

Workplace training and the skills gap: Examining the competency of professionalism

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Abstract

Workforce training is frequently applied to meet talent development needs in corporations, workforce development and readiness, and higher education. Disconnects exist between these fields that may impede their training effectiveness. The nature and extent of these disconnects remains incompletely assessed (Aliaga, Kotamraju, & Stone, 2014). Therefore, the current research considered what disconnects may prohibit cohesive experiential learning processes by which workers in training can gain maximal theory-to-practice transfer. Across the three settings, 416 respondents completed a survey developed by the researcher. A key finding emerged regarding Professionalism as a workplace competency. When rating the key core competencies that need to be taught, Corporations (54.3%) and Workforce Development (70.2%) indicated that Professionalism was the top competency; but only 14.6% of Education professionals viewed Professionalism as important. Hence, a greater partnership across the three types of organizations may be necessary to build agreed upon standards for preparing new workers in core competencies needed to succeed in the workforce. If these findings are confirmed via replication, it would appear important for organizations concerned with worker training to consider new ways to develop mutually aligned standards for preparing new workers in this core competency which is needed to succeed in the modern workplace.

Keywords: Career Technology Education (CTE), Internships, Apprenticeships, Career Development, Competencies.

INTRODUCTION

Kolb (1984) wrote "Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (p. 67). In the life of every individual, the gathering of knowledge is brought about by engaging in an action that s/he has not previously experienced. People often learn by reading materials and then applying that knowledge to a real-world activity (Kolbe, 1984, p. 354). One must then examine whether or not accurate learning occurred or something went wrong in the execution of the process. *Experiential Learning* (EL) develops skills that can be applied in real-world context across various domains in an individual's life. Yet there are many positions expressed across the literature regarding the methods required to deliver EL to the young and to adults. Generally, experts recognize that there is no perfect method for developing core competencies through EL (Decker, Lourenco, Doll, & Hartley, 2015).

This research will encompass the review of education, corporate, and workforce development subject matter experts and their position on providing stronger success in building competencies that can possibly increase the career readiness of younger generations. The body of research underscores the importance of aligning workforce readiness efforts with proven competency development methodologies, including formal education and EL and the mixed results of these efforts. For example, Dolgon and Roth (2016) suggested that America's education system has not evolved to modify the level of academic rigor needed to create a modern, effective workforce. Carver (1996) discussed the need to incorporate into our educational system the concepts outlined in Kolb (1984) and Dewey (1923). These concepts indicate that learning through experience is the critical infrastructure of developing success for individuals seeking a positive employment future. Likewise, Ferrández-Berruero, Kekale, and Devins (2016) emphasized that the use of work-based learning would increase the skills and competencies among individuals entering the workforce because work-based learning engages employees in solving industry challenges through educational experiences recognized by industry. Similarly, Azevedo, Apfelthaler, and Hurst (2012) promoted the need for industry to align itself with undergraduate programs in college and university systems to outline an education capable of meeting new industry needs. This revised education can and should be based on the needs of industry, combining core competencies and expected technical skills. This concept of developing new pedagogical delivery in higher education is furthered by Deeter-Schmelz (2015), who outlined the need for lockstep connections and delivery between education and corporations. In short, these researchers focused on bringing real-world experiences to education settings to provide direct links to the needs of industry and a behavioral understanding for students to become acclimated to the future work in which they will engage.

Younger generations in the workforce are challenged for many reasons, including the perception that younger persons have a greater sense of entitlement and a lack of commitment to engage in trades that will sustain their future (Gallagher & Parks, 2001). Bennis and O'Toole (2005) outlined in their study that business has lost its way due to the numerous processes related to hiring new employees. Organizations sought only individuals with the skills to complete the job requirements, or the best qualified. According to Srivastava and Theodore (2005), this hiring approach resulted in a weaker future workforce, because individuals who were just starting their careers were forced to seek employment in positions that were either not in their field or in lesser roles than they expected. These challenges were confirmed by Herman (2004), who indicated that the economic downturn that started in 2004 increased the level of mistrust across industries among current and potential future employees. Company actions manifested in greater cutbacks

in resources to support employees to do their work. The resulting increase in work responsibilities among existing employees increased their distrust of their employers, as company's improved financial standings did not translate into worker benefits or wages.

Zingheim and Schuster (2002) discussed the challenges presented to organizations in developing strategies for maintaining financial stability during an economic downturn. The points regarding the workforce described at length the expendable nature of skilled labor working in organizations. Organizations seek to reduce highly experienced staff and replace them with less qualified individuals, accepting the quality reduction in their products and potential financial business losses. The slower than expected change has led to a less qualified and less competent workforce. This less qualified and less competent workforce is then caught in the throes of the non-skilled work pedagogy. In light of these sobering realities, Tucker (2014) outlined the need for higher level skill sets to meet the challenges of a society that will be desperate for talent to support the growing technological advances arising within the global environment. These skills and competencies will be the single most critical pedagogical need as technology will not slow but only increase (Tucker, 2014).

