COURSE: RECRUITMENT, TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

LECTURE 7: ASSESEMENT OF TRAINING NEEDS

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Lecture learning outcomes:

At the end of the lecture you will be able to:

i. **Discuss the need for training needs assessment.**
ii. **Evaluate the importance of training need assessments**

ASSESEMENT OF TRAINING NEEDS

Training need exists when there is a gap between the present performance of an employee or group of employees, and the desired performance. Growing business performance is a journey, not an end. The success of business operations depends upon the ups and downs of the employee performances. Hence, the HR managers should look for methods to boost the performance and efficiency of its workforce to carry out the work today, and to train them for meeting tomorrow's goals. Training programmes were developed many years ago, but now-a-days, it has become a crucial factor in companies with certain objectives in mind. Training and development practices should boost up performance and develop the skills, knowledge and expertise of the employees.

Needs assessment refers to the process used to determine whether training is necessary. Needs assessment typically involves organizational analysis, person analysis, and task analysis. An organizational analysis considers the context in which training will occur. That is, organizational analysis involves determining the appropriateness of training, given the company's business strategy, its resources available for training, and support by managers and peers for training activities.

Person analysis helps to identify who needs training. Person analysis involves

(1) determining whether performance deficiencies result from a lack of knowledge, skill, or ability (a training issue) or from a motivational or work-design problem,

(2) identifying who needs training

(3) determining employees' readiness for training.

Task analysis identifies the important tasks and knowledge, skills, and behaviors that need to be emphasized in training for employees to complete their tasks.

WHY IS NEEDS ASSESSMENT NECESSARY?

Needs assessment is the first step in the instructional design process, and if it is not properly conducted any one or more of the following situations could occur:

• Training may be incorrectly used as a solution to a performance problem (when the solution should deal with employee motivation, job design, or a better communication of performance expectations).

• Training programs may have the wrong content, objectives, or methods.

• Trainees may be sent to training programs for which they do not have the basic skills, prerequisite skills, or confidence needed to learn.

• Training will not deliver the expected learning, behavior change, or financial results that the company expects.

• Money will be spent on training programs that are unnecessary because they are unrelated to the company's business strategy.

The vital objective of training is to build-up right ability and capability in the labor force so that they can perform to meet the needs, wants and expected returns of the employers. The need for Training may generally arise for the following-

- To improve the efficiency of employees
- To reduce wastage of time and money
- To have quality output
- To bring down supervision
- To have preventive maintenance
- To achieve optimum performance
- To boost morale of employees
- To prepare workforce for future challenging work
- To reduce absenteeism
- To bring down the grievances
- To build career by personal growth

WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN NEEDS ASSESSMENT?

Because the goal of needs assessment is to determine whether a training need exists, who it exists for, and for what tasks training is needed, it is important to include managers, trainers, and employees in the needs assessment process. Traditionally, only trainers were concerned with the needs assessment process.

Analysing training needs

For training to be effective, it is important to not only discern the training needs of the individual/group but also how their needs fit the overall objectives of the organisation. Many organisations invest considerable resources in training and development but never really examine how training and development can most effectively promote organisational objectives, or how developmental activities should be altered in the light of business plans (Beardwell et al, 2001: 329).

When does the need for training arise?

- The installation of new equipment or techniques
- A change in working methods or products produced
- A realisation that performance is inadequate
- Labour shortage, necessitating the upgrading of some employees
- A desire to reduce the amount of scrap and to improve quality
- An increase in the number of accidents
- Promotion or transfer of individual employees.
- Ensures availability of necessary skills and there could be a pool of talent from which to promote from.

THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Organizational Analysis .Organizational analysis involves identifying whether training supports the company's strategic direction; whether managers, peers, and employees support training activity; and what training resources are available. Some combination of documentation, interviews, or focus groups of managers and individuals in the training function should be used to answer these questions.

Company's Strategic Direction . The strategic role of training influences the frequency and type of training and how the training function is organized in the company. In companies in which training is expected to contribute to the achievement of business strategies and goals, the amount of money allocated to training and the frequency of training will likely be higher than in companies in which training is done haphazardly or with no strategic intent in mind.

Support of Managers, Peers, and Employees for Training Activities .A number of studies have found that peer and manager support for training is critical, along with employee enthusiasm and motivation to attend training. The key factors for success are a positive attitude among peers, managers, and employees about participation in training activities; managers' and peers' willingness to provide information to trainees about how they can more effectively use knowledge, skill, or behaviors learned in training on the job; and opportunities for trainees to use training content in their jobs. If peers' and managers' attitudes and behaviors are not supportive, employees are not likely to apply training content to their jobs.

Training Resources. It is necessary to identify whether the company has the budget, time, and expertise for training. For example, if the company is installing computer-based manufacturing equipment in Training one of its plants, it has three possible strategies for dealing with the need to have computer literate employees. First, the company can decide that, given its staff expertise and budget, it can use internal consultants to train all affected employees. Second, the company may decide that it is more cost-effective to identify employees who are computer-literate by using tests and work samples. Employees who fail the test or perform below standards on the work sample can be reassigned to other jobs. Choosing this strategy suggests that the company has decided to devote resources to selection and placement rather than training. Third, because it lacks time or expertise, the company may decide to purchase training from a consultant.

Person Analysis .Person analysis helps to identify employees who need training, that is, whether employees' current performance or expected performance indicates a need for training. The need for training may result from the pressure, including performance problems, changes in the job, or use of new technology. Person analysis also helps determining employees' readiness for training. Readiness for training refers to whether

(1) employees have the personal characteristics (ability, attitudes, beliefs, and motivation) necessary to learn program content and apply it on the job

(2) the work environment will facilitate learning and not interfere with performance. This process includes evaluating person characteristics, input, output, consequences, and feedback. A major pressure point for training is poor or substandard performance. Poor performance is indicated by customer complaints, low performance ratings, or on-the-job incidents such as accidents and unsafe behavior. Another potential indicator of the need for training is if the job changes such that current levels of performance need to be improved or employees must be able to complete new tasks.

Task Analysis .Task analysis results in a description of work activities, including tasks performed by the employee and the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to complete the tasks. A job is a specific position requiring the completion of certain tasks. A task is the employee's work activity in a specific job. These tasks include replacing light bulbs, electrical outlets, and light switches. To complete tasks, employees must have specific levels of knowledge, skill, ability, and other considerations (KSAOs). Knowledge includes facts or procedures (e.g., the chemical properties of gold). Skill indicates competency in performing a task (e.g., negotiation skill, a skill in getting another person to agree to take a certain course of action). Ability includes the physical and mental capacities to perform a task (e.g., spatial ability, the ability to see the relationship between objects in physical space). Other refers to the conditions under which tasks are performed. These conditions include identifying the equipment and environment that the employee works in (e.g., the need to wear an oxygen mask, work in extremely hot conditions), time constraints for a task (e.g., deadlines), safety considerations, or performance standards.

Steps in a Task Analysis A task analysis involves four steps:

1. Select the job or jobs to be analyzed
2. . Develop a preliminary list of tasks performed on the job by (1) interviewing and observing expert employees and their managers talking with others who have performed a task analysis.

3. Validate or confirm the preliminary list of tasks. This step involves having a group of SMEs (job incumbents, managers, etc.) answer in a meeting or on a written survey several questions regarding the tasks. The types of questions that may be asked include the following: How frequently is the task performed? How much time is spent performing each task? How important or critical is the task for successful performance of the job? How difficult is the task to learn? Is performance of the task expected of entry-level employees? Tasks that are important, frequently performed, and of moderate-to-high level of difficulty are tasks for which training should be provided. Tasks that are not important and are infrequently performed should not involve training. It is difficult for managers and trainers to decide if tasks that are important but are performed infrequently and require minimal difficulty should be included in training. Managers and trainers must determine whether or not important tasks—regardless of how frequently they are performed or their level of difficulty—will be included in training.

4. Once the tasks have been identified, it is important to identify the knowledge, skills, or abilities necessary to successfully perform each task. This information can be collected through interviews and questionnaires. Recall this chapter's discussion of how ability influences learning. Information concerning basic skill and cognitive ability requirements is critical for determining if certain levels of knowledge, skills, and abilities will be prerequisites for entrance to the training program (or job) or if supplementary training in underlying skills is needed. For training purposes, information concerning how difficult it is to learn the knowledge, skill, or ability is important—as is whether the knowledge, skill, or ability is expected to be acquired by the employee before taking the job.

TRAINING NEED ASSESEMENT

A TNA is the systematic investigation of training needs within an organisation. It is part of a process which integrates training with the business or development plans of an organization.

Why do a Training Needs Analysis?

A TNA provides information on the training and skills development requirements of all members of your network. It is one of the key steps in preparing a training plan and provides information on which to base training plan. It enables to:

- Identify the gap between current and required levels of knowledge, skills and aptitude
- Identify what the general content of training should be
- Form the foundation of a training plan
- Provide a baseline for the evaluation of a training plan
- Ensure that appropriate and relevant training is delivered
- Maximise use of scarce resource

A training need is a shortage of skills or abilities, which could be reduced or eliminated by means of training and development. Training needs hinder employees in the fulfilment of their job responsibilities or prevent an organisation from achieving its objectives. They may be caused by a lack of skills, knowledge or understanding, or arise from a change in the workplace. Training needs analysis identifies training needs at employee, departmental or organisational level in order to help the organisation to perform effectively.

The aim of training needs analysis is to ensure that training addresses existing problems, is tailored to organisational objectives, and is delivered in an effective and cost-efficient manner.

Training needs analysis involves:

• monitoring current performance using techniques such as observation, interviews and questionnaires

• Anticipating future shortfalls or problems

• Identifying the type and level of training required and analysing how this can best be provided.

TNA adds considerable value to outcomes and is a useful tool in terms of achieving member commitment to the network and its aims and objectives.

SCOPE OF NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Time constraints can limit the length and detail obtained from a needs assessment. However, even if managers demand a training course right now, needs assessment should still be conducted. There are several ways to conduct a rapid needs assessment. A rapid needs assessment refers to a needs assessment that is done quickly and accurately, but without sacrificing the quality of the process or the outcomes. There are several ways to conduct a rapid needs assessment. First, the scope of needs assessment depends on the size of the potential pressure point. If the pressure point seems to be local and has a potentially small impact on the business, then the information-gathering part of needs assessment could consist of only a few interviews with managers or job incumbents. If the pressure point will have a large impact on the business, then more information gathering should be conducted. If, after interviewing SMEs and job incumbents, you can tell that you are not learning anything new about the job, then interviewing could be stopped. Second, consider using already available data collected for other purposes. For example, error data, sales data, customer complaints, and exit interviews might provide valuable clues as to the source of performance problems. The Web may be a useful source for quickly conducting interviews with SMEs in different locations. Finally, if you are attuned to the business problems, technological developments, and other issues facing the organization, you will be able to anticipate training needs. For example, if the company is opening sales offices in an international location and introducing new technology in the manufacturing plants, cross-cultural training and training designed to help employees use the new technology undoubtedly will be needed. Be prepared by understanding the business.

BENEFITS OF A TRAINING NEEDS ANALYSIS

- Identifies performance goals and the knowledge, skills and abilities needed by a company‟s workforce to achieve those goals
- Identifies gaps in training provision in sectors and or regions
- Helps direct resources to areas of greatest priority
- Addresses resources needed to fulfil the organisational mission,
- Improve productivity, and provide quality products and services
- Improved profitability,
- lower staffing costs,
- Production improvements and staff development.

The focus should be placed on the collective needs identified by member companies that add value and impact to their competitiveness while also developing the employability of the workforce. A good TNA will address some of the following questions:

• What are the current external factors affecting how the companies in the sector/region operate (political, economic, social and technological concerns)?

• What are the most important competitive issues facing the member companies?

• How will training impact on the productivity, competitiveness and long term sustainability of member companies?

• What level and type of training are member companies currently participating in? • What are the specific training needs in each company?

• What are member companies‟ average annual training budgets?

• Does the company have a dedicated training manager/ HR function?

• Who is the target participant group/s?

• Which training programmes should be given priority?

• How important member companies think certified training is in the sector/region? • What length of courses should be offered – how much time will staff be released for?

• What method/s of delivery should be used (classroom based/onsite location; online; project based; recognition of prior learning)? The TNA would provide answers to the following for each company:

• What is the problem? Is it a training problem? (Training is not always the solution) • What are the key roles/areas in the company?

• What are the key skills linked with each of these roles/areas?

• What are the key skills gaps? • How many people need to be trained?

• What is the time frame/critical milestone dates? • What is the best time of the day to release staff?

• Does the company need additional trainers support for some learners?

Care should be taken when conducting the TNA to ensure that as wide an input as possible from the member companies is secured. Consideration should be given, where appropriate, to capturing the views of different company stakeholders (e.g. the owners, employees, training managers etc).

What are the key steps in conducting an effective Training Needs Analysis for training networks?

Planning is integral to a successful TNA and it is important to ensure that a consistent approach is followed when liaising with all potential members of the network. Before you start:

- Prepare thoroughly
- Follow a structured methodology
- Link training needs with the objectives of the network
- Gain commitment from members to participate in the TNA
- Communicate with all those involved
- Ensure you have the skills to conduct the TNA (analytical and communication)
- Collate the results gathered
- Prioritise the identified training needs and group them into training categories

FIVE STEPS OF TRAINING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Step 1: Identify problem and needs

The first step in TNA is to identify problems and needs. Before TNA is conducted, it should be probed whether training is needed. After identifying problems and needs, set up overall objectives for a training course

Step 2: Determine design of needs analysis

The second step in TNA is to determine the following: i) target groups to be trained; ii) interviewees; iii) survey methods; iv) survey plan including schedule to be conducted TNA and persons in charge of TNA. Those items become the basis for a training course designer to either create a new training course, identify an existing one that can fulfill the need, or obtain one externally.

