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*“Training Needs Analysis (TNA): A case
study of the Abu Dhabi Police”*

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Abstract

Abu Dhabi Police is one of the most challenged organisations among all public sector organisations in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi in the UAE. The Abu Dhabi Police therefore consider that their employees should have the ability and the confident to cope with critical situations. Existing literature regarding Training Needs Analysis (TNA) shows that most studies conducted on TNA practices were done overseas. Due to cultural differences, these findings might not reflect similar descriptions regarding TNA practiced in the Middle East, and specifically in the UAE. So, this research aims to investigate the nature of Training Needs Analysis within the context of the Abu Dhabi Police and the impact of TNA on organisational performance. To achieve this questionnaires and interviews will be carried out in the Abu Dhabi Police.

Introduction

The Abu Dhabi Police is one of the most challenged organisations among all public sector organisations in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi in the UAE. Also, the police are one of the most diverse forces and need to be very focused, active and effective, and object oriented. The Abu Dhabi Police therefore considers that their employees should have the ability and the confidence to cope with critical situations (Grau-Gumbau, R., *et al.*, 2002) who state that human resources have to be equipped with the necessary level of professional qualifications to face these challenges, and training is the basic strategy to achieve this.

The significance and value of training has long been recognized. Consider the popular and often repeated quotation, “Give a person a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a person to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.” This simple but profound saying is attributed to the wisdom of Confucius who lived in the 5th century BC. Given today’s business climate and the exponential growth in technology with its effect on the economy and society at large, the need for training is more pronounced than ever. (McClelland S.D., 2002)

With the new emerging organizational reality where change, competition, workforce demographic changes and business upheavals are eminent, training and development is becoming ever more an important method that equips organizations with the flexibility, adaptability and durability required for survival (Al Khayyat, R. Elgamal, M. 1997).

Whether fully recognised or not, all organisations, whatever their size, invest time and money developing their staff. Whether it is training employees how to use a new piece of software, complete a form, give good customer service or write a professional letter, training is an essential part of every organisations management.

This paper is part of an on-going research project that seeks to understand the nature of training needs analysis, and the impact of this has on improving organisational performance in the context of the Abu Dhabi Police.

Since the main research is at an early stage, this paper only reviews the literature and discusses the research problem, the research aim and objectives and the suggested methodology that will be used in this research. The author is currently in the stage of developing a framework for this research.

Literature review

This section is a brief review of the literature on training and training needs analysis as following:-

Training

There is no one definition of training. The simplest definition of the training in the traditional training theory is "...the acquisition of knowledge and skills for presently know tasks" (Lawrie, 1990, p 44, quoted in Crutchfield, E., 2000, p 92). Deutsch (1979, p 104) also, define training as following: "Training serves to help increase upward mobility within the organization, to adjust workers to the technological changes affecting the workplace, and often simply to introduce people to the world of work at the entry level". Moreover, Nadler and Wiggs (1986, p 4) provided the most commonly used definition of training: "Training activities focus on learning the skills, knowledge, and attitudes required to initially perform a job or task or improve upon the performance of current job or task"

So, from these definitions training is an important activity within an organisation which improves employees' performance and provides them the skills and knowledge required to do the job in a professional manner.

It is well acknowledged that one of the most important steps in training development is conducting a training needs analysis. This first step in training process focuses on the process of deciding who and what should be trained. A training needs analysis is primarily conducted to determine where training is needed, what needs to be taught, and who needs to be trained (Goldstein 1993).

Training needs analysis

There are many definitions of TNA. One of the earliest writers about TNA is Boydell T. (1976) who defined 'training needs' in the following paragraph:

"Let us examine the phrase "training need". The word 'need' implies that something is lacking - there is a shortfall somewhere. The word 'training' further implies that this lack can be supplied by systematic training. It can thus be said that a training need exists when the application of systematic training will serve to overcome a particular weakness"

In additional, one of the clearest explanation of needs assessment is given by Anderson J.E (2000, p 9), who writes that the needs assessment is the starting point in the training process. It is the phase in which an organization's needs are identified, forming the foundation of an effective training effort. The needs assessment tells where and what kind of training programs are needed, who needs to be included, conditions under which training will occur, and criteria to guide program evaluation.

