MANAGEMENT TRAINING:
A DEVELOPING-COUNTRY FOCUS

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INTRODUCTION

This paper seeks to examine the training function in Barbados, specifically the training of executive personnel. It looks at the way in which training is designed, implemented and evaluated. A brief conceptual overview of management development and training is provided. The training function within four organisations is followed through Barbados Employers' Confederation (1988); Barbados Institute of Management and productivity (1990); Caribbean Centre for Development Administration (1983); and the Government Training Centre.(1991). Of the four, two are in the private sector (Barbados Institute of Management and productivity, and Barbados Employer's Confederation) and the other two are in the public sector (Caribbean Centre for Development Administration, and the Government Training Centre). The interplay of theory and practice is conducted in relation to training policy, training method and posttraining evaluation. Towards the end of the paper, some general assessments are made and certain conclusions are reached.

House (1978) defines management development as any planned effort to improve current or future employee performance by imparting information, conditioning attitudes, or increasing skills. The defination implie that the results of development must be distinguished in terms of measurable change in either learner states or learner performance. Management development, therefore, includes such efforts as on-the-job coaching, counselling, classroom training, or job rotation. The overall effectiveness of the entire management development process can be affected by employee's ability and willingness to learn, the attitude and skills of his superiors, the abilities of his immediate associates and the nature of the formal authority system. It can, therefore, be seen how important the initial training is that is not only training general staff but also of managers and supervisors. Sikula and McKenna (1984) define training as a short-term educational process. Reilly (1979) defines training as the development of a person's knowledge, skills and purposes for a vocational process. Training is, therefore, a key method by which management development can be achieved.

In the recent times, it appears that education and experience alone are not adequate. Although many seem to accept the value of training in routine skills and techniques, however, they adhere to the view that good

managers/supervisors are born as such, and provided they have sound education, they will acquire the necessary knowledge and skills through experience at work. Training is frequently done for the wrong reasons. People are sent on courses to get them out of the way, as a reward or patronage, by mistake, because the courses form an essential part of the promotin process, to escape from workload and a host of other reasons. Much training is removed, if not divorced, from the work situation. While this does not invalidate all aspects of training, it does present serious problems; e.g. decision-making at a senior organizational level can never be the same in the training environment as in real-life situations. Some critics have a valid point when they complain that so much training, especially in institutions, ignore both the pressures, demands and dynamics of the real-life setting.

There are different types of training. It can be carried out both within and ouside formal institutions. Training can take any form, e.g. career development, on-the-job training, departmental training, organizational development, extension training and institutional training. Career development is a proces by which an employee is transferred from one job to another in accordance with a carefully-timed programme of sequences so that each of the different experiences makes a planned and constructive addition to the development of an employee's knowledge, skills and work approach. On-the-job training is a consciously provided instruction in the work situation. An employee is assigned to a particular job in a normal working situation and has a more experienced employee supervising his/her activities. This can be carried out at all levels of hierarchy and has the advantage that it can be tailored to the employee's needs. However, the employee assigned to the trainee must be competent and able to communicate his knowledge and skills.

Department training is one that takes place within a department both on-the-job and in more formal classroom-type situations. Courses are usually shorter, tailor-made, situation-specific, specialized and are more involved with particular technical skills. The advantages is that it is less disruptive than other types. Organizational development has more to do with the development and improvement of an organisation as a whole than with the instruction in specific areas of knowledge and skills designed for individual employees. Extension training involves using radio, correspondence and television. The benefit is that it can cover a large number of trainees but it is difficult to organize. It needs a great deal of research, careful planning and continuous commitments. Institutional training is what most people have in mind when they refer to training. The types of institutions, their missions, their functions and subject-areas differ considerably. By and large, institutional training is the easiest form to organize, run and control. It, however, romoves trainees from their work environment, placing them in heuristic situations.

