TRAINING FOR BETTERMENT: A MODEL FOR TRAINING OF PROFESSIONALS IN A DIVERSE ORGANISATION

Freidoon A. Khavarpour and Bruno Gelonesi
The University of Sydney, Australia

Abstract: Staff development is one of the pillars of organisational advancement. A well-trained employee has the capacity to increase the organisational output and improve his/her individual social capacity. The conventional method of staff development trains each tier of decision-makers for their particular skill needs. The problem with this model is that capital gain and financial results might be the only mutual outcome of these training.

The proposed model sees the staff as individuals who might have similar needs and interests towards certain philosophical and cultural views holding the organisation together. The model, already in practice in one of the Pacific Island countries, shows how one might find a common interest in the organisation and how the staff might be trained within the parameter of this undertaking.

INTRODUCTION

The structure of the organisation is a guide to define the work practice, allocate duties and coordinate work. The structure helps to understand the division of the labour, how decision making being made and how the communication between the players take place.

Organisational structure usually take the various shapes but they are generally look like a pyramid with many workers at the lower levels, fewer at the middle and still a fewer one at the top. Decision making and communication channels are indicated by the structure, showing who makes decisions, who will carry out these decisions and how these decisions are communicated to various levels of the organisation. However the height of the organisation and level of hierarchy is not uniform in all organisations. There are those which might become flat as the result of less number of operational levels and those with multiple operations that make up the tall organisation.

In summary organisational structure indicates the level of function and the communication process in which an organisation operates. In all, the process of decision making is generally at the top level with a few organisations having their decision made at bottom of the ladder.

Staff Development

Staff development is one of the pillars of organisational advancement. The impetus for an organisational success, might be argued, depends on the skills and know how of the workforce. A well trained workforce not only has the capacity to increase the organisational output, at least in a short term, but increases social benefit at both individual and community levels. For organisations to succeed a great deal of inputs, financial or otherwise, are invested in the setting up and conducting staff development programmes.

Approaches to the staff development in many organisations has been geared towards training of each tier of decision-makers in their particular job related skill and needs. This traditional and conventional practice treats the development of individuals as separate from the development of the organisation in which they work (Darling-Hammond, 1990). The top managers receive their training in areas of organisational re-structuring, management skills and similar topics. Down the

ladder the next tier is trained in means and ways of managing various departments and finally those dealing with the day to day contacts with the public are taught how to deal and satisfy customers demands on their routine and daily customer relationships. The problem with this model is that beside the outcome such as capital gain and financial results there are hardly any other common interest resulting from these capacity buildings. Furthermore, the staff development service has little or no involvement of the clients and those who will be the recipient of these training. In many of these development programmes, staff are asked to reflect on aspects of their work for a better understanding of the individual worker leading towards future efforts which might be handled more effectively. Although such approach might be proven to be effective in individual learning (Warren-Little, 1990) it is still questionable where they are sufficient in improving organisational development and interest (Wood, Thompson, & Russell, 1981).

Clearly what is needed then is a model of staff development which not only facilitate individual learning and improvement of quality of individual work practices but one which support and facilitates organisational development at the same time. Such a model of staff development will need to go beyond transmission and development of staff know how to a model of mutual and shared visions and common interest.

The process

The process starts with engaging all stakeholders in defining organisational needs, beyond personal interest and individual work practices. This means a need assessment, searching for organisational vision, within the context of organisational overall vision, goals and mission. Beyond this point is turning these common understudying and visions into a staff development policy that encourages common interests and mutual vision and interests. Such an action plan looks at individual staff at micro level and assists them to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to excel in their work and designated tasks. It also insist in development of staff activities towards group work and team building by drawing upon the individual and collective vision of staff at meso level. Finally the plan will assist the organisation to develop a strong and coherent framework to support and encourage the realisation of the mutual vision at macro level (Marshall, SJ, 1998).

The Case Study

Yooroang Garang: School of Indigenous Health Studies was invited to develop "…a fully costed plan…for the development of the Information, Education, and Communication [IEC] Unit" [later Solomon Islands Centre for Health Promotion {SIHPC}] by the Human Development Sector Unit-East Asia and Pacific Region of the World Bank in late June 1999.. The final Action Plan was to be implemented in two provinces of Makira and Guadalacanal (Clapham, 1999, p.1).

Three members of the Yooroang Garang visited Solomon Islands in the first week of June 1999. The team started the task by visiting, discussing and interviewing relevant personnel throughout their stay in Solomon Islands. Such needs assessment was followed by one of the team members visit to a community health centre; interviewing members of Malaria, Maternity Care and STD team, discussing the needs of the unit with Non-Government Organisation [NGO] management and attended a one day NGO seminar in Honiara. Ministry of Health and Medical Services [MHMS] and World Health Organisation (WHO) in Solomon Islands provided the team with valuable information, data, reports and necessary documents.

