Usefulness of Executive Development Programs to Corporate Executives

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Abstract

India has been in centre stage of developing economies and commends high respect in knowledge based industries India has opened it economy to international competition and Indian products now compete with best products of the world. Indian promoters have realized that human resource is basic for future success. Dynamic managements have started training their executives to best practices with view to improve system efficiencies. Executive Development Programs are backbone of such training and skill improvement. Small and Medium enterprises have also adopted Executive Development Programs to suit their requirement. We decided that an attempt should be made to examine how effective and useful these Executive Development Programs are, for participants in three time frames, one before enrollment, second on completion and third –one month after completion of program. Sample of 30 was selected comprising of 25 male executives and 5 female executives. All participants were at least 18 years of age with at least 3 years of experience. Executives were employed in different activities largely falling in production, marketing administration and BPO services Executives belonged to Vapi, Navsari, Vadodara and Ahmedabad. It was observed that executive perception on usefulness of Executive Development Program do show non-significant relationship with change in their perception of usefulness before enrollment, immediately after completion and one month after end of the program.

Keywords*: Behavioural Psychology, Psychology*

Usefulness of Executive Development Program to Corporate Executives

In today's constrained economic environment where all corporate spending is scrutinized, chief learning officers report that budgets for leadership and executive development are now subject to the same financial rigor as any business other project. Investments in executive education must be able to demonstrate usefulness and impact as corporations utilize executive education as a vehicle to facilitate strategic growth and change.

While the need for comprehensive assessment of management and Executive Development Programs is widely agreed upon, it is rarely carried out. Their exhaustive review of the literature found very few reports of research studies attempting to assess the impact of development programs over time. They list a number of obstacles to conducting such studies.

First, the learning from such programs is complex and difficult to assess abstractly. Second, the measurement of impact in executive education is highly dependent on utilization of learning back in the workplace. From design perspective, workplace contexts are diverse and non-standardized and difficult to establish a control Therefore, assessments of impact have been limited to reports collected in follow-up interviews or surveys.

The Executive Development Programs now are more focused on strategy, productivity, leadership, and global competition, leading to participant's developing depth and impacting upon knowledge, skills, attitude and behavior. Number of people participating in a program, cost per person, days per year, total investment in development at different levels of the organization, etc. are parameters on which usefulness is examined. It is common to investigate Executive Development Programs on Satisfaction Measures which typically watch whether things are clearer as regards goals and objectives or job one does.Progress Measures like to see improvement in attitude of trainees. Usage Measures show that the business is adopting a concept taught in a program, and that it is now part of the internal of the business. And Business Value Measures ideas implemented with help of a program.

Indian Economy is increasing becoming global and focus of corporate is to increase return on all the assets including Human Assets. It is seen that Executive Development Programs which were only events of big companies is percolating to even mid size companies. Small and medium enterprises though are less critical on usefulness on their training programs.

Despite limited number of research studies, the ability to evaluate the impact of Executive programs has become important to corporates. Companies are demanding greater knowledge and expertise. In this light this is a research in trying to find usefulness of Executive Development Programs by collecting feedback from participants about their reaction and learning after they have undergone such training.

The research also showed that executives seem pushed for attending Executive Development Program despite reluctance on their part internally. We could see lot of resistance to learn formally and many hated even filling evaluation sheets. Is it inertia effect? We hope not.

There were also views which seem to suggest that it is imperative to attend such Executive Development Programs and be in good books of management and reduce any chances of being seen as persons unwilling to change. These Executive Development Programs were to some a good break from routine and was welcome as a holiday. It is difficult to say whether Executive Development Programs need to take participant's consent for their readiness rather than given at managements convenience.

Past Literature

It might be interesting to see what kind of experiences executives and management have in western countries. It might be interesting to know about studies conducted previously. It is disturbing to note that it was extremely difficult to find any material on this subject from Indian prospective. We had to dig equally hard to find material from the West. It is well known that Cultural differences and Value systems mould the attitudes we put underneath some interesting inferences.

