Training & Development Gaps in the Handicraft Sector: An Empirical Study

Dr. Parvez A. Mir
(Faculty & Consultant), School of Business Studies (SBS), I. University of Science & Technology
One University Avenue, Awantipora, Kashmir - J & K-192122

Abstract

In Jammu & Kashmir State (J&K), the handicraft sector is losing its sheen as readily available value-added and cost competitive products from its neighboring countries are flourishing into the domestic market. The handicraft sector, with which our cultural ethos is attached, is still considered the backbone of rural India and is facing tremendous onslaught from foreign goods. Because of changed tastes, increased purchasing power, and global competition, people prefer to buy imported value added products rather than to buy domestic products on the basis of cost competitive advantage, which has a direct bearing on the rural entrepreneurs in the handicraft sector. Now the sector in the J&K is in its survival stage, moreover the handicraft training centers offering numerous training programmes for our rural youth are not impactful in reviving this sector. This paper tries to evaluate the perception of trainees regarding the decline of training effectiveness in the handicraft sector, which was once the backbone of the state economy. The outcome of the research is that the sector got deteriorated because of outdated training programmes offered by the government run handicraft training institutions and the institutional policies were not in sync with the current market demands.

Key Words: Handicraft, Training & Development (T&D), KSA, HRD

Introduction

Training and development (T&D) is a continuous process designed to improve human competency based on three key variables which are knowledge, skill and attitude (KSA) (Yajnikk, 1973; Wanchoo, 1973; Bedinham, 1997) in order to develop current and future roles of individuals for organizational efficacy and effectiveness (AHRD, 2002). Therefore, training as a sub-system of Human Resource Development (HRD), is of strategic importance in attaining organizational goals at the micro level (Samantra & Prasad, 1996; Porter & Vander Linde, 1995) and increase the national income as the national goals in the macro context. But due to rapid technological obsolescence in present dynamic environment, it is need of the hour to upgrade level of knowledge, skill and attitude (KSA) of trainees in the changing times for the unforeseen challenges (Mir & Jeelani, 2008). Training not only develops physical, social, intellectual and mental satisfaction but also improves the level of productivity in efficient and effective manner (Ashton & Green, 1994; Durra, 1990; Gross & Jones, 1992; Rao & Abraham, 1986; Storey, 1995, Blanchand & Thacker, 2004). The T & D potential in influencing the productivity, relative to other key factors, was emphasized in a study funded by the US Department of Education with the Bureau of Census (Ricky, 2001). The results were:

- Increasing capital stock by 10 percent and increases productivity by 3.2 percent.
- Increasing an individual’s work hours by 10 percent and increases productivity by 6.0 percent.
- Increasing an individual’s educational level by 10 percent and increases productivity by 8.6 percent.

The ultimate demand of Effective training is to deliver total customer value (Kayoda 2001; Tan etal, 1996; Kotler & Keller, 2013) and that is possible through proper Training Need Analysis (TNA) (Lynton & Pareek, 1978; Pfau et al, 2000). The Handicraft sector, which is one of the largest employment generating sectors in rural and semi-rural India, is passing through a very critical phase for the past one decade, as country exports has come down from Rs. 17,288 crore in 2006-07 to just Rs. 10,533 crore in the year 2010-11 (Thakur, 2012), which speaks volumes about the sector. This
sector is highly labour intensive, provides employment to about 70 million people and generates maximum employment after agricultural in rural India. Though handicraft sector in India is a more than Rs. 10,000 crore industry, but its share in the global market is negligible- not even two per cent of the world exports (Anonymous, 2015.) trade. So much so, if one compares India’s handicraft exports with small countries like Bangladesh, Pakistan and Srilanka- the situation is not encouraging. China, is exporting on mass production scale based on cost minimization principle (Albaum, etal, 2006) in the international market which gives them cost competitive advantage in the international market.

In the state of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), talented and artistic craftsmen produce excellent handmade articles that find their customers not only in India but in almost all parts of the world, thus a significant contributor to the state economy. The major handicraft of the state are woven embroidery (includes carpets, shawls, tapestry rugs), hook work embroidery (Namda, gabba, crewel embroidery, chain stitch and stable embroidery on shawls), engravings includes wood cooper or silver and painting. This is mostly confined to rural areas of the state and was introduced in Kashmir valley in the reign of King Zain-ul-Abideen (1420-1470 A.D.) (Lawrence, 1967). This industry was in boom in 1960’s and 1970’s, which was partly due to increased demand and less competition from its competitors in the international market but later on in early 1990’s due to globalization, it started dwindling due to increased competition, technological revolution, lengthy distribution chains and also due to youth aspiration for different professions (Mir & Mir, 2010). Now the scene of scenario is that the sector is in survival stage in the state. Against this backdrop, J & K government established handicraft training centers both elementary and advanced training in the respective handicraft trade category were established to sustain and revive this sector for the state economy.

