

A Study on Transference of Institutional Training in Civil Service of Pakistan- Administrative Reforms Perspective

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Abstract— This study is part of my PhD dissertation on human resource development in public sector executives of Pakistan with a special reference to institutional training. The term transference is used in strict academic reference and refers to the extent to which a training program is rated as relevant to the duty tasks of the human resources being trained. In the text following afterward, terms “relevance” and “transference” are used interchangeably. The study under consideration is about a short course in one of these institutes. The questionnaire administered included questions asking about the experience of trainees with the teaching of modules of management course namely personnel management, business communication and development administration. The aspects of training that were emphasized are perceptions of these trainees before training and then its relevance/transference to actual workplace responsibilities. This study also encompasses those particular factors that constrain the trainees to properly apply the acquired skills to their actual work environment. The officers questioned were also encouraged to suggest amendments in the taught programs and modules in light of their practical experience of field. (Paper has been shortened to number of pages requirement of conference proceedings. Full paper with detail tables and graphs is available with author.)

Keywords- Personnel Development, Transference, Institutional Training, Civil Service

I. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary organizations respond to rapid technological changes of external and internal environmental factors in different ways but often aggressively. Training and development is a trusted tool to synchronize existing human capital with these changes. The public sector of Pakistan is of course responsive to these changes but with a below par zeal and allocation of appropriate resources. Civil servants being at the helm of affairs in public institutions are the most appropriate human capital to be trained and prepared for this challenge. The role of institutional training is most critical in this regard.

Inclusion of the management syllabus in courses made many questions arise in mind. One such question may be that: are these courses serve the purpose of acquainting the trainee with those skills that organization is expecting? In simpler terms we mean that will these employees perform better at their workplaces after acquiring the proposed management education at their institutes. Porter and

Mckibbn 1988 and Spender 1994 have more or less same findings. However Longenecker and Ariss, 2002 regards management education an off site learning experience that expose managers to new concepts, practices and situation that can be transferred to work environment. As far as the clarity of outcomes of management courses is concerned we have sufficient room for discussion between above two extremes.

A. PROBLEM AREA

The public service of Pakistan has been regularly undergoing administrative reforms for last three decades. No such endeavor can be called a success or failure and they are of our concern neither. Core objective of the study is to analyze the level to which the management and administration course module has proved to be relevant to officers to apply them on their actual work setting. It is an attempt to identify the hurdles for these trainees during learning concepts and applying them practically to solve the contemporary workplace problems in context of civil service of Pakistan. Does this learning bring any material change in betterment of performance of trainees, is the core objective of the study.

B. limitations

The study is limited by a couple of factors that are found hard to be eliminated. Firstly we remained concerned to management of personnel while the module has a variety of other aspects like reforms, communication, institutions and public policy. Second is attitude of trainees that was showing a moderate trend during answering questionnaire. As most of them ticked “to some extent” sort of choices.

II. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

As a result of government’s increased emphasis on civil service reforms in past couple of decades the training institutes remained busy in designing a sustainable strategic plan for organizational learning. The ministry concerned was earlier given this special task to incorporate more dynamic fields of behavioral sciences in existing curricula. To design most appropriate courses, help from some degree awarding institutes was sought. Syllabus was chosen by the consultation of renowned business schools like Institute of Business Administration (IBA). The issue that was not

properly addressed was that public organizations have to adopt training and development programs to their own specific needs within the overall context of entity (Schofield 1997).

The courses were basically meant for grade 17 and higher levels including secretaries almost coming from various ministries. In selection for potential trainees the priority was based on seniority and annual confidential report. The officers questioned are of cadres that are much involved in administrative work and supervision of performance of a sizeable subordinate staff. Their area of responsibilities can be elaborated in light of written regulations in official documentation as below:

For executives (Grade 17 & 18)

Providing administrative support to concerned department or ministry and looking after the matters of human resources that further include

Correspondence, documentation and scrutiny of information Remarks, recommendations and suggestions during processing of cases Ordering, compilation and presentation of processed documents Drafting of correspondence, Implementing decisions, Research and investigation if any, Making sure the overall operations and performance is in accordance with prescribed regulations and established code of management practice:

Duties demanding deep knowledge of specialized functions like establishment and finance and having a judgmental eye and taking initiative of decisions

An active part in policy making process and ability to interpret policy outlines and directives and responsibility of proper implementation

