DEVELOPING A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH TO TRAINING
FOR THE AGRICULTURE ASSISTANTS OF THE DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE, SARAWAK THROUGH ACTION RESEARCH

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAs - Agriculture Assistants
AAO - Assistant Agricultural Officer
ADA - Assistant Director of Agriculture
AD(HRM) - Assistant Director for Human Resource Management Branch
AO(Dev) - Agricultural Officer (Development)
CDFP - Community Development Projects
DDA - Deputy Director of Agriculture
DRO - Divisional Research Officer
FO - Farmers organisation
HRD - Human Resource Development
IRAD - Integrated Rural Agriculture Development
NAP - National Agricultural Policy
SAAO - Senior Assistant Agricultural Officer
SSB - Sistem Saraan Baru (New Remuneration System)
ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the development of a systematic approach to training for the Agriculture Assistants of the Department of Agriculture, Sarawak. It was conducted through action research. The objectives of the study were to examine the current training system and to suggest ways to improve the system with a view to develop a systematic approach to training for the Agriculture Assistants. The study also attempted to explore the use of action learning concept in the systematic approach to training.

The action research group consisting of two Agriculture Assistants and four supervisors were selected from four districts of the Kuching and Samarahan Divisions. Action learning sets comprising the other Agriculture Assistants and District supervisors were also formed at the four districts. Information was gathered through series of brainstorming sessions of both the action research group and the action learning sets at the four districts. The brainstorming session also served as a venue for members to plan, act, observe and reflect together on the research activities. Questionnaires were also used to gather more information from the other Agriculture Assistants of the four districts. In its effort to develop a systematic approach to training for the Agriculture Assistants, the current status of training was analysed by the group. Through the analysis, the strengths and weaknesses of the system were identified. Based on the weaknesses, various strategies were proposed to improve the system. A systematic approach model to training for the Agriculture Assistants of the Department of Agriculture was developed by the group. The model basically consists of the four steps of the training cycle, namely: needs assessment, design, conduct and evaluation of training. The distinct feature of the model is the inclusion of people proposed to carry out the various activities in the training cycle. In view of the fact that most of the activities require a group of people to work together, the action learning approach is highly recommended for this purpose.

Although the study was not able to implement the training based on the strategies recommended, the group is positive that with the formation of action learning sets at the various level in the department, training system for the Agriculture Assistants could be further improved. The action learning approach not only provides avenue for participation and collaboration of members, it also contribute to the improvement of practices and provide an excellent avenue for development of the individuals. Further work to plan and conduct actual training using the action learning approach is necessary. It is also recommended that action learning approach be adopted in other activities that involve interaction of cross-functional officers in the department.
ABSTRAK


Walaupun kajian ini tidak dapat dilaksanakan seperti yang disyorkan, kumpulan penyelidikan tindakan berpendapat bahawa dengan pembentukan kumpulan pembelajaran tindakan pada beberapa peringkat di jabatan, sistem latihan bagi para Pembantu pertanian ini dapat diperbaiki. Pendekatan pembelajaran tindakan yang menggalakan penyertaan dan kerjasama di kalangan ahli kumpulan, bukan hanya memperbaiki amalan kerja tetapi ia juga merupakan ruang untuk pembangunan individu. Kerja-kerja lanjut mengenai perancangan dan pelaksanaan latihan yang sebenar dengan pendekatan pembelajaran tindakan hendaklah dilakukan. Adalah juga disyorkan agar pendekatan pembelajaran tindakan ini diterimakannya dalam kegiatan-kegiatan yang lain yang melibatkan pegawai-pegawai pelbagai fungsion di jabatan ini.

Introductions

The aim of training in the civil service is to acquire new knowledge, skills, and attitudes; to reduce and partly remove the gap between the employee's present level of competence and the requirements of the job; to prepare the employee for new demands; and to improve the employee's ability to cope with job changes.

