IMPACT OF TRAINING CLIMATE ON EFFECTIVENESS OF TRAINING PROGRAMMES

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*T*RAINING *in organisation is getting increasing mind space of top managers. However, to assert its rightful place, it has to come out from the periphery of corporate wheel to the centre of corporate functioning and contribute proactively towards attainment of organisational objectives. This requires that training professionals should show commitment towards enhancing value of training. The process of training delivery is mediated by pre and post delivery training factors which have an influence in constructing favourable or unfavourable training climate. This paper addresses all the important issue of training climate and the role played by various stakeholders in developing this. Importance of developing favourable training climate and negative impact of unfavourable training climate has been explained with the help of case study method.*

Key Words: Training Climate, Corporate Strategy, Training Effectiveness.

Focusing on Training Climate for Effective Training Programmes

Increasing focus on alignment of training strategy with organisational strategy is putting renewed emphasis on identifying factors responsible for successful implementation of learning acquired through training in organisational settings. For positioning training better, i.e., for ensuring its best possible fit with ongoing change strategies, policy makers and change managers set the objectives that training has to achieve and also time, numbers, cost and other considerations to be taken into account. (Lynton and Pareek, 2000; Tandon, and Chhachhi, 1996). Training without appropriate mechanism for implementation is not worthy of valuable and scarce organisational resources. HR practices suffer from credibility deficit because of lack of strategic fit and contribution to business results (Chaterjee et al. 2001; Pareek and Rao, 1992)

Primary requirements for effective training are assessment of needs, clear training policy, and support of the management, co-operation of the managers and adequate finance and resources. (Flippo, 1982; Fill and Mullins, 1990; Armstrong, 1995; Pattnayak, 1998). The goal of strategic, skill-building training is to produce meaningful, lasting behaviour change in the participants who attend the sessions. (Crosbie, 2005). Many authors have emphasised on importance of organisational context in effective delivery of training. Most of these attempts to define effective training imply that it is often an attempt to change the way the organisation functions. (Bramely, 1989; Pattnayak, 2001). However, training professionals have little control or influence on the working of organisation. They can improve effectiveness by working on training related factors which may lead to effective training. Success depends not only on effective training delivery but also on such important elements as expert facilitation, contextual awareness, formal and informal support, real-world application, self-study, self-awareness, stress and

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celebration. (Crosbie, 2005). All these factors have an integrated cumulative impact on ultimate success or failure of the training but they can be classified in three categories for the purpose of diagnostic understanding and analysis. These categories correspond to the chronological origin of the factors at different stages. These stages are Before Training, During Training, After Training or Before Entry (Reentry) in the workplace, upon Exiting the Workplace. (Nicholas, 1992). We are concentrating on first three basic categories which are named as Pre Training, Training and Post Training. Training professional enjoys some level of control on Pre Training and Training stages though their intervention in Post Training stage is minimal. This creates an anomaly which has negative repercussions on training effectiveness.

Pre Training stage corresponds to planning, acquisition of necessary resources and identifying post training evaluation parameters. Planning for training includes setting of narrow and broad objectives, identification of training tools and trainers, selection of training methodology, scheduling etc. Acquisition of resources involve collecting and arranging all identified required resources. It is quintessentially important to identify post training evaluation factors at pre training stage itself. It gives more credibility to training effort and helps trainer in orienting training towards attainment of organisation objectives. Pre training stage is crucial as many important factors can not be varied later during training stage if it was felt that some change is required.

Training stage is the delivery stage of training programme. Successful delivery is dependent on trainees, trainers and most importantly on training climate. As training programme is developed keeping in mind organisational needs and constraints, it is of paramount importance that these needs and constraints are kept in mind while delivering the training programme. It is important that trainees not only learn the concepts or knowledge dimensions in a generic way but they should also imbibe organisational context and background. Training climate is dealt with in detail in this paper later on.

Post Training stage is the implementation stage. It is crucial that all the learning is implemented and feed back taken so as to understand impact of training and help in designing and improving future training programmes. Without an effective post training strategy and support, training programme will not lead to desired results. Post Training support includes availability of resources required and facilitation of implementation of learning. This requires sensitisation of all the members in reference group of trainees about the training objectives and ensuring their whole hearted cooperation.

Out of these stages, the paper deals with the 'Training stage', however training stage can not be studied in isolation. It is structured during pre – training stage and implemented during post – training stage. In this stage, the crucial factors are trainee and trainer relationship and how they connect with the training objectives and organisation objectives. Primarily this relationship coupled with contextual factors lead to favourable or unavourable training climate.

Training Climate: Training climate is the result of interaction between trainees and trainers in the context of training environment. Climate can either be favourable or Unfavourable for effective delivery of training. (Lynton & Pareek, 1990) Favourable and unfavourable climate ostensibly is the result of feelings of trainers and trainees. But these feelings are moderated by other factors having genesis in pre and post training stages. Favourable climate is manifested high degree of team work, trust and commitment on the part of both trainer and trainee. Unfavourable climate is expressed in low trust, unhealthy competition and lack of interest on the part of stakeholders.
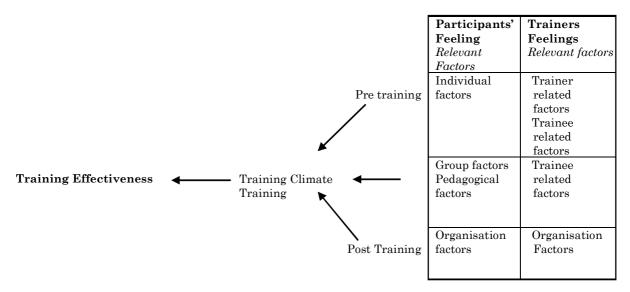
Participants' feelings are the outcome of interaction between individual, group, training and organisational factors. Individual factors are related with individual priorities, personal life situation and comfort level. Group factors include the sense of relatedness in the group, dynamics of the group, prior association among group members. This contributes to the participants feelings in training environment. Pedagogical factors which contribute are trainers' ability to relate, timing, structuring,

scheduling and methodology. Organisational factors are perceived organisational support, work context in which training will be implemented and perceived positive or negative consequences of training on performance enhancement and assessment.