Summary and Considerations

Across higher educators, workforce development professionals, and corporate trainers, challenges and differing opinions exist on the right methods for training and maintaining continual staff development (Armstrong & Sadler-Smith, 2008). There is a need to identify the best methods to provide training that grows the effectiveness of career-bound individuals and provides them with opportunities to become skilled. To develop a competent workforce to meet the needs of businesses in delivering products and services, employees need to be developed through training and the ability to use that new knowledge with real experiential application to verify competence. There appears to be a disconnect between three distinct areas in relation to preparing individuals to become workforce ready. These areas include: 1. educators in secondary institutions who provide theoretical and factual knowledge and may offer limited experiential learning opportunities; 2. workforce development trainers who provide small subsets of knowledge and preparatory practice for those entering new jobs; and 3. corporate training organizations that attempt to build experiential learning within the walls of corporate functions to prevent the loss of job knowledge and develop new job-specific knowledge, that is, practice that leads to capture of experiential learning (Armstrong & Sadler-Smith, 2008). Across these three groups, varied approaches develop individuals to enter or thrive in the workforce. These approaches meet certain levels of the required equation to provide knowledge and practice successfully. However, none of them provides a complete program to help workers gain experience, change careers, and/or understand the need for experiential learning while working in corporate environments. These fractures prevent individuals from reaching full potential as they work through the knowledge-to-practice model.

METHOD

Participants

The researcher will recruit participants through LinkedIn. The researcher maintains a LinkedIn network of roughly 28,000 connections. The network includes educators, teachers,

education administrators, experiential learning subject matter experts, career technical educators, business and industry leaders, business executives, and business owners, involved in developing the future workforce. Participants may be adults of any age and gender. Inclusion criteria comprise being 18 years old or greater and being part of the researcher's LinkedIn network of professionals who directly provide or oversee the provision of workforce development activities. Exclusion criteria comprise being younger than 18 years of age and not being part of the researcher's LinkedIn network of professionals.

The members of the researcher's LinkedIn network are professionals in fields similar to the researcher's field of work and are not personal friends or coworkers of the researcher. Due to the size of the researcher's network, the vast majority of members are not individuals with whom the researcher has ongoing relationships. As such, those receiving the research announcement would not feel pressure to participate. Additionally, in the research announcement, it is clearly articulated that the study is completely anonymous. Individuals were given a choice to participate in the study or not; no one will ever know their decision or be able to connect their responses to their identity. The research announcement also indicated that there would be no repercussions for responding or not responding to the survey. These characteristics of the researcher's LinkedIn network, combined with the safeguards stated in the research announcement, should eliminate any possibility of network members experiencing any pressure to complete the survey.

The minimum sample size for this study is 120. This was determined to allow for a minimum of 10 participants, on average, for each answer category to each question, in keeping with validity standards for survey data analysis (Fink, 2017). However, a greater number of subjects were sought to improve the validity of results.

The researcher maintains a Premium Membership in LinkedIn. LinkedIn's terms of service permit the dissemination of research announcements; see <https://www.linkedin.com/legal/user-agreement>. The researcher used LinkedIn's communication tools to post the research announcement on his news feed, where it was viewable by all members of his professional network. The research announcement outlined the purpose of the research and the conditions of participation. The researcher re-posted the research announcement to LinkedIn one week after the initial post. This process was repeated to three times to increase the sample size.

In the research announcement, a SurveyMonkey link was provided for those willing to participate. The Informed Consent was embedded within SurveyMonkey. Once the participant agreed to the Informed Consent, they automatically were taken to the survey questions. If a participant did not wish to participate after reading the Informed Consent, s/he could click No, at which point they were taken to a brief thank you page and did not receive the survey questions. Although it is unlikely, should subjects have experienced any emotional discomfort as a result of completing the survey, they could contact the Emotional Distress Hotline, a national mental health hotline, available 24/7 for free, at 1-800-LIFENET. After several weeks, the SurveyMonkey survey will be closed and the data analyzed.

Measures

This survey for the present study is similar to survey work by Azevedo et al. (2012) in their publication, In Azevedo et al. (2012), research focused on new business graduates and current employees, considering eight critical competencies: 1. influencing and persuading; 2.

teamwork and relationship building; 3. critical and analytical thinking; 4. self and time management; 5) leadership; 6) ability to see the bigger picture; 7) presentation; and 8) communication (p. 19). Based on outcomes across four European countries (Austria, United Kingdom, Slovenia, and Romania) Azevedo et al. (2012), indicated that “approximately 78% of employers and 70.5% of business graduates either agreed or strongly agreed that the eight business competencies were considered valuable for graduates’ performance on their current job activities” and “approximately 82% of employers and of business graduates agreed or strongly agreed that the eight key competencies were considered relevant for future career development” (Azevedo et al., 2012, p. 19). Moreover, in the final area of the study dealing with capability, 53% of employers and 63% of business students either agreed or strongly agreed that there was room for more opportunity to increase the capability of the new graduates in the eight competencies and that the graduates were not well-prepared for work in industry.

It is important to note that the research conducted by Azevedo et al. (2012) involved a conceptual framework developed in partnership with industry across Austria, the United Kingdom, Slovenia, and Romania to see if competencies could be measured and a determination made on the value of the results. However, no standards were set for the statistical reliability of the instrument used. Rather, Azevedo et al. (2012) recommended further research in the area of competencies. The present study may contribute to the further development of the instrument and its conceptual foundations.