For the purposes of this study, learning was defined as any change in behavior that can be attributed to the experience of learning, regardless of whether the learning was intentional or occurred as a result of the natural environment. Learning was not limited to the traditional academic realm; learning could also take place in all areas of an employee's life. Learning, in the context of the training program, was defined as an ongoing process of change in behavior that can be attributed to the experience of learning, regardless of whether the learning was intentional or occurred as a result of the natural environment. Learning was not limited to the traditional academic realm; learning could also take place in all areas of an employee's life.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Training is very essential for the success of any organization. This is especially true in the current conditions of a rapidly accelerating technological, economic, social and political change. In order for any organization to survive and prosper, they have to adapt in a flexible way to all the changes. The success in managing such adaptations will be decided partly by how well they use and develop the people who work for them. The people should be continuously trained so that they will be equipped with the knowledge, skill and attitude required to deal successfully with the impact of the technological, economic, and social change.

Training the people of an organization however does not mean that the people are learning. Sheal (1994), defined learning as a physical or mental process leading to a change in behaviour. He also stated that in order for people to learn, they must be motivated. In planning an effective training for employees of an organisation, there is thus a need to consider motivational factors that promote and encourage learning. As the people in the organizations are adults, factors that motivate adults to learn is one of the major factors that need to be given due consideration.

A systematic approach to training is thus necessary for training to be effective. According to Buckley and Caple (1995), the decision to apply a systematic approach to training is made when it is convinced that training is the most appropriate way to overcome a current or anticipated shortfall in performance. In the organizational context, one of the main purpose of training is to overcome such shortfall in performance. It is thus most appropriate that a systematic approach be adopted so that training can be planned based on the actual needs, conducted using the most effective training strategies and assessed based on its effectiveness in bringing about change. Unfortunately, the process of analysing training needs is quite tedious. It is often being overlooked by many organizations, especially the non-profit making organizations such as the public sector. Training strategies adopted by most organizations is also hardly given much attention. These results in the common phenomenon that most training takes place in a classroom. The effectiveness of such training is highly questionable bearing in mind that employees are all adults. Such method of training also makes it difficult to determine whether learning has taken place and whether what has been learned could be applied in the workplace. According to Reid (1991), to determine the most appropriate way of achieving training or learning outcome, the following three aspects need to be examined: i) approaches to training and development to meet different situations; ii) selection of appropriate training strategy; and iii) the learning strategy itself.

In many public sector organizations, employees are normally sent for external training for various reasons. Among some of the common reasons are: to increase competencies in certain subject matter; to fill up the quota allocated; for exposure to a new field; a reward for high performing employees; a punishment for certain misconduct; an opportunity to get out of the office; an opportunity to see new places; or directed by the higher authorities. Generally, these reasons exist as there is no policy on training and thus there is no basis to work on. Internal training though conducted by big organizations is often done on an ad-hoc manner, are mainly only to cater for their own immediate needs.

In view that such situation is prevailing in many organizations, it is thus the ultimate aim of the researcher to address some of the above-mentioned issues by attempting to...
develop a systematic approach for effective training of a group of staff in the Department of Agriculture Sarawak, that is the Agriculture Assistants.

Background of the Study

The Department of Agriculture Sarawak has set a vision to be the leading agency in commercial agricultural development by promoting and facilitating an environmentally friendly and commercial agriculture in the state. To realize its vision, the department has a total of about two thousand four hundred staff spread throughout the state of Sarawak. The department is structured in such that it has six functional Divisions and three Branches at the headquarters. Being a big department with diverse function, the department is represented at each of the nine administrative divisions throughout the state by the Divisional Agriculture Office at each division. The organizational structure of the department is as in Appendix A.

