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TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS IN MANAGERIAL AND SUPERVISORY TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Trudy Knox
and
Betty Yantis

The continuing interest in the development of not only managers, but all levels of employees, is found in both the classic work of Henry¹ and the current theories of Mills.² Mills' "R. O. I." thesis reflects the continuing investigation of new methods and techniques for the modification of attitudes and behavior patterns of the entire work force.

The basic premise of the management development program described below was that changes in the attitudes and behavior patterns of individual managers and supervisors would precipitate changes in the total work situation. When the superior changes his attitude and behavior, subordinates respond to the changes in him. The program was designed using Transactional Analysis theory as a vehicle for understanding and changing individual attitudes and behavior patterns and for improving interpersonal communication.

One of the most frequent criticisms of the various types of managerial and supervisory development programs is that there is no "scientific" way to evaluate the results of the programs.³ If an individual's realization that he can be in charge of his feelings, attitudes, and behavior is accepted as a positive or beneficial result of a management development program, the Rotter Internal-External Scale, or I-E Scale, can be used as an objective evaluative instrument.

Internal-External Locus Of Control

Rotter defines the internal-external locus of control:

Some persons are confident that they control their destinies. They are internals. Other persons feel that their fates are in the hands of powerful others, that they are pawns. . . They are externals.⁴

Internal-external is not one or the other, but rather a matter of degree, a continuum.

A review of the literature on research using the I-E Scale as the measure of internal control indicates that internals seem to

have certain advantages in life. These include being more disposed to seek information and take action, a higher level of education and more wealth.

Rotter summarizes the internal characteristics:

A series of studies provide strong support for the hypotheses that the individual who has a strong belief that he can control his own destiny is likely to (a) be more alert to those aspects of the environment which provide useful information for his behavior; (b) take steps to improve his environmental conditions; (c) place greater value on skill or achievement reinforcements and be generally more concerned with his ability, particularly his failures; and (d) be resistive to subtle attempts to influence him.⁵

Other concepts of interest that Rotter summarizes in his **Monograph** include chance, powerlessness, alienation, and competence. Internals and externals many times tend to be opposites on any given characteristics.

Rotter noted an increase of externality between 1962 and 1971 on college campuses. He found that in 1962 about 80 percent of the college students tested had a score lower than 11. In 1971 he found that mean score to be 11, which is a shift toward externality. He sees a need for further study of methods to reverse this trend to externality.

If feelings of external control, alienation, and powerlessness continue to grow, we may be heading for a society of drop-outs — each person sitting back, watching the world go by.⁶

Related Research

MacDonald's study of the effects of three counseling methods that were directed to the thought that many externals might desire a change but would not try because of their belief that they were powerless reflects a different concept from widely held motivational concepts.⁷ MacDonald feels that motivation may have been seen as too important in personal change, although he feels most writers are in agreement that a motivated person can bring about personal changes. In the past, the unchanging person has been seen as unmotivated. MacDonald believes the external person may desire a change but not try because of his feelings of powerlessness.

The externals who finally make a decision to do something about the problem often anticipate failure, or at least that they will be ineffective in what they do to bring about changes. They tend to look to others to do something to, or for, them.

The need to make change agents available for those who want to use them is apparent. Many people reach a stage of despair as they find waiting for something good to happen does not bring about desired results. Eric Berne described this as "waiting for Santa Claus."⁸

The I-E Scale

Since the introduction of the I-E Scale by Rotter in 1966, over 300 journal articles had been listed by MacDonald and Throop and MacDonald to 1971.⁹ As this number has now reached more than 600, these studies reflect the extent of the research on the internal-external locus of control concepts and the measuring instrument, the I-E Scale.

The I-E Scale consists of a 29 item forced choice scale, including six non-scored filler items, and has a scored range of 0-23. The low scores are internal, the high scores are external. It is customary that the group taking the scale be divided at the mean or median, and those scores falling below the chosen measure of central tendency are considered internals, those above are externals.

