

The Relationship between Ethical Practices of Training Provider and Training Effectiveness

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menentukan status amalan etika oleh penganjur latihan dan hubungannya dengan keberkesanan latihan. Tinjauan deskriptif ini melibatkan 164 orang pegawai Gred 41 yang berkhidmat di Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) di Serdang, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia. Responden yang dipilih mempunyai sekurang-kurangnya lebih lima tahun pengalaman bekerja dan mestilah pernah menghadiri latihan sekurang-kurangnya sekali dalam 12 bulan yang lepas (Januari – Disember 2008). Hasil kajian mendapati wujudnya perkaitan di antara amalan etika penganjur latihan dan keberkesanan latihan. Keputusan kajian juga mendapati bahawa kebanyakan amalan etika penganjur latihan adalah sebelum dan semasa latihan. Dapatan penyelidikan ini memperkukuh teori-teori sedia ada bahawa sesebuah organisasi atau pertubuhan akan berjaya mencapai matlamatnya jika ahli-ahli yang terbabit di dalamnya memiliki semangat dan amalan etika. Amalan etika yang betul, sama ada sebelum, semasa dan selepas latihan, memberi kesan kepada “kinerja” (performance) organisasi. Pada masa hadapan dicadangkan untuk mengaji dan menyelidik lebih luas lagi mengenai perkaitan di antara amalan etika penganjur latihan dengan keberkesanan latihan. Perlu juga diambilkira faktor-faktor lainnya yang boleh membawa kepada keberkesanan latihan. Sememangnya antara amalan etika, keberkesanan latihan, dan kejayaan sesebuah organisasi atau pertubuhan memiliki perkaitan yang rapat. Lantaran itu, dalam konteks pembinaan modal insan dan pembangunan yang bersepadu di Malaysia, mempertingkatkan amalan etika dan produktiviti dalam bekerja adalah merupakan satu amalan sosial yang digalakkan kerana manfaatnya yang muktamad.

Kata-kata kunci: amalan etika, penganjur latihan, keberkesanan latihan, dan kejayaan sesebuah organisasi.



Marlisa Abdulrahim, M.Sc. is a Student of Ph.D. Programme in the Department of Professional Development and Continuing Education, Faculty of Educational Studies UPM (University of Putra Malaysia), 43400 Serdang, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia. She was born in Malaysia on 11 July 1983. She earned her Diploma degree in Business Study (2001) from UiTM (University of Technology MARA) in Shah Alam, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia; Bachelor degree in Business Administration on Marketing (2004) from UPM; and Master Science degree in Human Resource Development (2009) from UPM. She has actively involved in research, sport and traveling.

For academic purposes, she can be contacted at: Blok 32-01-09 Flat Sri Melaka, Km 6 Jalan Cheras, 56100 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Her e-mail is marlisa_rahim@yahoo.com

INTRODUCTION

Many professionals and their clients are substantially invested in the unethical and immoral status quo. No quick solution to the problems of unethical procurement or performance is anticipated. The issues and performance patterns that have corrupted procurement and performance have evolved over many years, on both the demand and supply sides. Professionals who seek to apply higher standards of integrity may alienate themselves from their professional colleagues and in the case of whistle blowing in particular, subject themselves (and their families) to risks of retaliation or revenge (Camerer *et al.*, 2006). "Ethical", when applied to investment, has come to mean a selective approach to investment apart from the immediate financial and investment concerns; a consideration of what a company does and not just how it does it (Taylor, 2001).

The increasing professionalization of training brings not only financial and status rewards but also the obligation to examine the nature of our professional practices. Training organisations need to find out, whether the important key performance processes of training organisations, which assure their competitiveness, are existent and work well in their organization (Putz, 2007). The effectiveness variables have the potential to increase or decrease the likelihood of successful training outcomes.

Ethical practices and training effectiveness were important aspect in training program. The match of ethical principles truth training providers are truthfulness in reporting the facts, honesty in managing resources and evidence based decision making. According to G.J. Bergenhenegouwen (1996), like every other professional, training professionals work by assessments and value judgments.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

A. ETHICS AND ETHICAL PRACTICES

Ethics as the study of human conduct in terms of what is right or wrong, what is worth doing, and what should not be done (Farrell, Cobbin & Farrell, 2000). Recent work has especially focused on the need for an ethical space and ethical attitude (Napal, 2003). While an ethical culture provides a "roadmap" for individual conduct at work, programs and policies must be developed to facilitate the permeation of such normative guidance throughout the organization (Beu, Buckley & Harvey, 2003).

