

INTRODUCTORY DIAGNOSIS OF MANAGEMENT TRAININGS ON INNOVATIONS. PART II

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Summary: This paper is about the introductory diagnosis of trainings on innovations which are offered by the best and most popular training companies in Poland. The opening research was conducted in December of 2011 among 20 companies claimed as the best Polish companies in the training sector. The issues described in the text are: types of knowledge receivers, training approaches, strategies for trainings and trainer's techniques and skills. The whole text consists of two parts: the second one (Part 2), which is here, covers the third and the fourth issues mentioned above and closing conclusions. The conclusions are both practical and methodical. They would open a field of profound research in trainings on innovations for companies. In the Part 1 there are an introduction and two first issues.

Keywords: training companies, strategies for trainings, trainer's techniques and skills.

1. Introduction

This paper is the second part of the topic concerning the introductory diagnosis of trainings on innovations that are offered by the best and most popular training companies in Poland. Authors who work as academic teachers and occasionally as trainers indicated following aims of the article are:

- initial research on trainings on innovations,
- preparation to start a project of scientific research on trainings as an important sort of educational services,
- formulating suggestions for business universities in the line of improving their offer for students.

In addition authors would like to invite for a discussion on opportunities of improving programmes of business studies towards making them more practical.

While in the first part the authors focused on the types of knowledge receivers and training approaches and models, this article presents the main issues of **strategies for trainings, techniques** used by trainers and **skills** that are essential in the process. The authors did a review of available literature and linked found thesis with a results of opening research among Polish training companies.

2. Strategies for trainings

Studies of strategic HRM argue that provision of training is a test for organisation's **strategic approach to HR**. Further, firms that are able to implement a bundle of high-performance work practices invest in skills development. P. Boxall argues that in a services environment, a **firm's competitive strategy** is critical in deciding the markets it operates in and, consequently its ability to implement high-performance work practices and provide

opportunities for skills development. What is not clear though is do only highly differentiated service providers engage in skills development? Are there no opportunities for skills development in mass service markets? This aspect needs further exploration [1].

Extant training models explicate factors influencing training provision. One of them is **the theory of market orientation (MO)** [2, 3] and more specifically, the **market-based organizational learning framework** [4] is considered for any novel explanations. Market-based organizational learning framework is useful in understanding clients' needs and how a firm develops client-specific capabilities, which is critical for service delivery. J. M. Sinkula et al. were the first to test the interrelationships between **organisation's learning orientation (LO)**, which formally connects organizational values [5, 6], to an organisation's market information processing behaviours or its MO and organizational actions [2, 3].

The review of training companies run by authors of the article show that many firms providing trainings emphasize the fact of **being oriented on their clients**. Such declarations are expressed in their missions and general strategies. Examples of the marketing approach among training companies are i. a.:

- Gdańska Fundacja Kształcenia Menedżerów – their mission is to help other companies in **improving their market efficiency** [7],
- BEAVER Doradztwo Personalne – the company perceives its role as honorable **representation of client's business on the market** [8],
- House of Skills – declares that its staff is deepening their knowledge about different branches' needs. They observe changes in core sectors of economy (polish, european and international), analyze a situation and needs of managers, run international research to compare challenges for managers in Poland and rest of the world [9].

While no theoretical perspective for a best practices approach exists within the training or HRD literature, precedent for "best practices" research can be found in the larger domain of HR. Research among trainers aimed to find best practices for supporting training transfer reveal many interesting conclusions. S. Wood reports that **high commitment management** is "universally applicable" [10]. M. Huselid states in his empirical study that **high performance work practices and good internal fit** should lead to positive outcomes "for all types of firms" [11]. S. Wood and M. Albanese claim the "universalism" of high commitment management [12]. J. Pfeffer advocates a set of best human resource practices for the benefit of the firm and its employees essentially related to an empirical search for appropriate "HR bundles" [13].