Rotter points out:

A careful reading of the items will make it clear that the items deal with the subject's **belief** about the nature of the world. That is, they are concerned with the subject's expectations about how reinforcement is controlled. Consequently, the test is considered to be a measure of a generalized expectancy. Such a generalized expectancy may correlate with the value the subject places on internal control but none of the items is directly addressed to the preference for internal or external control.¹⁰

There are indications that the locus of control can be shifted by techniques that teach ways of mastering the control of one's feelings.

Program Structure

Bear Brand Hosiery, Inc., was the third largest manufacturer of women's hosiery in the nation in 1973. Administrative and sales offices were located in Chicago. All four production facilities were located in Northwest Arkansas.

The program was designed for all supervisors and managers from the four plants. The group was large for a management training program (two groups of 40 people) and very heterogeneous.

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The age range was from 22 to 76 years old. The levels of management represented ranged from first line supervisors through plant managers. Two company vice presidents attended some of the sessions. Years of service with the company ranged from one to forty years. Education levels represented ranged from grade school through graduate school. There was one woman in the group.

The training program began with an introductory dinner meeting attended by all supervisors and managers from the four plants in Northwest Arkansas. The basic objectives and structure of the program were presented at this meeting.

The Director of Personnel from the Fayetteville plant assigned individuals to two different groups for the training sessions. One group met on Tuesdays and the other on Thursdays. These smaller groups (approximately forty people in each group) met from 8:00 a. m. to 4:00 p. m. one day a week for four weeks during August, 1973. The Rotter Internal-External Scale was administered at the beginning of the first session, at the end of the final session and six months after the training program ended.

Theory And Techniques

The TA theory presented in the first sessions emphasized Eric Berne's concept of ego states. Definitions and examples of Parent, Adult and Child ego states were basic to all presentations. This was followed by discussions of transactions, strokes, rackets, time structuring, ways of solving problems, life scripts and redecisions. This basic theory served as the foundation for group interaction, discussion, and role playing in subsequent sessions.

Group members were encouraged to present problems encountered in their daily work situations. Advice and recommendations by the group leaders were avoided. The objective was to help the individual manager or supervisor learn to **apply** the theories and techniques presented by the group leaders. The individual was encouraged to analyze his own problems and formulate his own solutions using the theory and techniques he had learned.

This type of training program would not exclude the possibility that other methods would also be effective as change agents.¹¹ TA was chosen because it has been found to be a versatile tool, easily understood and easily adaptable to large heterogeneous groups.

Change In Locus Of Control

The hypothesis was that managers and supervisors who participated in the training program based on Transactional Analysis theory would shift their loci of control towards internal on the Rotter I-E Scale. Such a shift would indicate that they believed themselves to be more in charge of their own feelings, attitudes and behavior.

The results of the dependent t test of the pre-training and post-training mean scores of the Tuesday group, the Thursday group and the combined groups are summarized in Table 1.

TABLE 1
Means, Standard Deviations and t Values
of the I-E Scale for Bear Brand, Inc.,
Managers and Supervisors

Group	N	Pre-training		Post-training		t value	P
		M	SD	M	SD		
Tuesday	37	5.5676	2.6723	4.1622	2.9862	-3.2642	0.0014
Thursday	40	5.9500	3.2181	4.325	2.664	-3.9105	0.0003
Combined	77	5.7552	2.9554	4.2468	2.8058	-5.1111	0

The results of the dependent t test show the shifts of the respective means toward internality to be significant (1.4054 for the Tuesday group, 1.625 for the Thursday group and 1.5194 for the combined groups). Individual pre-training scores in the Tuesday group ranged from 0 to 13 and from 0 to 12 in the Thursday group. For the combined group 61.0 percent of the individual scores shifted toward internality, 19.5 percent shifted toward externality and 19.5 percent remained unchanged.

