Evaluating the Role of Training Strategy in Enhancing the Training Effectiveness

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Abstract:

This paper presents an evaluation for the role of training strategy in enhancing the training effectiveness by using Performance Leadership Assessment Tool (PLAT) as a tool to measure the influence of leadership in designing the good training programs in companies.

The researchers distributed 100 questionnaires on a random group of managers, trainers, and trainees in Algerian companies.

The researchers concluded that Designing training program must submit to a rigorous process of performance assessment for the leadership, trainers, and trainees, as well as develop a well-defined plan for the training strategy in any company to create an effective training program .

Keywords :PLAT, Training effectiveness, Leadership, Designing training program, Training strategy.

I. INTRODUCTION

The objectivity of training programs and development plans has always been leverage in developing countries because of the market needs for unique skills , hence , the designing training program becomes one of the priorities of any company.

Designing a good training program needs a training strategy to clarify the goals and visions of leadership in the company. The Training

A. The Concept of Training :

Training means changing behaviour pattern , it is the art of doing the job a correct , effective and efficient manner[1]

According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary the training means a process by which someone is taught the skills that are needed for an art, profession, or job[2] , Halloran states that training is The process of transmitting and receiving information related to problem solving[3] , but Beach defines

the training as The organized procedure by which people learn knowledge and/or skill for a definite purpose[4] .

B. The objectives of training :

The training has four major objectives [5]:

1. Increase knowledge about the special considerations related to management systems
2. Improve attitudes about the importance of management, thus improving the environment for change
3. Build and strengthen skills in the specific tasks to be completed for efficient functioning of the management system
4. Improve work behavior, so that people function better at assigned activities and fulfill their potential

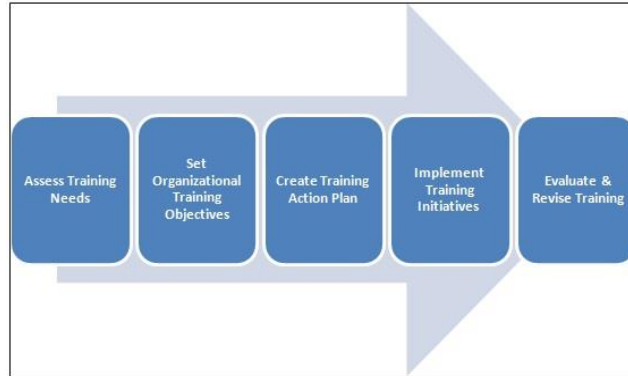### C. Designing Training Programs :

Designing Training Programs mean the designing of effective and efficient steps in order to provide a good training that enhances the performance of the trainees , or employees in the organization .

An effective training program is built by following a systematic, step-by step process. Training initiatives that stand alone (one-off events) often fail to meet organizational objectives and participant expectations. the five necessary steps to creating an effective program are the following[1] :

1. Assess Training Needs: The first step in designing a training program is to identify and assess needs. Employee training needs may already be established in the organization's strategic, human resources or individual development plans.
2. Set Organizational Training Objectives: The training needs assessments (organizational, task & individual) will identify any gaps in the current training initiatives and employee skill sets. These gaps should be analyzed and prioritized and turned into the organization's training objectives. The ultimate goal is to bridge the gap between current and desired performance through the development of a training program.
3. Create Training Action Plan: The next step is to create a comprehensive action plan that includes learning theories, instructional design, content, materials and any other training elements. Resources and training delivery methods should also be detailed. While developing the program, the level of training and participants' learning styles need to also be considered.
4. Implement Training Initiatives : The implementation phase is where the training program comes to life. Organizations need to decide whether training will be delivered in-house or externally coordinated. Program implementation includes the scheduling of training activities and organization of any related resources (facilities, equipment, etc.). The training program is then officially launched, promoted and conducted. During training, participant progress should be monitored to ensure that the program is effective.
5. Evaluate & Revise Training: As mentioned in the last segment, the training program should be continually monitored. At the end, the entire program should be evaluated to determine if it was successful and met training objectives. Feedback should be obtained from all stakeholders to determine program and instructor effectiveness and also knowledge or skill

acquisition. Analyzing this feedback will allow the organization to identify any weaknesses in the program. At this point, the training program or action plan can be revised if objectives or expectations are not being met.

