

EMPLOYEES PERCEPTION ABOUT THE TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Today in this competitive world training and development programme has become as an important part for the growth of the organization and employees as well. Training programme helps the employees in gaining job related knowledge and skills. This helps the individuals in improving their work performance and productivity. Industry is changing continuously in order to survive. The change involves the manufacturing process, business environment and making the technological advancement etc. As the demands of the products and services are increasing, the workforce should be well trained in order to meet the market competition. Employees' skills and ability decides the productivity and future of any organization. Employees will have different perceptions about their training programme. Some employee will consider this training programme as a major part of their career for learning the knowledge and skill. This will help them in their career advancement like higher pay off, promotions and other incentives. It may also happen that employee may take this training programme lightly. This study is intended to evaluate the perception of employees on their training and development programme. For this a qualitative study was used among the employees. Unstructured questionnaire was prepared and the interview was conducted among the participants. The findings reveal many of the significant facts pertaining to how employees perceive the training & developmental initiatives of the organization. These findings have been discussed in detail and the article ends with suggesting the future directions for research.

Keywords: *Organizational Benefits, Perception of Employees, Training & Development.*

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INTRODUCTION

Today as the global competition is increasing significantly, every organization needs to be active and growth oriented. Training and development is becoming more important for any organization. Irrespective of the size of the organization, they need to have well trained and skilled people to perform various activities. Training and development is the only ways to keep them updated and improve their skills about their job. If the current employee meets the requirement of the work, then in that case training is not important, but if it is not the case then, it is necessary to raise the skills and talents of the employee by giving them required and appropriate training.

After the recruitment process, the challenge before any organization is to train their employee in order to raise their skills and abilities. For this purpose organization invests lots of money in training and development process. They hope of getting profitable return on investment. Learners will have different opinions about their training and development programme. For some of them training will be waste of valuable time while for others, it will be helpful in improving the individual skills and knowledge. Interest of the learners in training programme is important because without their interest organization cannot get anything out of them. Many learners find their training programme interesting and relevant to their job but some of them could be dissatisfied. They will have their own different views like trainer would not be able to make the programme interesting or he would not be able to clarify the doubts of the individuals. It may also possible that some employee wants to do training programme because it will help them to improve their skills and knowledge, while for others this training means higher pay off.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Training and development programme is important for both individual employees and for organization. There are various models of training and development. According to the researchers it is difficult to measure the benefits of the training. Training analysts believe that the effectively planned and executed training programme helps in potential short term and long term benefits of the employee as well as organization.

For individuals, potential short-term benefits of successful training and development activities include being able to perform current tasks well, acquiring new knowledge and skills to use on the job immediately, increasing motivation and stimulation, commanding a higher salary, and enjoying other incentives such as greater promotion opportunities (Buckley

and Caple, 1990; Sibthorpe, 1994; Cascio, 1994). Training programme helps the employee to prepare him for the job. The success of training programme depends on the perception of employee. If he finds the training programme interesting which will help him to perform his task effectively then he will try to get maximum knowledge from that programme. Whatever knowledge and skills he acquires he will try to use it on his job. So these will help the employee in getting promotions and other short term benefits.

Potential short-term organizational benefits that derive from employees learning of new skills include improved employee performance, greater productivity, lower turnover, less absenteeism, and greater client satisfaction (Lynch and Black, 1996; Hale and Westgaard, 1995; Buckley and Caple, 1990). When employee's participation and interest is increased in training programme then it will help them to gain knowledge and skills. Which will result in better employee performance and will help to enhance the productivity of the organization. Employees will take interest in their jobs due to increased knowledge and skills. And so there will be less absenteeism in the organization. Many studies have shown the short term benefits in terms of productivity and dollars. For example employer training programme increases worker productivity by about 16 percent (Lynch and Black, 1996). Another example is of Sandia National Laboratories, who carefully documented and evaluated one training course, realized a \$200 return for every dollar spent on their training investment (Hale and Westgaard, 1995). These two examples show that the training programme helps to improve the employee performance and productivity which is the potential short term benefits for the organization.

The organization also benefits when training content moves away from the immediacy of individual skills building and includes training and development activities that enable employees to solve organizational problems (Buckley and Caple, 1990). Training programme helps the individuals to gain knowledge and skills to prepare them for their jobs. These programmes help the individuals in achieving their short term goals like getting promotions etc. If the employee shows real interest in training programme then he will think beyond the individual interest. He will try to improve his abilities which will not only help in his individual job but also it will help him to solve the organizational problems. Employees have got different perception about their training programmes. Some of them think that the training programme is only for the individuals which help them to get better pay offs. They don't think about the organization benefits. While some other employees think that the training

programme is both for the development for the individuals and also for the organization. Training programme helps to motivate the employees towards their job. It is not the case that all the employees get motivated. There will be some employees who will look after only for their individual interest, ignoring the organizational benefits.

