

Training under Changes in Public Sector – Eastern European Perspectives

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Keywords: Human Resource Management, Training, Training Needs Analysis, Public and Private Sectors

1 Introductions

The term 'training' is used in a broad sense whenever staff training is meant. In this context *training* refers to activities designed to teach high-level and qualified civil servant employees, to improve their knowledge, skills and behaviours used in performing their current work.

The basic training or learning life cycle is sometimes referred to the ADDE (Analysis-Design-Delivery-Evaluation) model.

The traditional notion of the training in public sector was based on organisational stability because public organisations were in fact rather static. Training was relatively straightforward and heavily skewed toward the beginning of employees' careers. Individuals were hired for specific jobs in many public sector organisations and were assumed to already possess all the skills that would be needed (Daley, 212). **The current notion guiding human resource development is to deploy personnel strategically, through not only initial training but also retraining and refocusing, and to change management style and organisation culture as well. Training and education are more evenly spread throughout the entire career of the public servant.**

2 Training and Learning Theories

Although different learning theories emphasis different aspects of learning and importance of the training as learning tool, they do not fundamentally disagree. For example:

- ❑ Behaviorism stresses the idea that learning is a behavioral change in response to external stimuli.
- ❑ Learning is therefore most effective when it is systematically arranged to reinforce the desired response.
- ❑ Social learning theory stresses the importance of observation and social context.

According to this theory, people learn most often from models provided in context and from mimicry. Cognitive learning theory emphasis putting together patterns in unique and meaningful ways. Finally, adult learning theory reminds educators and trainers of the adult learner's active curiosity, motivation for self-improvement, preference for practical problem solving, capacity for self-imposed learning management. Based on the previous described learning theories, the following seven fundamental training principles are formulated:

- ❑ Foster the participant's goal setting
- ❑ Increase the similarity of training to the work environment
- ❑ Use underlying principles
- ❑ Increase the organization of the material
- ❑ Actively involve the learner
- ❑ Give feedback
- ❑ Use a variety of techniques and stimuli.

While a very short training session might employ only a few basic training principles, longer programs should consciously try to use as many principles as possible. Few training programs suffer from employing too many principles; many programs suffer from overlying on too few. Training principles are operationalised by instructional method.

Most of the discussion so far has implicitly concentrated on learning basic and intermediate knowledge, skills, and abilities. This type of learning has always been important and will become even more important as the pace of change requires even more frequent replacement of knowledge and skill sets. However, organisations must increasingly foster advanced forms of learning using more sophisticated methods of transmitting, expanding, and creating knowledge. Advanced forms of learning (e.g. learning by sharing, nearing by comparing, learning by systems thinking, learning by competing and learning by suspending disbelief) are useful for solving totally new or complex problems, restructuring whole processes or systems, reanalysing a job from a completely new perspective or reengineering an organisation to adapt major environmental changes.

3 Training Needs Analysis

3.1 Training Needs Analysis (TNA)

A “training needs assessment”, or “training needs analysis”, is the method of determining if a training need exists and if it does, what training is required to fill the gap.

There are many factors to have influence on outcome of this assignment as follows:

- Vision and mission and strategy of civil service development within a public sector organization
- New legislation (e.g. accounting system, acquisition regulation, etc.)
- Introduction of new management systems
- The annual performance assessment in shaping the individual training needs.

The results of training needs analysis will highlight the subject matter needed to be covered during the training course. The knowledge, skills and behavioural competencies gained during the training will increase abilities and allow participants to perform their jobs at an acceptable level. By conducting training needs analysis the organisation can target the group of people that needs to be trained as well as hone in on what training exactly is required.

The purpose of conducting a training needs assessment is to prevent a quick fix approach to people development problems. The reasons for doing training needs assessment:

- To determine whether training is needed
- To determine causes of poor performance
- To determine content and scope of training
- To determine desired training outcomes
- To provide a basis of measurement
- To gain management support.

Needs assessment procedure of this particular assignment is a step procedure. Later it can be used as an ongoing process based on information from management and training participants. A wide array of specific TNA techniques is available for assessing training needs.

3.2 Problem Needs Identification

Before starting on a training needs analysis, it is desirable to carry out an audit of the current situation, desired changes in job or responsibility, and probable technological and organisational developments. This will provide the information needed to determine what is required of the individual, department and organisation.