TRAINING POLICY

Training policy and planning should accord with the overall development process. For instance, if a country wishes to decentralize the public sector and development activities, the training policy should include the preparation of the target community execute this policy. Programmes should be formulated to show how this is to be done and what process needs to be laid down. Too often, there is absence of or deficiency in a training policy, having little relevance to or ongoing connection with overall objectives.

Training policy decisions should only be reached after a careful consideration of the national policy. Attention must be paid to training at the aggregate national level for several reasons. First, training should be relevant to the achievement of international objectives. Second, training policy and planning should be in accordance with overall national planning. Third, the lack of coordination and communication between the various agencies concerned with training leads to uneconomic duplication and resource waste. Finally, one must deal with the problem of maintaining a degree of consistency or continuity in any training policy.

In an ideal situation, the objectives of a training programme and its consequent designare based on the assessed needs of the personnel and the organisation. In reality, there must be a degree of compromise, with consideration being given to what resources, skills and policy support are available at a given point in time. Choices are made on the basis of not what is best but what is feasible.

The methods used to assess training needs are several. The first is the use of surveys. It can take a variety of forms, e.g. questionnaires sent to people at a certain level requesting statistical or other factual data as to what is needed. Secondly, needs can be assessed by calling together senior executives and personnel managers for planning conferences. The third relates to the establishment of a central analytical agency responsible for helping in policy formulation, and the assessment of training needs. Such coordination should not be burdened with routine matters but should be an agency small in size, be locatad in a central position in the network and have sufficient authority to ensure cooperation and participation from powerful organizations. Fourthly, use can be made of consultants and specialists through international/regional technical assistance and funding agencies.

The factors affecting the selection and design of new programmes may be summarized to include political motivation and pressure, competition between different establisment, desire to concentrate on the courses which offer the highest prestige, new courses launched because the required resources are already there, and the personal interest element. Let us now examine what happens in reality.

BARBADOS EMPLOYERS' CONFEDERATION

Every year the courses offered are changed. Two methods are followed to arrive at the design and content of programmes. First, an analysis is done of the current business trends of an industry or a particular organization to arrive at the needs. This analysis takes the form of an examination of company records. The trained personnel check what courses have a high response and interest rate and then repeat and modify these courses from year to year. Close professional contact is maintained with the employer to ensure that the in-house programmes are structured to meet individuals needs.

There is a definite policy to avoid being theoretical, and to stress the more practical aspects. Much emphasis is placed on the indigenous organizational behaviour and practices. Efforts are made to place the textbook in real world and to highlight their interplay.

BARBADOS INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT AND PRODUCTIVITY

First, we refer to in-house training. When a company comes to BIMAP with a particular need, BIMAP first goes into the company, interviews various key people and subsequently comes up with a programme that is derived from these particular needs. The updating of courses is done constantly by drawing on the experience of the trainers, and by keeping up-to-date with research materials, i.e. books, periodicals, journals, new reports, and so on. In terms of course content, a balance is strunck between theoretical exposure and problem-solving orientation.

Secondly, the management training programme offers a number of basic courses, e.g. Fundamentals of Management, Sales Management, Quality Managment, ect. It is at the of each course that the participant gets an opportunity to actively utilize theoretical approaches. The content of these courses centres mainly on the knowledge factor.

CARIBBEAN CENTRE FOR DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

A real need for the reevaluation of public sector training programmes is underscored by CARICAD. Obstacles are encountered in persuading public sectors of the Caribbean region that research needs to be done on training needs. There is a pressing need for encouragement of career development and functional specialism within the public sector. Negative politics and adversarial partisanship are seen as the barriers in Barbados to linking policy and action. Before any programme is designed and implemented at CARICAD, studies of training needs analysis are done.

CARICAD emphasizes the need for supervisors to know what training is about and what the outcomes might be. The public sectors are being encouraged to set out specific training programmes for particular levels of management,

especially senior management. CARICAD, inter alia, runs a training of trainees programme, since it felt that they need to have an understanding of the running and management of a training programme to fully appreciate the process.