Figure 1 shows the main steps to design an effective training program .

| Assess Training Needs | Set Organizational Training Objectives | Create Training Action Plan | Implement Training Initiatives | Evaluate & Revise Training |

D. *Measuring Effectiveness of Training Program :*

There are three main ways to measure the effectiveness of training program , as following [6] :

1. **Visual Confirmation:** In traditional trainings, learners demonstrate their knowledge by performing a role-play. Technology allows us to take role-plays a step further. Instead of demonstrating knowledge that may or may not be true to the learner's job, learners now have the ability to share visual confirmation they've completed a task in real life. Imagine employees uploading a video or audio recording and/or submitting other visual proof of a task completed (for example a screen shot or video via smart phone). Now, imagine a training manager having access to those videos (and other visual proof) of employees using knowledge from a workshop in real life. Visual confirmation doesn't only change HOW learning is measured, it can also impact the way we train by honing in on the most effective training initiatives and taking the closer look at those initiatives that aren't "measuring up."

2. **Social Ownership:** The ability to teach others is one of the highest forms of mastery of a subject. Social Ownership puts learners in the position to teach others by showing how they apply concepts in their real world. This concept not only engages employees to teach and learn from each other, it also gives training managers the ability to measure how well concepts are being implemented within the organization. These peer-teaching moments can be captured via video or by having peer-peer workshops. Ultimately providing a new way to get employees involved and engaged to increase training effectiveness.

3. **Skill Assessments:** Creating a visual assessment of an employee's skill set and performance before and after a training moment. These snapshots, or skylines, of a learner's abilities can give a clear picture of performance and skill improvements you can

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directly tie to training. A simple example would be, testing a sales person's current sales skills prior to training, then retesting the individual after the event to see the delta. There are so many improvements going on in this area right now because of data analytics, it's a good one to jump on ahead of the curve.

II. TRAINING STRATEGY

A. *The Importance of training strategy :*

Training strategy is critical to improve any training program and needs to be considered during the initial stages of the roadmap planning. Providing Infrastructure and other related training throughout the program lifecycle ensures that all employees have a common language and the key stakeholders who will be responsible for developing and executing process activities have the appropriate knowledge and skills to effectively perform their process duties [7].

B. *The influence of training strategy on training effectiveness :*

Given the fast evolving and changing nature of the work environment, and the constant need for changing the strategies and frameworks that organizations apply to compete in the global markets, it is important to implement training strategies that reflect the necessities of the time. If the training strategy is sound and well-designed, then one can expect positive influence on the behaviors and attitudes of the employees and then on organizational performance as a whole[8].

a rich body of literature has been investigating the factors that can impact the effectiveness of training strategies and proposed a set of training models [9].

The literature reveals that one of the most reliable approaches and methods to evaluate training effectiveness is Kirkpatrick's four level approach[8]. It assesses :

1. The trainees' reaction towards the overall experience during the training program and its content.
2. The knowledge and skills that the employees develop during the training sessions.
3. The behavior of trainees during the training sessions and their reactions towards the material.
4. The perceived positive change in the behavior of employees and its impact on their productivity and the level of its impact on organizational effectiveness.

These four approaches are summarized in Hamblin's statement which declares that[10] : "training leads to reactions, which leads to learning, which leads to changes in job behavior, which leads to changes in the organization, which leads to changes in the achievement of ultimate goals" .

There is a causal relationship between each of these variables and every element influences the others. If employees receive a training program that they deem is related to their needs and expectations, then they will make extra efforts to get the best outcomes from it. This will enhance their knowledge about the material they learn from and reflect on it to identify their weaknesses and strengths and address them. Therefore, if effective training is provided, positive reactions, improved levels of learning, positive behavior change and improved job performance will be witnessed from the trainees[11] .