Merely having standards is not enough and a company must make the standards understood and ensure their proper dissemination within the organizational structure. Many companies therefore utilize codes that convey an ethical position (Valentine, Greller & Richtermeyer, 2006) which "institutionalize the morals and values of the company founders such that they become part of the corporate culture" (Alder, Schminke & Noel, 2007). Based on these notions, ethical codes and training seemingly allow organizations to improve employees' conduct by working through and increasing employees' perceptions of their immediate ethical context.

Proponents of the ethic of critique argue, not too debatably, that organizations are in a constant state of change. Under this argument, without constant and

consistent evaluation of organizational practices, the organization as a whole will turn, perhaps unwittingly, to a pattern of unethical decisions and unethical consequences. Within the ethic of critique, an ethical leader or organizational member criticizes the organization as “structurally ineffective”. The criticism is against excessive bureaucracy, the contractual mind-set, administrative impersonality and an overly technical approach to teaching. Adding zero tolerance to the discussion yields the following plausible critique (Carson, Baetz & McGill, 2008).

One of the primary goals of ethics research is to explain why individuals behave as they do when confronted with ethical dilemmas (Beu, Buckley & Harvey, 2003). They stated that researchers must understand that there are those individual who will behave ethically in most instances and there are certain instances where most people will behave ethically. A concern with job design and employee motivation was indeed one of the means by which ethical treatment of employees and concerns for their welfare were sustained well into the 20th century.

Geetanee Napal (2003) examined the ethical decision making in business which focus in Mauritius. The empirical evidence shows that studies on ethical decision making have been limited to developed countries. This study focuses on Mauritius, an emerging economy, and follows the course that existing research has taken. The aim of study was to provide a first indication as to the ethical perceptions of executives confronted with dilemmas in the field of business. The author used a questionnaire to collect data. There are 141 respondents, all in supervisory and management positions in the services sector. Organizations included financial institutions, sugar industry, food industry, telecommunication sector, police force, hotels, off-shore sector, legal profession, auditing and consultancy businesses, advertising agencies, and the medical and para-medical profession (retail and wholesale pharmacies, dental profession, and the press). With reference to strategies for ethical decision-making, the findings show that respondents ranked factors associated with moral deliberations higher than company policy and legal requirements. The general view is that, irrespective of codes of conduct, personal ethics predominate when it comes to making ethical choices. There is also evidence that while respondents consider the behavior of top and senior management as a key determinant of ethical conduct in the world of business, they rate the behavior of middle management as less important.

Meanwhile, Yvonne Stedham, Jeanne Y. Yamamura and Rafik I. Beekun (2007) examined gender differences in business ethics which focus of justice and relativist perspectives. This study aims to provide additional insights into ethical decision making by comparing the ethical judgments made by men and women. This study also aims to contribute to our understanding of gender differences in business ethics by investigating whether the ethical judgment of men and women differs when they base their judgment on a relativist and a justice perspective of ethics. Data were collected from 44 respondents. A survey, in English, was distributed by one of the authors to German students studying in a Master of Business programme. The results show that women’s judgment of the ethicality

of an action differs from that of men in that women judge a situation to be more unethical than men. The consideration of contextual aspects affects both men and women's conclusion concerning the ethical content of an action. The consideration of such factors as culture, tradition, and family is critical in their assessment of the unethical action presented.

Finally, G. Stoney Alder, Marshall Schminke and Terry W. Noel (2007) examined how the individual ethical orientation of employees influences perceptions of a variety of human resource programs that have the potential to be perceived as invasive. The authors collected information about employees' job attitudes, ethical orientation, perceptions of the degree to which various human practices violate employee privacy, and beliefs concerning the appropriateness of these same practices. Surveys were delivered to 186 employees by the company mail system of a heavy equipment sales and service center. The results demonstrate that ethical orientation directly affects perceived invasiveness and influences perceived appropriateness via both direct and indirect effects. Consistent with expectations, ethical formalism exerted a significant main effect on the perceived invasiveness of a set of human resource programs with privacy implications.