There will be a modification to the scale related to methods of gaining experience in career development and competency. The survey will include multiple choice questions and involve a Likert scale on which participants rate the level of importance they attribute to specific workforce development activities. See Appendix A for the full text of the survey.

Procedures

Members of the LinkedIn network received the research announcement in their LinkedIn news feed and/or via email. The research announcement was posted up to three times by the researcher and emailed to the list of potential participants one time, to attain a robust sample size. Interested participants clicked on the URL in the research announcement. This took them to the Informed Consent form, which they read to determine if they were willing to offer their expert opinions in the research study. Those who clicked “I decline” in response to the Informed Consent were taken to a thank you page and their participation terminated. For those who clicked “I agree”, participants executed the actions defined within the survey and completed all sections, including the demographic section. If the participant did not wish to share demographic data, entries of Prefer not to Answer were offered. Once all questions were completed, participants pressed the complete button and receive a “Thank you for your Participation” message.

Data Management

To ensure anonymity of the survey participants, in using SurveyMonkey, the researcher did not collect IP addresses. For this study, data from the survey were transferred from SurveyMonkey into an SPSS database for analysis. All the results were presented in aggregate form to protect subjects' identities. Data were accessible to the researcher only in the form of the SPSS database maintained on an encrypted flash drive and kept in a locked file cabinet in the researcher’s home. The SPSS database used for data analysis was accessible only by using a

strong password known to the researcher. The dataset contained no coded identifiers and, as such, was completely anonymous.

All electronic data was stored on an encrypted flash drive. No data was stored on any computer hard drive. Following completion of the research, the data set and related files will be retained by the researcher for a minimum of five years in case questions arise about the analyses. After the five years, this data will be destroyed using then current Department of Defense data destruction standards. An affordable technique, such as encryption, will likely be chosen, pending technology at the time.

Statistical Analysis

Responses to the survey were aggregated by question and answer category. Depending on the nature of the question, aggregation involved frequencies, percentages, or mean scores. Because this is a pilot study seeking to understand participants' perceptions, the results were defined across the three training domains (Education, Corporate, and Workforce Development). Each of these organization types is involved in learning provided across their distinct areas of influence. The purpose of the survey is to determine if there are consistent positions across each of the specific areas of influence. Based on their impartial position in answering the series of questions, this study sought to see if there are or are not disconnects in relationships between the three specific training domains with regard to the workplace core competency of Professionalism.

RESULTS

Using the planned online recruitment method, 416 respondents completed the survey for this research. The research announcement was potentially seen by 28,000 individuals, yielding a response rate of 1.5%. Respondents' sociodemographic characteristics appear in Table 1. Mean age was 51; 56.2% were women, and 43.6% were men. Regarding ethnic and racial backgrounds, nearly 80% were White; 7.8% were African American; 2.0% were Asian American; 0.3% were Native American; 4.2% were Hispanic; 1.7% were Biracial, and 2.5% identified as other.

As a group of professionals involved in education and training, their education levels were, as expected, reasonably high, with 39.4% having doctoral degrees, 2.2% with Juris Doctorates, 46.5% with master's degrees, and 10.2% with bachelor's degrees; 1.8% had less than a bachelor's degree. Respondent's work locations varied widely. Most, 52.1%, worked in a college or university setting. The remainder worked across six different locations; see Table 1 for details.

Table 2 presents the most important identifiers used in the hiring practices across the industry, related to applicants' experiences and qualifications. Participants were asked to identify the top three identifiers they believe hiring staff should rely on as part of the hiring process. Most of the respondents, 78.8%, identified "Current and past experience related to the job" as the most important factor. The second most important factor was nearly tied, with 54.% choosing "Creativity, integrity, personality, innovation" and 52.8% choosing "Education and certifications related to the job". Two other options were chosen by a sizable minority of respondents: "Communication skills" by 45.1%, and "Hire for attitude and train for skill" by 43.4%.

Respondents were also asked who should be responsible for developing the future workforce. A large majority, 69.0%, believed that all three organizations should be responsible conjointly. The second most commonly chosen option, a combination of educational institutions and corporations, was selected by only 17.5%, and the remaining four options by less than 10% of respondents. See Table 2 for details.

Respondents were also asked about what outcomes they expected from training organizations and the engagement needing to occur. Table 2 presents the results. Of respondents, 66.1% indicated that organizations should provide greater learning opportunities to develop core soft skill competencies and specialized core job skills in combination. Nearly the same percentage, 66.0%, indicated that organizations should provide internships or apprenticeships at a larger scale to accommodate experience for the learner. A sizable minority, 42.3%, reported that training settings should partner with organizations who provide certifications that enable individuals to meet hiring requirements for the workforce. A similar percentage, 41.6%, believed that organizations should support and engage in the development of new learning concepts that focus on specific needs for workforce success. An additional point endorsed by 38.2% of respondents was that organizations should provide skilled employees from industry to conduct education and training to develop students.

Table 3 presents responses from survey questions about providing experience. The results were divided to take two specific paths. The first was a review of education, corporate, and workforce development organizations and the extent to which they are equipped to provide Experiential Learning to assist job seekers in finding jobs. In these specific questions, participants were asked to Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree with statements. The results indicated that educational organizations were considered the best equipped, with 64.2% of respondents choosing Strongly Agree or Agree. Workforce Development Organizations were rated a close second, with 62.% indicating Strongly Agree/Agree. Corporations were rated third, with 57.1% indicating Strongly Agree/Agree.