Training and development with a long-term perspective can “improve the individual’s ability to identify, plan, implement, and/or monitor changes the organization needs to make” (Cascio, 1994, p.13). As the organizations are focusing on long term benefits of the training programme which will help in achieving the organizational objectives, so to make the organization more competitive. It is important to find out the potential employees who will undergo training programme. Because the organization spends lots of money for the training programme. The outcome of the training programme should be such that which will benefit the organization. So such employees should be found out who has got the potential to undergo the training effectively and give better results to the organization for its future growth. Selection of right employee for training programme is important in order to avoid the waste of money and time for inappropriate employee. Training and development can also equip individuals with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they need to think strategically and implement long-term organizational strategy (Rothwell and Kazanas, 1994). If the employee has got the dedication towards his organization then the training programme given to him might work towards the organizational long term strategy. He will try to implement his ideas and skills for the growth of the organization or else training programme will go into vain. It all depends on the perception of the employee how he uses the training programme, whether he uses it for his individual growth, organizational growth or this might be the wastage of time.

Many training practitioners view another major long-term benefit to organizations of effective training and development systems as being a vehicle for managing the rapid change that all organizations are facing (Casio, 1994; Buckley and Caple, 1990; Fricker, 1994). Some of the major changes organizations are facing now and into the future: skill obsolescence, technologically sophisticated systems, shift from manufacturing to service based economy, increased influence from international markets (Goldstein and Gilliam, 1994). In this world as the business competition is increasing everyone wants to be ahead of others. In order to do so today each organization is making continuously change to become competitive. Organizations are making technological advancement, going through functional

changes etc. so the training programme can be the major element in dealing with these types of different changes.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted in this study is a qualitative approach wherein it was decided to collect detailed personal narratives from participants. This approach relies on what Maxwell has identified as the major strengths of qualitative research; its capacity to examine (1) the meaning for participants of the events, situations and actions in which they are involved, (2) the particular context within which participants act and how the context influences their actions, (3) unanticipated phenomena and influences, which emerge spontaneously in open-ended interviews in ways that cannot in structured surveys, (4) the process by which events and actions take place and (5) complex causal relationships (Maxwell, 1996). Narratives provide the context and detail, revealing the chronology and interaction of events that are helpful in shaping the professional lives. In order to find out the perception of employees on their training programme a qualitative study was conducted. Sixty-five employees were asked to participate, they were asked to form a representative sample within the organisation. Sixty-three of these 45 employees agreed to be interviewed. Of them, only 30 were available for interviews during the necessary time period (others were not available due to their other commitments).

The interviews were conducted over the phone, employing a semi-structured interview protocol (Chilcott, 1987; Fetterman, 1990; Maxwell, 1996; Merriam, 1998, 2002). Respondents were asked to describe their experience in the organisation and any significant factors or critical incidents that affected their experience while receiving the training. They were encouraged to tell their own "stories" in their own style. Letters of invitation were sent to 65 employees, followed by a phone call or e-mail message, and finally 30 agreed to be interviewed. Each participant was interviewed for around 30-40 minutes. The responses were not audiotaped. Although it was thought to be done so, the organisation's HR department advised us not to record the interviews. because of their own reasons. Followed by the interview, each respondent was allocated a number derived from the order of the interviews and was identified by that number, and not by name on all of the paperwork and coding sheets. No identifying information, not even the respondent's department, was used anywhere during the analysis.

To find out the employees perception about their training programme a survey was conducted among the employees. Unstructured questionnaire was prepared having questions related to their training programme. The participants for this survey were chosen randomly. Sample size for this study was around 30. Each participant was interviewed for around 30-40 minutes. This interview was open ended. They were asked simple questions about their opinions and views for training programme. Participants were asked to describe their experiences and feelings. Unlike coding in quantitative research, in which a pre-established set of categories are applied to the data, the goal of the coding was to rear-range the qualitative data based on categories that emerged from participant's narratives (Maxwell, 1996). As a result, the coding is firmly rooted in the data. Later on each interview was coded to identify the common issues. It is obvious that each employee will be having his own opinion and experience about their training programme. Some of the employees will be satisfied with his training programme. They will be having their own positive opinions and views. Like they might think that these programmes are going to help them for their individual growth as well as for the growth of the organization. While some other employees will be having dissatisfaction for their training programme.