C. *The factors affecting on the attending of training program :*

There are many factors that affect the motivation and enthusiasm of employees to attend a

training program. The first thing that is important to take into consideration is the employees' past experience with training programs. If they were useless and not informative, then the trainees will have lost interest in attending them, and even if they did attend them, their motivation would have been very low[12].

Employees' general beliefs about certain training have a strong positive relationship on training effectiveness. The reputation of the training program plays a key role in triggering the motivation of the trainees, as they ask their co-workers about their previous experiences with the program and so form ideas about it even before they take part in it. The other element that can determine training effectiveness is the rewards that trainees are given upon successful completion of the program[13]. These rewards are crucial to trigger the motivation of employees to learn from the material and to try to apply it in their work place.

There are generally three types of the training incentives[12]:
1. Intrinsic incentives, which are the skills the training program provides for trainees and to what extent they help them improve their performance and behavior within their organizations.
2. Extrinsic incentives, which is the extent to which training programs can lead to promotions, salary increases and growth opportunities within the organization.
3. Compliance, which is simply the fact that employees participate in a training program because it is mandated by the organization.

D. *The link between Contextual Factors and Training Effectiveness :*

1) *Determining the organizational training needs and training effectiveness :*
One of the most critical elements that are related to training strategy and determining its effectiveness is the evaluation of the organization's training needs. Some organizations spend tremendous amounts of money and resources on training programs that deliver little of what their organizations initially need[14].

Some scholars suggest that there are three methods that can assist in deciding the actual and urgent training needs of the organizations[8] :
1. Surveys
2. Manpower analysis
3. Organizational analysis

They argue that it is important to identify the best people in the organization who know what the training needs of the organization are and then survey them to identify the most important and urgent training needs. These are normally human resource or strategy managers who are familiar with the weaknesses and strengths of their human capital and are in the best position to tackle them. Relying on their opinions and suggestions of what the organizational needs are will guide and direct the training strategy towards the overall objectives of the organization and align them .

Another scholars argue that training strategies should identify the needs of both the organization and the employees who take place in the training programs. They classified five major steps that should be taken to determine organizational needs[15] :
1. Asking the participants directly, the participants should be directly asked either through interviews or surveys about their training needs. The questions should simply determine what employees can do to better perform a job and what new skills they need to develop for

that purpose. More importantly, the content of the training program should be constructed based on the employees' needs.

2. Ask the bosses of the participants. This provides an objective view on the qualitative, quantitative or technical skills that employees need to develop in the short and long terms to achieve better performance and enhance their productivity.

3. Ask customers, peers and other stakeholders who are involved in one way or another in how the organization operates and what they think it still needs to improve and develop to take the organization a step ahead in its performance and operation.

4. Test the participants' knowledge and skills through simplified tests that assess the employees' acquisition of the required analytical and technical skills to perform their jobs. The results of these tests will be a significantly reliable element to direct their training interests towards the areas that need further development and improvement.

5. Analyzing performance appraisal forms is another reliable measure to determine the training needs of the participants. They generally reflect both the strong and weak areas of each employee at the end of each year. Hence, organizations should consult these resources before they come up with a training strategy to enhance their chances of aligning organizational needs with training goals and; therefore, achieve the desired outcomes from the training programs.

According to Brown, conducting needs assessment and making it an integral part of the organizational training strategy can be based on three steps[16] :

1. Conducting an organizational analysis that examines carefully the areas in which training should be performed and determines what exact skills, knowledge and new techniques employees should be acquainted with to perform their jobs more effectively and efficiently. Also, it is imperative to know the innovative practices that other competing organizations have implemented in order to be able to compete against them. This will require the introduction and implementation of new managerial techniques that employees should be trained for.

2. Task analysis focuses on the employees' current skills, the requirements of the jobs they perform and the necessary skills to better perform that job. This further specifies the employees' needs to improve their performance in the organization.

3. Individual analysis is the last element that Brown recommends to organizations and stresses on its adoption. It looks at the issue from a micro-level and assesses the needs of each employee and guides them towards the right training programs that can fill the gap in their skills and performance. Since employees differ in their strengths and weaknesses, individual analysis will satisfy the needs of each employee and provide them with an opportunity to enhance their productivity.