Roland Deiser (2009) posits that the traditional paradigm of learning focuses only on individual qualification, is in the domain of the HR function, and happens remote from the business as a mechanistic transaction between teacher and participant.Yorks, et.al. Linking Program Design and Assessment

Yorks, Beechler and Ciporen (2007) present a framework that extends the boundaries of The program, giving increased attention to pre- and post-program activities (see Figure 7). In a 5-year research study, they demonstrate how connections between learner-focused Practices that begin 8 weeks prior to the residential program and continue 18 months after The program both facilitated and reinforced participant learning in an open-enrollment Executive program.Russ-Eft and Preskill: A Systems Framework for Evaluation.

Another useful framework presented by Darlene Russ-Eft and Hallie Preskill (2005) places program evaluation within a systems framework RussEft and Preskill maintain that, "organizational leaders who quickly assume ROI is the best and sometimes only worthwhile evaluation approach often change their assumptions and expectations about their information needs…" when participating in a more systemic process.

Succession planning and executive development represents one of the hottest topics in the Organizational sciences and human capital management today, and for good reason. A great deal of research has shown that executive leaders, either individually or collectively, influence organizational outcomes (Barrick, Day, Lord, & Alexander, 1991; Day & Lord, 1988; Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996; Thomas, 1988; Zaccaro, 2001). With the forecasted supply of Future executives shrinking (Corporate Leadership Council, 2004; Dowell, 2002; GAO, 2003a, 2003b; Howard, 2001; Rothwell, 2002; Wellins & Byham, 2001), organizations are scrambling

to secure the executive talent needed to be successful. For many organizations, public and private, internal Executive Development Programs represent the most viable solution to meeting their executive talent needs. Although organizations spend considerable time and resources on leader development initiatives, many of these initiatives, whether targeting executives or front-line mangers, produce mixed results (Avolio, Sosik, Jung, & Berson, 2003; Carter et al., 2005; Charan, 2005; GAO, 2003b; Howard, 2001; Ready & Conger, 2003).

The kinds of developmental experiences and learning opportunities future executives are exposed to plays a substantial role in shaping their future performance and competence (Conger, 2004; Hill, 2004; McCall, 2004; McCall, Lombardo, & Morrison, 1988; McCauley, 2001; McCauley, Ruderman, Ohlott, & Morrow, 1994) as the needs and goals of organizations change, Executive Development Programs systematically and demonstrably influence executive development to help the leadership cadre meet the pressing imperatives and challenges they face (Conger, 2004; Hill, 2004).For various reasons (e.g., poor performance, voluntary turnover, etc.), the "shelf-life" of most executives is limited (Ciampa, 2005; Dowell, 2002). The turnover rate among executives is high, with roughly 30% to 50% of executives, on average, leaving an organization in a given year (Howard, 2001). As a result, organizations must have a means for regularly, and continually, replacing their senior leadership

 Beyond preparing future executives to lead, developing executives internally provides organizations with a means for promoting and achieving its strategic objectives (Carter et al., 2005; GAO, 2003a; Howard, 2001).There is emerging evidence that organizations with successful executive development initiatives report higher organizational usefulness, greater advancement of strategic goals, more positive customer satisfaction, and lower senior leader turnover (Carter et al., 2005).

Executive Development Program enables organizations to drive and sustain needed cultural changes to improve organizational performance (e.g., by retaining like-minded executives) (Blunt, 2003; Carter et al., 2005; Corporate Leadership Council, 2004; GAO, 2003a; 2003b).

Some authors have also said that like-organizations spend considerable time and resources to transform high potential candidates into executives (APQC, 2001; ASTD, 1995; Carter et al., 2005; Fulmer et al., 2000).-what works for one organization may not necessarily work for another (Day & Halpin, 2001; Moses & Eggebeen, 1999).

