

The Head Of The Training Function

Report Number Two based upon A Study of the Status and Functions of Training Departments in Business, Industry, and Government (A project of the Professional Standards Committee, ASTD)

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PART I — INTRODUCTION

Scope of Report

This report which is the second of a series¹ based upon the data collected in the recently conducted Survey of the Status and Functions of Training Departments in Business, Industry, and Government deals with the activities, relationships, and responsibilities of the head training position in the respondent organizations.

Before proceeding further, however, it is necessary to record some minor changes in the figures which were included in the article in the September, 1958, issue of *The Journal*. Five responses were received after the first tabulations were completed, thus making a total of 255 or 35.6 percent of the 715 questionnaires mailed to members of ASTD.² The number of returns from multi-unit organizations also increased slightly to 222 from the original 218, but with no change in the percentage distribution. *Thus, the data continue to be definitely in-*

dicative of conditions found in multi-unit organizations.

It is self-evident that an analysis of the functions of any organization or unit thereof ought to include, among other things, the collection of information about the top job, but it is extremely important that this be done in the case of the training function since, insofar as the authors have been able to ascertain, no previous attempt has been made to study this position thoroughly.

The highest position in any organization whether it is large or small, autonomous, or totally dependent, is extremely important because the way in which the top job is regarded affects the operating policies, the assignment of duties and responsibilities, the welfare of the persons employed in the function, the opportunities to render the maximum possible service, and sometimes the very existence of the particular activity. Items, therefore, bearing upon certain elements connected with this level in the training function were included in

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1. Also see *Journal* of the ASTD, page 34, August 1958 and page 45, Sept. 1958.
 2. The authors will be happy to receive questionnaires from those who have not returned them and to include the responses in the final complete report which will be published after the preparation of the separate reports has been finished.

the questionnaire to determine as accurately as possible the (1) job title, (2) immediate superior, (3) specific duties and responsibilities, (4) primary and secondary assignments of each head training position in the respondent organizations. It should be noted that emphasis has been placed upon the elements of the position which are impersonal and are concerned only with very tangible work factors of the job since it was not the purpose of this study to investigate personal, educational, and work experience histories of training personnel.

Specifically, then, this report will include information about the head position in the training function along the following lines:

The identification and classification of job titles.

The range of the duties and responsibilities.

The classification of the duties and responsibilities into recognizable and logical categories.

The distribution between training and non-training activities.

The identification of the position in the organization structure superior to that of the top one in training.

The degree of difference, if any, in assigned duties and responsibilities of the position in various types of organizations, e.g., single-unit as compared to multiple-unit; small as contrasted with large organizations.

Sources of Data

Three sources were relied upon for the information included in this report:

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Responses to specific items in the questionnaire.

A number of job descriptions provided by a minority of the respondents.

A somewhat larger number of organization charts submitted in response to a direct request for information about the internal operating practices of the training function.

The need for determining, as exactly as possible, the nature of the work of the head of the training function led to the inclusion in the questionnaire of items which asked:

Is training primary in your assignment?

To whom do you, as head of the training function, report?

What are your specific duties and responsibilities?

Are the duties and responsibilities stated in writing in some kind of official form?

While a large number of the returns, 163 to be specific, indicated that job descriptions were available, only 41 were actually included with the questionnaires received. These statements, however, appear to be quite representative, if numbers employed may be taken as a criterion, since they are descriptive of the head position in training in organizations whose employees range in number from a low of 1,600 to a high of over 250,000. On the other hand, only four of the 41 job descriptions came from single-unit companies or governmental agencies.

Sixty-eight charts showing the training function arrangement in as many organizations were provided. Since the main purpose in asking for them was that of securing information about the internal set-up in each training depart-

ment, these charts were not entirely informative about external relationships. Some clues which pointed out the immediate superior of the head of the training function in a number of organizations were discovered during the review of the training department organization charts which were submitted.

PART II — ANALYSIS OF DATA

Titles Assigned to Head of Training Function

The observation "what's in a name" frequently illustrates a common attitude toward titles of any kind. Assuming, however, that the largest proportion of organizations do give some thought to what to call the position in charge of the training function, it would seem reasonable that a collection of such titles may significantly indicate something of the general trend in the titling of this position. This report includes a collection of titles which were gathered through the survey and thus provides an organized look at information which is not only of interest but also of value.

