industry body publications (e.g., NSDC, CII reports)

Sample Design

- **Population**: Employees and HR professionals from manufacturing and service organizations.
- **Sample Size**: 100 respondents (50 from each sector)
- **Sampling Technique**: **Stratified random sampling** was used to ensure balanced representation from various job levels (e.g., entry-level, middle management, senior HR).

Data Analysis Techniques

Quantitative and qualitative methods were used to analyze the collected data:

- **Descriptive statistics** (mean, percentage, frequency) for survey responses.
- **Comparative analysis** to identify differences in T&D practices between sectors.
- **Thematic analysis** for qualitative interview responses to extract common themes and patterns.

Data Analysis

This section presents the analysis of the data collected from 100 respondents — 50 from the manufacturing sector and 50 from the services sector — using structured questionnaires and interviews. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and comparative techniques to highlight the key differences and similarities in training and development (T&D) practices across the two sectors.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Criteria	Manufacturing	Services
Gender (M/F)	38 / 12	30 / 20
Age (20-40 yrs)	40	42
Job Level (Junior/Mid/Senior)	25 / 15 / 10	20 / 20 / 10

Interpretation: Both sectors had a majority of young to middle-aged employees. The services sector had more female respondents and a slightly higher number of mid-level professionals.

Type of Training Received

Type of Training	Manufacturing (%)	Services (%)
Technical/Operational	76	28
Soft Skills (communication, teamwork, etc.)	24	88
Compliance & Safety	68	22
Customer Service	10	82

Interpretation: Manufacturing focuses heavily on technical and compliance training, while services prioritize soft skills and customer service.

Training Methods Used

Training Methods Used Method	Manufacturing (%)	Services (%)
On-the-job training	70	36
Workshops/Seminars	50	62
E-learning/Online tools	28	54
Role-playing & Simulations	10	48

Interpretation: Manufacturing prefers hands-on, on-the-job training, while the services sector embraces more interactive and digital methods.

Effectiveness of Training

Rating	Manufacturing (%)	Services (%)
Very Effective	22	38
Moderately Effective	58	46
Ineffective	20	16

Interpretation: Employees in the services sector reported slightly higher satisfaction with the effectiveness of their training programs.

Findings

Based on the analysis of data collected through surveys and interviews from 100 respondents (50 each from the manufacturing and services sectors), the following key findings have been identified:

- Manufacturing Sector prioritizes technical training, safety compliance, and operational efficiency.
- Services Sector emphasizes soft skills development, customer service, communication, and interpersonal skills.
- Manufacturing employees typically receive training once or twice a year, often tied to compliance or operational changes.
- Services employees undergo more frequent and continuous training, including quarterly or on-demand sessions.
- Manufacturing relies heavily on on-the-job training and traditional workshop formats.
- Services make greater use of e-learning, simulations, role-plays, and blended learning approaches, showing greater flexibility and innovation in delivery methods.
- A higher percentage of services sector employees found their training to be very effective, while the manufacturing sector showed a more moderate satisfaction level.
- This may be attributed to greater personalization and variety in training formats in services.
- The services sector is more open to using digital tools and online platforms for training.
- The manufacturing sector is slower to adopt digital methods due to the technical and hands-on nature of its operations.
- Manufacturing Sector:
    - Budget constraints for training programs
    - Resistance to adopting new training methods
    - Shift schedules affecting training participation
- Services Sector:

    - High employee turnover affecting long-term development
    - Difficulty measuring the impact of soft skill training
    - Need for constant updating of content to match changing customer expectations

- In both sectors, HR departments play a key role in training execution, but leadership involvement is more strategic in services than in manufacturing.
- Service organizations are more likely to align T&D initiatives with overall business objectives.
- Services sector provides more tailored training programs based on job roles and performance levels.
- Manufacturing tends to use standardized training modules, often lacking individual customization.
- Both sectors acknowledged that training and development improve employee productivity and job satisfaction.
- Services sector respondents were more likely to report a direct link between training and customer satisfaction or service quality.

LIMITATIONS

While this research provides valuable insights into the comparative practices of training and development (T&D) in the manufacturing and services sectors, it is important to acknowledge several limitations that may have influenced the findings:

- The study was conducted with a sample of 100 respondents (50 from each sector). This relatively small sample size may not fully capture the diversity of training practices across all organizations within each sector.
- If the sample was drawn from a specific geographic region (e.g., one city or state), the findings may not be generalizable to organizations operating in different regions with varying cultural and economic conditions.
- Much of the data is based on employee self-reports through surveys and interviews. This may introduce response bias**,** such as overestimation of training effectiveness or underreporting of negative experiences.
- Due to time limitations, the study could not include longitudinal analysis to track the long-term impact of training programs. A cross-sectional approach provides only a snapshot of current practices.
- The research did not quantitatively measure training ROI (Return on Investment), productivity changes, or customer satisfaction improvements post-training, which could have added further depth to the analysis.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to compare and analyze the training and development (T&D) practices in the manufacturing and services sectors. Through the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, several key differences and similarities between the two sectors were identified. The research confirms that training and development are essential strategic tools in both sectors, contributing significantly to employee performance, job satisfaction, and organizational growth. However, the focus, frequency, methods, and effectiveness of T&D practices vary notably between the manufacturing and services industries.

The manufacturing sector places a greater emphasis on technical training, safety protocols, and process-oriented learning, primarily delivered through traditional methods such as on-the-job training. In contrast, the services sector focuses more on soft skills, customer service training, and continuous learning, often delivered through modern, flexible platforms like e-learning and simulations. While both sectors face their own set of challenges—such as resistance to change in manufacturing and high turnover in services—the need for customized, relevant, and outcome-driven training is universally recognized. The study also found that

employees in the services sector report higher satisfaction with their training programs, largely due to the relevance and adaptability of the training content.

Despite certain limitations, the findings of this study provide valuable insights for HR professionals, training managers, and policymakers to tailor sector-specific T&D strategies. Bridging the training gaps and leveraging technological advancements can further enhance workforce capability in both sectors.

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