The study is not without certain limitations. As this is a qualitative study with less number of samples the narratives of employees reflect a kind of aloofness from their experiences in the organization that may not characterise the narratives of all the employees on roll. An employee might have explained his perceptions on training and developmental aspects in slightly different terms at the time of the interview than he would have at some other time did in an informal discussion with some other colleagues. Another limitation to the methodology was that the interviews were not audiotaped. This resulted in an inability to collect all direct quotes from participants. However, an unexpected advantage of this is that because the participants knew that they were not being audiotaped told their stories with surprising, and frankness. Time and monetary constraints also limited the scope of this study. In many cases, respondents corrected details of the narrative when re-read the notes over the telephone. This has helped to maximize accuracy.

The first question asked was whether your training programme meets the needs of the employee. Participants had different opinions on it. Some participants said that the training programme helps them to prepare for their job. According to them this programme is relevant to their needs. They were excited about their training programme. For them it was real time

opportunity to gain knowledge and skills. They told that if company will provide another training programme then definitely they will voluntarily participate on it. There were some participants who were not fully satisfied with the training programme. They had some opinions like they should change the format of the training programme. According to them on the job site training is better than the classroom training. They think that classroom training is waste of time; it is better to learn while working which is relevant to their job profile.

The response gathered from the previous questions formed a foundation to probe on nature of the training programme in terms of its being simple to understand and follow. As it sounds like a very simple and basic question, it is important in evaluating the success of the training programme. The training programme should be simple such that each participant could follow it easily. Without the understanding of the employee, training programme has got no meaning. When participants were asked about it during interview then many of them answered that the training programme was simple to follow and understand. Some of them faced problems in understanding but doubts were being cleared by the trainer. There were few participants who told that it was difficult to understand. It may be because of their lack of attention or interest in the programme.

The participants were further directed to opine on the trainers' response in terms of whether he listens to and responds to their concerns and queries. Generally in the training programmes we see that if participant does not feel comfortable with the trainer then he avoids asking question related to his doubts. He feels like by asking this question what the trainer will think about him. So it depends on the trainer like how he interacts with the participants. Whether he makes the training environment friendly for the interaction or he takes the class strictly. If the trainer clears the doubt of the participant easily and encourages them to ask their questions then participants will feel like interacting with the trainer. When participants were asked about this during interview then majority of them told that the trainer was friendly, and they were free to ask any doubts. Some interesting answers also came from them. Like one employee said that it is not the case with each trainer who comes for giving training programme. According to him during his training programme the trainer was very strict. This training officer was from the head office. Employees found it difficult to interact with that training officer. Similarly one employee has told that when training officer comes from some other organization then it becomes easy to interact with him.

It was also an inquisitiveness to find out whether the training programme generates an opportunity to learn the skills and behaviors that will help to get rewarded and promoted. According to the respondents training programme is the platform to obtain the knowledge and skills. This is required by the individuals to improve their work performance and increase the productivity. This will help them to get promotions and other incentives. When participants were being asked about this question then many of them were in confusion. According to them training programme gives the only knowledge about their job. It depends on the individual's ability as to how they make use of it. A very few of them said that if training programme could have helped them in getting promoted then everyone should have reached on the top position, but it is not the case. Only the talented people get promoted and rewarded because of their skills and abilities that they possess by them. While some participant to some extent agreed with the point that the training programme helps them to get rewarded and promoted.

It was also felt pertinent to raise another question on the impact of training on employees, in the sense whether the training programme was engaging and exciting. During the training session it might happen that the participants will get bored. In between the long session participants may lose interest. It depends on the trainer how he manages his training session. Training officer should make such kind of environment that will increase the interest of the individuals such that they will not feel tired of the long session. This session should be interactive so as to maximize the participation of the individuals. While asking about this question some of the employees were saying that the training session should not be long. Because the long session makes the training programme boring and dull. Participant starts losing interest in it. A few of them even told that the training programme was so boring that they are not going to attend any training programme unless it is made mandatory. It was not so with all the participants. Some participants appreciated the training programme saying that it was interesting and exciting.

Then the subsequent question asked was does your training programme provide learning that is practical for use on the job? According to the researchers if the employee finds out that their training programme learning is practical for use on the job then individuals take more interest in it. After knowing that these trainings are going to help them in their jobs then they take these programmes more seriously. While discussing these topics with the participants many of them agreed that the learning by training programme is relevant to the practical use

on the job. But they also told that there are some irrelevant topics that are covered in details that should be avoided because of there no use in their jobs.

It is also important to draw the participants' attention on the role being in question when it recommends its employees to undergo any training programme. Therefore, the intention in generating the responses was whether their organization continuously updates and improves their training and development programme. Today as the business environment is changing everyone wants to be more competitive. Organizations are going through the technological changes, functional changes etc. So the workforce should also be trained in such manner in order to cope with these changes. This will help them in their individual growth as well as organizational growth. During the interview participants told that the company makes continuous changes in their training programme as per the requirement. They told that the top management decides on the selection of the employee who would undergo which training programme. Sometimes organization also sends the some selected employee to get trained in other industries.