Of 254 titles submitted, there were 97 literally different identifications for persons in charge of the training function. Seventy-three titles appeared only once; this is 75.25 percent of the 97 different titles. From this and further data furnished regarding job titles, it is obvious that general agreement on what to call the top training person is not widespread. However, some areas of agreement seem evident, for instance: one hundred responses reported the term "director," 65 indicated "supervisor" and 38 used "manager." Much more significant than this is the fact that 220 titles

incorporated the term "training" in some way; this is 86.61 percent of the total number submitted. It is interesting to note and equally important that only 11 or 4.38 percent of the returns showed that the top position designation was not identified with the training activity.

In the tabulation of position names a pattern of logical categories emerged which was utilized to classify the data applying to titles of top training persons. Seven such categories are used; it is evident, however, that another kind of classification is possible, i.e., into the following: (1) those with full-time and (2) those with part-time responsibilities for training. The first five of the position name groups shown in Figure I and defined in the following listing are definitely charged with the full-time carrying out of training duties.

Categories and Definitions

The first five of these categories of position names indicate specific full-

time responsibility for the operation of training function.

Director and variations, e.g.; training director, director of education, director of training, director of sales training.

Supervisor and variations, e.g.; supervisor of training, supervisor of educational services, training section supervisor, supervisor of factory training.

Manager and variations, e.g.; manager of personnel training, manager of the training section, plant training manager, manager of personnel development.

In-Charge-Of, e.g.; divisional trainer, section head, training superintendent, training officer, head of training.

Coordinator and variations, e.g.; coordinator of training, coordinator of personnel development.

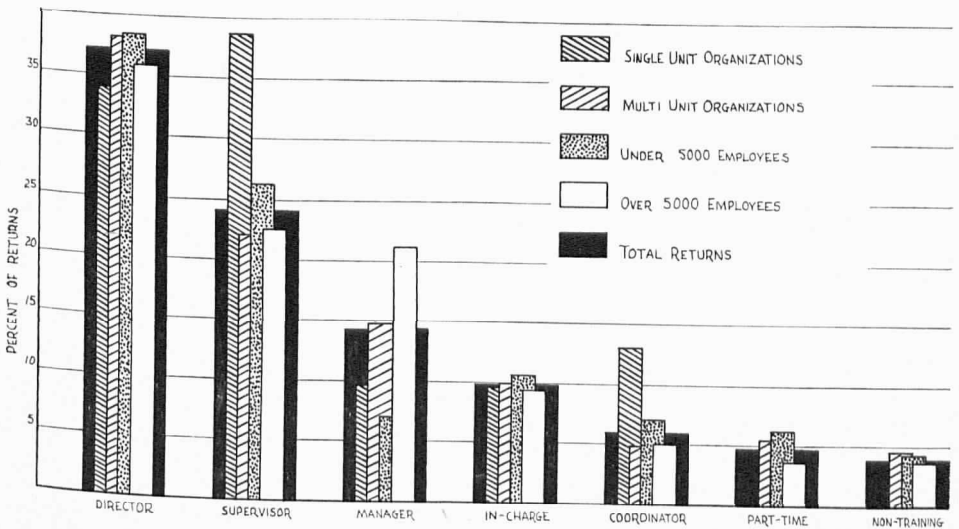


FIGURE 1: Titles of Heads of Training Functions

Part-Time training includes titles which indicate clearly that training is less than a full-time responsibility, e.g.; director of personnel and training, training and safety director, supervisor of training and employee services.

Non-Training titles include those which indicate no connection with the training function, e.g.; chemist, engineer-in-charge, assistant cashier, supervisor of special projects.

The number of persons employed in an organization seems to have little effect on selection or assignment of titles except in the "manager" category where organizations of 5,000 or more employees use this term in the title about three

times more often than smaller organizations. The term "director" and "manager" also tend to be in common usage in the large organizations, while such names as "coordinator," "supervisor," and a number of titles indicating part-time training responsibilities are found more frequently in organizations with less than 5,000 employees.