On the other hand the course plan of personnel management included, besides conventional HR issues, discussion of the concepts of managing human resources of the organization with respect to the jobs of trainees and relating examples from actual workplace experiences. The concepts to be learnt and applied are as under:

Evolution of human resource management and human resource development

Modern organizational behavior to human resources

Understanding of job description, job analysis and job specifications concepts

Understanding the concepts of recruitment, its channels, selection and its process

Training, its on and off the job nature and types and its differences with development Rewards and its types and dynamics Performance evaluation and management

Motivation theories and philosophy Contemporary directions of HR in organization

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

There is sufficient literature both supporting and questioning the importance of formal tertiary or university level institutional learning for enhancing effectiveness and efficiency of public sector managers. According to Martin (2000) quality service and efficiency if supported by good financial regulations and controls require the governmental entities to properly acquaint their human resources for managing new changes of work environment and public

objectives. As far as strict academic approach is concerned to train public managers or in local terms civil servants, some criticism is of considerable value. Thacker in 2002 pointed that those living in academic world are actually living in an ivory tower in confinement where teaching ways lack the relevance to actual world of work. According to Pferrer and Fong (2002) the research data suggest that business schools are not proving effective to guarantee a career success even awarding MBA degrees and good grades.

Keeping in view the mentioned criticism there are certain research studies that made recommendations to improve the management training whether at universities departments or officers training institutes. Jamali (2005) regards the main weakness of traditional management training, its focus on dissemination of knowledge as mere theory completely divorced from practice.

Eric Cornuel (2005) is of the view that components that make up the overall course of management education or training are "too dispatched in much too superficial manner". He declares that institutions for management training are limited by this factor in achieving their goals. Lars et al. (2006) suggests that management training should include the development of character and sensitivity apart from skills and knowledge related to profession. Arguments of Jamali (2005) identified the challenge being faced by training academies is development of alternative curriculum and delivery styles of learning which is facilitating and stimulating for a continuous organizational learning.

Eric Cornuel (2007) considers no way out for management learning processes except to be more real world focused. In the opinion of Jamali (2005) current management education programs for public managers and executives of government machinery should be rational, positivist and empirical but not with over emphasis on cognitive learning and development of theory. Haskins and Clawson (2006) go further and suggest that it is wiser to develop employees of public entities to learn via things they see, share, speak and do or some combination of these portals.

Ahmad (2002) advocated case studies, role-playing, projects done as groups and individually and simulation exercises. He continues saying that instructors must assess the current teaching styles from time to time to be innovative and incorporate the views of those being trained. The studies quoted above almost agree on one point that theory has to be taught at first place and the applications of acquired should definitely follow rather the actual disagreement is on the improper combination of both in context of curricula. They suggest that professional training should be based on philosophy of experiment or synthesis of knowledge rather than a compartmentalized approach. Garavan (1997) regarded the target nuances embedded into organizational learning that guarantees the involvement of individual. The highest percentage of respondents has been taken and shown as following. (Table wit analysis of method of instruction is available with author)

Similarly according to Longnecker & Ariss (2002), judgment of formal management education experience is consequent on ability of training to enhance on the job performance of participant learners. Fro having a more

competitive edge the same authors propose a continue research program to improve the quality of trainers, training contents and the extent to which program itself matches the perception of learners in context of their respective work environments.

From this discussion we can summarize a strong urge for training institutes to work rigorously to synchronize the skills being imparted with complex requirements of on the job human resource networks. Cabrera & Bowen (2005) urge the practicing executives to share a commitment via collaborative research, to make stronger bridges with faculty of institutional training and incorporate integrated, multidisciplinary and experimental learning in curriculum.

As far as the specific personnel management module in training course is concerned Thacker (2002) put forward that taught program about managing people of organization does not really reflect what is actually happening in organization of public sector. Usually the module being taught at business schools of Pakistan as well as public sector training institutes communicate the concepts of very superficial practices like hiring the people, rotating them, getting best out of them, development and reward system and their decent recognition etc. the most vital factor missing is the specific socio cultural and socio economic condition of the society where organization actually exist. The learned concepts mostly inspired by American pedagogy of modern management are not to be adapted to trainees' actual workplace. So transfer of knowledge is not facilitated to real world.

