

# Training and Development for Growth

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*Having clarity on the objectives of any learning process that is being offered helps to meet both training and developmental needs thereby ensuring greater opportunities for systemic change.*

From the earliest times, living beings have progressed step by step, learning to live life. Birds learn to fly, animals get trained in the art of hunting and human beings learn to talk and walk. The family becomes our first school of training. Our life's experiences are our training ground; every experience imparts some learning to us, enriching us and adding value to our lives.

Training, thus, is an integral part of our life and, at every stage, we play the role of either a participant or a trainer. In PRADAN, where we are engaged with people, creating their agency. It is important, therefore, to learn the basics of training, which will help us make learning a less difficult proposition for others whom we are supposed to help. This article is a sincere attempt towards understanding the basics of training.

Training and development are often used as interchangeable words, training leads to development of some sort and developmental needs spur our training needs! However, there is a subtle difference, and understanding this will help us decide which 'needs' require more attention and what should drive our training objectives. Training is more about acquiring a skill and knowledge whereas development is about the growth of the individual/group/society. Training is the systematic development of the attitude, knowledge and skill patterns required by a person to perform a given task adequately whereas development is the growth of the individual in terms of ability, understanding and awareness. For example, the ability to read/understand the entry in a SHG pass book by a member is a training need whereas the ability to build understanding, confidence and awareness of the fact that, in spite of having a little or no education and despite always being led by the man of her family, the SHG member can do this task efficiently, is a developmental need. As Pradanites, we focus on the growth of the individual member; however, being aware of this subtle difference, shapes the design of our module and methodology.

To make a training more meaningful, all teaching, training and learning must be aligned with individual potential and the wider life development needs; this wide, flexible, individual approach to human development is vital for any workplace be it a multinational or an NGO. I would prefer to substitute the word 'training' with 'learning' because this will belong to the learner, whereas training traditionally 'belongs' to the trainer or the organization, which is conducting the training.

Based on the focus and the outcome of the training module, there are primarily two kinds of approaches to training—trainer-controlled and learner-controlled. In the trainer-controlled approach, the trainer guides trainees through a series of lessons, exercises and activities to achieve the final objectives. The trainer controls the overall speed and direction of the training. This approach is best suited when training needs to be completed quickly and the trainees are motivated to learn a particular skill.

In the learner-controlled approach, the learners have the freedom to choose the topics and the lesson plan, and provide feedback when necessary; although they are not in full control, they have considerable degree of freedom. This approach is more suitable when the learners are a diverse group and require time to learn the content.

Training needs to focus more on the holistic development of the person in focus rather than only transferring skills and knowledge. An effective personal development must consider the individual potential (natural abilities often hidden or suppressed),

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individual learning styles and whole person development (life skills, in other words). Whereas training or teaching seeks to develop people (rather than merely being focused on a specific qualification or skill), their development must be

approached on a more flexible and individual basis than in traditional paternalistic (authoritarian, prescribed) methods of design, delivery and testing. Thus, choosing a mixed approach (both trainer-controlled and learner-controlled) is more likely to give us a balanced outcome.

The thumb rule is that the 'need' for the training should be felt by learners and they must articulate the same in clear terms. Learners' commitment starts from here. In the context of PRADAN, this requires more effort on the part of the facilitator. Prior to the actual training session, many sub-groups/individual interactive sessions are required to help the trainees clearly articulate their needs. From these flow the objective and design.

Feedback and evaluation are essential for people to know how they are progressing and for their confidence. People's commitment to learning relies heavily on confidence and a belief that the learning is achievable; therefore, the way the tests and assessments are designed and managed, and how the results are presented to the learners are very important parts of the learning and development process.

Many practitioners are focusing today on the return-of-investment model in the arena of training. In simple terms, this is the value that any organization is deriving out of the

training that has been imparted. In PRADAN, we have to look at this model in terms of how the trainee is finally benefited from the process and what value additions have happened in her/his family life and social status.