Another constraint encountered is in the indigenizing of training programmes. Within the public sector, managers and supervisors seem not to be receptive to the local training personnel and seem to have more confidence in specialists from outside the region, especially the North Atlantic industrial countries.

GOVERNMENT TRAINING CENTRE

The Centre designs courses which are geared specifically to the public sector. They are based on the experience of the trainers, with an emphasis being placed on practically and applicability of techniques. Although the Training Division's mission is fairly clear, it is not clear if the Training Division personnel periodically check with policy-makers and decide on what training should be offered to facilitate overall national objectives. The content of the GTC courses shows that emphasis is placed on the problem-solving aspects of the public sector.

Analyzing the policy and programme design process leaves one with an awareness that not enough preparation goes into the design process. Although a number of means for analyzing training needs are available, in general only one of these is utilized by the Centre.

TRAINING METHOD

There is a wide range of methods and aids available. Which method is used is largely a question of which method is most appropriate for a particular purpose at a specific time and in certain conditions. There is no one best method and most training programmes benefit from a variety of tools.

Knowledge of the trainees is important in deciding what method to use. If the class contains trainees of widely differing abilities, then methods should be flexible. Available research advocates using the lecture method primarily for young personnel who are fresh out of the educational setting, and discussion and role-playing for the more mature experienced trainees since they do not like lecturing.

The appropriate use of various methods and aids varies according to the nature and objectives of the training programmes. It also depends on the habits, abilities and personalities of the trainers, and trainees, and on external factors, such as finance and the ability to maintain the equipment and materials. A constraint on the use of the different methods, some are aware but not trained in their use, and some are prejudiced.

Generally, managers and supervisors more readily accept methods, such as lecture and programmed learning, which are primarily instructor-centered with limited interaction among trainees, than trainee-centered methods involving a high degree of interaction. House (1978) has found that the use of leader-centered techniques is useful in gaining acceptance of management training efforts. Managers claim that trainee-centered discussion tends to be nonapplicable and diffuse.

BARBADOS EMPLOYER'S CONFEDERATION

A variety of methods are offered which only consider the subject-matter to be presented and not the type of trainees. Role-playing, lectures, videos and workshops are the most common method used. Resources from outside the organization and a number of executives who are in the private sector are drawn on heavily. The Confederation recognizes, however, that the optimum method is that of free discussion where experiences are shared.

BARBADOS INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT AND PRODUCTIVITY

The Institute states that a stimulating mix of classroom study, seminars and project is offered, with discussion at the end of each course to see what has been learnt. There is no difference between private and public-sector personnel as far as training is concerned. Changing trainee attitudes and perceptions are the Institute's foremost training challenge and most training methods are geared towards this.

GOVERNMENT TRAINING CENTRE

The Centre finds that it is difficult to break free from traditional and, sometimes obsolete, practices. It is all the more difficult to implement innovative ideas. The training personnel recognize that attitudes are not easily changed. However, emphasis is placed on doing so since methods are not as consequential as attitudes, because if there are poor attitudes no method used would be successful. Flip charts, AV aids, handouts, lectures, discussions and role-playing are utilized. Attention is paid to the type of course rather than the nature of the trainee group.

CARIBBEAN CENTRE FOR DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

In its Caribbeanwide experience, the Centre discerns that lectures are the most accepted method because it is the most long-standing and well-known method. Role-playing and case studies are also used with evaluations being done at the end of the day. The Centre uses regional and local training specialists, and resource persons. Of late, the Centre has produced a management training package of materials which contains cases, texts and illustrations so that managers do not necessarily have to leave the job to receive relevant training.

POST-TRAINING EVALUATION

There are several reasons for evaluating training programmes; e.g. to ascertain whether the programme should be run or not, to find out how it can be improved, and to see if it is achieving its objectives. The assumption that because a training programme continues to attract clients it is fulfilling a useful purpose is a common but false assumption.