There are a few terms that can be used to refer to the process of identification of training needs. The most common terms are either training needs analysis (TNA) or training needs assessment. Although both terms are often used interchangeably and many writers regard them as similar, Kaufmann, R., *et al.* (1993) considered them as different. According to Kaufman, the purposes of needs assessment were three-fold - to identify performance gaps, to prioritize them and to address the most important ones. Needs analysis, on the other hand, was the process adopted to investigate the reasons for the gaps. (Holton, E. *et al.*, 2000).

However, the researcher believes that both of these terms are closely related and designed to identify training needs within an organization, so the two terms may be used interchangeably in this research.

Training needs analysis models

Leigh, D. *et al.*, (2000) acknowledged that dozens of needs assessment models have existed for the past three decades and each differs in terms of its levels of concentration. However, the TNA models have not seen significant changes over the past 30 to 40 years, in terms of theory as well as practice (Goldstein, I. 1993).

Several TNA models have been presented in the literature (McGehee, W. and Thayer, P. 1961; Mager, R. and Pipe, P. 1984; Rossett, A. 1987; Rummler, G. and Brache, A. 1995; Taylor, P. *et al.* 1998; Leigh, D. *et al.* 2000). The McGehee and Thayer's three-level (Organisation-Task-Person) conception of needs assessment is considered the core framework for needs assessment in the academic literature and most of the models developed since have been based on this three-level framework (Holton, E. *et al.* 2000),. Clarke, N. (2003) also, stated that the (O-T-P) model integrated macro through to micro analyses, arising from an investigation of training needs to meet organisational needs, task or job

needs, through to the particular needs of the individual or person. In the following brief description of the (O-T-P) framework as a typical approach to TNA.

Organisational Analysis (O)

The original purpose of organisational analysis as described by McGehee and Thayer (1961) was to provide information about where and when training was needed in an organisation.

Task Analysis (T)

A task analysis identifies the nature of the tasks to be performed on the job and the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) needed to perform these tasks.

Person Analysis (P)

Person analysis focuses on identifying who should be trained and what training is needed by individual.

Research problem

Existing literature regarding TNA shows that most studies conducted on TNA practices were done overseas (UK, Europe, USA and Far East). Due to cultural and national differences, these findings might not reflect similar descriptions regarding TNA practiced in the Middle East, and specifically in the UAE. There were similar studies conducted in the Middle East (for example Hajar, S. 2005(Saudi Arabia); Qefel, M. 1998 (UAE); and Al-Ashi, M. 1991(Jordan)) however, the scope of these were not specific to TNA and the organizations used in them were limited to only certain manufacturing and service sectors. The findings therefore may not be generalising to describe TNA practices of organization in the public sector of the UAE such as the Abu Dhabi Police.

Aim and Objectives

This research aims to investigate the nature of Training Needs Analysis within the context of the Abu Dhabi Police and the impact of TNA on the organisational performance.

So, the objectives of this study are TO:-

- Address the current methods and techniques of identifying training needs in the three levels (individual, operational, organisational) within Abu Dhabi Police.
- Identify gaps and barriers to training initiatives within Abu Dhabi Police.
- Develop a strategic organisational approach to future training needs.
- Develop a framework that integrates the needs of individual employees and the organisation.
- Make recommendations and this will equip the Abu Dhabi Police to face the challenges of the modern world.

Research Methodologies

No single method for conducting research data can be termed as perfect, because each one has some limitations. It depends on the type of research plus the circumstances surrounding the research, primarily the prevailing culture and the willingness of the employees as well as the company to reveal the information which may be critical to the completion of the research. Both qualitative and quantitative methodologies therefore will be used in order to minimize weaknesses and reach a deeper understanding of the area.

This approach of integrating two or more methods within a single research design is called “triangulation”. According to Bryman, A. and Bell, E. (2007, p 59), triangulation approach attempts to “cancel out the limitations of one method by the use of another in order to cross-check the findings”.

The researcher will use a survey questionnaire as according to Zikmund, W. G.,(2003) “Surveys provide quick, inexpensive, efficient and accurate means of assessing Information.....Surveys are quite flexible and, when properly conducted, extremely valuable to managers”.. Also, interviews will be used as with key informants. The key informants will be the Abu Dhabi Police Directors and senior managers in the field of training and development and those who possess similar expertise. Further, some of the informants will be chosen from the other departments to add depth to the data collected.

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