Needs assessment can follow two distinctive approaches:

- ❑ *Management-centered needs assessment* approach helps merge the training program with organizational objectives as determined by the management. It brings management closer to the training program design and implementation.
- ❑ *Individual-centered needs assessment*, where such systems are used; it becomes imperative that the employee-provided information not be used or appears to be used in any judgmental decision (i.e. retention, dismissal, promotion or pay).

3.3 Organisation Needs Analysis

Organisation needs analysis can be conducted in numerous ways, and it is therefore up to organisation leaders and key people providing strategic guidance to make sure that the most effective training strategy is selected for the organisation.

Because the Organisation Needs Assessment is a time consuming activity, the checklist of questions can steer consultants and managers towards the most appropriate way of assessment.

3.4 Department Needs Analysis

The primary objectives are those objectives that the organisational entity is expected to achieve, and towards which the majority of efforts will be directed. The secondary objectives might be those that it would like to achieve or which are likely to naturally occur as a result of achieving the primary objectives.

Put simply, the primary objectives are those objectives that the business entity is expected to achieve, and towards which the majority of efforts will be directed. The secondary objectives might be those that it would like to achieve or which are likely to naturally occur as a result of achieving the primary objectives.

The knowledge, skill and behaviour required analysis is used to identify the most critical job requirements at department levels of a public sector organisation. These information can be collected by different ways as follows:

- This information can be collected during *managerial interviews* or through *questionnaires*, addressed to the department heads.
- The other variation for analyzing department needs can be the *development proposals for performance appraisal*. The outcomes of development needs proposals are collected by department heads and sent to training designing team of a public sector organization.

3.5 Individual Assessment

Needs analysis occurs not only at the organisational and department levels, but also at the individual levels. Methods for deciding who needs and receives training vary across public sector organisations. Some organisations have highly formalised systems, and others have very informal systems.

There are three primary players of the Individual Needs Assessment as follows:

- *HR and different departments* are most often key actors for performance appraisal and for setting training needs.
- *Supervisors* are generally key actors for the training stemming from performance appraisals and individual development plans (generally shared with employees).
 - Employees are themselves the key actors in determining their needs for compliance and mandated training in their positions.
 - Today most public service employees must be well versed in many areas and knowledge sets during working career, even if they remain within the same field, a circumstance that is becoming less common.

3.6 Training Objectives

Defining objectives for a training is a critical step in the whole development process. A training objective is the specific knowledge, skills, or attitudes that the trainees are to gain as a result of the training activity. An objective is usually measurable. By defining objectives in a measurable way, we describe a desired behaviour and it will later be able to offer better feedback. We have to be aware, though, that attitudinal goals are often not very measurable

There are several important points to note in the above-quoted learning objective:

- The training (learning) objective is *performance-based*
- The objective is *clear* and not subject to misinterpretations - the trainees know exactly what is expected of them and how they will be tested

- ❑ The training lesson is action-oriented "will be able to set" the method that guides the *learning process* and will demonstrate whether the lesson has been learned
- ❑ The end-result is observable and measurable.

4 Training and TNA in Different Countries of the World

4.1 Cranet HR Database

The total sample 2005 CRANET database comprises HR data of 7952 private companies and public institutions from 32 countries, several of which are outside Europe including 864 private companies and public institutions from six countries from Eastern Europe (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia). This data-base is considered as the biggest one to the policies and practices of organisations in the fields of staffing, employment and human resource management. **Based on this database, we review a few aspects of training and people development and TNA in private and public sectors.**

The proportion of public sector organisations in the database amounts 18% (155 institutions) in Eastern European sample and 25% (1900 institutions) among all surveyed participants.

Due to analysis of Cranet database, **the performance appraisal systems have an important role in determining training and human resource development needs.**

According to the data included in our analysis, ***internal training is the most widely used in both samples***, as nearly half of the employees take part in this kind of training programmes. In contrast, only a slightly more than one fifth of the employees participate in external training.

Finally, we were also able to form views of *training* and to determine how the potential *actors* can *influence* the various *phases* of training and to what extent:

- ❑ defining training needs,
- ❑ designing training activities
- ❑ and implementing training activities.

In general, we can establish that the *role of trade unions* in any phase of the training process is *negligible*. ***Line managers have the most influence on defining training needs, whereas the HR department has the primary***

responsibility for designing and implementing training activities. The differences between the samples in this area are not particularly marked, but as they are still typical, we present the specific values.