Resistance to evaluation can emanate from several sources. Opposition can come from the training staff, who can be sensitive to criticisms. There may be concern about who is to do the evaluation and so on. Criticism may also come from the sponsoring agencies, who have nearly the same concerns. There may be and often are political pressures of one kind or another. There may be resistance from the trainees, concerned about how the evaluations might be used against them.

Evaluations can be costly, requiring skilled personnel, time and effort to effectively prepare the questions and review them. Conceptual courses are harder to measure and evaluate. While it may be possible to assess how much the trainee has learnt, it is very difficult to improve the interpersonnel relations among staff members.

Several criteria can be used as indices of change as a result of management development. The criteria include (a) changes in knowledge of organizational goals and objectives, technological advances and management principles, (b) changes in attitude towards the organization, top management, co-workers, subordinates and development efforts, and (c) changes in ability in human relations skills, work skills and work habits. These changes may manifest themselves on the job and result in changes in job performance of the individual and his peers.

Evaluation may take many forms. First, ratings are judgements on ability or performance. Second, questionnaires can be done during a programme at the end or after the trainee returns to work. The anonymity that is guaranteed tends to encourage honest, genuine responses. Third, there are tests or written examinations or performance tests to monitor changes in ability or knowledge. Fourth, interviews and discussions provide verbal evaluation which go a long way towards resolving the problem of misinterpretation. Fifth, there are observational techniques to measure skills, ability, communication and productivity.

BARBADOS EMPLOYERS' CONFEDERATION

Some evaluation is done, mostly on in-house programmes. It is difficult when courses have people from a wide variety of organizations. To have access to an in-house programme, someone who is unknown to the people in the organization visits the organization as a client with a view to assessing its

operations. This is followed by visits by the training officer to assess organizational records and other data. It has been found that, in general, methods have been implemented, especially organization-building approaches.

BARBADOS INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT AND PRODUCTIVITY

Evaluation is done for in-house training by going to the organization and talking to the rank and file members and finding out what has changed. Due to the politics of organizations, this can be difficult to do. These reports are given verbally to the business-owner. Often it is found that only a small percentage of the recommendations are ever implemented. It is felt that this is so because senior managers do not themselves come on courses. Therefore, when supervisors try to implement programmes, they tend to be met with resistance and indifference.

CARIBBEAN CENTRE FOR DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

It has been found that impact evaluation is difficult to undertake. The Centre does not get into impact evalualtion. Often, top management does not seem to appreciate what training the trainee is undertaking. While CARICAD sees the urgent need for ongoing evaluation which would lead to reassessment of many programmes, the top-level policy-makers do not seem to appreciate this need as urgent.

GOVERNMENT TRAINING CENTRE

Evaluation of courses is built into the course itself. Participants give reports of what they have learnt. Between six months and a year later, the trainees are brought back to a review seminar. Problems and constraints experienced and opportunities explored are elated. This is a new programme recently implemented by the Centre. So, the results are not available as yet.

GENERAL ASSESSMENTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Given the theory and the actual practices of these training institutions, it is now possible to make some general assessments about management training in Barbados. In relation to training policy, ideally a training policy should accord with overall national policy, having made a careful consideration of the multiple policy areas. This is not being done, even within the Government Training Centre, whose stated mission is to realize public sector's training policy, goals and objectives. The impression is gained that these institutions seem more concerned with offering popular courses without trying to change inimical organizational culture and environment. This negates the specific use of training as a means of organization development.

When it comes to actual course content, there are attempts to indigenize programmes. This is encouraging and it shows that innovation is valued and the need for more practicality is recognized. It appears, however, that these attempts have been slow because of resistance from managers who seem intimidated by returning trainees and contemporary management development skills.

As regards training methods, all the institutions identify the pressing need for more trainee participation in the learning process. Nontraditional means of teaching are being used with limited success. However, other factors besides the nature of the course need to be taken into account when choosing a particular method. More emphasis should be placed on an analysis of the trainee's particular needs.

