

Towards Managing Change in the Civil Service of Bangladesh

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Abstract

This article is an effort to explore and develop ideas for a need-based curriculum that is an essential aspect of designing an effective training program. That may inspire a trainee to develop a high level of self-confidence to examine economic, political and social aspects of a crisis to remove hurdles to ensure sustainable development. It's a fine tuning for making professionals, and teaching them how to develop awareness, professionalism, knowledge and active participation (participatory) that may immensely benefit other fellow participants. To ignite inner talents for seeing issues from different perspectives. Their keen insights assist others in fostering a spirit of cooperation and in building common ground. Their contribution will demonstrate maturity and establish a new depth of understanding in the relevant fields. A motivational belief to create an image will be unlocked. A genius of high order is certainly necessary to fulfill the demand of society, to answer some insistent demand of the times. Otherwise, any invention would have been forgotten or put aside till circumstances more propitious for its use arose. An effective training program can prepare employees very efficiently.

Key Words: Effective Training, Need Assessment, Behavioral Change, Efficient Bureaucrats, Organizational Effectiveness, Professional Development

1. Introduction

The main purpose of training is the creation of skilled human resources, essential elements of good governance. They take responsibilities on their shoulders out of conscience and devotion to the nation. But to implement laws, a government needs efficient bureaucratic mechanisms. They can stifle economic growth, discourage innovation and investment, and perpetuate inequality. To build efficient administration in any country, appropriate institutional arrangements, proper enforcement of laws, and a skilled workforce are necessary. The Public Service Commission of Bangladesh is tasked with selecting a skilled workforce according to the government's needs. Similarly, a competent and qualified Election Commission is required to conduct free, fair and inclusive elections which reflects popular choice. All these institutions operate within a defined framework. However, when faced with a disaster or crisis, the true test begins. To overcome such a national crisis, we need competent, efficient, experienced, and civic-minded individuals, along with a tested and informed civil society that provides correct guidance. Effective coordination among different departments is essential, and for this, the provisions of the law are necessary, and to disseminate ideas and goals to the employees, effective and proper training is imperative.

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2. Objectives

The main objectives of this article are:

- i. To make a comparative study among three institutions of the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies (APCSS), USA; Civil Service College (CSC) of Singapore with Bangladesh Public Administration Training Center (BPATC), Bangladesh;
- ii. To find out the opportunities, challenges and weaknesses of BPATC; and
- iii. To explore the strength and opportunities of APCSS and CSC to fit in BPATC.

3. Rationale of the Study

People's perception about the civil service of Bangladesh is now-a-days encountering challenges due to some prevailing bad examples in the bureaucracy. For example, providing services to the citizens, showing positive attitudes, thirst for knowledge, good culture, fostering cooperation etc. have become scarce in the government offices. So, why this is happening we need to assess. Training effectiveness, their contributions and perceived attitude after the training need to be measured to develop efficient and skilled manpower. The training goals and objectives should be determined accurately before training starts.

3.1 Why Measure Effectiveness?

To determine if the training benefits the people. To see the effect on organizational performance and determine the training's return to uncover issues in the training process and improve its effectiveness.

3.2 How to Measure?

Academy to Innovative HR (AIHR) author Shani Jay suggested the following four steps to measure referring to the Kirkpatrick Model of evaluating the results of training and learning programs.

- a) Reaction: How do people directly respond to training?
- b) Learning: What knowledge and skills they acquire?
- c) Behavior: What change occurred in the behaviors of employees after training?
- d) Impact: How are organization's goals impacted?

4. Methodology

- i) Review training modules to get practical knowledge about effective training programs.
- ii) Interviewing stakeholders to get ideas about benefits they are getting.
- iii) Literature review.
- iv) Analysis of experiences achieved during service life as a civil servant.

5. Visit Training Institutes

The author has reviewed training modules of three training institutes and experience of four countries to observe field level events and their views about problems and the way forward. He attended all these training courses. A brief is stated below:

5.1 'Managing Change in the Singapore Civil Service' under the 'Matt-2 Training Program'

- It was about a study of successful governance and economic reform based almost entirely on the effective development of human resources.
- To discover the main reform policies which drove these developments, and the underlying strategies which were utilized to realize the reforms, the approaches and techniques which were used, and the reasons for the success and any failures during the reform processes.
- Finally, to identify and understand what aspects of the Singapore process may be useful in guiding or supporting the reform process in Bangladesh.

5.2 Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies

It's a College of Security Studies that offers Executive Courses for mid-career military officers and civilian officials to build lasting relationships, enhance mutual understanding, and foster cooperation for comprehensive security in the Asia-Pacific region. The course consists of three required elements: (i) a core curriculum that examines the economic, political, social and military aspects of comprehensive security, (ii) an Advanced Studies Program of elective courses, and (iii) a Professional Enhancement Program providing computer and English language courses.