Immediate Superior of Head of Training Function

To whom should the head of the training function report? In what area of an organization's activities should training be placed? What administrative pattern will provide the basis for establishing and operating the most effective

TABLE ONE
IMMEDIATE SUPERIOR OF THE HEAD OF THE TRAINING FUNCTION

<i>Organization Category of Immediate Superior</i>	<i>Number Reporting in Each Category¹</i>	<i>Percent Reporting</i>
Vice President	34	13.39
Other Top Management	17	6.69
Other Training Personnel	14	5.51
Other Staff ²	7	2.76
Middle Management	9	3.54
Personnel	91	35.82
Industrial Relations	67	26.38
Employee Relations	15	5.91
Total	254 ²	100.00

1. This category includes staff areas other than Personnel, Industrial Relations, or Training.
2. One respondent did not provide the information about the immediate superior.
3. Includes heads of the training function in single and multi-unit organizations. (Thirty-two of the 254 reporting are employed in single-unit organizations.)

training programs? These and similar questions are frequently asked by management as well as by training personnel when consideration is given to matters of organizational placement.

In this connection it is necessary to remember the generally accepted principle that the placement of a position in the hierarchial structure in any organization may give some indication of its status, its scope of activity, its freedom of operation, its influence on policy determination and on operating procedures. It is significant, therefore, that the head of the training function is found reporting to a rather wide variety of positions with respect to level but not so much with regard to functional area in the respondent agencies and companies.

A review of Table One, "Immediate Superior of the Head of the Training Function," reveals the following facts concerning the placement of the head of the training function:

In almost three-fourths of the respondent companies and government agencies, the person in charge of training reports to someone who heads up an organizational area that deals with the employment, development, selection, and welfare of people.

Approximately one-fifth of those in charge of training report directly to someone who carries the title of Vice President or some other top management title including Vice President for Personnel, Industrial Relations, and Human Relations.

Very small numbers are directly responsible to members of middle management or to heads of other staff functions.

Other data not shown in Table One indicate that only one of the 32 heads of the training function employed in *single-unit* organizations reports to someone on the Vice President level and that 27 or 84.37 percent of this group are responsible to the person in charge of either personnel, industrial relations, or employee relations.

Since such titles as "Director" and "Manager" appear to be used quite indiscriminately without clear-cut indication about the level in an organization in which they appear, it is difficult to determine how high in the structure they are placed. The important point, however, is that the head of the training function appears not to have direct access to the higher ranks of line management and, in the majority of cases, def-

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initely reports to someone who is located in the staff areas of an organization. Two hundred and three of the 254 who provided information on this item, or 79.92 percent, named positions in the staff category to which they reported.

Of the 51 heads of training functions who report to top management, 39 or 76.47 percent have the title of "Director" or "Manager." This is 30.0 percent of the training persons with these titles. In contrast to this, however, only 10.0

percent of all other full-time heads of training report to top management.

A further analysis of the data shows that 34 or 13.39 percent of the persons in charge of training report to vice presidents who are mainly placed in the organizational area which is concerned with development or welfare of people, while 17 or 6.69 percent report to other top management personnel. Table Two contains the detailed listing of the position titles in these groups.

TABLE TWO
TOP MANAGEMENT TITLES OF IMMEDIATE SUPERIOR
ON THE HEAD OF THE TRAINING FUNCTION

<i>Area of Responsibility and Position Title</i>	<i>Number of Heads of Training Function Reporting to</i>		<i>Total</i>
	<i>Single-Unit Organization</i>	<i>Multi-Unit Organization</i>	
VICE PRESIDENT			
Personnel	1	13	14
No specific designation		8	8
Industrial Relations		8	8
Sales		3	3
Human Relations		1	1
Sub-total	1	33	34
OTHER TOP MANAGEMENT			
Executive Secretary	1		1
Works Manager	1	8	9
General Manager (operations)		3	3
General Sales Manager		2	2
City Manager		1	1
Assistant Postmaster General		1	1
Sub-total	2	15	17
Grand Total	3	48	51

Duties and Responsibilities of the Head of the Training Function

Consideration of the findings of the study, which relate to duties and responsibilities of the head of the training function, should begin with the fact that 240 (94.11 percent) of the respondents indicated that training is their primary assignment. Only 14 (5.49 percent) indicated that it is not. This coincides closely with the fact that 8.67 percent of the respondents have titles which indicate that they are not primarily training people. Thus, there is added evidence that the training function is recognized as an important and separate

responsibility in most business, industrial, and governmental organizations.