*2) Supervisors' role **in motivating employees and its influence on training** effectiveness :*

Various studies have found positive links between the managers' support and role in motivating employees to effectively benefit from the training programs[12], and also a positive one between training motivation and training outcomes and effectiveness[17]. The more supportive the role of supervisors, the more focused, and goal oriented employees become.

Some scholars argue that since supervisors are the closest to and most knowledgeable people about the employees' performance, since they conduct the end of year review, they can easily

pinpoint what their training needs are and how they can achieve the best outcomes from them. This direction towards the right training tools and mechanisms is a primary component in determining a successful strategy[18].

The employees' level of motivation determines the training effectiveness. The higher the motivation of employees, the better their approach towards taking the most from the training sessions[11].

The results of these studies are robust and indicate that one of the most important training strategies that can strongly influence training effectiveness is the moral and psychological support of supervisors. The more motivating they are to their employees, the more influential the training programs become.

E. Leadership and Training Effectiveness :

The existing managerial literature for both the public and private sector indicates that leadership plays a major role in guiding organizations towards achieving their goals. This will allow a streamlined process whereby leaders influence their colleagues and empower them to give the best they have to their organization[8].

Training and preparing capable leaders has become one of the first priorities of the modern governments, especially in the United States and Europe. This part of the literature review will shed light on two issues that are closely related and significantly affect training effectiveness: (1) the importance of building the leadership skills of trainees within public organizations and its influence on the overall effectiveness of the training programs, (2) the role and the support of the organization's leadership in the success and effectiveness of training strategies and programs. Effective leadership plays an instrumental role in framing the training strategy and also in setting a clear and coherent strategy.

III. THE PRACTICAL PART

A. Performance Leadership Assessment Tool:

The Performance Leadership Assessment Tool (PLAT) is based on a Plan, Do, Measure, and Learn cycle , its questions are based on the key ingredients to ensure enabling organization or company to deliver good performance, hence PLAT is a good tool to measure the role of training strategy in enhancing the training program effectiveness in the company.

B. The study methodology:

In this part of the study , the researchers measured the role of training strategy in enhancing the training program effectiveness.

The researchers distributed 100 questionnaires with 20 questions to 100 managers, trainers, and trainees in Algerian companies. The questionnaire was divided to five perspectives, the first perspective was about the importance of training strategy, the second perspective dealt with the influence of training strategy on training effectiveness, the third one was about the link between contextual factors and training effectiveness, the fourth perspective showed the views about the factors affecting on the attending of training program, and the last one was about leadership and training effectiveness.

All the answers were collected, classified, and analyzed by Performance Leadership Assessment

Tool (PLAT)

C. The results:

After calculating , classifying, and analyzing all the views, the researchers can be summarized the results in Tables (1-5) and Figures (2-6) as following :

1) Perspective 1 : The importance of training strategy :

TABLE 1 : THE VALUES OF THE FIRST PERSPECTIVE

Factor	Caption	Avr.
Vision	We have a clearly stated and visible vision that sets the direction for the organization	3
Values	We share clearly stated and visible values that guide the organization in how it operates	4
Objectives	We have defined and visible smart objectives that determines what we will do	2
Risk Balance	We have a good balance of attainable and stretch objectives	3
Accountability	People are assigned to be accountable for the objectives	4
The Perspective Overall Average		**3.2**

Fig.2: Bar chart of values of the first perspective
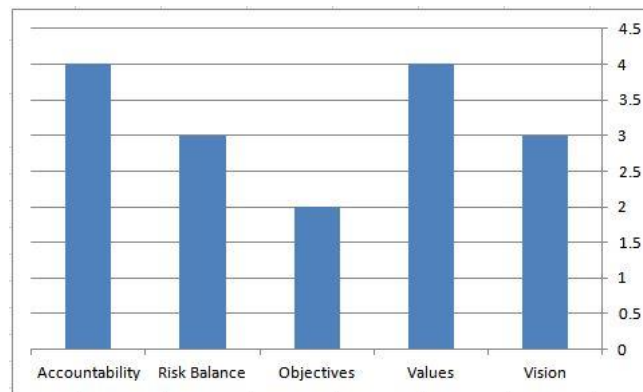
2) *Perspective 2 : The influence of training strategy on training effectiveness :*