More often than not what ultimately differentiates successful from unsuccessful organizations is that the former are more systematic, rigorous, and consistent in their planning and implementation than the later (Conger, 2004; (Day & Halpin, 2001; Fulmer & Conger, 2003). Organizations use these data to determine if its Executive Development Program is achieving its desired impact and to make informed decisions regarding where and how best to improve the program, as needed (GAO, 2004; Martineau, 2004; Martineau & Hannum, 2004; Rothwell et al., 2005).

Kirkpatrick (1994) approach which contends that the best evaluations are those

that measure ROI, many in the field today contend that ROI is not necessarily what the Client wants or needs, nor is it the best approach to answering the organization's evaluative questions.

As Yorks, et. al., (2007) argue, "The advantage of conceptualizing program assessment in terms of an integral part of the program design is that it places emphasis on the value of 'learning' as the focal point of the process linking program design and content with assessment."

Experiences of similar work, we have identified from available literature review. Specifically, information was collected from: (a) handbooks and book chapters on our topic (b) technical reports and comparable best practice studies; and (c) research and articles published in peer-reviewed journals, reviews, and periodicals;(d) material available on internet.

Present Study

This study is one of the first studies to find usefulness of Executive Development Programs .This study seeks to investigate usefulness in Executive Development Programs as experienced by participating executives in different three time frames-one before attending, second after attending and third, one month after completion of training.

Thirty numbers of executives who attended Executive Development Programs were interviewed to understand their views and real usefulness of such an initiative. The survey collected detailed information about the executive perception before Executive Development Program, soon after program ended and also one month after it is over to see and understand whether passage of time changed their view on its usefulness. Data from participants is used to observe, difference in views on gender free basis.

Data Collection and Analysis

Interviews were noted by interviewers. First, all response sheets were read thoroughly to gain an in-depth feeling for their narrative. Sentences and phrases that directly described were extracted from each response. Second, descriptive labels were formulated for each statement within the context of the individual narrative. Third, these descriptive labels were organized and analyzed in relation to the underlying theme that emerged. Fourth, these labels were re-examined and thoughtfully adjusted as needed while efforts were made to remain true to the meaning present in the original narrative accounts. Fifth, clusters of descriptors were then integrated into one list and an exhaustive description was written. Sixth, this written formulation was sent to the participants for their review and feedback. Minor modifications were made to this description to incorporate participants' comments.

Participants were assured that their participation was voluntary and that their responses would not be shared with no one including their family members. This study had ethical approval from all the participants. In designing and conducting this study, the authors followed the methodological principles for social analysis.

Peer Review Process

A peer review process was incorporated into the stage of data analysis in order to provide an external check on the validity of the primary researcher's interpretations of the interview data. The peer reviewer went over the data at every stage of the analysis with an eye to scrutinizing the primary researcher's assumptions and providing feedback. Information was informally exchanged (e.g., via e-mail and telephone) with the peer reviewer/s every 7 to 10 days while face-to-face peer sessions were held 2 to 3 weeks where data was exchanged and ideas were discussed. The peer reviewer suggested new or alternative formulated themes, identified themes that the primary researcher had missed, challenged the primary researcher's interpretations of meaning, and brought significant points concerning the research sample and data analysis process to the fore. At times when the primary researcher disagreed with the suggestions of the peer reviewer, they worked to achieve consensus on the data analysis through a thorough discussion of the meaning of participant statements as situated within the context of the original narrative.

Validity of the Data Analysis

To ensure that standards for good research were met, strategies addressing the transferability, dependability, and credibility of the data were employed as procedures of verification. Transferability was assessed by the appearance of identical themes across narratives involving different persons in different scenarios. To ensure dependability, the peer review was employed to provide an external check of the data analysis procedures. To address credibility, the primary researcher and the peer reviewer independently reread and carefully examined the scale, the lists of formulated descriptors, the theme, and the exhaustive description to ensure that the themes did not distort or neglect aspects of the original narrative. Seeking the participants' feedback on the exhaustive description provided an additional assurance of credibility.

