

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper is discussing the issues in training and development in Malaysia. Issues like changing in the nature of work force, attitude of the participants, employer's policy and environmental factors are very dominant in shaping the culture of training and development activities in Malaysia. Malaysia needs to take serious attention and consideration towards training and development programs in aiming to be an industrialized nation in 2020.

Key words: Training and development

INTRODUCTION

Training and development programs were an important aspect in developing the country since the independence of Malaysia in 1957. The government of Malaysia has recognized the importance of human resource development in achieving a developed nation. Therefore the establishing of training agencies that emphasized on various fields such as agricultural development, public administration and industrial development have increased tremendously. Below are examples of government agencies involve in training and development.

The importance of training and development in developing the country can be seen in the increment of budget for training and development in the Malaysian Plan. Table 2 shows the differences of allocation for training and development in the fifth, sixth and seventh Malaysian Plan (Junaidah binti Hashim, 1999).

Table1: Malaysian Government Agencies

Industries	Training and Development Agencies
Agricultural Development	State Agriculture Department Farmer Association Council National Fisheries Council
Rural Development	FELDA, KEMAS and RISDA
Civil Service	INTAN
National Security and Public Order	Royal Malaysian Police Royal Malaysian Army Malaysian Prison Department
Industrial Business	National Productivity Control & SIRIM Malaysian Institute of Management

Table2: Social Sectors Budget For Training (Million)

Training Area	Fifth	Sixth	Seventh
Industrial Training	RM350	RM580	RM1503
Non Formal Training	-	RM30	-
Commercial Training	RM7	RM27	RM66
Management Training	RM18	RM140	RM292
Education	RM5437	RM7724	RM8437
Total	RM5812	RM8501	RM10098

Private sectors have also spent million of dollars USD in training and development programs in order to improve the company's performance. Table 3 shows us the training expenditure of several private companies in Malaysia.

Table 3: Training Expenditure in Malaysian Companies

Year	Company	Expenditure per Employee
1990	S.K. Brothers Realty	USD1000
1990	The Regent Hotel, K.L.	USD588
1990	Nestle Group	USD760
1991	Esso Malaysia	USD6538
1991	Leisure Holiday Sdn Bhd	USD2000

Even though training and development programs have been carried out for many years since the independence of Malaysia, there are many issues hit the implementation of training and development in the country which provide great challenge to training providers such as government agencies and private sectors.

ISSUES IN TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OF MALAYSIA

The issues in training and development in Malaysia basically focus on four major aspects that are policy of the employers, training providers, participants and the environmental factors.

1. Policy of the employers.

In this context policy means the attitude of the employers toward training programs. It seems that there many employers perceive training programs as entertainment programmes. Participation in any training programs is without any specific objectives or intention but it is a matter of finishing the yearly budget of the organization. For example many government agencies are sending their officers for training whether inside or outside of the country toward the end of the year where there are some amount of money still need to spend on.

The allocation for training programs is also not the first priority of many organizations in Malaysia as compared to other aspects such as management, production, equipment so on and so forth. Budget for training is only considered if there is extra money in the organization's fund. As a result training programs do not contribute significantly to the development of the organization. Due to this kind of attitude or policy of the organization, participation in training programs are not consistent. The employees are only sent for training whenever there is available financial in the organization.

2. The Training Providers

Training providers mean the parties who provide the training and development programs for the participants. There are some common issues in relation to these training providers. There are training providers in Malaysia who conduct training programs without taking proper steps as suggested by training theories. In conducting a training program the provider should at least engage in several principal such as suggested by Tyler 1949 (Cervero, 1988). The principal are:

- i. What educational experiences should the school seek to attain?
- ii. What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes?
- iii. How can these educational purposes be effectively organized?

In another words these four questions can be translated into five tasks for training providers to conduct a training program. There are:

- i. Identifying learner's need.
- ii. Defining objectives.
- iii. Identifying learning experiences that meet these objectives.
- iv. Organizing learning experiences.
- v. Evaluating the outcomes of the educational effort in accordance with the objectives.

On the contrary training providers who conduct training programs are just focusing on organizing learning experiences into educational plan without considering in detail other aspects. For example training providers do not conduct training need analysis before carrying out the training program. This is because they do not have proper knowledge in conducting training or refuses to put extra effort to conduct training need analysis or may be they perceive training need analysis is not an important element in conducting training programs. As a result the training program fail to meet the desired objectives of the organization.

Evaluation is one of the most important aspects in training program. A training provider has to conduct evaluation in order to identify whether the training program is conforming the actual objectives. As said by Ibrahim bin Mamat 1996, one of the objectives of evaluation is to identify the attainment of the desired objective. In Malaysia many of the training providers do not conduct evaluation thoroughly as required by evaluation theories. Most of them only conduct a short evaluation after a training program ends. As said by Shamsuddin Ahmad 1995, " There was no evidence of any known theory or model being used. As one evaluator phrased it, " I'm not familiar with theory and I don't know how to answer that; we just follow what our seniors did" In fact measuring training effectiveness is one of the controversial issues in evaluation training program. Normally it is not comprehensive. As a result providers or participants do not know whether the training program is successful or otherwise. According to Junaidah Hashim, there are four patterns of evaluation normally adopted by training providers in Malaysia. The four patterns are:

- i. Formal evaluation pattern
- ii. Flexible economic evaluation
- iii. Outcome evaluation pattern

iv. Client-oriented evaluation pattern.