Participants were also asked about the value of partnerships across the three types of organizations. The combination of Corporate and Workforce Development organizations was rated highest, with 72.7% indicating Strongly Agree/Agree. For educational organizations on their own, without assistance from the others, 59.3% indicated Strongly Agree/Agree. The combination of Corporate and Education was rated Strongly Agree/Agree by only 39.0% of respondents.

Table 4 presents the results of questions related to Gaining Experience Across Education, Corporations, and Workforce Development. These questions sought to understand what are the most important areas of focus in the three types of organizations to assist job seekers to gain experience. From a list of options, respondents were asked to choose the top three areas for each type of organization. Many respondents indicated that the most important areas for corporate organizations to assist job seekers to gain experience were Experiential Learning, 74.4%, and Internships and Apprenticeships, 66.0%. The third most chosen options, nearly tied at 44.1% and 43.5%, were providing a mentorship and the need to provide related work experience. Knowledge of the subject matter was also chosen by a sizable minority of respondents, 38.0%. There were similar results related to Workforce Development, with Experiential Learning at 65.3%; Internships and Apprenticeships at 69.3%; providing a mentorship at 45.3%; providing related work experience at 39.6%, and knowledge of the subject matter at 39.4%. Results varied when respondents considered educational organizations: Experiential Learning, 72.4%;

classroom engagement with a degreed instructor, 59.0%; knowledge of the subject matter, also 59.0%; Internships and Apprenticeships, 53.0%.

Table 5 presents the results of questions related to competencies across education, corporations, and workforce development. Respondents were asked to select the top five core competencies best taught in each organization. For education, with a specific focus on high school and college, indicated that critical thinking was most often selected, with 78.2% of respondents choosing this option; problem-solving was second, at 66.0%; communication was third, at 57.3%; teamwork was chosen by 40.0% of respondents; ethics by 34.5%; and decision-making by 31.0%. Core competencies better taught in corporations offered a different set of outcomes, with Professionalism chosen most often, by 54.3% of respondents; project management by 47.7%; leadership by 47.5%; and business politics by 42.0%. Five competencies were chosen by 30-39% of respondents, including planning and implementation by 39.3%; business applications by 39.3%; teamwork by 33.3%; negotiation/persuasion by 31.4%; and accountability at 29.7%. Finally, core competencies best taught by workforce development included professionalism at 70.2%, by far the most common competency chosen for workforce development organizations to focus on. Planning/implementation were selected by 38.4% of respondents; business applications by 32.1%; teamwork by 32.1%; motivation by 30.7%; human relations by 30.5%; communication by 30.2%; and accountability by 29.3%.

As part of the research, the respondents were offered the opportunity to provide comments to present opinions relative to the subject matter of the research. The research focused on their personal opinions relating to changes needed across educational institutions, corporations, and workforce development organizations to better prepare individuals to enter the workforce. There were 198 open-ended responses; see Appendix C for a link to the comments. In addition, the option was offered to the respondents to provide feedback in an open forum item to offer any opinions about career planning. In this segment of the survey, comments from 315 respondents were provided; see Appendix C for a link to the comments.

Discussion

The current research asked the following question: Across the three distinct workforce development approaches of Higher Education, Workforce Development, and Corporate training, what disconnects prohibit a cohesive experiential learning process by which individuals would gain maximal theory-to-practice transfer? The findings from the present research include two sets of data that provide insight into the disconnects that exist across the three types of organizations. First, when understanding the most important core competencies that need to be taught, Corporations (54.3%) and Workforce Development (70.2%) indicated that Professionalism was the top competency; a striking difference was that Education professionals did not view Professionalism with the same level of critical importance, 14.6%. Second, across the organizations, when asked about areas of importance on which to focus attention, the divide continued with Corporations and Workforce Development seeing Experiential Learning, Internships/Apprenticeships, and Mentorships as the primary foci to develop critical experiences for job seekers, whereas Education professionals ranked as highest Experiential Learning Classroom Engagement with a degreed instructor experience, and Knowledge of the Subject Matter; Internship/Apprenticeship was a distant fourth. Therefore, one could conclude that a greater partnership across the three types of organizations may be necessary to build an agreed upon set of standards for preparing new workers in the needed core competencies.

In reviewing the current research findings and the related literature published over the past decade, both suggest a level of concern related to the development of career and technical education for Generations Z and I, who are entering the workforce now yet facing challenges in their preparation for work. The literature has indicated that the difficulties being faced by the Z and I Generations include a lack of preparation to be career ready. The conversations across Educational Institutions, Corporate Organizations, and Workforce Development Organizations indicate that social technology has had an impact on these generations to effectively engage and to conduct work (Linder-VanBerschot & Summers, 2015, p. 108). This research outlines the views of Education, Corporations, and Workforce Development organizations on what needs to change and who should be responsible for providing this change.