The *time spent with training* is an indicator that can reflect the importance of training very well. When we examine the *number of days spent with training* by staff categories, there is a notable difference between the practice of Eastern European organisations and that of the total sample. In Eastern Europe, the training provided for managers and professional employees is longer than that given to manual workers. Managers spend the most time with training, they are followed by professional and clerical employees, and finally, by manual workers. **Organisations' expenditures on training and development (T&D) are located in a band between 2-4% of annual payroll costs in most countries.** Central public sector institution spends 3,89% of annual payroll costs on training and development (T&D) in most countries. The local public sector spends less than their central counterparts. Their T&D expenditures amounts 2,89%.

Our analysis reveals that the role of line managers in defining training needs is the highest in both samples. The Eastern European respondents reported that HR departments and individuals exercise an equal influence on training needs. Based on the total sample it can be observed that the role of the individual in defining his/her training needs increases at the expense of the influence of the line manager.

The phase of *designing training* belongs to the field of competence of the *HR department* in both samples, but it has to be mentioned that the influence of line managers on this aspect of the training process is rather strong, too, especially in the Eastern European sample.

According to Eastern European respondents, the *implementation of training activities* belongs primarily to *the responsibility of the HR department*. When comparing the role of line managers of both samples in this phase of the training process, we can see that the ones in the total sample have the strongest influence.

4.2 EU Experiences

Among the EU-member states is widely accepted that the Civil Service is undergoing a process of continuous change. This change is being driven by external influences in the environment in which the service operates. These include the European Union integration process and an ever more complex European environment, the implications of globalisation and an economy largely based on external trade.

Change is also driven by the desire internally to provide a modern, effective and efficient quality customer service.

Government policy on decentralisation will present new challenges and require new responses in terms of the delivery of training and development, at a civil service level, at organisation level and at the level of the individual.

These factors will require creative and innovative responses to the training and development needs of individuals to allow them to excel in their roles. To achieve continuous improvement in performance, staff need to develop and enhance their knowledge, skills and behaviours.

The Performance Management System supports this process by identifying the core requirements of each role and planning the appropriate training response.

In civil service of the European Union (Demmke et al,2006) there are three different approaches of training needs as follows:

The centralised model means that all aspects of the TNA will be centrally done.

Within the decentralised model all aspects of the TNA will be done by the local, intermediary and central public organisations.

Most member states of the European Union follow the semi-decentralised approach where the strategy and the framework are centrally managed but the realisation of the TNA is de-centrally carried out.

Different experiences (IG, 2000) show that in the initial phase of different change initiatives, knowledge-based training predominated, but it is now accepted that training provision should concentrate on the skills and competencies (behaviours and abilities) required to undertake different change projects successfully.

Research suggests a number of skill requirements identified by public institutions generally within the developed economies of Europe, and predominantly these are the soft skills of team working, communication and so on. Within the EU-member states' public sector, skills that public employers have identified are multi-skills, communication (intra and inter) and IT skills. Many of these skills should be reasonably easily accessible through various existing training courses.

Since the importance of human resources has been acknowledged in the developed world, more and more private and public organisations make considerable efforts to improve the effectiveness of human resource management. It is widely believed that the *conventional* sources of effectiveness (including technology, access to financial resources, and economies of scale) are insufficient for maintaining a high service level in today's expectations of clients (e.g. citizens) (Pfeffer, 1994). **Many experts think that the human factor (knowledge, skills, and behaviour) is the key to sustaining long-term competitiveness in private business and high service levels in public institutions.**

In this environment, besides the traditional **knowledge-based IQ** the development of the increasingly popular **emotional intelligence EQ** (Goleman, 1998) and **inter-cultural intelligence CQ** (Ng.-Easrly,2006) are also required.

4.3 Needs of New Public Management (NPM)

The public sector, in the form regarded as conventional today, was established more than one hundred years ago – although its roots reach back hundreds of years, and, in the case of China, for example, thousands. A number of important theoretical and practical pillars form a background - such as Weber's bureaucracy model, or the social-class system of the United Kingdom. Weber has defined administration as instrument of state power and institution as well. The modern public sector developed in those countries which were industrialised in the second half of the 19th century, and, during this period it undertook its responsibilities (built on a bureaucratic regulatory function) basically in a formal and hierarchic way. This system valued both long-term service and relevant work experience very highly.