IV. METHODOLOGY

The data collection instrument for this study is questionnaire. It proved to be most appropriate as number of officers interrogated totaled to be 100. the questionnaire was administered to all of the subjects at the end of one session of management development course at Pakistan academy for rural development Peshawar chapter. As mentioned earlier respondents were either executives of grad 18 or higher executives of 19 and above. The officers were first briefed about the purpose of the study and were made feel relax to get best out of them. Response rate turned to be 87 %. Our questionnaire comprised of four sections as explained below:

First section comprises of background information about the respondents. It includes factors such as age, service length in public sector and working history in respective grades

Second section asking about the perceptions of respondents as trainees before actually joining the institution and preparedness for learning

Questions in third section ask about the relevance of each taught module to original workplace responsibilities.

In fourth section questions are focused on learning of contents of personnel management course in particular. It gauges the level of difficulty in mapping the learnt concepts in training back to work environment. Moreover the prior familiarity of trainees with personnel development concepts and concentration during classroom lectures are also points of consideration.

V. FINDINGS

A. *background of respondents and prior training experiences*

The majority of our subjects are between ages of 38 and 52 years and their job experience is between 15 to 25 years in public sector. Most of the respondents had it as their first job. For around 80 % of respondents this was first time to study personnel management and development as their training module.

B. *Perceptions about proposed management training*

More than half of trainees (53 % of higher executives and 59 % of grade 18 executives) officers regarded the training to be of great value and an opportunity for knowledge up gradation. Some openly pronounce it to be a good break from routine work schedules and an opportunity to live in diverse interactive environment and meet old friends. 55 % of our senior executives were impressed of new management concepts being taught to them and explanations thus provided by their trainers. On the other hand 62 % of grade 18 civil servants were moderately satisfied with factors mentioned above.

35 and 40 % of junior and senior level executives respectively were annoyed of poor preparedness and expressed strong agreements that they were not prior briefed through a seminar or workshop about what will be taught and discussed in proposed course of management development. Similarly most of them were also not prepared to take exams and assignments as typified in traditional tertiary level of education.

C. *Relevance/transference of course contents to workplace responsibilities*

The respondents were asked to judge the relevance of personnel management course contents by rating the questions asked in questionnaire. In rating system 1 indicates lowest relevance while 7 indicates the highest. The outcomes are plotted as under: (graph available with author)

The above figure clearly shows that maximum of respondents gave rating ranging from 1 to 3 to personnel management module. According to our selected scale it depicts relatively low relevance of human resource course to actual work environment of civil servants as rated by them. This confirms our initial supposition and as per the cited literature of this study. Moreover according to expectation the contents of courses like administrative reforms and business communication got high ranking in terms of their relevance to civil service job description. As given below: (table available with author)

The table above tells that most of the civil service executives found the human resource (or personnel management) course to be highly relevant for a variable "enhancement of general knowledge of human resource field". As 37 % of higher and 66 % of junior executives opted for it. It was followed by the variable "enabling to cope with higher future responsibilities" (20 % of senior and 28 % of junior executives chose it). After those, the variables choices like "better performance of daily routine tasks",

management of changes caused by administrative reforms” and “making working environment more viable” were rated as moderately relevant with human resource module of training.

The next variable “covering the proposed syllabus in given period of time”, 15 % of trainees found it to be difficult. Likewise the other variables namely, “completing assignments in time and with success” and “remaining focused during the teaching of course” were rated to be difficult by 12.6 % and 7 % of respondents respectively. Surprisingly only less than 8 % of both junior and senior executives confirmed that they would be able to map the concepts of management learnt during training back to the actual workplace environment to larger extent. 18 % said not at all and around 70 % ticked the choice “to some extent”.

Our next observation was to see whether the given choice of applying the learnt concepts to civil service workplace is dependent on variables like age and years of experience of respondents. Chi square test was performed to judge this relationship. The previous statement regarding the effect of age and service experience can be further vivified like we want to see that whether more years of working in a public workplace enable the officers to better understand the concepts in training and then apply them on their work setting or merely being older provides them with this maturity. The finding revealed that neither of the two factors affects our mentioned variable.

The main source of encouragement for officers interviewed to apply the learnt concepts at workplaces proved to be the support of immediate superior that has 30 % of response. It is followed by the choice having 19 % of response “the existing work environment” and then a closer 17% of response for “current policies and practice in government sector” and finally above 14 % expressed their view that existing factors of work environment were mostly in line with what is being taught at management courses at training institutes.

In another question a whopping majority of 53 % agreed that existing bureaucratic attitude and norms are hurdling to a large extent in applying the learnt concepts of training at their respective work settings. It was followed by 36 % of response complaining of existing philosophy of management in government sector to be responsible for the same. Lastly 26 % blamed the tight work schedule of public managers to be a barrier for any innovation at workplace (table of problems in adapting to personnel management module is available with author).