Objectives

To Study usefulness of Executive Development Program before enrollment, soon after program ended and, also one month after it is over, to examine and understand whether passage of time changes their view on its usefulness.

Hypothesis

There is no difference between in the usefulness of Executive Development Program before attending, after attending and one month after attending the program.

Method

      Sample: We have selected total 30 Executives, mix of 25 male and 5 female officers working in companies. Each Executive is at least 18 years old and their work area varies from production, marketing, administration and BPO. Executive Sample is collected from Vapi, Valsad, Vadodara and Ahmadabad.

      The copies of the scale were administered to 38 executives (32 males, 6 females Out of them randomly selected 30 executives -25 male and 5 females

Tools

      For this study, Data was collected through survey developed by Researchers. Personal details were collected in personal meeting with respondents. Survey collects perceptions of respondent's behavioral changes arising about Executive Development Program attended by individual.

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Statistical analysis

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Cochran Test was used to analyze our observations

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Result and Discussion

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      Table below describes the descriptive statistics for the sample of executives. As we are using non parametric Cochran test descriptive are arranged with frequencies describing initial and final states. The first row shows before program view of executive on Executive Development Program with columns indicating usefulness as 0 and 1.our sample of 30 is divided into two columns, zero value indicating in usefulness and one, describing usefulness. Here, all of the table's entries confirm our expectations.

      The second row provides post Executive Development Program opinion of participants.13 executives mentioned that they have found Executive Development Program ineffective as compare to 14 before attending Executive Development Program.17 executives concurred that Executive Development Program is effective as compare to 16 before taking Executive Development Program.

      The month after attending Executive Development Program, the third row shows executive opinion on in usefulness reaching 9 which is lowest in all the time frames. This shows that Executive Development Program has improved impression on its usefulness reduced. When 21 executives state that they found Executive Development Program to be effective, it can be seen as an after event usefulness, sipping in the minds of participants.

Cochran Test

Frequencies

	Value	
	0	1
BeforeProgram	14	16
AfterProgram	13	17
MonthAfterProgram	9	21

Our sample of 30 participants gave us Cochran's Q of 2.625 which for 2 degrees of freedom is not significant.

Test Statistics

N	30
Cochran's Q	2.625[a]
df	2
Asymp. Sig.	.269

a. 1 is treated as a success.

Statistically Result can be stated as-there is no significant change in opinion of Management Executives before, after and one month after attending Executive Development Program. The p value is .269 which is <.05, hence not significant.

Conclusions

Organizations are asking for ways to evaluate the usefulness of executive programs. Unfortunately, few research studies on evaluation appear in the literature due to the difficulty of meeting experimental design requirements. Despite this lack of empirical research, clients continue to seek greater knowledge on the topic of program evaluation.

This study sought to investigate usefulness of Executive Development Programs as perceived by participants through survey of researchers and interviews with participants. Researchers also reviewed relevant articles from publications responses from the survey Taken together with our interviews provide evidence that there is no significant change in opinion of Management Executives before, after and one month after attending Executive Development Program. The p value is .269 which is <.05, hence not significant.

Recently, away from a singular focus on quantitative measure, companies utilize these Executive Development Programs to show dynamism of their management. Many contend that

solely pursuing a quantitative measure like Cochran's Q may not be the best approach to evaluation. As executive programs become closely integrated with the strategic issues of the company, qualitative measures that focus on the transfer of learning into business outcomes may provide tangible evidence of program usefulness.

Today however, internet networks are challenging our existing methods of learning and development as well as our current practices of program delivery. With the advent of online communities, the value of Executive Development Program will more and more be measured in page clicks, downloads, and user ratings.

The task ahead for service givers is to facilitate these rapidly emerging communities of practice, and foster new forms of knowledge sharing and learning that may lead to more effective organizations.

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