At the beginning of the 1980's and within the framework of the New Public Management – which basically involved emphasising business solutions and efficiency – comprehensive reform programs began to be introduced in several English-speaking countries (the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Australia, the United States of America and Canada). These efforts provided both a model and experience which are also valid in those European countries embarking on their transformation. The classic model of Public Administration “emphasised on the good use of procedural regulations as oppose the NPM focuses on result instead of procedures and reflects liberal economic strategies”. (Zarai, 2001).

In recent years effective public sector management has come to be regarded increasingly as something more than the modernisation of public institutions and the cost-reduction process in the public sector. Today, more and more attention is paid to issues such as establishing dynamic relations with civic society and the private sector, the improvement of service quality, increasing society's assumption of responsibilities, together with serious participation by citizens in decision-making and the expression of their views in terms of public service performance (UN, 2005; Welch-Nuzu, 2006)

Whilst the point of origin for NPM is a respect for business efficiency, the new model focuses on shaping a common value. The formation of a public service which might be termed “complying-optimising” is linked with the spread of the notion of responsive governance, which has regard for the demands of various stakeholders. This new value is facilitated by:

- these same various stakeholders,

- harmonious and constructive co-operation between public- and private sectors,
- the concept of the citizen as key customer,
- openness and transparency,
- normalizing the legal status of public servants and
- a customer-oriented character.

4.4 Eastern European Countries

During the past 17 years the breakneck speed of the rebirth of capitalism has brought eight countries, eight new EU member-states (the Czech Republic, the three Baltic states, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and also Hungary) – and two newly accessed EU member-states (Romania and Bulgaria) closer to the West than they have been in decades. There is no precedent in the world's history for such a rapid transformation from centralised state control and the national planned economy to free-market and globally competitive capitalism. By now the consequences of this difficult political and economic process have confronted the public service of these countries with the need for renewal, but the process seems to have begun as early as the time of the change of regime.

The general trend observed in HR in the nations of Eastern Europe can be summed up as “gradual Westernization.” Talented members of the work force are now recognised as constituting a competitive edge in both business and non-profit public organisations. Throughout the region, university graduates with up-to-date technical and managerial skills are in demand, with the former egalitarian pay structure giving way to sharper differentiation. **Besides know-how, the soft side of competence -communication and inter-personal skills- became more valuable.** In contrast, the role of bureaucracies and the power of trade unions have eroded, though by no means eradicated. Changes in labour laws and status Law of public servants have brought higher flexibility for both public servants, employees and employers as well (Carell et al., 2000; CRANET, 2006).

At the end of the 90's several modernisation programmes were also launched in many Eastern European countries, and most adjusted themselves to these New Public Management guidelines. In the language and basic principles of NPM a number of issues are emphasised, such as: focusing on customers, decentralisation, the separate preparation and realisation of guidelines and the employment of specific individual partners. In the transitional countries of Eastern Europe some regarded the enthusiastic popularisation of this model as another attempt to “colonise central and local administration with a unified Western approach”. However, others welcome the idea and are anxious to experience its promises and features.

4.5 Hungary

Training courses are mandatory in the Hungarian civil service. There is no difference now between different civil servants' ranking in defining the target groups. Typical training needs within the Hungarian civil service are driven by the following factors:

- ❑ Certification requirement with a civil service exam on executive and professional levels. Since 1993 the civil service certification program on executive level is available and the professional one was introduced in 1998.
- ❑ Since 1998 it is available as a 30 hour of post certification civil service training program. It is provided for such civil servants who successfully passed the basic exam for civil servants.
- ❑ New legislation (e.g. accounting system, acquisition regulation etc.);
- ❑ A minimum number of training days is not required but high and middle ranking civil servants have to make a civil servant examination every three year.
- ❑ Introduction of new management systems (e.g. ISO, CAF etc.)

Offers of different training providers

Due to objectives of the state reform program (Hungary, 2006b), it has established a National Civil Service HR and Educational Secretariat in the Prime Minister Office, managed by a secretary of state from 1st of January 2007. This central body is charged to coordinate all HR activities on central and local government levels. The National Civil Service HR and Educational Secretariat shall have the following major attributes:

- ❑ formulates the policies and strategies concerning the management of the civil servants
- ❑ drafts and proposes concerning public management methods and tools;
- ❑ drafts joint regulations, applicable to all public authorities and institutions, concerning quality management;
- ❑ drafts and elaborates the concept of the National Personal Service Center
- ❑ sets the criteria for the evaluation of the civil servants' activity;
- ❑ supervises civil servants' certification training program on professional and executive level.