It is important to note that when Education, Corporations, and Workforce Development organizations are asked about the most essential identifiers used in the hiring process, the vast majority still fall back on the most commonly used outcomes related to current and past experiences (78.8%) and education/certifications related to the job (52.8%). Additionally, many corporate organizations seek individuals who can assimilate into the organization with creativity, integrity, personality, and innovative qualities (54.5%). Additions provided a view into the changing hiring process, including hiring individuals with greater communications skills (45.1%) and hiring for attitude/training for skill (43.4%). In Herman (2004, p. 20), it was clear that responsibility for the development of the workforce fell on all organizations equally. When asked about responsibility for developing the future workforce in the current research, a majority of respondents, 69.0%, concurred with Herman, deeming that responsibility as shared across Education, Corporate, and Workforce Development organizations. Also, when asked about the expected outcomes and the engagement needed from these organizations, most respondents, 66.1%, outlined the importance of more significant opportunities to develop soft core competencies and specialized skills combined and providing internships and apprenticeships on a larger scale to create an experienced workforce, 66.0%.

Azevedo et al. (2012, p.14) discussed the challenges related to organizational partnering to change the dynamic of employability. The authors indicated that as vital as it is for Education and Corporations to partner to develop stronger outcomes that are required for career success, it is challenging for these specific groups to connect effectively. In the present research, it was clear that the question regarding Education and Corporations partnering together garnered only minority support across Strongly Agree and Agree, at a combined 39.0%. The respondents' view was clear with a 72.7% combination across Strongly Agree and Agree that Corporations and Workforce Development had a more significant opportunity to create the right conditions to generate stronger experiences in required subject matter areas. Additionally, most Education professionals, 59.3%, believed that they provide both the knowledge and experience potential employees need to compete.

Throughout the open-ended comments, the respondents consistently offered their opinions in regard to the need for significantly more Internships and Apprenticeships to increase the value of experiential learning and increase the value of the learning experience. For instance: Educational institutions occasionally provide the core knowledge and experience an employee needs to compete in the job market, but not always. Students have to seek opportunities to gain job experience, which can be difficult during a traditional 4-year educational experience. Relevant opportunities may not be available in close proximity, etc. Additionally, while often well-prepared in technical/core competencies for a specific field, soft skills may be lacking for those who are currently entering the workforce.

Again, it's based on individual experiences, but those soft skills are often obtained through extracurricular/volunteer activities while attending college. Students must be intentional about obtaining soft skills, and often they aren't even aware of the importance of acquiring such skills until after they graduate.

Or, as one respondent wrote:

Funding to update educational institutions must be increased to re-tool and develop programs that target emerging occupations. Corporate America needs to provide more internships (paid and unpaid) to high school students to engage them in the corporate network before to help students determine the best pathway before entering college to avoid wasted time and money.

Another respondent indicated:

Corporations need to be more involved with education and Workforce. They have standards and don't do a good job of working with local communities to develop homegrown talent. Partner instead of competing in the endeavor. Corporations need to realize the value that Workforce Development and Educational Institutions can bring in training individuals with the exact skills needed for them (Anonymous, 2018). The significance of combining knowledge through a high school and/or college degree including Internships and Apprenticeships was regarded as a necessity for creating greater learning opportunities (66.1%). To wit: Educational Organizations have to stop the focus on content that can be easily tested (information) and instead focus more on the kinds of topics and activities that produce highly employable individuals. These topics would include creative problem solving, communication, collaboration, critical analysis, citizenship, and character; even though these topics are hard to evaluate and difficult to standardize.

Or as echoed by another respondent:

Educational institutions need to be more engaged with employers. Many times the education provided does not meet the needs of the employers. By the time education decided to change coursework employers needs change.

Limitations

This research involves two key limitations. First, the sample size, $N = 416$, although sizable, was relatively unimpressive in relation to the universe of individuals who potentially saw the online Research Announcement, 28,000. This yielded a small response rate of 1.5%. It is therefore not possible to know to what extent the respondents are representative of the targeted population. It is possible that self-selection factors skewed the sample in some manner. Due to time constraints in completing the research, recruitment only occurred for 10 days. Future researchers would do well to designate a longer recruitment time and perhaps use other recruitment methods to garner a larger response rate. Second, the questionnaire used in this study to obtain information about respondents' perceptions was developed by the researcher specifically for the current investigation, because no existing instrument could be located in the professional literature capable of assessing the needed factors. Thus, the present questionnaire lacks validity and reliability information. Additional psychometric work is needed to demonstrate the reliability and validity of the questionnaire.

Conclusion

The current research considered, across three distinct workforce development approaches of Higher Education, Workforce Development, and Corporate training, what disconnects may prohibit cohesive experiential learning processes by which workers in training can gain maximal theory-to-practice transfer. Across the three settings, 416 respondents completed a survey developed by the researcher. Two key findings emerged about the disconnects that exist across the three organization types. When understanding the most important core competencies that need to be taught, Corporations (54.3%) and Workforce Development (70.2%) indicated that Professionalism was the top competency; a striking difference was that only 14.6% of Education professionals viewed Professionalism with the same level of critical importance. Therefore, it would seem that a greater partnership across the three types of organizations may be necessary to build an agreed upon set of standards for preparing new workers in the core competencies needed to succeed in their jobs. Future researchers would do well to recruit a sample with a higher response rate, to confirm the findings and assure that the sample is representative of the universe of professionals engaged in training across the three types of organizations. If the findings are confirmed, it would appear important for organizations concerned with worker training to consider new ways to develop a mutually aligned set of standards to prepare new workers in the core competencies they need to succeed in the modern workplace.