It is quite easy to find a confirmation for above thesis in the authors' review of training companies. It turned out that polish training firms are very conscious of the HRD philosophy. They try to convince their clients that **human resources management is very sensitive area in every organization**. Trainings can help to make managers be more aware of the fact that human resources need investments. More over thanks to trainings the idea of HRD becomes closer to managers who engage themselves more in the process. The founders of Mazowieckie Centrum Szkoleń Sp. z o.o. express an opinion: „In our opinion trainings prepared on request are the most effective form of development staff's qualifications [14]”. Megalit Instytut Szkoleń organizes the scheme "Blue Ocean Strategy – dedicated to Renee Mauborgne and W. Chan Kim" and assumes that thanks to this clients have an opportunity to get a new regard on business [15].

There is a suggestion for HR executives that they consider how their training professionals receive and are held accountable for developing knowledge on evidence-

based training transfer practices. Organization can support opportunities for trainers to converse with recognized **training transfer** experts involve trainers in sponsored research on assessing transfer interventions, and enable trainers to seek formal and informal opportunities to learn about proven transfer practices. Moreover, trainers need to understand clearly both the enablers and barriers to training transfer that are unique to their organization. Although robust support is offered for enabling strategies such as assessing learner and transfer climate needs these interventions may vary based on organizational structure, training content, and work environment support. HR practitioners should revisit the value placed on **trainers' professional development efforts**. Trainers' desire to seek out sources of learning on transfer will be tied to the importance they and others place on that information and how they perceive their role in the organization [16].

The table 1 presents the most important information on training firms that participated in the research run by the authors.

Tab. 1. Characteristics of training companies concerning their strategic approach towards trainings

Company	Strategic approach towards trainings
Gdańska Fundacja Kształcenia Menedżerów	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cooperation with overseas business schools, hiring about 30 lecturers from abroad, - trainers of international-class - mission: helping organizations in improving their market efficiency
Ernst&Young Academy of Business Sp. z o.o.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - solving business problems
Nowe Motywacje Sp. z o.o.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - fitting to clients' business needs
PROFES Centrum Kształcenia i Doradztwa S.j.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - visiting companies which implemented the Kaizen approach
CT PARTNERS SA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - knowledge on a high world level - looking for the best practices in the IT area
VADEMECUM – Konferencje i Szkolenia Sp. z o.o.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - trainings on sales skills are aimed to enforce a company's position on the market
Moderator s.c.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - experience in helping companies during economy transformation in Poland - projecting training programmes on the basis of collected experience - creating own methods, research models
Lauren Peso Polska SA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - close cooperation with a client - working on a client's development
SYNTEZA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - orientation on clients
BEAVER Doradztwo Personalne	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - honorable representing of client's business - professional research on client's needs
Symposium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - fitting clients' needs

House of Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - partnership, cooperation, open communication with clients - diagnosis of a strategy, structure, processes, organizational culture and people's potential - observing changes in core sectors of economy (polish, European and international)
Infor Training Sp. z o.o.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - being familiar with the best market practices
Mazowieckie Centrum Szkoleń Sp. z o.o.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - adjusting training programmes to clients' needs - cooperation with clients - research
GB Resources Polska Sp. z o.o.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - mission directed towards satisfying business needs
ProFirma Sp. z o.o.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - building long-term relations with clients - participating model of cooperation with clients
Training Partners Sp. z o.o.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - fitting clients' needs
ITS Education Sp. z o.o. (Midwest ITSE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - fitting clients' needs
Megalit Instytut Szkoleń	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - new regard on business thanks to trainings
Exbis Experci Biznesmenom Szopa i Szóstak Sp. J.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cooperation with consulting companies

In general training companies know that the issue of learning and its conditions is essential. The review shows that polish training companies explain to their clients a question of proper training organization. Caring for the selection of trainers and their skills' level is very important and should be raised as a strategic issue of human resource management. Polish training firms present an open attitude and cooperate with consulting and advisory companies (Exbis Experci Biznesmenom Szopa i Szóstak Sp. J.) [17].

3. Trainer's techniques and skills

Organizational changes, improving communication, better integration of a team or more efficient work can be described at various levels of management theories, so that the **effectiveness of training** for employees and managers is measured by many quantitative and qualitative indexes. In the literature there are four groups of evaluation:

- assessing an obtaining information process,
- assessing an obtaining new abilities and skills,
- assessing how much attitudes and behaviors have changed,
- assessing efficiency of an organization.