The main activities or programmes of the department are concentrated at the divisional levels. The success or failure of these programmes depend a lot on the staff of that particular division. The Divisional Agriculture Office is headed by an Assistant Director of Agriculture (ADA), assisted by officers of the Managerial and Professional group who represent the major discipline or function of the department. To ensure an effective implementation and supervision of projects, each division is then sub-divided into districts. At the district level, the officer in-charge is the Assistant Agricultural Officer (AAO) who is assisted by the technical support staff such as the Agriculture Assistants (AAs).

The AAs of the Sarawak Agriculture Department are the frontline workers of the department. They make up about thirty percent of the total staff strength and they are well spread out in the twenty nine Agriculture Districts in the state. The main role of the AAs is to facilitate and promote the development of commercial agriculture projects on the ground. In terms of academic qualification, most of the AAs attained Form Five education. Prior to their posting to the various districts, they have to attend a two-years Basic Agriculture Science Certificate Course conducted internally by the Agriculture Institute of the department.

Over the recent years, there had been a lot of changes in the department's policies and programmes. The traditional farming in Sarawak is rapidly giving way to commercial agriculture development. During this Seventh Malaysia Plan, the main thrust of the department's activity is the development of commercial agriculture projects. This change in programmes needs a paradigm shift on the part of the people in the whole department. Since the AAs are the frontline workers, they are the first who should be trained on these new programmes which is in line with the concept of commercialization of agriculture.

The department, through its Human Resource Management Branch has been actively implementing training programmes for the staff. The department was the first state department to do Training Needs Analysis (TNA) with the state appointed consultant in 1995. From the TNA report, training needs at organizational level and team level were identified. The needs were mostly on generic subjects (non-technical) which were meant mainly for officers in the managerial and professional group. As there were limitations to the exercise, the training needs for the technical support staff was not highlighted.

In 1996, generic training programmes identified as critical needs of the department were implemented for the managerial and professional group and the supervisory level of officers. In 1997, the department's training focus was on the Agribusiness Management Training for the frontline workers who were implementing and going to implement the commercial agricultural projects. The training design for the programme was developed by the trainers who are departmental officers. As had always been practised, the evaluation of the programme however was never given much attention.

Objectives

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iii.

iv.

Introduction
In order to enhance staff performance in any particular job, appropriate and effective training must be provided for the staff. The success of any training programme however depends on many factors, not only on the trainees but a whole range of other factors. It is thus the ultimate aim of this research to identify effective training strategies with a view to develop a systematic approach to training for the Agriculture Assistants of the department.

Statement of Problem

The Department of Agriculture, being a growing technical department is constantly facing technological changes in the agriculture sector. The state of Sarawak with its vast area of land has lots of potential for agricultural activities. This is especially so at this time of economic slowdown where the government’s emphasis is on food production. In view of these two factors, the department has been experiencing a lot of technological, economical, social and political changes over the last few years. These changes will continue to persist in the future, may be even at a more rapid pace. When this being the situation, the existing staff of the department is definitely not competent to deal with all the new programmes which are tailored to meet the current and future needs.

The capability of the AAs, who are the main implementors of the programmes and to deliver the required service to their clients is highly questionable. With their mere training in basic agriculture science, their effectiveness to perform their task is also questionable. The present training system of the department is very ad-hoc, without any proper focus and plan. How much can these type of training fulfill the needs of the AAs? As front-liners, the AAs are working at the district level, who then should be responsible for their training? In cases where training had been given by the department, has the training been geared towards the new programmes? Has appropriate training strategies been considered during the planning (if there is any)? How effective has the training been? Have the trainees been able to apply what they have learned in the workplace? Who is responsible to ensure that what has been learned is applied in the workplace?