At all the training institutions resistance to new methods was encountered. How management development and organization development can be achieved without change and innovation in work approaches and relations is not yet clear to the institutions. The impression received is that training personnel themselves are not fully knowledgeable about the variety of training methods nor do they seem to be clear about the link between management training and overall aggregate development.

It is in the area of training evaluation that training in management in Barbados fails to meet the ideal situation. It is lacking in all the institutions. The closest to the ideal and the most innovative is new review seminar recently started at the Government Training Centre.

From our findings we have concluded that in order for management training to have a desirable impact on organization development, a total reevaluation needs to be done. New policies need to be formulated and new strategies need to be put in place with a view to making management training a more coherent process.

The need for management training to sensitize managers and supervisors as to what training should achieve cannot be overemphasized. Without this, any training initiative, no matter how well organized and well carried out, would have no long-term beneficial impact and is likely to lead to further frustration and alienation of trainees.

Training in Barbados seems to be a routine functional activity rather than a means to achieve management and organization development. For example, transfers and promotions are usually devoid of any logical planning and neither training nor experienceappears to be seriously considered when positions are filled. The training institutions do not appear to collaborate very often. It is almost as if they want to advocate the courses being run separately. But the courses would exert greater usefulness if they were conducted at forums where ideas and experiences could be shared. While there exists several training programmes offering a wide variety of courses geared towards changing knowledge, skills and behaviour, the hard-nosed planning as well as essential follow-up is not there. Without these, the current programmes are not being entirely effective and useful.

Training not only facilitates organization development but also careeer development. Training personnel need to extensively interview the potential trainees and examine their working environment, including interpersonal relations, operating problems are identified, genuine employee/trainee needs/dispositions are diagnosed and meaningful dialogue between trainer and trainee is initiated, training will continue to be in part misplaced.

While indigenzing training content is desirable for developing countries, using successful crosscultural training programmes/modules from industrialized countries still has its place. Baradian training institutions need to keep in touch with fast-changing training concepts, methodologies and technologies. Training institutions in Barbados also need to interact with fast-growing nowestern countries, examine their training approaches and methods and start utilizing them where possible and desirable.

Much emphasis is being placed, and quite rightly, on the practical operational aspects of training - the imparting of transferrable knowledge and skills. This is demonstrated forcefully by all the training institutions. Yet, in numerous instances, it is the employees' attitudes that are at fault, especially in the public sector. This is not being vigorously addressed in training sessions.

The need for posttraining evaluation cannot be stressed enough. Findings need to be collected, documented and finally analyzed. Yet not enough top-level appreciation concerning the need for such evaluation and the consequent payoffs is in evidence in the country at the moment. The training institutions clearly are not doing enough, though there is no underestimating the attendent difficulties of the process. A variety of evaluation methods are in existence and yet in Barbados these are not being utilized even on a periodic basis.

The institutions' outreach programmes; interacting with the various components in the greater environment, are generally well-establised, given financial and human-resource limitations. The outreach programmes, operating under several constraints, cater to the target community in terms of skill acquestion and development, retooling, retraining, preservice training, midservice training and hands-on training. Yet, the institutions' initiatives in the field of research, documentation and publication - dealing with such areas as organization/management development, policy, planning, information processing, human resources, materials control, finance, budgeting, marketing, accounting, production, operations, programme, project, innovations, evaluation and measurement - are as yet rare or nonexistant.

The entire training initiative seems to fall short of societal needs. It appears that training exists and operates somewhat in isolation from the development process. It seems that the training institutions are uncomfortable with either in-house or external evaluation. Perhaps, there is the concern that negative evaluations might put the institutions and their programmes in a less favourable light. There might be other concerns - the finding that training is not achieving

what it was designed to do - which could be discouraging and a setback to institutional funding and expansion. Such considerations seem to stand in the way of evaluation, disabling the institutions to learn from criticism, disappointment and failure and holding people back in development activities.

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