4.6 Romania

Civil servants are entitled to continually improve their professional development. The public servants attending professional development courses shall receive their due pay if:

- a) the courses are held at the initiative or in the interest of the public authority or institution;
- b) the courses are attended at the initiative of the public servant and with approval from the manager of the public authority or institution;
- c) the courses are organized by the National Institute of Administration, by local continuing professional development centres of the local public administration in accordance with the law, or are organized by other similar domestic or foreign institutions.

In present, the training capacities cover approximately 22.000 participants/year, while the number of civil servants is approximately of 110.000, without taking into account the other categories of personnel from the public administration.

Training courses are mandatory in the Romanian public service, there is *no difference* now between different civil servant's rankings *in defining the target groups*. *A minimum training day is no longer required*. In the past there were allocated minimum 7 compulsory training days for each civil servant.

Several TNA (Training Needs Analysis) assignments have occurred in the Romanian public sector during last years (NACS, 2005 and 2007). These analyses related to the following areas:

- ❑ Clarifying nation-wide development needs of occupational development. These projects have been driven by CNFPA (National Development Centre of Adult Education) CNFPA, 2002). Due to the special characteristics of civil service, NACS is responsible for regulations for civil servant training and development.
- ❑ Contributing to the successful EU-accession of Romania, the implementation of reform on public sector and using effectively the structural fond. These assignments were planned, carried out by representatives of foreign donor institutions (EU, PHARE, World Bank, etc.) jointly with representatives of recipient Romanian institutions and their other local partners (Lucking et al, 2006).

4.7 Macedonia

Under the “National System for Co-ordination of Training and Professional Development of Civil Servants”, set up in October 2005, the CSA is responsible

for co-ordinating training activities at national level and, in co-operation with other relevant bodies, defining goals and Subject areas and channelling donor funds, as well as planning and implementing generic/corporate training. Employing bodies are responsible for providing specific/technical training in their sectors. Currently, questionnaires are being sent out by the Public Administration Reform Unit of the Government Secretariat to establish training needs across the entire public administration. The management of training function is assigned to Professional Development Unit.

Training is still carried out on an ad hoc basis and financed by donors (UNIDEM, UNIDO-EPO, FIOOM, DFID, RF-VAO, etc.) in Macedonia and there have been delays in setting up a training strategy and an institution dedicated to training. Several typical examples of this training approach are listed below:

- ❑ A Training Support Facility (TSF) for the municipal administration was established in 2004 under a joint project of the Trilateral Committee on Co-ordination of Training for Municipal Administration and the UNDP. More 6.000 local civil servants have participated in this training program in 2005-2006.
- ❑ 75 local civil servants from municipality Skopje were trained within “System of Public Administration and Public Service” program. This program was sponsored by FIOOM.
- ❑ The French RF-VAO program was developed to train high level civil servants. 30 civil servants have been trained within this program yet.
- ❑ CSA offers different training programs. A “20 day Managerial Training Program” includes 6 training modules as follows: teamwork, quality management, strategic planning. This program was supported by DFID (UK). By the end of 2006 more than 70 civil service servants have participated in this program.
- ❑ British Council in co-operation with the Agency for Reconstruction has accomplished training, started on 6th of June 2006 and ending in January 2007, for category II civil servants. 250 new expert civil servants (category II) from non-majority communities and 100 translators of Albanian and Macedonian languages have been drawn into a 9 month period program. The new expert civil servants are trained regarding their respective functions in their ministries. The translators are trained through a full time course followed by a seminar of an additional 3 months. The Steering Committee of the program includes the Cabinet of Deputy Prime Minister, The Civil Service Agency, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Government Sector for European Integration and the EAR (observer).
- ❑ Training related measures were used for the first time in 2005 to increase the representation of minorities in the public administration. Six hundred

Albanian candidates with high school degrees received a nine-month training session prior to their employment.

Conclusions

The extent of one article does not allow presenting every important training related development in different countries' public service. In this study, one can understand the importance of the challenge faced by public sector manager, and specialized HR advisors. These embrace the following: how to assess the situation whilst making the series of decisions which will build up a new complex system of training; how to combine the training techniques of the private sector which they have adapted whilst retaining the conventional values of the public sector and improving the commitment in such a way that, simultaneously, they promote the continuous renewal and improvement in efficiency of both the organizations and the sector by exploiting the possibilities inherent in HR and training.

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