With the above questions in mind, this study thus attempts to examine the present training system, identify appropriate training strategies and to develop a systematic approach to the on-going planning and conduct of training for the Agriculture Assistants (AAs) of the Sarawak Agriculture Department.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the research are:

i. To examine the strengths and weaknesses of the existing training system for the Agriculture Assistants (AAs) of the Sarawak Agriculture Department.

ii. To identify appropriate training strategies suitable for the Agriculture Assistants.

iii. To develop a systematic approach to the on-going planning and conduct of training for the Agriculture Assistants through action learning.

iv. To explore the use of action learning in training the AAs.
Training can be considered to be systematic when all the four stages of the training cycle have been carried out in a systematic manner. The four stages of training cycle are: Training Needs Analysis; Planning and Design of Training; Conduct of Training; and Evaluation of Training. Systematic training normally results in effective training. Training is considered effective when the staff (trainee) are competent, confident, committed and motivated in their work after the training. When the staff is competent, confident, committed and motivated in his work, his performance would definitely be improved. The improvement in performance of staff as a result of training is actually the ultimate aim in human resource development.

Assumptions of the Study:

1. A systematic approach in the planning and conduct of training results in effective training.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Systematic Training in relation to HRD
ii. Action learning approach is one of the possible ways to plan and conduct effective training for employees of an organization.

**Significance of the Study**

The study is expected to contribute to the overall improvement in the planning and conduct of training and development in the Sarawak Agriculture Department. Firstly, it will be the basis for the training section of the department to provide appropriate and effective training for the Agriculture Assistants in the department.

Secondly, it will serve as a guide for the training section to provide effective training for the other sectors of the staff or officers in the department.

Finally, when training is effective, staff of the department would be more competent, dedicated and committed towards their job which ultimately results in higher productivity.

**Definition of Terms**

Action Learning - A continuous process of planning, acting, observing and reflecting by a group of people working together to solve common work related problems with the aim to get things done in a better way, and at the same time developing both the individual and the organisation.

Agriculture Assistants - The technical support staff of the department who works in the District Agriculture Office as extension agents for the agriculture development projects.

Agriculture Department, Sarawak - A state government department that is responsible for the development of small holders agriculture in Sarawak.

Commercialization of Agriculture - Agricultural activities involving not only in the commodities production but also the processing and marketing aspect of it in order to obtain maximum profit from the agriculture enterprise.

Systematic approach to training - Training activity that is carried out according to the four basic steps in the training cycle, which are training needs analysis, planning and designing training, conduct of training and evaluation of training.

Task Analysis - A process of identifying the list of task for a particular job based on the job description. Based on the list of task identified, the knowledge, skills and abilities of the staffs are determined to formulate the training objectives of any training program.

Training - Any organized learning activity that is provided by the department, that focused on the present job of the staff. In our context, training activities include short course, seminars, conference, workshops, on-the-job training, symposia and study tours. It can be training organised by the department (in-house) or those organised by other agencies (external) which are attended by the staff of the department.

Training Needs - Needs for human performance improvement that can best be met by training of some kind.

Training Needs Analysis (TNA) - A process of examining training needs of an organisation and that of the staff based on their performance gap and then analysing how best the training needs might be met.

Training Strategies - Effective ways or means to plan, design, deliver and evaluate training activities in the organisation.
Introduction

Scope and Limitation of the Study

The main aim of this study is to develop a systematic approach to training for the AAs in Sarawak Agriculture Department. Systematic approach to training requires a thorough process of planning, implementation and evaluation of training. In view of the time constraint in this study, the researcher only managed to deal with the planning stage of the systematic approach where training needs assessment of the AAs was one of the major activities in the study. However, in planning training using the systematic approach, all steps involved in the training cycle is also being looked into.

In view that the department has already formulated its vision and mission, the department is quite certain of its main business and the direction it is heading to. Through the TNA exercise carried out in 1995, the organizational training needs has also been charted out. In line with the organizational needs, this study, thus attempt to look into ways to provide effective training for the AAs. One of the possible ways to provide effective training would be planning training in a participative way, whereby both the supervisors and the AAs themselves are involved in the process. This could be done through the action learning approach. Action learning set could be formed at the district level. In this study, four action learning sets were formed on a pilot basis. The districts were chosen because the district head and some of the staff were chosen as members of the Action Research Group.

