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# Golden Research Thoughts

## EVALUATION OF TRAINING IN BANKS
## AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

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### ABSTRACT

"Evaluation is the process for gathering information about the worth or quality of something as a way of making decisions to increase its worth or quality" (New by et al, p.220)[13].   It is the systematic acquisition of feedback on the use, worth or impact of some activity, program or process in relation to its intended outcome (Naidu, 2006)[14]. Though evaluation is put at the end, it is in fact a continuous and on-going process that takes place at all the stages of the training cycle. Ultimately, training must be judged by its impact on the organization.

This requires hard data on measurable objectives, such as increased sales, market share, reduced operating costs, lower rates of absenteeism, or whatever other objective the training was designed to achieve. Although other forces may affect these measurable criteria, it is nonetheless important that training be tied to corporate objectives all the way through to the payoff stage. If the trainer antagonizes the employees in some way, if there is too much information to absorb, or if the material or the approach is off-target, this needs to be known immediately. Participants and their managers should be involved in the evaluations in ways more meaningful than filling out little check-list at the end of the day.

Group evaluation sessions and discussions not only reinforce what was learned, they also underline the serious purpose of the training and stimulate employee ownership of the results. There are some gaps are in training evaluation as of now. The author of this article has attempted to find deficiencies in the present system and suggested remedial measures.

**KEY RECORDS** :- Strategy for evaluation, assessment cycle, training feedback, stages for evaluation.

## INTRODUCTION

Training is not a panacea; it cannot eliminate core problems like low capitalization or a product line that does not meet customers' needs. Training can, however, provide extraordinary improvements in the organization. The key to getting the best return on investment from training is to view it strategically rather than tactically. As is commonly said, training enables a person to perform better. Hence, the taste of pudding is in the eating. Unless we are able to demonstrate use of learning in the work situation, training, person cannot be accepted as successful. It is possible that the shortcomings were in the initial thought itself, the designing did not keep in view the objectives rationally, the implementation was sloppy, the methodology adopted was not suitable to the subject are, involvement of the participants was ignored and so on. Hence, to a serious HRD manager, evaluation is the tool available to him which can settle all the issues objectively.

Before proceeding further, we therefore need to understand the impact and scope of evaluation. Evaluation is no validation in a simpler sense. It is a process to make total of assessment of the cost benefit both in social, organizational and financial terms. Therefore, to say, the evaluation is enough if it examines and assesses the training vis-à-vis the objectives set out for it would be restrictive in its approach. Today, cost benefit ratio is also an important ingredient in the whole scheme of training particularly in big organizations besides improvement in organizational culture. Evaluation is always a tricky both for the trainee and the trainer as it involves a lot of impressionistic or judgmental inputs and both are also evaluated simultaneously.

## LEVELS OF EVALUATION

An evaluation cannot be converted into a mathematically exercise to arrive at a concrete/proven conclusion. It has to take into account all those factors which influence the learner and the trainer equally at different points of time. Despite this variable factor, evaluation strategy is able to throw valuable information/assessment/judgment on the effectiveness or otherwise of training to an organization or HRD manager. The purpose for which evaluation needs to be done can be summarized as under :-
1. To assess the success of the training process.
2. To assess the learning process for the trainer and training agency.
3. To conceive new approaches in designing training programmers.
4. To enable the trainers to respond to different training situations and
5. To motive trainees for learning.

In the light of above observations, it is quite clear that evaluation is neither a onetime activity nor it is one man activity. It concerns itself with everyone involved and at every step of the process. Accordingly, evaluation can be undertaken at the following levels;

**Learner's Level :** To assess the extent of learning.
**Trainer's Level :** To assess the effectiveness to enable him to modify/alter and improve the performance.
**Training Manager's level :** To assess the overall contribution of training in improving the organizational efficiency at the optimum desirable cost.
**Organizational Level :** to ensure its functional impact in reducing performance problems, increasing

productivity, and altering attitudinal environments with appropriate rate of return on investments made in training activity.

**Donor's Level :** To help satisfy the donor as to the fulfillment of their objectives in assisting recipient institution / organization. The evaluation process can result into several possible outcomes or alternatively could be initiated with different purposes.

### Strategy for Evaluation
### 1. Direct Feedback

This involves and centers round the gamut of activities in monitoring a training program and could throw light on traditional segments of training process like effectiveness of TNA. Decision on the long/short term objectives, designing of training program delivery/implementation of the program adoption of suitable methodology and creation of conducive environment for better learning curve in the audience. As such, it is concerned more with the trainees and the trainers.

### 2. Policy Feedback :

All training program are aimed at meeting organization goals in the long run. Hence, successful training evolution feedback, apart from indicating successful accomplishment of the program objectives in the immediate range also confirms the validity of organizational policies or communicates the need for suitable review of those goals themselves. It is a very effective tool to get an unbiased feedback from those who are directly connected with the organizational success process.

### 3. Development Feedback

Evaluation as its by-product could also give very valuable feedback as to the developmental areas not focused so far by the organization. It could open new vistas and areas of activity for logical expansion or consolidation. Sometimes the organizational become the need of the hour in the light of such observations/feedback.