The data for this section of the report are derived from answers to the questionnaire item: "What are your specific duties and responsibilities?", plus 41 job descriptions. However, before considering the kind and extent of these duties and responsibilities, it is interesting and appropriate to point out a set of facts concerning job descriptions. One hundred sixty-three or 63.92 percent of respondents claimed they have a job description, 32.55 percent do not, 3.53 percent did not answer this item. A larger percentage of training positions in single-unit organizations had job de-

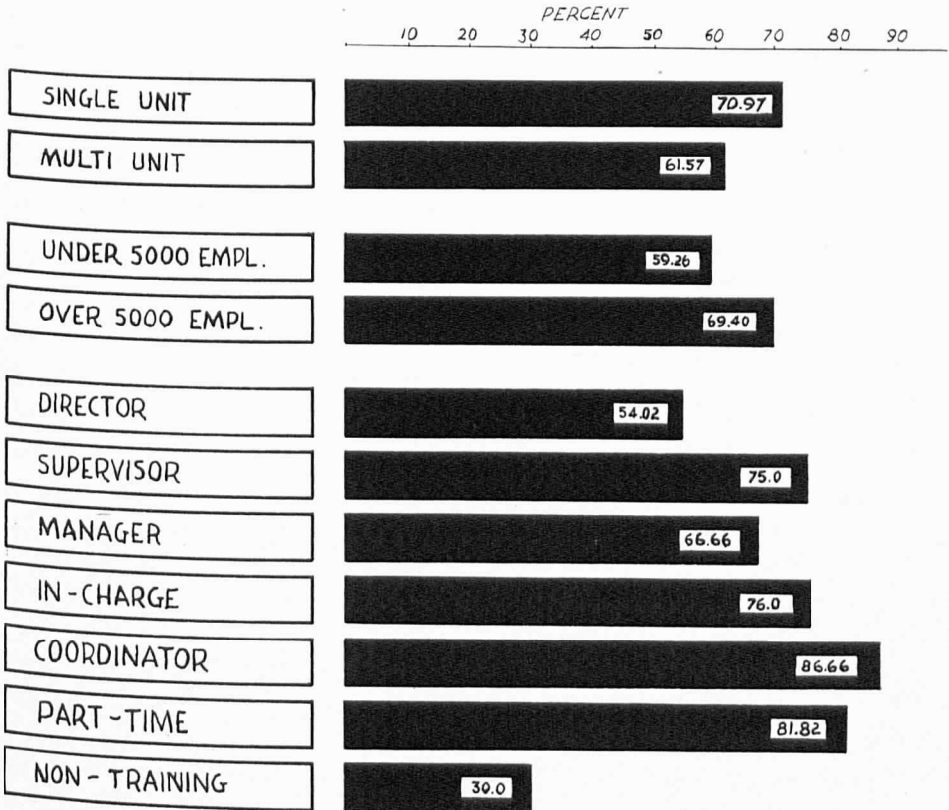


FIGURE 2: Duties and Responsibilities Stated in Writing

scriptions (71.88 percent) than those in multi-unit organizations (62.78 percent.) However, in organizations of less than 5,000 employees 59.26 percent had job descriptions, and in organizations of over 5,000 employees 69.40 percent had job descriptions. It is important to note that though respondents were asked to send copies of their job descriptions only 41 of the 163 respondents who said they had them, actually sent copies.

It is indicated in Figure 2 presented on page 49 that job descriptions of the training position carrying the title of "director" or "manager" tend to be fewer in number than are the descriptions of the jobs of "supervisors" and "coordinators," or even in part-time training assignments.

A tabulation of the responses to the questionnaire item mentioned above and a process of extracting significant indicators of responsibility from job descriptions produced a large variety of different items which when recorded separately and sorted in various ways brought about a logical series of categories of responsibilities.

1. *Instruction Responsibilities:* provide group instructor service, train and develop discussion leaders, conduct training conferences, teach classes, coordinate training schedules, counsel in the use of training methods and techniques.

2. *Development and Preparation of Programs:* develop training materials, assess training needs, formulate and recommend plans for employee development, conceive and prepare training programs, write training manuals.

3. *Training Evaluation:* develop technical knowledge and skills standards,

obtain ratings on apprentices and trainees, evaluate all training activities, follow up on performance of trainees, evaluate effectiveness of instruction.