The researcher had only about five months (from December 1997 to April 1998) to carry out the research. Within the five months period, the researcher also has to attend lectures in the campus. A total of six weeks, given one week at a time after every two to three weeks, were allocated during the five months period for the researcher to get back to the workplace to carry out the research. In most organisations around here, employees normally take leave during the months of December and January as it coincides with the school holidays. Hence meetings were not able to be done frequently during that period. During the five months period, the researcher only managed to collect data on the existing training system and gather information on training strategies. Based on the information gathered, a model of systematic approach to plan and conduct training was developed by the action research group. However, the model was not tested due to time constraint, as it takes quite some time to really do the planning of training, especially if external trainers were required. The researcher however managed to introduce the action learning concept to the four districts.

There are a total of about six hundreds AAs who are stationed throughout the state under the various functions or discipline of the department, such as Extension and Commodity Development, Farmers Institution, Research, Training Institute and the Farmers Training Centre. This study is however confined to the AAs doing the Extension and Crop Development work at the District Agriculture Office. Starting from this year, 1998, the AAs doing such job are designated as Area Staff or Specialist Staff. While the Area Staff are responsible to look after all the agriculture development activities in a specific regional area, the Specialist staff are those assigned to be specialised in one specific commodity in his respective district. These group of staff were selected because they form the majority of the AAs in the department and they played a major role in the implementation of the commercial agriculture projects. In view of time and financial constraints and also the homogeneity of the AA's work, this study is however, limited only to the AAs serving in four districts, namely Bau, Siburan, Samarahan and Serian of Kuching and Samarahan Divisions.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The chapter provides a review of work and research done on training, its benefits and factors affecting training. Before describing the systematic approach to training, the training cycle is also presented so as to show the various stages in the training process. The literature review on the systematic approach to training is given more emphasis by deliberating in detail each of the steps involved. Considering various factors that affect training effectiveness, the needs for effective training is also highlighted in the chapter. The chapter also highlighted other training strategies that had been adopted by writers in the literature. The last part of the chapter gives a view of employee training in Malaysia which is related to the topic of this study.

Definition of training

There are many definitions of training, depending on the context; such as training to improve work performance or to improve a sports-person or disabled persons' performance. The former context, where training is for improving work performance, is the concern of this study. Such being the case, the definition of training provided by the Department of Employment 'Glossary of Training Terms' (1978, 2nd Edition) as cited by Buckley and Caple (1995) as quoted below is applicable to the context of this study.

Training is a planned and systematic effort to modify or develop knowledge/skill/attitude through learning experience, to achieve effective performance in an activity or range of activities. Its purpose in the work situation is to enable an individual to acquire activities in order that he or she can perform adequately a given task or job.

The above definition of training means that training is a planned effort that aims to develop a person's knowledge, skills and attitude so as to improve his performance in the job. The same definition of training was also quoted by other writers such as Patrick (1992) and Bramley (1986). The emphasis that training is to improve performance in the job was also quoted by other writers such as Nadler and Wiggs (1986), Pont (1990), Newby (1992), Webster (1993), Bambrough (1993) and Gordon (1994). Patrick (1992) also stated that individuals showed improvement in performance in certain task due to training. He however deliberated that training is therefore ultimately concerned with theories or principles of learning and skill acquisition and that learning has to be manifested to improved performance at some task.

Training is often being defined in relation to learning. Nadler and Nadler (1989) defined training as an "organized learning that focus on the present job of learner". They emphasized on the "learning" that is provided by employers for the employees. They also emphasized the concept of "organized" because the concern for training is on intentional learning rather than incidental learning. Fisher, Schoenfeldt and Shaw (1990) emphasized the need to facilitate the learning of the job-related knowledge and skills by the employees. Webster (1993), stressed that training is the management of the learning process. Pont (1990), who supported similar view, stated that the learning process is the core of training.