5.3. Institute of Management

The author as one of the members of a team visited the Institute of Management under the State University of Jakarta, Indonesia. Their purpose mission was "Encourage Civil Servants" to enhance their motivation to upgrade their performances and positive values and work culture to increase competitiveness, and to apply accountability principles.

5.4 Experience in South Korea

The author as a member of a team visited Samsung factory in 2005 where he learned a new idea regarding marketing/promotion of goods of a company. In the Samsung policy, a salesman is assigned to make a survey (instead of setting any targets), on the consumers about the requirement of any item, types of services it provides, what changes of features they want, and based on the statistical data the company manufactures goods/brands and facilities or accessories.

6. Major Findings

- Try to find solutions where problems exist.
- Frequent review meetings with employees' help to identify problems.
- Don't impose decisions on the employees, rather share with them, listen to them, make it participatory.
- Participatory norm setting creates ownerships, develop code of conduct.
- Learning by journey is an effective tool.
- Frequent change of policy creates a negative attitude on employees.
- Repeated stimulations help in retaining memory.
- Exercise sharpens memory.
- Mentoring is a training method that involves transferring knowledge, skills, and experience from one person to another.

6.1 Example of Good Practices

Recently, the author visited a readymade garments factory in Gazipur with a beautiful environment and sincere workers. A few female workers were wearing green jackets. This is an indication of their pregnancy. The whole factory is so alert for those female workers. It has a daycare center with sleeping places for the children that assures female workers to work peacefully. Their shift break for 5 different floors has a 15-minute gap from each other so that smooth movement of workers is ensured. The manager, administration stands at the entry point with a smiling face, as if he is there to receive workers. If the management becomes caring for its employees, production is enhanced remarkably.

6.2 Few Bad Instances That Create Image Crisis

- A senior professor at Dhaka University made a PowerPoint presentation in 2003 using handwritten slides having data/statistics up to 1992. He didn't even hesitate to admit his inability to teach the participants/trainees with updated knowledge and information.
- A senior secretary of Bangladesh while visiting the USA, left the seminar to meet his children living in a different city far away from the seminar place.
- A joint Secretary of Bangladesh while attending a seminar in Sri Lanka, went shopping and set his juniors to attend in his place.
- A bus driver in Singapore, who was assigned to bring Bangladeshi trainees to the training center on time, became annoyed when he realized that officers were making unnecessary delays. So, he commented- "that's why Bangladesh can't develop".

6.3 Good Example of Singapore

How Singapore has made such a tremendous development just in one generation which Europe and America took two centuries. Their civil service academy designed courses in this way so that their trainees coming out find easily their relevant jobs. The entrepreneurs make liaison with the academic authority so that they can design a need-based training program. The civil servants of Singapore follow this formula: a) Think Ahead, b) Think Across and c) Think Again before finalizing any project document.

7. Training and Development

Effective Training develops immediate change, analytical power, cognitive power, attitude, and competition that support human resource management. This analytical power is the topmost purpose of education that teaches us proper management talent and knowledge (Aguinis et al., 2009; Stewart et al., 2024). Rosemary Harrison has shown the shift in learning and development. Firstly, unfold the meaning of learning and development in the information age, which is also called digital age or multimedia age, and secondly, it explores points of wastage, overburden and unevenness in learning and development, and thirdly presents the learning and development lean. The future of training and development is lean learning and development which means learning with least possible excess or deficit and waste. Learning and development are not a burden on the training process. It is the optimum utilization of training resources and components. It is planning to yield the best possible results with the least consumption of time and budget (Harrison, 2005).

Training plays a role to immediate changes in effectiveness, while development is related to the progress of longer-term organizational and employee goals. But the terms are often used interchangeably. Training and development have historically been topics within adult education and applied psychology but have within the last two decades become closely associated with human resource management, talent management, human resources development, and knowledge management. Germany has an elaborate vocational training system, whereas the United States and the United Kingdom are considered to generally have weak ones (Thelen, 2004).

Training is teaching, or developing in oneself or others, any skills and knowledge or fitness that relate to specific useful competencies. Training has specific goals of improving one's capability, capacity, productivity and performance, that is professional development (Speck & Knipe, 2005). Mentoring is a training method that involves transferring knowledge, skills, and experience from one person to another.

8. Modernization of Modules

In the early days, 1960s and 70s, theory-based research through trial-and-error intervention was the method of training (Bell et al., 2017). And subsequently new training methods such as the use of computers, television, case studies, and role playing were introduced to get better results. The 1980s focused on how employees received and implemented training programs, and encouraged the collection of data for evaluation purposes, particularly management training programs. The ideas of training and development became popular in the 90s with the concept of lifelong learning fostering a positive culture of training and development.

Since the 2000s, training has become more trainee-focused, which allows those being trained more flexibility and active learning opportunities. These active learning techniques include exploration/discovery learning (Birdi et al., 1959).