TABLE 2 : THE VALUES OF THE SECOND PERSPECTIVE

Factor	Caption	Avr.
Reaction	People are engaged in assessing what needs to be done	4
Knowledge and Skills	The relative importance of tasks or projects are clear to people	2
behavior	People know how to do their work	3
positive change	Expectations of how to do things and to what standard are clear to people	3
The Perspective Overall Average		**3**

Fig.3: Bar chart of values of the second perspective
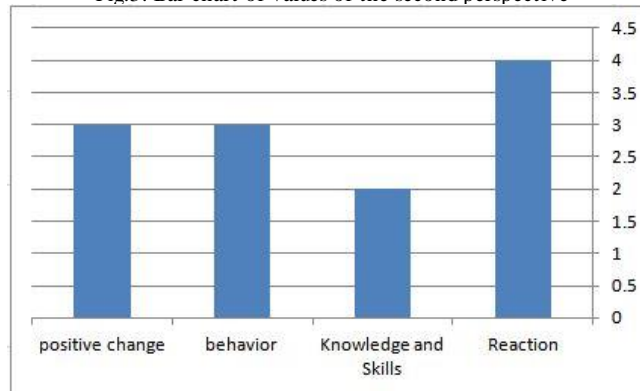
3) Perspective 3 : The link between contextual factors and training effectiveness :

TABLE 3 : THE VALUES OF THE THIRD PERSPECTIVE

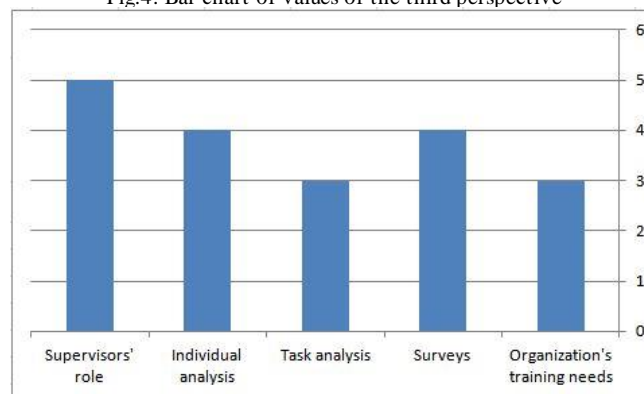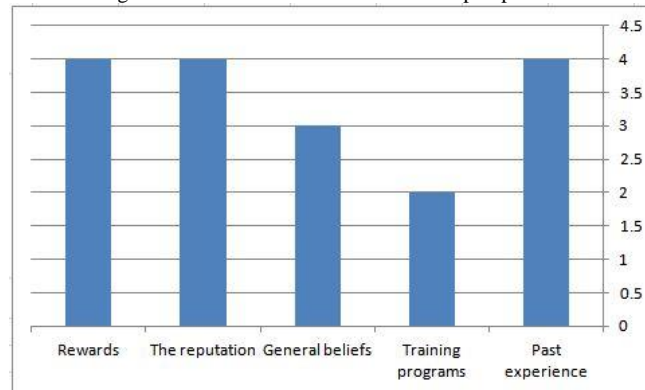| Factor	Caption	Avr.
Organization's training needs	Some organizations spend funds that deliver little usefulness	3
Surveys	Getting an idea about innovative practices that other competing organizations have implemented	4
Task analysis	Focusing on the employees' current skills, and jobs.	3
Individual analysis	Assessing the needs of each employee and guiding them towards the right training programs	4
Supervisors' role	The moral and psychological support of supervisors	5
The Perspective Overall Average		**3.8**

Fig.4: Bar chart of values of the third perspective

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4) Perspective 4 : The factors affecting on the attending of training program :