To summarise what training is, a comprehensive definition provided by Bramley (1986) is very relevant to the context of this study. His definition is as follows:
Training should be a systematic process with some planning and control rather than random learning from experience.

Training should be concerned with changing concepts, skills and attitudes of people treated both as individuals and groups

Training is intended to improve performance in both the present and the following jobs and through this should enhance the effectiveness of the part of the organization in which the individual or group works.

Benefits of training

Systematic training benefits both the organization and the individuals who have been involved in the training program.

As quoted by Buckley and Caple (1995, 1996) and Brookes (1995), the benefits of training from the organization's point of view include: helping organizations to achieve its objectives, increasing productivity through less wastage, fewer accidents, less absenteeism, lower staff turnover, and increasing customer's satisfaction. Mangham (1995) reported that training of people is fundamental to efficiency and progress of the organization. The role of training to enable business organization to face challenges of business change by raising level of competence of their people who are responsible for initiating, guiding and implementing important business decision is quoted by Dingle (1995). Buckley and Caple (1995) also mentioned that the benefits shared by both the organization and the trainees can often develop enthusiasm towards the process of learning and development. This in turn help to create a learning organization that is more flexible in dealing with and responding to present and future demands.

In terms of benefits to the individuals, Buckley and Caple (1995) reported that trainees may gain greater intrinsic or extrinsic job satisfaction. This is because training make them more competent in their job thus giving them the personal satisfaction, increase level of confidence and raising of morale and team spirit. A similar view was also put up by Sibthorpe (1991), where he stated that training provides motivation, stimulates interest at work, helps trainers develop presentation skill through role play and syndicate work and finally increases knowledge of the individuals concerned. Lengerman (1995), reported on the tangible benefits of training to the individuals. Based on his study conducted in one firm, he found that workers reap substantial benefits from training, whereby worker who were trained outside the firm raised earnings by more than ten percent while those trained inside the firm raised earnings by eight percent.

Apart from giving benefits to the organisation and the individuals, benefits of training in an organization can be seen from three aspects; its benefits to the task, to the team and to the individual. Sibthorpe (1991) described training benefits to the task in such a way that training provides skills to people doing the task; enable business to change with changing needs and circumstances; increases productivity in order for business to be more competitive; improves expertise to produce quality products and services; reduces the chances of mistakes and it standardizes work.

As to the training benefits to the team, Sibthorpe(1991) stressed that training is required for new recruits to exchange views and information among team members; realizes the "Hwathorne effect" and training acts as a venue to generate ideas from staff.

Apart from bringing benefit to the organisation and the individuals, training also benefits the country as a whole. Lyn (1996) reported that aggressive training and development provided for the upper echelon of managers in Taiwan makes the country very successful economically.

In view that training benefits both the organisation and the individuals, training of employees in the organisation is thus very important. However, in this information age,
where there is so much information and changes in technology, there is a need to look at various factors that affect training in organisation.

**Factors affecting training**

There are many factors affecting the success of training in an organization. The organisation itself plays a very important role in the success or effectiveness of training, (Wexley and Latham, 1991). According to them, the following aspects of the organization play an important role in determining the success of training:

i. The organization's corporate strategy, which includes strategic training plan based on the short and long term objectives of the organization

ii. The organization structure which locate training staff in both the corporate (headquarters) and the regional level.

iii. The ability of organizations to adapt to the rapidly changing technologies through continuous upgrading of their people via specialized training programs.

iv. The attitudes of key people especially the CEO and the line managers towards training.

v. The availability of training budget

vi. The capability of training manager, trainers and training staff to plan and deliver training that can meet the organizational needs.

Other writers such as Sheal (1994), Pont (1990) and Webster (1993) however stressed the role of learners themselves in making training effective. Sheal (1994) reported that there has been a significant shift in the focus of training over the recent years. According to him, the emphasis has moved from the teacher or trainer, the transmission of information and how best this can be improved, to a focus on the learner and how best to promote learning. His idea is similar to that of Pont (1990) who stressed that the emphasis in training should change from WHAT (what knowledge or skill to impart) to HOW (how to help people to learn) to ask questions to acquire skills of self-directed inquiry. According to him, for training to be effective, it is thus very important to know how the people in the organisation learn. Sheal (1994), who reckoned that the people in the organization are adults, recommended that the ten factors which promote adult learning should be given due consideration by trainers. The ten factors that promote adult learning according to Sheal (1994) are as follows:

1. **Motivation to learn**
   Adults may be motivated to learn something for a variety of reasons: a change in their lives or their jobs; a desire for job advancements; a love of learning or the desire to do something new. In some cases the learner may be sufficiently motivated to overcome obstacles such as poor facilities or boring trainer but in most cases, the learner must have the initial need and desire to learn, in order for training to be successful. The trainers must therefore be able to motivate learners to learn.

2. **Comfortable learning environment**
   For many adults training can seem a rather strange and somewhat fearful experience. Among the fears and anxieties that learners often bring with them to the training session include: fear of trainers who might expose them in some way; fear of other group members who could laugh at mistakes and thus diminish the learner's self-esteem; and fear of failure, of not performing well and the possible consequences of this for the learner's career. The trainer therefore must be able to create an atmosphere which is free of fear and anxiety and in which participants are physically and psychologically comfortable.
Literature Review

iii. Individual learning needs and styles
In view that individuals have different interest and needs, they too have their own preferred style of learning. There is a need therefore for trainers to provide a variety of activities and training methods to cater for the participants' differing learning needs. Trainers also have to vary the activities and methods to cater for the differing learning styles.

iv. Previous knowledge and experiences
Adults themselves are rich resources as they have a rich foundation of knowledge and experience and they have also acquired a large number of habits and patterns of thought. Thus, they do not come to training session with a blank slate. Trainers should therefore recognize and respect their previous knowledge and experience by making as many associations as possible with the information already stored in their memory.

v. Control over learning content and activities
People are happier, and work better when they have some control over their working environment. Similarly, adults tend to learn more and are more involved when they have some control over the training content and activities. Trainers therefore should involve learners in the diagnosis of their own needs, work on their training content and to evaluate themselves.

vi. Focus on dealing with realistic problems and applying learning
Unlike children, adults are less subject- or information-centred; they are more problem- or performance-centred. They are usually concerned with learning how to deal with problems that they are faced with now and want fairly immediate solutions. Training should thus be linked closely to the work-related problem and to deal with specific problem areas related to a topic rather than to deal comprehensively with a whole subject.

vii. Mental and physical participation
Involvement is the key to learning and people learn more from being "players" rather than "spectators" in a training course. It is thus important for trainers to get learners to participate in the training activity through oral participation (questioning, discussions, participant presentations), written participation (quizzes, completion of worksheets, using flipchart to report on an activity), group activity (through discussions, games, case studies, team projects) and physical activity.

viii. Provision of sufficient time for learning
Based on research, learning is increased when the brain is allowed to pause. Trainers should thus promote learning by providing short breaks and time for assimilating the new information or practicing the skills already taught.

ix. Opportunities to practise or apply learning
Participants need to be able to practise and apply what they have learnt if they are going to remember their training and transfer it to real-life situations. There is thus a need for practice in training, so that new behaviour patterns are learned and practiced in active learning situations.

x. Measures of competence or performance
As human learning is far too complex to be described by observable, measurable, terminal behaviours, objectives of the training should be clearly spelt out so as to specify the directions of growth.

Webster (1993) who supported the learner-oriented approach to training as opposed to trainer-oriented stressed that the aim of such training is to stimulate and help learners to learn rather than to impose upon them the knowledge, skills and attitudes or value systems.
have their own preferences for learning and catering to the needs of knowledge fixed habits and a blank slate.