Trainer's feelings are dependent on factors classified as Trainer related, Trainee related and organisation related. Trainer related factors are dependent on trainer's command over training subject, level of motivation and prior preparation. Trainee related factors are participants' prior understanding of the subject and involvement in the training programme.

Organisation factors are resources and time commitment and perceived importance given to training.

Participants' and trainers feelings mediate to construct a favourable or unfavourable training climate. Lather and Sharma (2007) have proposed a diagnostic model of training climate wherein it is proposed that training climate is the result of interaction between Participant's Feeling and Trainer's Feeling, however, each factor responsible for participant and trainer's feeling manifests itself at different stages of training. Understanding this relationship is important from diagnostic point of view. Complexities and subtleties of this relationship give ample scope of evaluating strength of a training programme as well as help us in taking corrective action. The relationship model is refereed in figure 1.

Participants' Feeling *Relevant Factors*	Trainers Feelings *Relevant factors*
Individual factors	Trainer related factors Trainee related factors
Group factors Pedagogical factors	Trainee related factors
Organisation factors	Organisation Factors

Training Effectiveness ← Training Climate Training ←

Pre training

Post Training

Figure 1: Training Stages and Training Climate - A Diagnostic Model (Lather and Sharma, 2007)

It is imperative on the part of organisation to ensure that all the three stakeholders i.e. organisation; trainer and trainee behave in the manner so as to facilitate construction of favourable climate. Since organisation has the biggest stake in successful conclusion of training, it is the prime responsibility of training mangers to evaluate the factors which lead to evolution of favourable or unfavourable climate. If this responsibility is not taken up with the seriousness it deserves then the outcomes can be quite disastrous.

Impact of Unfavourable Training Climate: Case of an Automobile Giant

Situation: A big automobile giant decided to give training to its fresh batch of Graduate Engineering Trainees in behavioural and interpersonal skills along with regular technical training. Behavioural training programme was scheduled at the end of the induction training schedule just prior to their placement in respective departments.

Company decided to hire a well known behavioural trainer for two days training programme. Company's HRD manager had a detailed discussion with the trainer prior to the training programme. She also invited many trainees of past years to share their experiences so as to make trainer aware about the unique context of the training. However, this exercise was not very successful as any clear outcome or understanding was not evolved. According to HRD manager this was a requirement as per company policy to contextualize the training programme. As per the checklist provided by the company, trainer listed out requirements and other facilities. It was clearly mentioned that during the time of training, trainees will not be disturbed for any other official work. Trainer also decided to conduct pre and post training evaluation to assess learning from the training.

On the scheduled day trainer reached at the venue for the training. However, for some time there was no sign of any trainee. Training manager explained that most of them were on out bound training in Hyderabad and trains of some of trainees are delayed. Then few of the trainees trickled in, very tired and with long faces. They told the trainer that they have just arrived after gruelling schedule at Hyderabad and have not even taken their breakfast. Mean while HRD manger informed the trainer that some of the trainees will come in the afternoon as there is some miscommunication between induction training coordinator and HRD department.

Trainer tried to face the situation bravely but she was not very sure that how will she relate to the new participants in the mid of the programme. Programme was structure d in a workshop mode and was not modular in nature. After first session of training which was attended by three trainees only, HRD manger informed the trainer that the candidate will leave the training programme one by one for some time as their final placement interviews are scheduled on the same day. This was an alarming sign because it would not only interfere with the continuity of the programme but also would divert attention of the participants. She objected but to no avail. Some more trainees joined in th second half but even now the attendance was not full. The same trend continued the next day also and ten new trainees joined in the morning. Trainer took up a separate session with them but it was almost impossible to cover all the aspects in half and hour session. In the mean time, trainer was informed that they have to shift to some other training room as some meeting is scheduled in the present room. In the next room, projector and other aids were dysfunctional. Some how, she completed the whole programme.

Analysis: Pre and post analysis of learning showed moderate improvement however, it was much below expectations. The feed back from the participants was also not very encouraging. Trainer was least surprised as the training climate was not conducive for training.

This is an appropriate example of building of unfavourable training climate. Trainer did not get organisational support, participants were confused about the objectives, timing and scheduling was improper and most of all there was no ownership of the whole process. The biggest loser had been organisation because they valuable resources and time were wasted. Trainees also did not get any value addition and trainers' reputation also sullied because of average results. The primary responsibility lied with the HRD manger. From the pre training planning stage to training stage, lack of commitment led to negative feeling between trainers and trainees which led to creation of unfavourable training environment.

Conclusion
Success of training is not merely dependent on quality of trainer rather it is the result of cumulative sum of trainer, trainee and organisational efforts and commitment. Primary responsibility lies with the training manger, as representative of organisation they should ensure proper pre training planning as well as post training support. They should coordinate closely with trainer, be it in house or an outsider, so as to make him aware of the objectives as well as facilitate him in delivery of training. Training as a function can improve its image only when all concerned will show high commitment and avoid trivialization..

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