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Appendix A
Research Survey

Demographic Questions:

- 1) Gender:
 - a. Female
 - b. Male
 - c. Prefer not to answer
- 2) Age (dropdown menu, 18-99/Prefer not to answer)
- 3) Race/Ethnicity:
 - a. White
 - b. Black or African American
 - c. Asian American
 - d. Native American
 - e. Hispanic
 - f. Other (please describe)
 - g. Prefer not to answer
- 4) Education Attained Thus Far:
 - a. High School
 - b. GED
 - c. Associate Degree
 - d. Bachelor's Degree
 - e. Master's Degree
 - f. Juris Doctor
 - g. Doctoral Degree

h. Prefer not to answer

5) Where do you currently work?

a. K-12 schools

b. College or University

c. Non-profit

d. Corporate

e. Workforce Development

f. Educational Corporation

g. Other. Please specify: _____

1. In your opinion, who should be responsible for developing the future workforce?

a. Primarily Educational Institutions (High Schools and Colleges)

b. Primarily Workforce Development Organizations (e.g., state and local workforce agencies, Jobs for the Future, Hiring Heros)

c. Primarily Corporations

d. A Combination of Educational Institutions and Corporations

e. A Combination of Workforce Development Organizations and Corporations

f. A Combination of Educational Institutions, Workforce Development Organizations, and Corporations

2. In your opinion, what are the appropriate areas in which individuals should gain experience prior to beginning a new job or career? (Select the top 3)

a. Knowledge of the subject matter

- b. Internship or Apprenticeship
- c. Classroom engagement with a degreed instructor
- d. “School of hard knocks”
- e. Related work experience
- f. Being mentored
- g. Books or Textbooks
- h. Experiential Learning (i.e., an experience that delivers usable exposure to claim as job experience.)

3. When hiring an individual for an open position, what are the Core Hiring Conditions (e.g., Work Experience, Degree, References) you would look for in the individual? (Select your top 3)

- a. Knowledge of the subject matter
- b. Internship or Apprenticeship experience
- c. Classroom engagement with a degreed instructor experience
- d. “School of hard knocks” experience
- e. Related work experience
- f. An Individual who had a mentor with experience
- g. Lists of Books and/or Textbooks read
- h. Experiential Learning (i.e., an experience that delivers usable exposure to claim as job experience.)
- i. Other. Please specify: _____

4. Educational institutions provide the core knowledge and experience a potential employee needs to compete in the job market. (Likert Scale 1-5 Strongly Disagree – Strongly Agree)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

5- What are the appropriate areas of focus within Educational Institutions to assist job seekers to gain relevant job experience? (Select the top 3)

- a. Knowledge of the subject matter
- b. Internship or Apprenticeship experience
- c. Classroom engagement with a degreed instructor experience
- d. Leveraging of “School of hard knocks” experience
- e. Other related work experience
- f. Individual who had a mentor with experience
- g. Lists of Books and or Textbooks read
- h. Experiential Learning (i.e., an experience that delivers usable exposure to claim as job experience.)

6. Corporate organizations engaging with Educational Institutions to build experience in the subject matter areas they define is most critical to their corporate success. (Likert Scale 1-5 Strongly Disagree – Strongly Agree)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

7. Corporate organizations engaging with Workforce Development Organizations to build experience in the subject matter areas they define is most critical to their corporate success. (Likert Scale 1-5 Strongly Disagree – Strongly Agree)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

8. Educational Institutions are equipped to provide experiential learning that effectively assists job seekers in finding jobs. (Likert Scale 1-5 Strongly Disagree – Strongly Agree)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

9. What are the most important areas of focus in Workforce Development Organizations to assist job seekers to gain experience? (Select the top 3)

- a. Knowledge of the subject matter
- b. Internship or Apprenticeship
- c. Classroom engagement with a degreed instructor
- d. School of hard knocks
- e. Related work experience
- f. A mentorship
- g. Books or Textbooks
- h. Experiential Learning (i.e., an experience that delivers usable exposure to claim as job experience.)

10. Workforce Development Organizations are equipped to provide experiential learning that effectively assists job seekers in finding jobs. (Likert Scale 1-5 Strongly Disagree – Strongly Agree)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

11. What are the most important areas of focus in Corporate Organizations to assist job seekers to gain experience? (Select the top 3)

- a. Knowledge of the subject matter
- b. Internship or Apprenticeship
- c. Classroom engagement with a degreed instructor
- d. “School of hard knocks”
- e. Related work experience
- f. A mentorship
- g. Books or Textbooks
- h. Experiential Learning (i.e., an experience that delivers usable exposure to claim as job experience.)