The aim of the first one is to check to what extent the lack of information has diminished in different areas of new knowledge. The way of evaluating the changes depends on simplicity of the knowledge and its subject.

Assessing an obtaining new skills usually is carried during the discussion with

participants which can draw conclusions about the practical effect the participants could use after the training session in real work. At this stage researchers use also special questionnaires which after analyzing give answers about efficiency of the training.

When a trainer wants to control how learners' abilities developed, he uses practical tasks. There are two different methods of assessing this aspect of trainings:

- either a trainer gives a task to a learner and then check results,
- or an examiner observes a whole process of work not only the results.

Assessing an improvement of organization efficiency consists of three main appraisals of:

- improvement at workplace of every learner, described by time management, motivating subordinates, communication, decision making,
- improvement in teamwork, so that division roles and responsibilities, conflict solving, communication,
- improvement in organization, that means aims achieving, meeting needs of consumers, economic independence.

Nevertheless the survival courses should be assessed separately. Because of their innovative aspects they are measured by several appraisals. One of them is "a organization energy index". This is a combination of psychological test, inquiries, questionnaires. The participants of a training answer the questions connected to their motivation, interactions with other members of a team, intrapersonal conflicts, work planning and others. Usually there are such two similar tools, used before and after the survival training. The comparison between them gives the answer how effective the training was.

Another tool to measure effectiveness of survival trainings is "a rotation index". A trainer of Training Partners Sp. z o.o. claims that an outdoor training is to get better interactions in a team, create organizational culture and intangible factors of motivation, build an identity of a firm and employees. One of the results of a weak organizational culture is a high level of rotation in workforce. After a survival training session it is possible to measure how much the rotation decreased [18].

"A firm does not have to spend money for recruitment (approximately 10-20 thousand PLN), accommodation the new employees (again 10-20 thousand PLN)" – count up a trainer from Training Partners – "If the cost of a survival training was 20 thousand PLN for 100 employees, and costs of rotation decreased with 20-40 thousands PLN, it makes the bargain!" It is worth saying that besides such measurable costs there is an improvement in teamwork and motivation of employees.

The third appraisal is "a process efficiency index". If any task in a firm before the survival training took three months, and after it only two ones, there is an obvious reason for taking such trainings into consideration. If a cost of the training is less than money saved during the month left, the survival training has just succeeded.

The process of learning, so relaying new knowledge at the four stage of the efficient learning theory, has always been changing. Innovations in training techniques are aimed at increasing their efficiency. The positive effects of that should be both for employees and their managers and for firms and organizations.

The review of Polish training companies shows that trainers who work there use many **interesting methods and techniques**. The most interesting practices are as follows:

- workshops (Ernst&Young Academy of Business Sp. z o.o., House of Skills) [19, 9],
- **games**, i. a. authorized ones (SYNTEZA, Training Partners, Megalit Instytut Szkoleń, Exbis Experci Biznesmenom Szopa i Szóstak Sp. J.) [20, 18, 15, 17],
- own methodology which is not presented on the website (ProFirma Sp. z o.o.) [21],

- **visualization and hypnosis techniques** (Megalit Instytut Szkoleń) [15].

Workplace learning is often described as acquiring, using, and critically reflecting knowledge to achieve organizational goals. This learning occurs as a process of individuals developing propositional (knowledge about), procedural (knowledge of how), and dispositional (development of values and attitudes) knowledge through their workplace experiences. Robust vocational practice includes engaging in novel work practices that extend individuals' proficiency, securing guidance from experienced coworkers and being able to access practice on "prized" or important tasks. In this context we can see formal and informal learning methods that identify how both the individual and the organization create, share, and reflect upon learning [16].