Last question of questionnaire enquired about the respondents’ view of taking another management development course of such type in future. Around 60 percent of trainees surprisingly responded in favor of such endeavors in future and showed a welcoming attitude. A mere 15 percent strongly decline such offer and 21 percent opted for an unwilling acceptance of another course. This factor was highly dependent over age factor as young trainees and aged around 40 were most willing to undertake management development trainings as shown below: (table of readiness for future course is available with author).

VI. RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From previous points of findings we can deduce the following

The module taught in personnel management is not of a great relevance for concerned executives to perform their daily routine tasks better. In other words it has a low transference to workplace

Most of the officers opined about course to be an enhancement of their general knowledge about the field of human resources in strict academic framework. Respondents show their overall satisfaction with the teaching method, explanation of bookish concepts, duration and congeniality of institute environment.

Mapping the theoretical concepts back at their workplaces turned to be most challenging factor for all of the respondents. It further proved to be independent of trainees length of service and age factors etc..

Support of immediate superior and conducive work environment worked out to be the most encouraging factors for majority of officers to apply their learnt concepts at respective work settings. A 9 to 5 work schedule does not hinder their aim to do so.

The attitude of existing bureaucracy and current management philosophy were seen to be the major barriers to any innovation at improving the quality of work and service delivery at public workplace.

Majority of executives exhibit a positive and welcoming attitude to keep on taking courses of management development and training

In nutshell it is understood that despite the congeniality of training environment and used of modern tools of imparting knowledge the course of personnel management only helped in enhancing the level of general knowledge of both categories of our executives. It further supports that the course, to larger extent, did not directly help in betterment of performance of routine managerial activities. This argument is strongly supported by the resulted number of respondents who are not getting able to apply the constructs shown in course of training to work setting. One positive attribute that is depicted in last question is willingness of trainees to learn and preference for knowledge working. Reviewing the job descriptions of the civil servants and related strict procedures of decision-making leaves less room for concerned officers to exercise policy initiatives and thus introduce or suggest any change.

The findings until now almost confirm what is earlier discussed in literature review that management schools in general and bodies of employees training for management development seldom match and reflect the real life job practices. In this study as we remain limited to a specific course for civil servants in a government training institute, so the recommendations are being made only in that context.

A. *Changes in course contents of personnel management module*

As the relevance of the learning material to actual requirements of public workplace, worked out to be major barrier in this survey, the first recommendation is to review

the course contents being taught in training. The curriculum proposed for training executives is currently more influenced by subjects being taught in modern business schools and management degrees. Like wise the course must emphasize the skills of job analysis and handle and initiate on the job training that should bring about growth, motivation and a learning behavior in employees under chain of command. The mentioned areas are somewhat directly related to daily routine tasks of civil servants. The areas if discussed and taught well will eventually help in achieving goals that are often set in a given administrative reform program.

B. Background diversity of trainees in a single course

In practice different ministries send their officers for training at a time often without giving any consideration to the specific challenges each ministry or department faces at its workplace. Contrary to this, it is suggested that in a single proposed training program only 4 to 5 ministries or departments should participate through their executives. Before finally deciding on this issue the selection of participants must be worked out with proper counseling with both trainees and trainers. The trainees too would feel encourage discussing their workplace anomalies as case studies. With much diversity and myriad of backgrounds, the trainees come from; instructor is compelled to just hush up the conventional course outline with all its demerits mentioned earlier.

C. Methods of instruction

The current style of tutelage in good management institutes and so in the training institute considered for this study, takes a start with introduction of a particular topic, its definition or related theory. Instructor moves from pure academics to actual dilemmas of concerned employees workplaces. Where employees are asked to share their work experiences, explaining in light of the academic concept or theory, that was the lesson of the day.

In our case, it is suggested that at time when recommendation of officers is made for a training of management or personnel development, the higher executives or those who make recommendations should simultaneously work to define the “work scenarios” of recommended officers. The academicians will then propose which concept or theory of personnel management can be discussed and analyzed to best explain and finally solve the problem at work scenario.

Contrary to the actual happening, the pure theoretical concept is brought in at the end when its use and application have already been taken by trainees according to their particular work settings.

This paper has just given a clue to a possible amendment in teaching style at our civil service training institute to ensue more transferability of training to workplace but still it needs

to be tested and put in a practical way to check its feasibility through further research and experiments.

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