### Methods of Evaluation

Evaluation can be sourced from various mediums. However, none of them can bring home effectively the results expected in entirety. Hence, invariably a combination of two or more can deliver the results. Following are the important methods:

### 1. Structured Questionnaire

This is most commonly adopted source. Most of the evaluators prepare comprehensive questionnaires covering essential aspects of the program me so as to seek views from the concerned. While full understanding of the course is essential for drafting of the questionnaire, care has to take to ensure that leading questions are not framed as they may result into skewed, predictable and desirable responses. An unbiased questionnaire would offer open ended questions to the respondent to give him opportunity to respond. Another precaution to be taken relates to questions resulting in yes and no responses. From the trainee's point of view, such questionnaires are good as they do not expect any serious thinking on his part. Evaluations based on such responses invariably lead to erroneous conclusions. Newspapers which conduct random surveys on topical issues normally seek this type of responses.

### 2. Open Forums

This type of evaluation responses is generally unstructured except the major lead issues. They seek to assess the views of the targeted group in open forum, where direct responses and cross responses could be made. Such evaluations are a bit difficult and the results are also unpredictable. But being open responses, they are mostly unbiased and without any pressure.

### 3. Personal Interviews

Personal interviews are an excellent medium provided there is no bias on both sides. Sometimes, the respondent finds it difficult to respond face-to-face or difficult to give a negative feedback if the evaluator is internal and connected with the implementation of the program me also.

### 4. Rating

This medium is generally adopted while doing the end of the course evaluation where the participants are asked to rate the program me on a rating scales of 1 to 10 and conclusions are drawn accordingly. This is very dependable form of assessment as participants are not used to it and prone to commit mistakes or put some rating without serious thought.

### 5. Trainer's Observations

In some institutions, the trainers keep making notes/comments on the program from time to time and even at the end of the program, on the basis of the records maintained by them. Such detailed impressions recorded while implementing the program itself may give a realistic but could also lead to a biased picture as it is the version of the trainer himself and he would naturally avoid recording anything against himself.

### 6. Report of Discussion

In some organizations, there is a system of preparing a report on yhe basis of discussions with the participants informally which is further supplemented by trainer's observations. As stated earlier, no system is foolproof unless taken up by an outsider.

Depending on then time of evaluation, we can categorize evaluation as formative and

### *Summative*

### 1. Formative Evaluation

It is concerned with identifying the weaknesses during the process of training. It allows us to monitor the progress of the trainee and make appropriate changes to the training plan to attain the desired proficiency level. Formative evaluation is also called continuous evaluation.

### 2. Summative Evaluation

As the term indicates, it is evaluation at the end of the training program. Such evaluation can tell us about the worth of a training program, through it can also indicate how we can improve the quality of the training program and what areas can be improved upon.

The purpose of evaluation is primarily two fold: (i) to improve the training program by providing the necessary feedback to the training system; and (ii) to assess the value of training to the participants and to that organization. A systematic evaluation of training can provide us valuable information on the following:

• Performance of the trainees;
• Performance of the trainers;
• Areas requiring improvement on delivery of training;
• Changes that can be attributed to training;
• Benefits of the training in cost-terms.

Evaluation is useful to all the stakeholders of the training-trainees, trainers/training coordinator, training department and senior management. Senior management staffs responsible for approving training budget are always worried about quantifiable outcomes of training to justify the investments made. Similarly the training department should also be concerned about evaluation of training to estimate the impact it has made in terms of performance improvements. The trainers and trainees are interested in their own development vis-à-vis organizational goals. Appropriate feedback through evaluation can guide them on their performance.

### Principles of Evaluation

We have discussed earlier that evaluation is a process of collecting information about the worth of the training. In order to conduct evaluation in a systematic manner, we should follow the basic principles of evaluation. These are:

### 1. Clarity of purpose:

At the outset, we should be clear about the purpose of the evaluation. The purpose shall decide the nature of data and quantum of data to be collected and how the data should be collected.

### 2. Objectivity:

The evaluation process and the evaluator should be very objective, and therefore use valid and reliable instruments for data gathering. Objectivity in data analysis and interpretation in a detached manner shall help report writing and communication.

### 3. Integrated evaluation:

Evaluation should not be considered in isolation. A systematic evaluation is one where the evaluator is involved from the very beginning and observes all the processes there in. this means, evaluation should not be the end exercise, but it should be planned at the beginning itself.

### 4. Evaluation should be tailor made:

No evaluation procedure or practice can be standardized or recommended as 'one fit size' for all. Every training program is unique, and therefore evaluation should be specially designed for the purpose.