A preliminary analysis of the current situation in Solomon Islands health system indicated a number of important factors, which undermines the ability of health care in Solomon Islands (Clapham, Khavarp0our, Gelonesi, 1999). Shortage of trained health personnel, shortage of medical equipment, high population growth and financial strains are a few highlighted in the review of

health system in 1996 (Solomon Islands Ministry of Health and Medical Services, 1996). But a vibrant and engaging system of collaboration was evident and is still functioning in many parts of the organisations in the Solomon Islands. The presence of a large contingency of Non Government Organisations [NGO's] and similar institutions in the islands indicated a high level of activities among these groups. From the interviews and discussions with various groups it was evident that collaboration and engagement in mutual goals and objectives were also taking place at national, provincial and local levels. These were the strength of the Solomon Islands community that needed nurturing and developing.

To engage in this community building process the development of "horizontal" rather than the "vertical" ties between the government institutions, NGOs at local, state and national level was paramount to the success of any initiative, health or otherwise. However, these engagements needed to be focused and directed towards mutual interests and outcomes. Participation in these mutual engagements, and in this particular case those engaged in health promotion initiatives, required specific skills and training, which were missing at many levels.

Such specific need which was mutually recognised by all at various levels, was the health promotion (see Figure 1). However, the needs of each level for health promotion training varied as their responsibilities differed. The top-level decision-makers required training in the meaning and concept of health promotion. The second tier of decision-makers were more in need of learning how collaborative efforts might influence health promotional activities at local levels. The workers, at lower level of decision making, had interest in developing skills in designing health promotion programmes, implementing them in earnest and evaluate the outcome. Based on these findings and using Bloom's The Cognitive Domain Taxonomy of Educational Objectives a Plan of Action was initiated (Bloom, 1956).

The Outcome

The Plan has now moved to implementation stage. After receiving conformation from the World Bank and Solomon Islands' Ministry of Health and Medical Services for the Plan and allocation of funding a number of development has taken place.

The training of the 2nd tier staff is now under way. Three of the staff from the new SIHPC are now attending Yooroang Garang programmes, one at undergraduate and the other two at postgraduate levels. Their curriculums are geared towards reorganisation and restructuring of the SIHPC. In addition to the foreshadowed training in policy development [see Figure 1] they are looking into areas of programme development and strategic planning.

Funds are now made available by the University of Sydney's International Development Fund to train 3-4 of the top management and Head of the NGO's [1st tier] to attend a three days workshop at Yooroang Garang in November-December 2000.

Meanwhile, the 3rd tier training needs will be served through various training, arranged by the three students attending classes at Yooroang Garang.

Figure 1

Developing staffs' individual and organisational needs

Bloom's Concepts	Meaning	Who	Application/training needs
Evaluation	• Judgments on values and purposes	**1st tier** • Top General Managers • Department Heads • Head of the NGO organisations • Solon Islands Centre for Health Promotion team	• To approve health promotion policies, • To approve funding for health promotion activities.
Synthesis Analysis	• Ability to put together elements/parts to form a whole • Ability to breakdown elements/parts to understand the relationships	**2nd tier** • Managers • Team leaders • NGO representatives • HEO's at Malaria, Maternal care and, STD	• To develop policies in health promotion • To advocate health promotion policies
Application Comprehension Knowledge	• Ability to use abstracts in concrete situations • Ability to recall methods/processes • Ability to recall patterns	**3rd tier** • Local HEO's at provincial level • Staff working/involved in health promotion activities	• To design, implement and evaluate health promotion programmes

REFERENCES

Bloom, BS (1956), (Edited), *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, Handbook 1, The cognitive Domain,* Mckay, New York.

Clapham, K (1999) *Proposal*, Unpublished Consultancy Proposal to the Ministry of Health and Medical Services and the world Ban, Sydney.

Clapham, K., et al (1999), *Solomon Islands: Health Development Project Information, Education and, Communication Unit,* Unpublished Report to the World Bank and Solomon Islands Department of Health and Medical Services.

Darling-Hammond, L. 1990, Teacher Professionism: Why and how? Lieberman, A [Edited], *Schools as collaborative cultures: Creating the future now* , Falmer Press, London, pp. 25-50.

Marshall, SJ, (1998), *Improving senior secondary education: What can we learn from teachers' experiences of the SACE?* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Alberta, Edmonton (AB)

Solomon Islands Ministry of Health and Medical Services (1996), *The Comprehensive Review of Health Services Report,* Solomon Islands.

Warren-Little, J. (1990), Teachers as colleagues, Lieberman, A [Edited], *Schools as collaborative cultures: Creating the future now* , Falmer Press, London, pp. 25-50.

Wood, F., Thompson, S., & Russell, F. (1981), Designing effective staff development programs, Dillon-Peterson (Edited), *Staff development/organisational development,* Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Alexandria [VA].