Another issue in training and development on Malaysia is that the trend of training is so much influence by current trend in training of that particular time. For example in the 1990's motivation and parenting training became so popular led by individuals like Dr. Hassan Ali and Dr. Fadhilah Kamsah. Since they were very successful in their business therefore everyone has jumped into the bandwagon by conducting motivation and parenting type of training programs that brought them better income.

3. The Participants

The most common issue in relation to training participant is the attitude when engaging in learning activities. Many of them participate in training programs is just to fulfill employers directive or job requirement (Rogers, 1989). Therefore the willingness to learn is not coming together with them. As we understand willingness or volunteerism is one of important element in adult education as said by Jarvis 1998, "one of the key differences between adult and child learning has to do with volunteerism. Formal childhood learning is compulsory, adult learning is voluntary". As a result participants do not really benefit from the training program that they have undertaken.

Training transfer is also another controversial issue in training and development. Many participants as they got back from any training program to the work place, the tendency to apply the knowledge that they have exposed during the training programs is very little. This phenomenon due to many factors such as the participants themselves refuse to apply the knowledge or skill, not receiving support from the employer and inadequate facilities at the work place. Training transfer is very important as a return to the organization after allocating certain amount of money for the employee. This is why Kirk Patrick has included this element in his evaluation model. According to Kirk Patrick's evaluation model, a training program need to be evaluated at four stages which are reaction, learning, behaviour and effect (Ibrahim bin Mamat, 1996) Behaviour means to evaluate whether the participant manages to transfer the training knowledge or skill on the job.

4. The Environmental Factors

Training and development are so much influenced by the environmental factors like the changing nature of the work force, economic situation and phenomenon of globalization.

In 1997, Malaysia had experienced very serious economic turmoil due to devaluation of Malaysian currency against USD. The management and operation expenses of an

organization became very high. As a result the government of Malaysia and the private sectors faced serious financial problem. The government and private sectors had to control their spending only on necessity needs. Therefore allocation for training had been cut down or absolutely abolished. For example in 1998 financial aid for training had drop 11.39% which was RM141,312,455 in 1998 as compared to RM159,486,563 in 1997 (Laporan Tahunan Majlis Pembangunan Sumber Manusia , 1999). Thus, training and development programs in Malaysia could not be carried out consistently as it is so much depending on the economic performances or situations.

Changing in the work force is another unavoidable phenomenon that affects the nature of training and development in this new millennium. According to Shamsudin Osman Director General of Public Service Department Malaysia 2001, "globalization, convergence in information, communication and technology, the ever increasing demand for new and better quality service and the demand for governance will change the landscape of the public service". Employees in the new millennium require new skills to acquire new skills on a continuous basis. The skills can be classified into generic and functional skills. A care generic skill would be information technology skills. All employees must have the required IT skills. The functional skills required could include very specialized skills such as international financial management, share market operations, negotiation skills and the like. Employees performing specific functions must have the required functional skills. General qualification are no longer adequate.

To survive in this new millennium each employee will have to perform multiple tasks. Thus, the public service and private sectors need people with multiple skills to undertake multiple tasks. According to Peter Drucker 1998, "organization of the future will need knowledge workers". Therefore the amount of information to be processed and the knowledge to be mastered would be increased as a lot more data will be generate.

From this scenario, training and development have become very important means to equip the employees of public service and private sectors with adequate knowledge. Training providers and trainers have to prepare themselves with latest knowledge and skill in facing the new dimension of human resource development. Hence, training providers and trainers could not be longer satisfy with what they have done in the past but they have to explore and acquire new methodologies in developing public service and private sectors to perform their tasks. For example the government has embarked on the design and development of human resource management information system. It is one of the projects under the electronic government flagship, which in turn is one of the seven flagship under MSC program (Haji Abdul Wahab bin Adam, 1999). One of the services that will be provided by the system is to analyze training needs, select candidates, support scheduling of training (inclusive of sessions, instructors and

logistics) and evaluate training. By having this kind of technology, training providers and trainers could carry out their training and development programs effectively.

In this new millennium, the concept of globalisation has become a main issue in today's world discussion. The increasing level of interdependence across the countries of the world has created a borderless world. As a result, political, economic and social problems of one country have major implications for both its immediate neighbour as well as the other countries. Globalisation and market liberalization will expose Malaysia to international competition for market, capital and technology. The pressure is on the public service to ensure that it is efficient in facilitating business and industry to retain Malaysia as an attractive place for investment. Therefore public service and private sector employees have to be trained to cope up with modern technology, knowledge and skills to compete with foreign companies. Once again training has become very important means to train Malaysians with sufficient knowledge and skills. In other word training and development programs have to be more aggressive in term of training content, frequency, methodology and management.

CONCLUSIONS

As we have discussed earlier we can conclude that training and development in Malaysia were still surrounded by common issues as other countries do. Issues like changing in the nature of work force, attitude of the participants, employer's policy and environmental factors are the issues which being extensively discussed in many countries in the world including developed nations. As a developing country which is aiming to be an industrialized country by the year of 2020 as stated in vision 2020, Malaysia has to take serious attention and consideration towards training and development programs. Training and development programs have to be paralleled with the development of modern civilization in this new millennium.

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