The Handicraft training centers are now organizing training programmes for the last three decades in the state and have been found that the pass-out artisans after acquiring the training from these institutions, mostly failed in establishing their own ventures which was also cause of concern for the state. Moreover, in the post World Trade Organization (WTO) era with the diminished tariff and non-tariff barriers (Nayar, 2009; Shukla, 2009), there was sharp decline in the production of these handicrafts, which may be attributed to many reasons, the most important being the import of cheap and value added products from its neighboring countries (Cordell, 1991) under the umbrella of liberalization, privatization and globalization (LPG); secondly due to turmoil phase in the state of J & K in the last twenty five years. This compelled many micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) to change the business as the tourism sector was almost negligible for the state economy hence acting as a detrimental to the ‘entrepreneurship culture’ in the state. In addition, in the training centers, there was huge gap in design and delivery of training programme to the trainees, with the result there is possibility for things to go amiss and expectations failed (Azevedo & Akdere, 2011) hence it is serious issue and is indispensable to study the effectiveness and efficiency of these training programmes.

Objectives:
(i) To evaluate the perception of trainees and trainers towards the training course imparted by the handicraft training centers of the state.
(ii) To identify the gaps in the training course organized by the handicraft training centers of the state.
(iii) To suggest measures in order to achieve effectiveness of training programme organized by the handicraft training centers of the state.

Methodology:
Training and Development in the handicraft training centers has been studied under the system model which consists of Input stage, processing stage and output stage. The research study is exploratory in nature and the sample frame for the research was the Jammu & Kashmir state and the data was collected from all the districts of all the three divisions of the State i.e. Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh division by using a well structured questionnaire and interview method. The respondents for the present study were the trainees of the training centers however, to increase the reliability of the data, the perception of pass-out trainees, administrators and officers was also taken into consideration.
Sometime booster sampling technique was used due to non availability of pass-out student of a particular training center. The sample plan is given in the table 1.1.

**Table 1.1: Training Centers in the Jammu & Kashmir State.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Name Of Division</th>
<th>Total Centers</th>
<th>Training Centers</th>
<th>Sample Selected</th>
<th>Sample percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Kashmir</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>128</td>
<td></td>
<td>37.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Jammu</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>59</td>
<td></td>
<td>40.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Ladakh</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td>38.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>518</strong></td>
<td><strong>200</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>39.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Research Findings:**

The perception of trainees with respect to different variables (table1.2) under the system model consists of input, processing and output stage. In the input stage, selection of trainees was taken for discussion whereas in the processing stage, relevance of training, duration of training, trainee competence with respect to knowledge, skill and attitude (KSA), culture, continuous assessment, design of course and physical infrastructure was taken into consideration. In the final output stage, evaluation, quality and placement was discussed.

A) **Input Stage**

i) **Selection of Trainees**

Right selection of trainees is prerequisite for the success of any training programme and should be purely based on motivation level of the trainee but it has been found during the survey that the trainees are mostly dropout from the normal educational system as depicted by 28.3 percent of trainees agree and 18.72 percent strongly agree with this dimension. Mostly trainees accepted that they attending course by chance not by choice. No doubt enrolment in these institutions has increased but unfortunately unmotivated lot has made inroad in these training centers which has a direct bearing on the ultimate quality in the end. Though government is serious about the revival of handicraft sector in the state, but it has been found that the department has thrown all the selection procedure to winds and it was witnessed that even child laborers have made their inroad into these training centers besides, adults who have reached at an age where their admission into training centers seem to be absurd and unwanted. This is also the cause of failure in reviving the entrepreneurship culture in the handicraft sector of the state.

B) **Processing Stage**

i) **Relevance of Training**

The training effectiveness depends upon the Training Need Analysis (TNA) in the respective trade supported by both supply and demand driven needs (Sloman, & Reynolds, 2003). It has been found during the survey that the perception of faculty favors that the content wise syllabus needs reorientation in the current globalized environment which is three decade old. All this needs a drastic change both in content as well as context-wise so that right skills along with right knowledge are imparted to the trainees for the current market needs.

ii) **Duration of the Training:**

Though, the training durations vary from trade to trade depending upon the intricacies and delicacies of the activities in the respective trades. The active training period gets reduced substantially in the Kashmir due to external factors and the actual time period is inadequate to impart knowledge and requisite skills to the trainees. Consequently, it is not possible to make trainees as a perfect fit within the existing time duration as majority of the respondents i.e. 46.0 percent of people disagree and 10.6 percent strongly disagree with this dimension hence showing dissatisfaction towards the actual training duration. However, many respondents were concerned with the quality of training programme rather than duration of training programme. In addition, the majority of respondents were not satisfied with teaching pedagogy. A small 3.87 percent of trainees remain ‘undecided’ concluded that there is proportion of trainees in these institution who are least career conscious and can be dangerous to other trainees as well as to the institution.
ii) Developing Trainees Competence:

In order to achieve excellence, practical orientation is must for Human Resource Development (HRD) as was found in the survey that these institutes were poor in imparting practical orientation to the trainees. This depicts that trainers are lacking requisite orientation to develop skill competence among the trainees as the entire training programme revolves round the technical (skill) aspects whereas in-depth knowledge and behavioral component (attitude) of the training was missing. It has been found that 41.66% of trainees disagree with the statement that practical orientation is required for developing trainee competence which in itself depicts that trainees hardly feel any difference between theory and practical training (Albanese, 1988).

iii) Developing Positive Attitude:

A trainee with sufficient knowledge and requisite listening skills cannot be successful in imbibing the skills unless he possesses the positive attitude and motivation towards that training programme. Generally the concerned staff of the organization also feels that trainees lack the right attitude, therefore a training programme has to be attitudinal as well as content based (Cohen, 1990) and was found that 54.6 percent trainees were of the opinion that training programmes lack the requisite methodology to change the attitude of trainees. Moreover, it is important that the conducive learning climate be created in these training centers which will change the ‘frame of reference’ of trainees and accordingly professional attitude of trainees will be developed (Lewin, 1951; Lynton & Pareek, 1978).

(Table: 1.2): Perception of Trainees towards the Training programmes in the Handicraft Sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No</th>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree(SD)</th>
<th>Disagree(D)</th>
<th>Undecided(UD)</th>
<th>Agree (A)</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Selection of Trainees</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>18.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Relevance of Training</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>38.66</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>32.03</td>
<td>8.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Duration of Training</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>6.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Trainee Competence</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>41.66</td>
<td>5.92</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Right Attitude</td>
<td>7.75</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>54.6</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Knowledge &amp; Skill of Trainer</td>
<td>12.75</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>37.05</td>
<td>11.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Continuous Test</td>
<td>7.75</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>5.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Infrastructure facility</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Quality improvement</td>
<td>9.22</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>5.21</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>10.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Employment Opportunities</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>46.8</td>
<td>47.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Evaluation of Training Programme</td>
<td>9.76</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>10.37</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>6.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Participative culture</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>7.75</td>
<td>6.55</td>
<td>2.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Design &amp; Structure of Trg. Prog.</td>
<td>20.45</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>6.01</td>
<td>34.85</td>
<td>11.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

iv) Knowledge and Skill level of Trainer:

The basic objectives of any training programme is to improve the professional capabilities of the trainees, therefore, the trainers must posses proficiency both in knowledge and skills to enable them to meet the challenges and the growing demands of the market( Sahaf, 2002). Though, the majority of the trainees i.e. 37.05 percent of trainees agree and 11.29 percent of trainees strongly agrees that the trainer’s posses the necessary skills and knowledge to train the aspirants about the handicrafts skills but still a good minority 3.8 percent of trainees feels otherwise. In addition, duty of a trainer is to act as mentor in the class to bring attitudinal change among the trainees (Clawson, 1985; Beekie, 1997) but unfortunately, trainers have not understood the concept of value based education
system. Moreover, it has been found during the survey that there is no proper sync between the training wings and school of designs with respect to latest design developments and changing customer tastes.

v) Continuous Assessment:

The trainers cannot take it granted that whatever is being taught in the training center is wholly being imbibed by the trainees. It has been found that 31.3 percent of trainees are satisfied with the periodical tests are being conducted; however, there is lack of proper standardized pattern of continuous assessment in their training programme. Moreover, no periodical tests are being conducted in order to assess the value attained by the trainees during the training programme. In addition, there is always diversity and heterogeneity in the approach, understanding, motivation and learning abilities of the trainees so a trainer is supposed to be creative in their teaching pedagogy while imparting training (Collins et al., 2004) but unfortunately was missing in these institutes. So there is dire need for standardized value based evaluation system in order to identify difficulties and deviations for timely corrective measures.

vi) Infrastructure and Physical Environment:

In the service sector, nowadays more emphasis is given to last three ‘P’s of marketing mix (7P’s mix) people, process and physical evidence (Parasuraman et al, 1988) but during the survey it was found that training centers in the 90 percent cases of sampled area have been housed in private buildings on monthly rentals where a proper hygiene, ventilation and other facilities are missing. However, officials of the department were reluctant to talk on this issue. To impart any training and creating conducive climate, the presence of sufficient infrastructure is not only essential but also backbone of the trainee’s perception about the quality of the training. Moreover it is an important ‘P’ of physical evidence in order to create ‘motivational frame of reference’ for attitudinal development (Parasuraman et al, 1988; Mir, 2011). Department contemplates to carry training programmes to every nook and corner of the state and hence these training centers are mobile in nature. But in an effort to do so, the training centers have been located at places where proper vigilance and monitoring is either very difficult or impossible.

vii) Developing Participative culture:

In order to be more effective a trainer should be familiar with cultural background of training participants as Jammu & Kashmir has great cultural diversity within the three divisions i.e. Kashmir, Jammu & Ladakh. This is necessity in view that the faculty gets normally transferred as per the service rules of state. It can be seen that 51 percent of trainees totally disagree with the conducive climate which depicts that trainees are lacking the concept of participative learning climate and has been groomed on the traditional authoritarian lines (Mir, 2007). This is not an exclusive case, as it is a norm in whole education scenario in the state and mostly passive learning is followed (Madhavan, 2012). The culture of ‘teaching’ is followed rather than ‘culture of learning’ (Thomas, 1990) and it is the duty of the trainer who can create a cooperative culture so that trainees will develop their internal locus of control.

viii) Structure & Design of training Programme:

The course structure and design is important in the curriculum development of any training programme and should be always updated on year to year basis. The curriculum development should be always in sync with the market and industry demands. Moreover in curriculum development, multitasking along with Information Communication and Technology (ICT) should be encouraged so that the real human Capital will be developed in the state (Robert, 2000). It was found that 34.85 percent of trainees agree with the fact that structure and design of training programme are crucial for human resource development (HRD).

C) Output Stage:

i) Evaluation of Training Programme:

In order to maintain quality standard it should be made compulsory for all the institutes that third party monitoring agency should evaluate the performance of training programmes so that any lapse on the part of any stakeholder of these institutes can be minimized. From the trainee’s point of view, mostly 45 percent of trainees showed reluctance for any sort of evaluation of training programme.
which is due to their poor competence and dropout level from the main stream education system. There is no doubt that all evaluation models are facing the common fundamental flaw which is they are lacking on decision making (Holton & Naquin, 2005) which is must for practicing experimentation and develop innovations in the respective field.

ii) Focus on the Quality:

The ultimate aim at the output stage of any organization is holistic value added quality (Porter & Keller, 2013) and same is the case with the handicraft department. It was found during the survey that only 37.2 per cent of trainees agree with the statement that training programs focus on quality while as there is higher percentage of trainees i.e. 38 percent of the trainees disagree with the statement as the institution is more concerned quantity rather than quality. This is also depicted in their in-house reports where with the strength of 518 training centers, the concerned development has imparted training to more than 1.50 lakh trainees up to the year 2004 (Anonymous, 2006) but it is unfortunate that nowhere it is stated that how many craftsmen, master craftsmen has been placed or added to this industry. Moreover, it was found that many trainees who figure in the total number of trainees trained by the department through its wide net work of training centers haves not adopted the line hence a direct loss of resource to the state exchequer. Furthermore, in these institutes there is no such inbuilt tracking mechanism whereby they can track trainees after the completion of training programme so that there pass out trainees can be made role models for the future generation (Anonymous, 2011).

iii) Employment Opportunities:

No doubt every trainee cannot become entrepreneur but it is better to be ‘employer rather than employee’ and will not only flourish the cultural ethos of Kashmir but will also boost the state economy (Anonymous, 2011). So far as the placement records regarding the employment opportunities provided to the trainees after completion of course by the concerned institutes was missing. However, during the survey it was also found that 47.99 percent of trainees strongly agree with the statement that after training the employment opportunities of trainee will be more. This depicts that the trainees are optimistic about their future and this is duty of the concerned authorities to keep their hopes alive.

Suggestions and Policy implications:

In the current globalization era, all organizations needs to be dynamic as its impact has led to the ‘survival of the fittest’ syndrome since handicraft sector in India is facing the major onslaught from its neighboring countries. Consequently the core function of handicraft industry should not only in terms of operational efficiency of the training institute but also the quality human capital output. The content of training process needs to be re-engineered in the current challenging environment so that young trainees are developed for different roles and responsibilities to face future challenges. The trainer’s should behave as a professional mentor so that behavior and attitude of the trainees can be modified in a constructive way. Moreover, modern standardized continuous assessments should be adopted so that value gained by the trainees in the training program is assessed properly. In addition, in reviving the entrepreneurial culture in the state it is mandatory to include creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship as core courses in curriculum so that the young minds are groomed on entrepreneurial lines with a guidance and counseling cell to support these trainees.

References:


