

A STUDY ON NEED FOR TRAINING IN CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND ISSUES AND CHALLENGES INVOLVED IN TRANSFER OF TRAINING IN GENERAL

K. GEETHA
RESEARCH SCHOLAR,
PACHAIAPPAS COLLEGE

&
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE(SS)
ETHIRAJ COLLEGE FOR WOMEN
CHENNAI 600 008

Dr.V. THYAGARAJAN
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF COMMERCE(RETD.)
PACHAIAPPAS COLLEGE FOR MEN
CHENNAI 600 030

ABSTRACT

Learning and transfer of learning acquired in a training programme are critical outcomes in Human Resource Development. Human Resource is an important factor that leads to enhanced organisational development, but only if such human resources are sufficiently trained. Skill gaps still poses a serious challenge for several organisations. Such gaps can be filled only if companies offer well designed training programmes. The intensification of competition at the global level, rapid leaps in technological changes and the changing market place scenario all necessitate the demand for a more capable and dynamic workforce. This creates a need for companies to make substantial investments in their training programmes. Despite the commitment of time, money, training becomes fruitless if such knowledge learned is not applied to the work place. In addition to the issues involved incorporate training and its transfer, currently, training in Corporate Social responsibility (CSR) is gaining a lot of momentum. Corporate companies need to make significant budget allocations for training their professionals in CSR activities as such activities have an impact on a firms corporate culture and are vital to corporate brand image and success.

Key words: Corporate social responsibility, training, learning, trainee, design, transfer

INTRODUCTION

Human Resource is a very important factor of production that aids in overall organisational development so long as the human resources are well trained. Training and Development is an integral component to the

growth and development of an organisation. However, deficiencies in the supply chain of skills continues to be a challenging problem for most companies. Corporates make big investments in their training programmes to largely benefit their stakeholders, most importantly, their own employees, job seekers and their businesses. Despite such investments in training, there is no assurance or much initial evidence that there will be a return on such investments. Pinpointing a skill gap can be difficult. Different employees have different strengths and weaknesses and it takes time to know the deficiency of each employee. Corporate companies need to develop such training programmes that over time each employee becomes proficient in their jobs, as proper training could result in better learning transfer. Since corporate companies invest largely in their training programmes, it is important that investments get translated into an enhanced individual and organisational performance.

CSR IN INDIA AND CHALLENGES OF CSR

CSR is necessarily an evolving term that does not have a standard definition or a fully recognized set of specific criteria. Given that, business plays a key role on job and wealth creation in society, CSR is understood to be the way a company achieves a balance or integration of economic/environmental and social imperatives while at the same time addressing shareholder and stakeholder expectations. CSR practices add value to business operations. Without taking care of society, no business activity can be transacted to the society.

It is essential for CSR strategies to become central to business strategy and part of the long-term planning process. Stakeholders of the current world are questioning companies today more on their CSR initiatives and the company's decision making in this direction.

India has a long rich history of close business involvement in social causes for development of the nation. India has had a long tradition of corporate philanthropy and industrial welfare has always been in the forefront. However, CSR managers are facing several challenges in managing the CSR activities such as lack of budget allocations, lack of employee support and lack of knowledge as well as inadequate professionalism in this sector.

TRAINING IN CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR)

Training in CSR is necessary as it represents a strategic tool in the hands of top management seeking to implement their corporate social policy. Studies show a nexus between CSR and training as a strategic issue. Employees are more likely to respond if training programmes incorporate policies, procedures and system use in the workplace that meet the CSR objectives. Employees trained on CSR policy are likely to perceive the importance of CSR policy and will buy into it. Inyang et al. (2011) found that employees are more likely to respond when the training programmes incorporate CSR objectives and projects. More so, the new

recruits during the orientation process should be given a thorough overview of the core CSR values. It also leads to enhancement of employee's ethical behaviour. Absence of proper training is one of the barriers to CSR implementation (Graafland and Zhang,2014).

IMPORTANCE OF CSR TRAINING

In seeking to turn employees into CSR ambassadors, companies' consultancies and social media bloggers have realised the crucial importance of CSR training and employee engagement. It is important that corporates organise training programmes through seminars, conferences to disseminate and generate new and update knowledge and information in this sector.

Corporate Social Responsibility training covers the principles and methods of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as well as the best practices and effective strategies required to reach a sustainable business. Training is imparted in the context of making it practical in various tactical and functional environments in emerging markets. Trainees are introduced to best practices, sustainable decision-making methods and analytical tool. CSR training helps trainees to improve their skills associated with CSR. Such hands-on training will convert the pure theoretical concepts of CSR to more practical applications.

Also through such CSR training, trainees learn how to manage their CSR strengths to provide more value to the society and business. Moreover, trainees are equipped with adequate knowledge to assess the present CSR methods, design and perform a focussed strategy, thereby, incorporating the CSR efforts. CSR training is most dedicated to practical exercises including individual and group activities, practical case studies and hands on workshops. There are agencies that offer CSR courses and training with focus on accountability and sustainability in areas such as social auditing, accounting and reporting. These courses are tailor made to meet the unique needs of individual companies and participants.

CSR related training is expected to have a positive effect in terms of enhancing not only labour standards but also the customers knowledge. Employees who are trained with respect to CSR activities will be able to better communicate this content to customers. Companies while designing their training programmes must focus on providing their CSR values in all training sites and integrating a dimension of CSR into their training programmes.

Apart from the need, importance and challenges involved in CSR training, companies face significant challenges in job training too designed and offered by them to the employees , especially in the context of transfer of such training.

TRANSFER OF TRAINING

Transfer in the context of Training and Development activity, is discussed in the literature in terms of the generalisation of material learned in training (e.g skills acquired, knowledge gained) to the job context as well as the maintenance of the learned material over a period of time on the job (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). In the words of Baldwin & Ford, “Learned behaviour must be generalised to the job context and maintained over a period of time on the job”.

FACTORS THAT IMPACT TRAINING

TRAINEE CHARACTERISTICS:

Research has shown that the characteristics of the trainee’s personality directly affects the training process and training transfer (Ford et al, 1992; Warr et al., 1999).

TRAINING DESIGN

According to evidences, training design strategies such as the use by trainers of general principles (Clark,1990; Schunk,1996) and of variable learning stimuli (Baldwin,1992; Holladay&Quinones,2003) enhance transfer. For some type of skills, the presence of identical elements in the training and transfer settings also transfer. (Butterfield&Nelson,1989).

WORK ENVIROMMENT

Given today’s changing environment, this concern has become stronger as learning is a key mechanism for fully utilising human resources. Initially, Baldwin & Ford (1988) contended that 10% of knowledge learned while in the training environment is applied to the work environment though there are other researchers who suggest that 10% to 15% of knowledge is applied to the work environment (Broad & Newstorm,1992; Burke & Baldwin,1999; Factean, Dobbins, Russell, Ladd &Kudisch,1995).

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

In the recent years, lot of things have progressed dramatically, in terms of both the science and practice of training. On the practical side, socio - cultural, technological, economic and political pressures have all combined to force modern to take a closer look at their human capital in general and training in particular (Thayer1997, Howard,1995). According to London & Moore 1999, in fact, now more than ever, organisations must rely on workplace learning and continuous improvement in order to remain competitive. Corporates of today’s world have made a drastic shift of their views about training from a separate standalone event to a fully integrated strategic component of the organisation to meet the challenges of the competitive world. New training related approaches such as action learning, just in time training, mentoring coaching, organisational learning and managerial skill portfolios are all being currently explored. Furthermore, modern corporate companies must cope with training needs associated with the changing

demographics of the population – both an older and diverse workforce can be expected in the march towards the new millennium. There are significant issues and challenges that are faced by corporates in the context of transfer of training by employees who have undergone training programmes in which they have hugely invested. Since it is highly necessary that companies have a responsibility of offering standard products / services to their stakeholders, who form an integral part of the society, it is important that proper training is offered to their employees so that proper output is made available to all thereby ensuring social equity which leads to the company fulfilling their social responsibility they owe to the various sections of the society. To make this possible, companies need to focus in offering well designed training programmes to their employees. However, there are some factors that are the root causes for causing low rate of training transfer which poses a big challenge for companies who aim at cost- benefit equation.

INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN FACTORS.

A well-designed training programme would motivate learners to interact with the material, come up with their own ideas and apply whatever they have learnt within the training environment. This could save time in just waiting for the training over and then applying the newly learnt knowledge and skills on their jobs. This issue needs to be emphasised as there could be a considerable time lag between what has been learnt and its application on to the job and such a difference in time could cause repercussions due to difficulty in retaining what has been learnt and its proper application to the job, a major reason for poor training transfer. This is a challenge for companies in the present day of context as millions are invested in such training programmes. To face these challenges to a reasonable extent, there are some theories that are available in the existing literature that could help companies in ensuring a successful training transfer.

1. **THEORY OF IDENTICAL ELEMENTS:** This theory states that training occurs when the skills in the course are like what is required in the relevant job context. A substantial degree of similarity existing between the training environment and the actual work place could lead to a high level of fidelity. When learners can apply what they have learnt to a good extent to their jobs, this concept is known as ‘Near Transfer’.
2. **STIMULUS GENERALISATION APPROACH:** This theory emphasises the need for structuring the training programmes in such a way that learners are taught, rather they are trained in what they need to know. That is, only the essential skills/knowledge are taught/ imparted to be more precise, this theory implies that the learners should be so trained that they can apply knowledge/skills even when the work place and training environment are not very similar.
3. **COGNITIVE THEORY OF TRANSFER:** This theory, as the name indicates, stresses on to what extent learners can remember what they have learnt and finally use them in their tasks when the training session is over, and they start working in their job. For this, the theory stresses on the need to make learning material more meaningful and giving the learners methods, tricks and schemes to make what they have learnt easier to remember.

LEARNER FACTORS

- a) **Self-Efficacy:** The confidence that a learner – trainee has in applying what has been learnt to the actual work site is an important factor that has an impact on transfer. To give that confidence to the trainee is indeed a major challenge for the corporate trainers. This imposes the need to combat low capability from learners, for which companies need to incorporate more background information and relevant lessons to both teach and infuse confidence.
- b) **Motivation:** It is the key to encourage retention of knowledge. A well-designed training course can enhance motivation with methods such as gamification, reward systems and by reinforcing how these skills could benefit the trainer well.
- c) **Barriers to effective learners:** There are situations where the learner could be both effective and efficient in terms of training transfer but there could be some impediments that could demotivate learners in making a successful transfer. Lack of proper support from co-workers and superiors, difficulties in the job itself, constraints in time and outdated or otherwise faulty equipment's are some of the common hindrances to effective transfer.
- d) **Personal time and Stress factors:** The availability of time and the psychological health of both the trainers and the trainees impact such transfer. But often these factors have been under estimated as a cause for poor transfer

EXTERNAL FACTORS

Even though the learner's environment is one of the most significant factors in the transfer, its importance in some cases have been ignored.

- (i) **Availability of Resources:** When learners have been given the necessary resources to apply what they have learnt, back to their jobs such as opportunities to apply what they have learned, proper equipment's to do their tasks, it could result in better transfer.
- (ii) **Support and sanction from Higher Ups:** Support from managers /superiors is necessary for effective transfer to take place. However, such transfer can either be facilitated or hindered by the extent to which they involve themselves. Success of a training transfer is based upon the attitude and behaviour of the higher ups.
- (iii) **A plan of action:** An outline of steps that learners must take could help transfer and ensure focus. Such plans could include goals along with strategies for reaching those goals and required resources.
- (iv) **Positive support from peer groups:** Adequate support and feedback from peer group is also highly important issue for the trainee in making effective transfer. This is necessary to reinforce the importance of training and the encourage transfer. Such support can be extended from peers by sharing their success stories when they had undergone similar training sessions.

- (v) Encouragement from external areas: Another challenge for corporate companies is to ensure a work climate/work environment for the trainee in a way that it supports the trainee's initiatives. It is pertinent to note that the trainee is assured that they can apply their new skills without unfavourable consequences.
- (vi) Company culture/Resistance to change: If learners are used to a culture where their group norms dictate that training need not be taken seriously, then it would be harder to ensure even a reasonable percentage of transfer. On the other hand, if the work groups are more inclined towards progress, whose members have a high self-actualisation and self esteem needs, there will be no resistance to change that may otherwise arise when learners apply what they learnt to their jobs, doing it differently from the way they were used to doing their work earlier.

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