12. Corporate Organizations are equipped to provide experiential learning that effectively assists job seekers in finding jobs? (Likert Scale 1-5 Strongly Disagree – Strongly Agree)

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

1

2

3

4

5

13. What are the most important areas of focus in Workforce Development Organizations to assist job seekers to gain experience? (Select the top 3)

- a. Knowledge of the subject matter
- b. Internship or Apprenticeship
- c. Classroom engagement with a degreed instructor
- d. “School of hard knocks”
- e. Related work experience
- f. A mentorship
- g. Books or Textbooks
- h. Experiential Learning

14. Across all 3 organizations (Education, Workforce Development, Corporations), what specific outcomes would you expect from these organizations and what kinds of engagement do you feel need to take place (Select the top 3):

- a. Provide extra funding to educate and train the future workforce
- b. Provide Internships or Apprenticeships at a larger scale to accommodate experience for the learner
- c. Become more accepting of simulations as part of the learning process and accepting of simulation credentials
- d. Provide skilled employees from industry to conduct education and training to develop students.
- e. Partner with organizations who provide certifications that enable individuals to meet hiring requirements for the workforce
- f. Support and engage in the development of new learning concepts that focus on specific needs for workforce success
- g. Provide greater learning opportunities to develop core soft skill competencies and specialized core job skills in combination

15. What are the most important identifiers used in the hiring process (Select the top 3)?

- a. Current and past experience related to the job
- b. Hire for attitude and train for skill
- c. Education and certifications related to the job
- d. Hire based on sex or ethnic background

- e. Creativity, integrity, personality, innovation
- f. Communication skills
- g. References
- h. Supporting materials provided by candidate
- i. Other. Please specify: _____

16. What are the core competencies that are better taught in Education (High Schools and Colleges) (Select your top 5)?

- a. Leadership
- b. Human Relations
- c. Problem Solving
- d. Decision-Making
- e. Project Management
- f. Business Politics
- g. Critical Thinking
- h. Planning / Implementation
- i. Negotiation / Persuasion
- j. Business Applications
- k. Professionalism
- l. Communication
- m. Teamwork
- n. Accountability
- o. Ethics
- p. Innovation
- r. Motivation

17. What are the core competencies that are better taught in Corporations (Select your top 5)?

- a. Leadership
- b. Human Relations
- c. Problem Solving
- d. Decision-Making
- e. Project Management
- f. Business Politics
- g. Critical Thinking
- h. Planning / Implementation
- i. Negotiation / Persuasion
- j. Business Applications
- k. Professionalism
- l. Communication
- m. Teamwork

- n. Accountability
- o. Ethics
- p. Innovation
- r. Motivation

18. What are the core competencies that are better taught in Workforce Development Organizations (Select your top 5)?

- a. Leadership
- b. Human Relations
- c. Problem Solving
- d. Decision-Making
- e. Project Management
- f. Business Politics
- g. Critical Thinking
- h. Planning / Implementation
- i. Negotiation / Persuasion
- j. Business Applications
- k. Professionalism
- l. Communication
- m. Teamwork
- n. Accountability
- o. Ethics
- p. Innovation
- r. Motivation

19. Please provide your thoughts on what the necessary change(s) should occur so that Educational Institutions, Corporations, and Workforce Development Organizations could better prepare individuals to enter the workforce (Share your opinion):

20. This is an open forum item for you to provide any opinions about career planning.

Appendix B

Tables

Table 1

Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Subjects (N=416)

Measure	All Subjects
Age	$M = 51$
Gender	
Male	43.6%
Female	56.2%
Race/Ethnicity	
White	79.6%
Black/African American	7.8%
Asian American	2.0%
Native American	0.3%
Hispanic	4.2%
Biracial	1.7%
Other	2.5%

Education Completed

Completed Some High School	0.3%
High School/GED	0.5%
Associate Degree	1.0%
Bachelor's Degree	10.2%
Master's Degree	46.5%
Juris Doctor	2.2%
Doctoral Degree	39.4%

Where do you work?

K-12 Schools	11.2%
College or University	52.1%
Non-profit	6.8%
Corporation	6.1%
Workforce Development	3.7%
Educational Corporations	6.6%
Other	13.7%

Table 2

Experience and Qualifications (N=416)

Measure	All
Most important identifiers used in the hiring process (Select the top 3)	
Current and past experience related to the job	78.8%
Creativity, integrity, personality, innovation	54.5%
Education and certifications related to the job	52.8%
Communication skills	45.1%
Hire for attitude and train for skill	43.4%
References	11.1%
Supporting materials provided by candidate	5.6%
Other	4.1%
Hire based on sex or ethnic background	1.0%

Who should be responsible for developing the future workforce?

Combination of Educational Institutions, Workforce Development Organizations, and Corporations	69.0%
Combination of Educational Institutions and Corporations	17.5%
Primarily Educational Institutions (High Schools and Colleges)	8.5%
Combination of Workforce Development Organizations & Corporations	2.6%
Primarily Corporations	1.7%
Primarily Workforce Development Organizations	1.0%

Outcomes expected from organizations & engagement needing to occur

Provide greater learning opportunities to develop core soft skill competencies and specialized core job skills in combination	66.1%
Provide Internships or Apprenticeships at a larger scale to accommodate experience for the learner	66.0%
Partner with organizations who provide certifications that enable individuals to meet hiring requirements for the workforce	42.3%
Support and engage in the development of new learning concepts that focus on specific needs for workforce success	41.6%
Provide skilled employees from industry to conduct education and training to develop students	38.2%
Provide extra funding to educate and train the future workforce	28.0%
Become more accepting of simulations as part of the learning process and accepting of simulation credentials	23.6%
Other	2.4%