4. *Advisory Responsibilities:* advise on courses available outside of company, educational counseling to employees, counsel employees on self-development, act as consultant on training problems, advise and assist interested personnel on training matters.

5. *Administration of Training:* assist line management in budgeting training costs, maintain training records, formulate training procedure, member of foremen selection board, construct and administer personnel tests, maintain company library, make regular reports to management, train and supervise subordinate employees.

6. *General Professional Activities:* stimulate participation in training, maintain contact with schools and colleges, keep informed on new training techniques, secure acceptance and use of training knowledge and materials.

7. *Non-training Activities - Related:* serve, participate, talk at community meetings; serve on advisory committees, assist in organization planning, edit company publications, administer college relations activities and recruiting.

8. *Non-training Activities - Unrelated:* administer safety programs, salary administration, writing job descriptions, administer insurance program, perform special assignments as directed.

Figure 3 presents these categories, their relative importance in the job descriptions and in the responses on the questionnaire.

The development and preparation of programs is the obvious standout responsibility area for the head of the training function. Five hundred and two or 41.56 percent of the 1208 questionnaire responses, and 144 or 32.29 percent of the 446 elements derived from job descriptions indicate this fact.

Training administration is also dominant as indicated in 232 or 19.21 percent of responses of the questionnaire item and 119 or 26.69 percent of the job description elements.

Not surprising is the fact that instruction is indicated as only about one-tenth of total responsibility.

It is also interesting to note that in

some categories the actual duties performed by the head of the training function may not follow those designated in the job description. For instance: in the case of the category of "general professional activities" the job descriptions provide for a greater area of responsibility than is indicated in the responses that the training heads actually assume. Also training people actually perform more unrelated non-training activities than their job descriptions seem to allow.

Another responsibility category which also is prominently mentioned in the job descriptions, that of training evaluation, and which has received much attention in training literature and reports of late, seems to be carried out less frequently than should be the case according to the responses listed on the questionnaires that were returned.