TABLE 4 : THE VALUES OF THE FOURTH PERSPECTIVE

Factor	Caption	Avr.
Past experience	The employees' past experience with training programs	4
Training programs	The degree of usefulness and informative of the training programs	2
General beliefs	If training programs have a strong positive relationship on training effectiveness	3
The reputation	The reputation of training program plays a key role in triggering the motivation of the trainees	4
Rewards	Rewards are crucial to trigger the motivation of employees to learn and to apply in work place.	4
The Perspective Overall Average		**3.4**

Fig.5: Bar chart of values of the fourth perspective

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*5) Perspective 5 : The leadership and training effectiveness:*

TABLE 5 : THE VALUES OF THE FIFTH PERSPECTIVE

Factor	Caption	Avr.
Leadership skills	The leaders must be good model for their employees.	4
Organizational support	Preparing capable leaders has become one of the first priorities of the modern governments	3
The role of leadership	Leadership plays a major role in guiding organizations towards achieving their goals	5
Challenge	Effective leadership plays an instrumental role in framing the Effectiveness training programs	2
The Perspective Overall Average		**3.5**

Fig.6: Bar chart of values of the fifth perspective
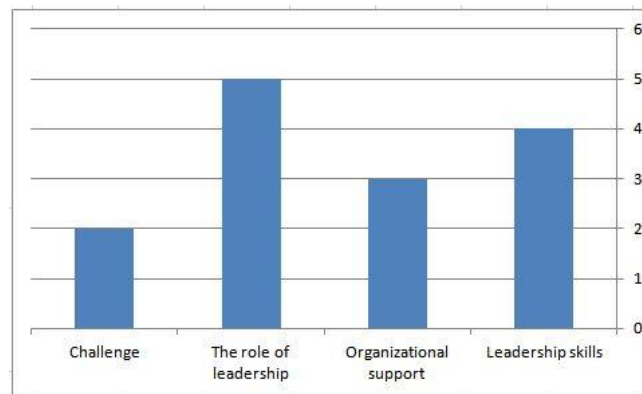
The processed , and analyzed values of all perspectives can be listed in Table 6, and shown in Figure 7 according to the previous calculations.

TABLE 6 : THE VALUES OF ALL PERSPECTIVES

Perspective Title	Perspective Value
The importance of training strategy	3.2
The influence of training strategy on training effectiveness	3
The link between contextual factors and training effectiveness	3.8
The factors affecting on the attending of training program	3.4
The leadership and training effectiveness	3.5

Fig.7: Bar chart of comparing among perspectives
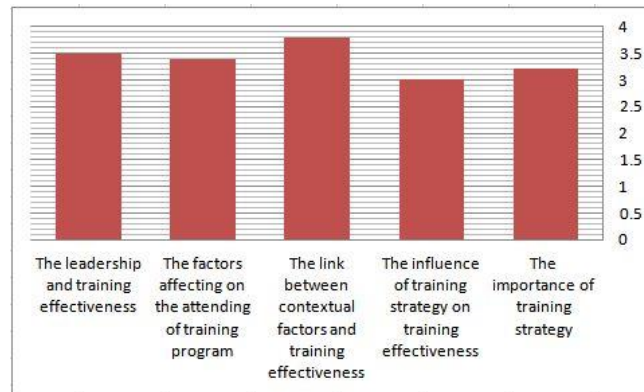
IV. CONCLUSION

In this paper the results of PLAT analysis of the questionnaires indicate to the following:

- Perspective 3: The link between contextual factors and training effectiveness (3.8 out of 5) is the most influential perspective on training effectiveness, and perspective 2: The influence of training strategy on training effectiveness is the least influential perspective on training effectiveness.

- The average value of all perspectives is (3.38 out of 5) , that gives an indicator for the increasing of the performance of leaderships in the Algerian companies by developing the training strategy .

- The training effectiveness can be very useful in the suitable environment with a good leadership, and high level of ethical values.

- Designing training program must submit to a rigorous process of performance assessment for the leadership, trainers, and trainees, as well as develop a well-defined plan for the training strategy in any company.

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