Table 3

Providing Experience (N=416)

Measure	All Subjects
Corporate Organizations are equipped to provide experiential learning that effectively assists job seekers in finding jobs	
Agree	31.0%
Disagree	26.1%
Neither agree nor disagree	19.2%
Strongly agree	18.0%
Strongly disagree	6.0%
Workforce Development Organizations are equipped to provide experiential learning that effectively assists job seekers in finding jobs.	
Agree	48.0%
Neither agree nor disagree	22.6%
Strongly agree	14.2%
Disagree	12.5%
Strongly disagree	3.1%

Educational Institutions are equipped to provide experiential learning that effectively assists job seekers in finding jobs.

Agree	45.0%
Strongly agree	19.2%
Disagree	17.0%
Neither agree nor disagree	14.4%
Strongly disagree	5.0%

Corporate organizations engaging with Workforce Development

Organizations to build experience in the subject matter areas they define is most critical to their corporate success.

Agree	48.7%
Strongly agree	24.0%
Neither agree nor disagree	19.0%
Disagree	7.0%
Strongly disagree	1.5%

Corporate organizations engaging with Educational Institutions to build experience in the subject matter areas they define is most critical to their corporate success.

Agree	2.0%
Strongly agree	37.0%
Neither agree nor disagree	14.2%
Disagree	7.0%
Strongly disagree	0.5%

Educational institutions provide the core knowledge and experience a potential employee needs to compete in the job market.

Agree	39.1%
Strongly agree	20.2%
Disagree	20.2%
Neither agree nor disagree	18.0%
Strongly disagree	3.0%

Table 4

Gaining Experience Across Education, Corporations, Workforce Development (N=416)

Measure	All Subjects
<hr/>	
What are the most important areas of focus in Corporate Organizations to assist job seekers to gain experience? (Select the top 3)	
Experiential Learning	74.4%
Internship or Apprenticeship	66.0%
A mentorship	44.1%
Related work experience	43.5%
Knowledge of the subject matter	38.0%
Classroom engagement with a degreed instructor	14.2%
“School of hard knocks”	5.0%
Other	3.2%
Books or Textbooks	2.0%

What are the most important areas of focus in Workforce Development

Organizations to assist job seekers to gain experience? (Select top 3)

Internship or Apprenticeship	69.3%
Experiential Learning	65.3%
A mentorship	45.3%
Related work experience	39.6%
Knowledge of the subject matter	39.4%
Classroom engagement with a degreed instructor	21.4%
Books or Textbooks	4.1%
“School of hard knocks”	3.1%

What are the most important areas of focus in Education Organizations

to assist job seekers to gain experience? (Select the top 3)

Experiential Learning	72.4%
Classroom engagement with a degreed instructor experience	59.0%
Knowledge of the subject matter	59.0%
Internship or Apprenticeship experience	53.0%
Individual who had a mentor with experience	27.0%
Other related work experience	10.4%
Lists of Books and or Textbooks read	10.0%
Leveraging of “School of hard knocks” experience	7.0%
Other	2.4%

Table 5

Competencies Across Education, Corporations, and Workforce Development (N=416)

Measure	All Subjects
Competencies better taught in Education (High Schools/Colleges) (top 5)	
Critical Thinking	78.2%
Problem Solving	66.0%
Communication	57.3%
Teamwork	40.0%
Ethics	34.5%
Decision Making	31.0%
Professionalism	14.6%
Leadership	22.3%
Project Management	20.6%
Planning / Implementation	19.7%
Accountability	19.7%
Business Applications	19.4%
Human Relations	15.4%
Innovation	13.0%
Motivation	8.7%
Negotiation / Persuasion	7.0%
Business Politics	3.4%

Core competencies better taught in Corporations (Select your top 5)?

Professionalism	54.3%
Project Management	47.7%
Leadership	47.5%
Business Politics	42.0%
Planning / Implementation	39.3%
Business Applications	39.3%
Teamwork	33.3%
Negotiation / Persuasion	31.4%
Accountability	29.7%
Human Relations	25.7%
Decision Making	23.3%
Problem Solving	18.0%
Innovation	15.1%
Ethics	14.0%
Communication	13.4%
Critical Thinking	10.0%
Motivation	6.7%

Core competencies better taught in Workforce Development Organizations

(Select your top 5)?

Professionalism	70.2%
Planning / Implementation	38.4%
Business Applications	32.1%
Teamwork	32.1%
Motivation	30.7%
Human Relations	30.5%
Communication	30.2%
Accountability	29.3%
Problem Solving	24.7%
Ethics	24.2%
Project Management	23.3%
Decision Making	21.3%
Leadership	20.1%
Negotiation / Persuasion	20.0%
Innovation	16.6%
Critical Thinking	15.8%
Business Politics	15.6%

Appendix C
Open-Ended Survey Comments

For comments about changes needed across educational institutions, corporations, and workforce development organizations, click here:

<https://preview.tinyurl.com/AppendixEfeedbackQ22>

For comments offered in the open forum, click here:

<https://preview.tinyurl.com/AppendixEfeedbackQ23>