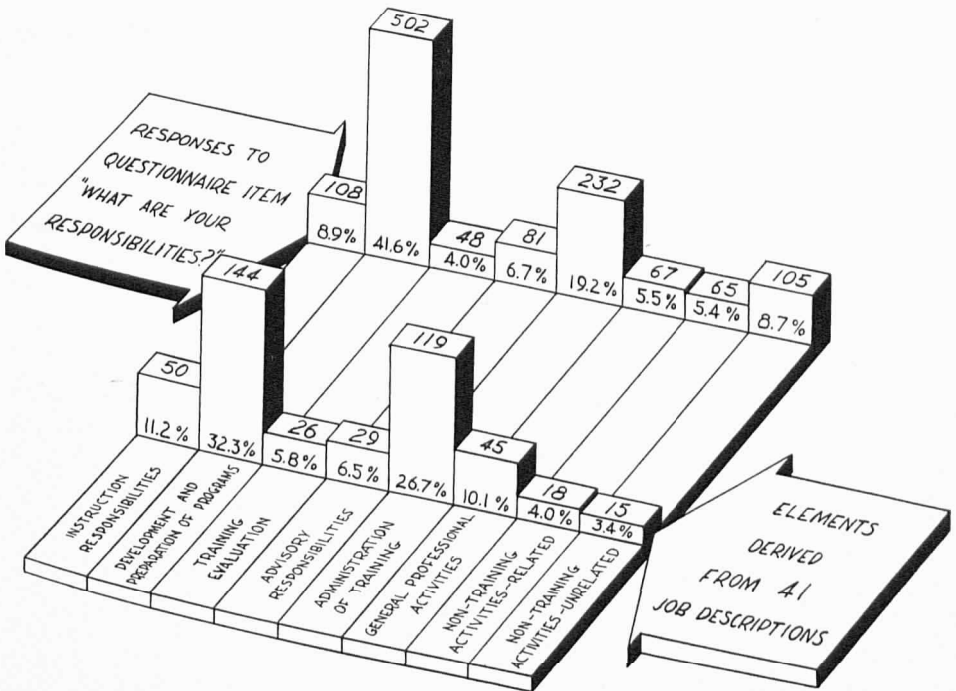


FIGURE 3: Areas of Responsibility for Heads of Training Functions

PART III

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Our current concern about the effectiveness and value of this country's entire educational system points up emphatically the contention that training in business, industry, and government must undertake and carry out new and greater responsibilities for the continuous development of people in order that our society may be able to grapple intelligently with the problems arising out of the rapidly changing and growing body of knowledge that is constantly being made available. In agreeing with this view the argument is advanced by Dr. Margaret Mead¹ that "education for rapid and self-conscious adaptation to a changing world" cannot be adequately handled by the educational system alone because (1) education must be a continuous process throughout the lifetime of every individual, (2) the work place of every individual provides the closest contact with the opportunities to learn new things as well as with the most stimulating incentives for continuing to learn, (3) the facilities, the experience, and the personnel in business, industrial, and governmental establishments are valuable sources which should be utilized to provide the lifelong education and training so unquestionably necessary.

If this point of view has any validity, it is plainly evident that the training function in business, industry, and government must expand its horizon and gear itself to perform more tasks in breadth and depth than it is doing to-

day. The top level position then becomes even more important than when it is considered in the light of the somewhat restricted view that limits its responsibilities to the direction of training activities which emphasize mainly the skill and technical development of people. It has been mentioned elsewhere that this study does not deal with an investigation into the personal, educational, and experiential factors that should be considered in selecting persons to hold the head job in training, but it is concerned with determining the duties and responsibilities now assigned to or performed by incumbents in this position in organizations that cooperated in the survey. The analysis of the responses which is reported on above shows that a pattern of action common to the position of the head of the training function, in multi-unit organizations at least, is quite clearly apparent. Even though the scope of the assignments is not as specifically outlined as it will be in the future, it is evident that there is recognition on the part of many involved in this activity that the training function is the one element in business, industry, and government that can aid people and organizations to do more than make a "rapid and self-conscious adaptation to a changing world."

While the position of the head of the training function may be important in an organization, it is quite clear that it is not placed very high in the structure. Only 13.39 percent report directly to a Vice President while 6.69 percent have

1. Margaret Mead, "Why Is Education Obsolete?"—*Harvard Business Review*, November-December, 1958, Vol. 36, No. 6, pp. 23-37.

direct access to some other top management position.

The training function, in the overwhelming number of cases, is placed within the organizational area that is concerned with selection, development, and welfare of people and their relationships to the job, each other, and management.

The only really common element in the titles assigned to the head of the training function is the term "training." The title does not necessarily indicate the status of the position nor does it delimit the scope of responsibilities assigned to it.

While the duties and responsibilities of the head of the training function are many and varied, it has been possible to classify them into a series of broad categories into which they fit logically and naturally. These classifications should be helpful sources in the process of developing and preparing position descriptions and job specifications.

Training is, without doubt, recognized as a separate and distinct function requiring separate administrative attention since 94.1 percent of the heads of the training activity in the respondent organizations stated that they were assigned to this responsibility on a full-time basis. It is certainly safe to conclude that this is the situation in multiple unit organizations.

One of the unknown quantities of the work of the head position in the training function is the extent to which the nature of the job requires the performance of duties and responsibilities commonly considered to be included in the assignments of management persons. The work of a manager, regardless of position name or level in an organiza-

tion, may be classified into two broad categories: (1) the group of specialized or technical tasks peculiar to a particular functional area of the organization such as production, accounting, sales, organization planning, research, training, and the like; (2) the group of common tasks which any management person must perform such as planning, organizing, directing, controlling, and coordinating. The data collected show clearly that heads of the training function certainly carry on the specific staff and technical activities connected with this work, but the nature and extent of the managerial duties cannot be so clearly determined. It must be assumed, however, that administration of any unit of an organization does require the exercise of the managerial functions outlined above. A more intensive study of this position should be made in order to establish definitely and conclusively the major elements involved including such items as the desirable personal traits and qualities, nature of preparation prior to appointment, scope of duties and responsibilities, the place of the position in the organization structure.

The responses show that the duties included in the job descriptions do not actually identify the extent and range of activities reported being performed by the heads of the training function. This condition then calls for a closer scrutiny of the content of the current job descriptions for the purpose of making them more realistic. On the other hand, it appears that more careful examination and analysis of the job of the head of the training may bring about a clearer delineation of the duties and responsibilities of this position.