Any training programme that is aimed at equipping its employees need to provide the satisfaction at the end of it. Therefore, it was attempted to clarify from the respondents that are they satisfied with the range of training and development opportunities available to you. Participants had different opinions about this question. Few of the employees were satisfied by the training opportunities. According to them it helps them in their workplace. Some of them said that the training programme should not be made mandatory. While some employee said that they should be given the right to choose for the training programme in which they want to go. Some employee also showed some dissatisfaction on the selection of candidates for the training programme by the top management. According to them it was not clear on which basis they were selecting the candidates.

The final question was that, do you believe that the training and development programme are worth the time and money spent on them? This was felt to be important as the organisation spends lots of money on training programme, in order to increase the performance of the employee and the organizational productivity. Majority of the employees believe that the training given to them is worth the time and money spent on them. They think that the training provided to them is important in terms of their career development. Very few of them said that these training programmes are waste of money and time.

KEY FINDINGS

As the informal interview was conducted participants came up with their own feelings and views about their training programme. Unstructured questionnaire helped the participants to share the experiences and opinions of their training programme freely. Majority of the participants perceive that the training programme given to them meets the needs of the employees. They think that the training given to them is useful for their job. Whatever skills and knowledge they require for their current job are made available in their training programme. Very few participants responded that their training programme does not meet the needs of the employee. A very few exceptions were there like who were in dilemma, they were unable to answer this question.

Now we talk about the learning environment of the training programme. Majority of the participants believed that the training programme was simple to understand and follow. This simplicity of the training programme helped to increase the interest of the employee towards their training session. Few participants told that they were having difficulty in following the content of the training session. It might be possible that they didn't pay attention and so they missed some important concepts and because of that they were having difficulty in understanding. Or it might also be possible that the trainer was unable to clear the concept. Majority of the employee said that the trainers who came from other organization were friendly and made the training session interactive and comfortable. According to the participant they felt comfortable while asking their doubts and queries. When the training officers were form their own organization then it was not that case. Trainer was strict and the participants felt uncomfortable to interact and clear their doubts. Majority of the participants found that their training programme was not engaging and exciting.

According to the training analysts training and development programme gives employees an opportunity to learn the skills and behaviors that will help them to get rewarded and promoted. Here majority of the participants perceive that it is not that case because each employee undergoes some sort of training programme provided by the organization. Still everyone does not get promoted. According to them it depends on the individual skills and abilities. Not on only the training programme they undergo. Training programme helps to some extent but it is the individual ability which is important in getting the promotions and other rewards.

Now talking about the training and development activities majority of participants believe that the learning is practical for performing their jobs. According to them it is easy to implement the knowledge and skills on their job. Employees were satisfied with the range of training and development opportunities. Employees were happy that the organization continuously updates and improves its training and development programme. Thus overall majority of the participants were satisfied with their training programme. According to them the training and development programme met their requirement and expectations which would help them in achieving the individual and organizational goal.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Understanding how the issues discussed above affect employee's perception on training and development is a critical step in addressing certain underlying problems. However, it explains in itself the differences between employee's understandings. In conducting this study, major sources of discontent across the employee's was found. That led us to believe that the organisation in question is required to work rigidly to create a situation conducive to the organizational life. Perhaps most importantly, an alarming number of participants who were interviewed do not feel supported by their bosses and the organisation, which in turn prompts further research to better understand the extent and niceties of the problem. These numbers of participants are alarming and even shocking as by many measures of success these employees would be seen as productive and noteworthy players in their field. Undoubtedly, organizations are required to empower both the trainers and the employees i.e. the trainees to look for the support they need to be successful and satisfied, and then reassure that the support is really offered.

This study also advocates a qualitative approach to assessing the employee's perception on training and development. Though survey research can be conducted with the help of statistical techniques and structural modeling, the interview method permits the participants to identify, in their own words and chronology, the intricate set of factors that shaped their experiences at an organisation level. By conducting unstructured interviews first, it was possible to identify the issues that are unique to the population from which the sample was drawn. Having gathered these rich narratives, it is possible now develop an informed, organisation-specific survey to better understand the perception related intricacies of the employees.

The findings of this study show that there are various possibilities to increase the effectiveness of the training programme. Organization should identify the needs of the employee and encourage them to participate in training and development programme. Another thing is that the organization should choose the training officer in such a manner who could train the employee in a better way. Organization should take necessary steps in making awareness among the employees that the training and development programme helps the individuals in getting the future growth.

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