Step 3: Collect data.

The third step in TNA is to collect data through: i) reviewing documents on existing training (secondary data and information); and ii) conducting survey including interviews and observation at work. It is important to collect and review secondary data and information prior to conducting interview surveys.

The following five steps are to be taken in conducting a group discussion: i) orientation on objectives and contents of the survey for interviewees; ii) explaining questionnaires (individual survey); iii) conducting a group discussion with a guide question; iv) wrapping up the interview; and vi) modifying methods, process and questionnaires if needed. A proto-typed cycle of conducting a group discussion is shown the figure below. However, this cycle and process can be modified according to a survey plan.

Step 4-Analyze data using various methods

Step 5-Provide feedback of the findings

COLLECTING INFORMATION FOR A TRAINING NEEDS ANALYSIS

There are various methods to collect information for TNA which can be utilised individually or in combination with each other. It is advisable to use more than one method to get a comprehensive overview of the needs of the sector/region.

1. **Surveys-** Surveys have advantages and disadvantages and TNAs based solely on these could be questionable. Surveys are beneficial because many people can be polled in a short period of time. They can be easily analysed and be quite cheap to administer. Surveys can provide first level data which can then be explored deeper with focus groups. Surveys should take the form of a questionnaire and should include close-ended or openended questions, or a series of both. Close-ended questions require the respondent stay within certain parameters set by the person who created the survey. As the answers are limited, tabulating the data is quite simple. Open-ended questions allow the respondent to provide more feedback and introduce new ideas that may not have been considered initially, although tallying the results may be more difficult. A good option during the creation of a survey would be to include a combination of both close-ended and open-ended questions.
2. **Focus Groups** -Focus groups allow for small group interaction, allowing the network to uncover details about their target audience and their requirements. Brainstorming is encouraged allowing for an exchange of new ideas and what training may be needed. **Focus Groups** -Focus groups allow for small group interaction, allowing the network to uncover details about their target audience and their requirements • Business challenges faced by members and sector/region

- Company training needs and skills deficiencies
- Common training and development needs
- Current training approaches and providers
- Review of what types of training work best for this target group/sector
- Gaps in current training provision either locally or at all

• Identify new training the network could develop

• Members view of certified training and willingness to participate

• Any regulatory requirements for training or changes in this arena

Utilise the focus group to:

• Review what training needs identified are to be prioritised

• Identify the most suitable methods of delivery (classroom, online, blended etc.)

• Assess what resources are available within network e.g. training venues, training materials, training facilities, online forums to share learning materials etc.

3. **Interviews** must be conducted in a consistent manner and be conducted with precision and accuracy. A comparison should be made of what employees are currently doing and what will be expected as the company continues to grow diversify and/or expand/downsize.

Individual Interviews

These can be an efficient, flexible and rewarding way of gathering information on each member company. Interviews must be conducted in a consistent manner and be conducted with precision and accuracy. A comparison should be made of what employees are currently doing and what will be expected of them as the company continues to grow diversify and/or expand/downsize. Follow an agreed interview format with each company to ensure a common approach and for ease of collation and subsequent analysis.

4. **Reviewing Existing Documents**

This involves researching and noting what is going on – „getting the feel" of the needs of the sector/region. This may include reviews of sector specific reports, national plans, reviews of member company business plans or policy statements

5. **Discussions with relevant Stakeholders**

A number of key stakeholders should be consulted where appropriate.

Meetings with Steering Group .These meetings shall be vital in determining the strategy employed in conducting TNA, in determining the core objectives of the network and ensuring that the TNA captures as much information as possible. Steering Group meetings also play a key role in reviewing the results of the TNA and determining what training needs will be prioritised and presented in the Training Plan.

Discussions with relevant Bodies. It is often beneficial to consult with professional bodies of the particular sector who have a high level view of the needs and upcoming skills deficits of that sector.

Discussions with stakeholders operating in employment services. As part of Skillnets" commitment to the jobs challenge, free training places for jobseekers are provided via the Skillnets networks. This allows job-seekers to up-skill in skills that are currently demanded by industry and enables them to network with companies. As a new applicant it is important that the proposed network has considered the training needs of job-seekers in the chosen sector/region and how they may fit with the training needs of the member companies identified during the TNA.

References

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