From the early 1990s to present, the research on continuous professional training has been dedicated to the figure and practice of the facilitator. In the 1990s, the analysis of a facilitator was based on the amount of time dedicated to the continuous training and their professional position. On the national level the first studies (run by Chambers of Commerce in 2000; Epise in 2000; INEM in 1996) focus on qualitative investigations, which created invaluable information about the **professional role of the trainer** based on the degree of professionalism and the specific business. This same qualitative investigation tendency continued throughout Europe, especially in Great Britain, France, Denmark and Germany (Dupont and Reis in 1991; Evans et al. in 1990; Proença in 1991). In the last decade, there has been an emphasis on describing and defining the **professional profile of trainers** in regards to their roles, functions, work and competencies. So in the last 20 years, there was found a large amount of research on the practices and professional figures focusing on two main concepts. The first tries to establish a trainers' profile according to work relations and performance. The second concentrates on studying the profile based on competence and capability as the pressing needs for designing a training curriculum in this new era of continual an permanent learning [22].

The literature distinguishes between **generic and/or basic skills and specific skills**. In the case of trainers **generic skills refers to theoretical or conceptual skills** (analyze, understand, interpret) which make up knowledge required to practice the profession (knowledge of the general context, institutional, classroom, workshop, knowledge of the educational psychology basis of the training, learning theories, knowledge of those being trained, macrodidactics, microdidactics, educational psychology, guidance etc.) applied from the planning of the training to the assessment of the effectiveness of the training given and including learning and teaching strategies, tutoring and monitoring along the with the involvement of different didactic media and resources. Generic skills also include **social skills** (the ability to relate and collaborate with others in a communicative and constructive way) which form part of knowing how to be and act in the world (attitudes, values and norms). These include skills relating to organization, administration, management, communication and facilitation in training (group processes, working as a team, negotiation, interpersonal relations, leadership, internal and external strategy training related etc.).

Specific skills of the trainer are **assimilated in the specific conditions** in which this professional develops those competences. Today it is impossible to think of the light of his or her particular situation and in the context of how they work. However, there is no type of skill that can be developed and assimilated outside the contexts of action of the trainer, regardless of whether it is generic of specific in character of social, technical or didactic etc. On the basis of this contextual model of contexts the following distinction can be made:

- a) general context: limited to the **socio-occupational status of the trainer**, considering his or her degree of professionalization and taking two criteria into account: employment conditions (time commitment, type of contract) and occupational conditions (duties to be performed, types of training to be provided).
- b) the specific context: limited to the classroom-workshop, which is the place where **the basic professional teaching skills** are put in practice (planning, delivery and evaluation of training, trainer's attitude in the classroom and workplace, learning tools used, role of trainer in the classroom and workplace, coaching and mentoring activities, ect.) as well as the more specific ones (knowledge of the labor market, specific skills and attitudes such as motivation, power and autonomy, teamwork, willingness to continue with self-improvement, etc.) [22].

Training companies that took part in the research are quite good examples of how such a business should be managed. The table 2 shows detailed information on methods and techniques applied by trainers and characteristics of themselves.

Tab. 2. Trainer's techniques and skills used in selected training companies in Poland

Company	Trainer's techniques and skills
Gdańska Fundacja Kształcenia Menedżerów	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - trainers who attended courses on modern teaching methods - practical experience of trainers - trainers from abroad
Ernst&Young Academy of Business Sp. z o.o.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - exercises in groups, pairs - dealing with abstract and professional situations - workshops - 80% of exercises and 20% of a lecture - trainer is a moderator, facilitator - trainers are engaged in professional organization and have a lot of experiences
Nowe Motywacje Sp. z o.o.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - using a D. Kolb's conception of adults' learning
PROFES Centrum Kształcenia i Doradztwa S.j.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - trainers are practitioners
CT PARTNERS SA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - presentations, examples, discussions, group exercises, summarizing, questions and answers
VADEMECUM – Konferencje i Szkolenia Sp. z o.o.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - trainers from Polskie Towarzystwo Psychologiczne who constantly are improving their skills
Moderator s.c.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - trainers are specialists, psychologists etc.
Lauren Peso Polska SA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - profile of a trainer is available for clients after buying a training - main method of work: a dialog with client
SYNTEZA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - exercises developing creativity - games concerning a team work - simulations of conversations with subordinates - case studies - questionnaires for auto-analysis - discussions to exchange experiences