It should be noted that the pre-training mean scores for the groups tended more toward the internal end of the I-E Scale than most groups reported in the literature. This is to be expected for persons who are at the manager-supervisor level in an organization. Knox found a pre-training mean score of 7.25 for a group of Economic Opportunity Agency family planners and community organizers in Washington County, Arkansas, 7.92 for a group of Business Administration graduate students at the University of Arkansas, and 9.12 for a group of counselors at the Ohio State University.¹² Other mean scores on the I-E Scale for samples of several populations are included in Rotter's Monograph.¹³

Duration of Change

Another question that is frequently raised about management training programs concerns the duration of the change that might occur during the program. A follow-up administration of the I-E Scale to 58 of the original 77 participants was done approximately six months after the end of the training program (February 1, 1974). These scores were then compared with the pre-training scores (August 2, 1973) and the post training scores (August 23, 1973). The objective was to investigate the residual effects of the training program. Did the program have any lasting impact on the participants?

It was hypothesized that the six months follow-up mean for the group would be equal to or less than the post-training mean if the training program had had a lasting effect on the participants. The comparisons of these means were rendered less meaningful because it was not possible to include all of the original participants in the six months follow-up tests. Production cutbacks during the fall had resulted in transfers and resignations.

A dependent *t* test (*t* test for means of related samples) was again used to analyze the data. The results are shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2
Means, Standard Deviations and *t* Values
of the I-E Scale for Bear Brand, Inc.,
Managers and Supervisors*

MEAN	SD	MEAN	SD	<i>t</i> value	P
Pre-training		Six month follow-up			
5.586	2.766	4.155	3.318	3.349	0.0007
Post-training		Six month follow-up			
4.069	2.925	4.155	3.318	0.217	0.4118

* N=58

When the post-training and six months follow-up means for the group composed of the 58 participants who were available to take the test the third time are compared, a slight shift toward externality (4.069 to 4.155) is noted. This change is not statistically significant. When the six month follow up mean (N=58) is compared with the mean of the original group (N=77), a slight shift toward internality is observed (4.2468 to 4.155); however, the difference in N renders this meaningless.

It would be fallacious to draw any firm conclusions from these results because of the uncontrolled intervening variables in the six month time period. The previously mentioned cutback in production necessitated a reduction in the work force and some reorganization of the remaining employees. According to one of the Personnel Directors, a climate of "anxiety and fear" developed throughout the organization. The conclusion might be drawn that it is significant that the six months follow-up mean did not shift significantly toward externality amid this climate of anxiety and uncertainty, since these production developments were, in effect, beyond the control of any of the participants in the training program. Such a conclusion could not be justified in the absence of control groups. . . which for this situation was not possible.

It is recognized by the authors that "hard" conclusions in this area would require much more tightly structured research design. It is also recognized that this type of research requires the interest and cooperation of the company **paying** for the training program. In the absence of this concern and cooperation of the company, highly structured research is at best very difficult — if not impossible. The authors are convinced, however, that much can be learned from this kind of interface between the "real world" of business and industry and the "theoretical world" of academia.

This type of training may have further significance. Few people would deny that the overwhelming majority of the graduates of business administration colleges for the past decade have been exposed to a complete array of leadership and management theories. Why then does popular and professional literature continue to document the discontent of the American workforce and decry the lack of effective leadership and management in American businesses?

Perhaps it is not knowledge that is lacking. Perhaps it is not even the multi-constraints of the hierarchy, about which so much has been written, that prevents the adoption by business of modern management theories and techniques. Perhaps it is the personal inability of individuals to implement these theories and techniques — a lack of autonomy. If this should be true, then management development consultants and business administration faculties may need to critically review the emphasis and direction of the education and training they are offering. It is possible that more emphasis should be placed on helping the individual to better understand himself and become more in charge of his own feelings, attitudes and actions and less emphasis on reviews of management/leadership theories.

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