9. Self-Realizations/Hypothesis

Training and development encompass three main activities: training, education, and development. The only thing that is constant is change. Change culture, an overview that ensures improvements in the civil sectors. Changing in the mindset of civil servants. Colonial regulations and general orders need to be rewritten to instruction manuals (Ho, 2007).

10. Research Gap

From the personal experience of the author, he has identified the following areas as gaps while formulating training modules:

10.1 Needs Assessments

Most importantly Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are set to measure the effectiveness of the training. KPIs can vary based on the training program and organizational needs but may include training metrics such as employee performance, productivity, knowledge acquisition, customer satisfaction, or employee engagement. Carry out a pre-training assessment to identify the baseline of employees' knowledge, skills, or performance levels before the training program (Brown, 2002).

But the author's experience says that at BPATC, the participants were not asked about their needs for the current job responsibilities. His observations about APCSS, USA; CSC, Singapore, that these centers evaluated their achievements and exchanged views for further improvement. In BPATC, Dhaka, he undergone several training courses. But when he wanted their suggestions of 'Senior Staff Course' with the previous batch he came to know that all modules are being prepared traditionally. Feedback from the participants is not being considered when preparing modules for the new courses. Assessment can predict the degree of effectiveness of training and development programs and how closely the needs were met, the execution of the training (i.e., how effective the trainer was), and trainee characteristics (e.g., motivation, cognitive abilities). (Tannenbaum & Yukl, 1992).

10.2 Principles

- Improving self-efficacy, which increases the learner's personal belief that they can fully comprehend the teachings (Aik & Tway, 2006).
- Maintaining a positive attitude, as an uncooperative attitude towards learning could hinder the individual's capability to grasp the knowledge being provided.
- Increasing competence, which is the ability for an individual to make good decisions efficiently.

10.3 Motivation

Creating a positive and dynamic attitude can help employees achieve their highest level of productivity. This issue should be focused seriously. Because it can create an engaged workforce that enhances individual performance.

10.4 Feedback

Feedback helps bridge any gaps between outcomes and organizational goals by providing insights into how well the training aligns with desired competencies and performance metrics. Traditional constructive feedback is not a modern acceptable method as the training is not equitably distributed. Rather, to address these disparities, authorities may implement diversity policies and mentorship programs to provide extra support to underrepresented groups.

11. Recommendations

- i) Appreciation by the centers, creation of interest inside the minds of trainees.
- ii) Do's & don'ts, protocol/bylaws of state function; diplomatic relations.
- iii) Annual survey among citizens to get feedback about services rendered by the bureaucrats.
- iv) Generally, genius people introduce new ideas but if the current society is not capable of receiving the concepts, it is useless like an unseen wildflower whose fragrance is wasted on the desert air.
- v) A modern Research and Development (R&D) center in the training institutes may be very effective in this purpose.
- vi) A training center must be equipped with the latest technology as well as the most brilliant trainers to support continuous improvement.
- vii) The employees are the ones who know the problems within their respective areas and the best suited to find the right solutions.
- viii) Regular reforms in a training institute are needed in long term policy making and priority setting.
- ix) Gantt Chart, a graphical representation, is a very good tool and should be followed to avoid waste of time. It saves time and money by setting priority and pragmatic check list of tasks.

12. Areas of Application

- To be applied to all foundation courses for the civil servants.
- Authorities/employers should be approached for suggestions when designing training.

13. Inference

All the public institutions should be made stable, effective and protected from any irregularities. Sometimes traditional rules should be changed to cope with the latest cultures.

- American author G. Michael Hopf said: "Hard times create strong men, strong men create good times, good times create weak men, and weak men create hard times."
- Nobel laureate (2024) Daron Amemoglu has proved that the main cause of development behind the scenes is effective and stable institutions.

14. Conclusion

The effectiveness of training and development depends mainly on how a program is designed. A student has dreams when he is graduated, his dreams become bigger. He needs an appropriate job. His enthusiasm becomes limitless. A training program successfully imparts new knowledge and skills to employees, enabling them to perform their jobs better, leading to improved productivity, performance, and ultimately, achieving organizational goals; it is measured by assessing the impact on employee knowledge, skills, and behavior change after completing the training, as well as considering the return on investment for the organization.

The “effectiveness of a training program” refers to how well a training program achieves its intended goals, measured by the improvement in participants’ knowledge, skills, and performance on the job, ultimately contributing to positive business outcomes and demonstrating a return on investment (ROI) for the organization; it essentially assesses whether the training successfully transferred learned skills into real-world applications.

When information and ideas flow both ways, the chances of making a breakthrough will be higher than if information and decisions are taken in one direction. But the key decisions should be taken by the leaders, political/public service, which they are accountable for. Working manuals should be updated to disseminate new information across the department (Ho, 2007).

Every civil servant is a leader and a role model, whether to their teams, their colleagues or the customers they serve. By improving the way, we lead and manage change we can improve many aspects of our work, reducing bureaucracy, making efficiencies and becoming more responsive in delivering public service. Every employee should be made enthusiastic about responsibility and outcomes.

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