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Evaluation of the learning imparted, in terms of how well that has been acquired, honed and implemented in the real work-life situation, is the key. But before embarking on evaluation, it is important to know how trainees assess themselves on a particular skill or knowledge before the training (pre-training assessment), followed by a re-look at this assessment after the training. This will give the trainer a clear picture of the trainees' real assessment, which can be mapped against the post-training self-assessment. For example, a participant may give a score of 6 out of 10 on a certain skill set in the pre-training self assessment. Later, when asked to review the same score after the training session, there are chances that the participant will change the score 6 to 4 or even 3 because when the participant gave that score, s/he did not have a very clear picture of what constitutes that skill set. After attending the training, s/he gets a clear picture, and her/his own assessment about the pre-training self changes. There are chances that the same rating may go up; but often, it goes down. A comparison of this with the post-training self assessment helps us understand how far, in the participant's own view, s/he has been able to learn from the training.

Based on the assessment, an evaluation plan can be developed, in consultation with the field supervisor. It has been noticed that

during the training session, if the action plans are well formulated, following these when the participants are back in the field/work place will ensure application of the learning. These action plans should include a description of the action intended,

comments on how they intend to implement it, a timescale for starting and completing it and any resources required. A detailed action plan always helps the learners to consolidate their thoughts. The action plan will have a secondary use in demonstrating to the trainers, and anyone else interested, the types and levels of learning that have been achieved.

The field of training and development is vast and many eminent thinkers have expounded various theories. Depending upon the objective and the purpose of a particular training setting, one can make use of these. Here are a few general tips for designing and delivering a training programme.

After the Need Assessment is done, we need to:

- ♦ **Define the objective of the programme:** This is of utmost importance. The objective of any training programme is that the participants achieve specific skills or knowledge after participation. When writing the objective, ensure that it answers the following principles:
  - ♦ An observable behaviour expected from the trainee.
  - ♦ Condition under which the performance should occur.
  - ♦ The degree of performance expected of the trainees.

For example: In an SHG meeting, members should be able to recall the amounts loaned and repaid by each member, without the accountant's assistance. Here the observable behaviour is the ability to speak/share these details in public. The 'condition' here is 'in SHG meetings' and the 'degree of performance' is 'without the accountant's assistance'. In this objective, the developmental need is the ability to speak/share in public. An increase in the confidence level of the members and an increased awareness that they have the ability to clarify and confront.

- ♦ **Develop a lesson plan:** A lesson plan comprises elements such as the content to be covered, the sequence in which it is to be covered, the time duration for each activity, the instructional methods to be used and the type of media to be used. A lesson plan acts a guide to the trainer during the actual delivery.
- ♦ **Select a training strategy:** The trainer decides how s/he wants to proceed further with the training schedule. Whether it will be a trainer-controlled approach or a learner-controlled approach needs to be decided first. A combination approach works well too.
- ♦ **Select a training delivery method:** Depending upon the experience and situation of the participants, training can be delivered either 'on the job' or through 'classroom' sessions. On-the-job situations provide the trainees with real work situations, opportunities and problems and these lead to real experiences. It also is an opportunity for learning through day-to-day interaction

with the stakeholders and seniors. Classroom sessions can be further detailed into five methods, namely:

- o Lecture method: By giving lectures to the trainees about a topic or a subject.
- o Computer-based method: By using computer software/web-based technology as a resource to make the participants understand and practise any topic/subject on which the training is imparted.
- o Discussion method: By informal/formal discussions among the participants and the facilitator to clear concepts.
- o Experiential method: By providing simulated experiences for the participants to learn from.
- o Audiovisual method: By using audiovisual technology.

Sometimes, combination of methods are used in a single training module.

Once the training session comes to an end, it is important to get feedback from the trainees on how beneficial the programme has been, and develop an evaluation and application of learning plan with them.

Learning is a continuous process and the wheel keeps on rolling, only the participants are different. Today's participants become tomorrow's trainers. A trainer too learns something from every training and, thus, s/he is a participant too in the learning process. Simultaneity of both roles is the essence of this process.