### Stages of Evaluation

There are three stages at which evaluation can be undertaken:
1. Pre-training Evaluation
2. On-going Evaluation
3. End Evaluation

The pre-training evaluation is generally not undertaken by the trainers and organizations. However, it has been found to be useful particularly in designing training program as it affords an opportunity to set specific benchmark for the conduct and better planning of the program and to

ensure enhancement in competencies by comparing entry point data with expected end evaluation, this evaluation throws more responsibility on the trainer who has to identify areas of emphasis in the program as also has to do extraneous preparatory work. Obviously, the pre-training evolution is more a conceptual exercise. The on-going evolution is obviously an exercise of the process. It monitors the feedback during the program itself through formal or informal process or by obtaining daily reports or by observance of proceedings.

This enables the evaluator to know the extent of achievements of objectives on an on-going basis. It also gives indications as to appropriate linkages between the content and process and usefulness of topics included. As a result of this, the mid-correction can be effected without waiting for the conclusion of the program and thereby salvaging the usefulness of the training activity by identifying those participants who have not been able to keep pace with the proceedings as well those who are benefited most by it. Finally, the end evaluation is considered to make judgmental assessment of the training as to achievement of its objectives, the extent to which learning have emerged and absorbed by the achievement of its objectives, the extent to which learning have emerged and absorbed by the participants, the extent ot which the contents  and process has gone together as planned. This enables the trainer to have a look for immediate modifications in the management about desirability of continuing and expanding training process in the organization. Yet another area for evaluation is related to impact evaluation studies, which is a separate activity and is undertaken relatively rarely by most of the organization. Of course, impact evaluation, finally, gives concrete evidence of effectiveness, relevance, absorbability of training and its impact on the capabilities of practitioners in the organization. For the sake of convenience, impact evaluation has been left out of the scope of study in this paper.

### Assessment Cycle

Although evaluation or assessment of training can be conducted by people internally also in many cases, it is got done by people outside the system so as to avoid the influence of bias. Internal assessment could, in certain cases, be helpful as the consideration which has not been concretized could also be kept in view while making such evaluation.

Even then, before taking up the evaluation, we need to set out important measurement parameters. These could be as under:

### Step 1 : Listing out of the performance problems experienced

The basic of the training itself is the problems experienced in the past and addressed thru the program. Hence, the baseline for the evaluation is the listing of such issues and then to examine how far they were covered/responded in the program and whether they got answered at the end.

### Step 2: Setting out the objectives

The objectives of the program have to be specified in a manner that demonstrates action to remedy the problem. The linking of problem with solution will make the program effective, though such an objective will be broad based in nature and coverage.

### Step 3: Design and conduct of the program

These areas are measurable both by the participants and the trainer. These is most important operative part of measurement/evaluation exercise. The assessment has to be made without  any bias which sometimes creeps  in because the trainer is the one who design and conducts the program.

Therefore, if a negative feedback/assessment emerges, it will go against the trainer himself. This is one of the reasons for going to an outside consultant for evaluation.

### Step 4: Effectiveness of learning of both at confidence level and on-the-job level

The confidence level assessment could be taken up even during the training its self without waiting for its conclusion. However, its effectiveness in relation to work responsibilities could be judged only after completion of training.

### Step 5 : System Development

Finally, the evaluation should cover the impact or influence of training on the system as a whole. Weather it had improved the performance level problems identified initially and created an improved baseline throwing up newer challenges. While this is easier to say, it is difficult to ensure as training is neither a panacea to all the organizational problems nor training could be attributed to all the successful achievements or changes in the organization. Of course, training could be a part of it.

### Conclusion

All evaluation assessment efforts must try to cover every aspect of training. To begin with, the objectives should be examined with a view to establishing whether they were realistic, clear both in determination and understanding and are capable of being realized. If the objectives are not complying with the above criterion, the evaluation would not reveal the correct picture.

The second aspect is the training methods. They should not only be appropriate but should facilitate learning easily to create the necessary impact in minds of the trainees. The methods supplement other efforts of the trainer in putting across the knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Thirdly, the evaluation should also see the composition of the group of trainees. Many may not subscribe to this thought as part of evaluation exercise. But the size of the group, its composition as to the background, knowledge and experience level have their own impact on the training module.

The selection procedure adopted is an equally important aspect. Fourthly, the time span earmarked to training should also be examined. Many a time, it is absorbed that organization or training house stipulates the time and then asks the trainer to incorporate inputs spelt out by them. Obviously, this mismatch defeats the purpose of training itself. Hence, determination of time/duration, allocation of the time to the entire program and topics, sequences thereof ensuring flow of the program and finally whether it was hectic or easy need to be seen from learner's point of view.

Fifthly, trainer's performance should also be examined which is the most critical element in training. He is a live, vibrant and creative element in the whole scheme of training. He could improvise in case of need and improve any program in spite of all other factors. His effectiveness, experience, Skill in purveying inputs, skills in the use of various methods/aids, attitude towards training in particular and the group in general could greatly affect the evaluation results.

Sixthly, the training material also needs to be examined. It supplements the training efforts significantly. The trainees could use the reading material to recapitulate learning. Hence the usefulness, quality and timeliness of reading material also ensure the success of the program.

Finally, the training environment and facilities also play an equally important role. The training friendly ambience, appropriate classroom facilities, quality of residential accommodation, food arrangements all have an influence on training and the learning environments.

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