Learning control over their more involved activities. Trainers work on their

The Training Cycle

The training cycle is a planned approach to training that involves four main stages.

The four main stages according to Bambrough (1993) are:

i. The identification of training needs
Training activity normally starts with the training needs analysis so as to identify the training needs. This is normally conducted through survey, workshop sessions or through performance appraisal. The identification of training needs can be done at various levels, such as at the organisational level, the team level or at the individual levels.

ii. Planning to meet the identified needs
Once the training needs had been identified, proper planning for the training should be done. This involves planning the learning strategies, the course content, the training activity, the delivery and planning all the necessary logistic requirements of the course.

iii. The implementation of the plan
Training should be conducted only after all the planning work has been done.

iv. The evaluation of the plan
Training has to be evaluated at the various stages such as during the training itself and also after the training so as to assess the effectiveness of the training.

According to Sheal (1994), the four stages evolves in a cycle as it is a continuous process. Diagrammatically it can be shown as in Figure 2.

![Training Cycle Diagram](image)

Figure 2. The Training Cycle (Source: Sheal P.R., 1994, p12)
Pont (1990) describes five distinct phases in the training cycle, all of which logically follow on from the previous stage. The cycle starts with the needs analysis which is then followed by the planning and designing of the training approach. Once the design has been worked out, the training materials are then developed before training can be delivered. The stage of developing the training materials by itself is the additional stage that differentiates this model from the basic model. After the training has been delivered, there is a need for it to be evaluated. The evaluation stage does not only cycle back to the first stage of analysing need but it also cycles back into the other three stages as shown in Figure 3.

![Figure 3. The five-stage training cycle (Source: Pont, T., 1990, p3)](image)

The knowledge of training cycle is thus very important for planning and managing of training activities in an organization. It determines the various processes involved in the various stages of the cycle. Both of the cycles presented above however shows that training activity always starts with analysis of the organizational needs and that evaluation stage does not end by itself but continues back to the analysis stage.

Systematic Approach to Training

To ensure that the resources, people, facilities, time and money are well utilized, organisations need to plan its training in a systematic way. (Bambrough, 1993). A systematic approach to training can be interpreted as a logical relationship between the sequential stages in the training cycle. (Buckley and Caple, 1996). According to them, the approach consists of four key activities which are essential in the training process. The four key activities are:

1. Analysing Needs
2. Planning & Designing the Approach
3. Developing the Training Materials
4. Delivering the Training
Identifying the training needs which is the mismatch between what the job demands and what the prospective trainee possesses in knowledge, skills, attitudes and experience

ii. Designing and planning the training which is working out the content, the sequence in which it can best be presented, the most appropriate learning strategies to use, the equipment and the other resources that are needed to support the training and the amount of time that it will take.

iii. Conducting the training which is not merely showing or telling but the application of a number of skills to assist learning of the trainee.

iv. Assess effectiveness of training which involves internal validation (whether trainees have achieved the objectives of the training), external validation (whether trainees are able to apply their knowledge and skills to the job) and evaluation (assessment of the total value of training).

The systematic approach involving the four key activities as mentioned above is a working tool that enable trainers to monitor the progress of their training projects. These four key activities can be shown diagrammatically as in Figure 4 or what Buckley & Caple (1995) called the basic model of a systematic approach to training.

Figure 4. A basic model of systematic approach to training
(Source: Buckley, R and J. Caple, 1995, p27)

Since the diagrammatic representation of the approach is a working tool, different trainers would have different format of the model. As quoted by Buckley and Caple (1995), whatever the format, all models are likely to have individual variations around the four key activities. An example of such variation is their own model which consist of fourteen stages. According to them, the most important point about systematic process is that it allows trainer to plan and to work realistically within their constraints. Reid (1991), stated that the systematic approach to training is where needs can be assessed and jobs are subjected to rigorous analysis to yield details of the necessary objectives and content of training as well as the desired standards of performance.