BEAVER Doradztwo Personalne	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - working on real business situations
Symposium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - methods that are reconsidered and perfectly refined - methods of activating apprentices - using all available methods
House of Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - precise selection of trainers who have to legitimize their experience in business - e-learning - workshops - case study - team work - discussions - mindmapping
Infor Training Sp. z o.o.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - licenced trainers - presentation - discussions - case study
Mazowieckie Centrum Szkoleń Sp. z o.o.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - trainers are specialists, experts, practitioners
GB Resources Polska Sp. z o.o.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - trainers with practical experience in business
ProFirma Sp. z o.o.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - own methodology of training - inspired by foreign trends - creating novel solutions on polish market
Training Partners Sp. z o.o.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - case studies - licensed and authorized games (management, communication, sale, negotiations) - authorized tools prepared by psychologists, managers and advisors - playing roles - outdoor - licensed strategic simulations - heuristic techniques - films - discussions - documentary analysis
ITS Education Sp. z o.o. (Midwest ITSE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - highly skilled trainers who understand that only satisfied client ensures work
Megalit Instytut Szkoleń	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - games - exercises connected with products and procedures used by client - techniques of visualization and hypnosis
Exbis Experci Biznesmenom Szopa i Szóstak Sp. J.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - presentations - guiding films - playing roles - mindmapping

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - simulation games - psychological tests - case study
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Describing methods and techniques is not enough to interpret the issue. It is necessary to explain the role of trainers who “play those instruments”. Polish training companies bet on **experienced people who have worked in business**. Very popular is present their specializations and short history of achievements. It is very interesting that for example Gdańska Fundacja Kształcenia Menedżerów hire **trainers from abroad** [14]. Other way to recommend trainers is mentioning their participation in some community of professionals such as Polskie Towarzystwo Psychologiczne (Ernst&Young Academy of Business Sp. z o.o.) [19]. Who are trainers? **Specialists, practitioners, lecturers, professors** etc. What more they are **constantly learning** and actualizing their knowledge, and improving their skills. That is why training companies are also organizing special courses for trainers (ProFirma Sp. z o.o.) [21].

4. Practical and methodological conclusions

Trainings are nowadays very popular as a form of improving people’s and organizations’ knowledge and skills. The introductory research conducted by authors of the article brought many interesting practical and methodological conclusions. Issues that were analyzed dealt with training companies and their offer of trainings on innovations.

From practical point of view authors noticed that there are not many trainings on innovations. Topics of trainings offered by the companies from the ranking only slightly touch that matter. Companies are also more oriented towards solving clients’ actual problems than implementing innovations. Descriptions of their offer is rather poor and not satisfying clients’ expectations. Websites which should be the most professional and full of information occurred too simple and “user-unfriendly”.

From the point of future research view this is important to conduct profound interviews not only with chosen members of staff (as it was done this time), but with as many trainers engaged with the companies as possible.

As far as the type of knowledge receivers are concerned the situation is similar among training companies. The practical reckon is that they prepare training schemes for groups of maximum 15 persons. Trainings for specialists are strictly directed to them. There was not identified any distinguishing trainees because of their sex, but topics connected with innovations are still closer to men. The features of training participants that are important for companies which organise trainings on innovations are their professional experience and position at work. Theories on trainings are not numerous but there are a few of them. Authors are quite impressed due to the fact that enigmatically named conception of HRD of HCT are known by people working for training companies. What more they also are very aware of being market oriented which is expressed by their readiness to fit clients’ needs.

The hint for the future research is to take part in some trainings on innovations as hidden observers. This kind of a research technique would bring more profound knowledge how the trainers work and if training are suited to participants.

The next practical reckon is trainers are more and more educated and skilled at their profession. They use various and numerous techniques, sometimes very sophisticated or derived from cooperation with abroad (e.g. hypnosis, authorized games and own methodology). They are also very open to learn new ones. Authors of both papers give

some recommendations for training companies that took part in the research.

From the future research point of view there could be some objective tests which would check skills and education of trainers. Such tests must be implemented in the planned research project on training in innovations.

Generally, trainings on innovations needs many improvements. It is necessary to look at "old topics" in innovative way due to the changes experienced by all entrepreneurs. Clients of training companies should more encouraged to authorize training schemes which can be more innovative thanks to that. Training companies therefore should care more for their advertising on their websites that actually should be a signature of innovative attitude.

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