B. TRAINING PROVIDER

The market situation of training providers has changed in comparison to earlier times, especially for government driven or other training organizations which to some extent are funded by government money or the money of other umbrella organizations. Mark Sebastian Putz (2007) said that to compete against private providers, training organisations firstly need to find out, whether the important key performance processes of training organisations, which assure their competitiveness, are existent and work well in their organization. Secondly, they need to implement those processes, which are still missing but would increase the performance of their organization. In total, training providers need to offer more interesting products and programmes than their competitors have in place, they need to have a well-working sales – and marketing-management, the knowledge delivery process must be outstanding – because this is the basic product of a training organization – and the organization needs an efficient process – and financial-based controlling system.

Based on the research findings, the norms and values of an organization stem from completely different sources. In broad outlines, I can distinguish three main sources. *First*, the individual norms and values brought in by the founders, stakeholders and top managers of the organization. Past and present ideas, wishes and expectations expressed by top managers in the organization exert a great influence, among other things, on decision making, interpersonal relationships, the culture of the organization, views and conceptions, ideas and behavior of the staff. *Second*, experiences of the organization as such. The results of past activities are, as it were, recorded in institutional memory, being displayed in job descriptions, job specifications, plans, procedure regulations and traditional practices. They show in which activities the staff put their energy, showing

which activities had, and still have, a great “value” for the organization. *Third*, the nature of the organization. Some companies or institutions have their own cultural patterns, stemming from the type of product and/or services they provide. Well-known examples are, for instance, health care, with a strong orientation towards life and the dignity of the human being. Bureaucratic organizations such as municipalities, ministries, and so on, are more often focused on implementing certain rules and regulations than on the efficiency and effectiveness of the proceedings. These norms and values are institutionalized within the organization, in this way forming the culture of the organization.

C. TRAINING EFFECTIVENESS

Training is related to the skills deemed necessary by the management of an organization that must be acquired by the members of that organization, in order to improve the probability of achievement of its goals. Training offered to employees, may help them reduce their anxiety or frustration, brought on by work demands, that they are not familiar with, and they are lacking the skills to handle effectively. Employees feeling, less than competent to do a task, are more likely to leave the field; or if they choose to stay, their productivity would be suboptimal (Lingham, Rickley & Rezania, 2006).

Debbie T. LeClair and Linda Farrell (2000) investigated the effectiveness of a training programme in changing safety attitudes and culture for all employees within a highly regulated environment in the nuclear industry. An attitude survey was used to measure responses from employees in the nuclear industry before and after a safety training intervention which all employees attended in their work teams. The first administration of the survey yielded 417 responses, and the second, administered 16 months later following the training intervention, yielded 460 responses. The findings imply, at first glance, that the training has had an effect only for the higher grades of employee. The results strongly support the notion of two safety cultures operating, whose effect is to render the safety culture training programmed differentially effective.

Mohamed E. Ibrahim (2004) examined effectiveness of training in organization. The author used meta-analytic procedures to examine the relationship between specified training design and evaluation features and the effectiveness of training in organizations. Meta-analytic procedures were applied to the extant published training effectiveness literature to provide a quantitative population estimate of the effectiveness of training and also to investigate the relationship between the observed effectiveness of organizational training and specified training design and evaluation features. The objective for the present meta-analysis was to assess whether the effectiveness of training varied systematically as a function of the evaluation criteria used. The author used five sets of studies were available in the data set those that reported using: (1) reaction and learning; (2) learning and behavioral; (3) learning and results; (4) behavioral and results; and (5) learning, behavioral and results criteria. The research used quantitative method for the measurement

of training effectiveness. The results suggest a medium to large effect size for organizational training. In addition, the training method used, the skill or task characteristic trained, and the choice of evaluation criteria were related to the effectiveness of training programs.

Tony Lingham, Bonnie Richley and Davar Rezania (2006) identified evaluation system for training programs by using four phase approach. The research suggests a four-phase systematic approach to designing and evaluating training programs that promotes collaboration between organizational leaders, trainers, participants and evaluators. This study presents a case study of a leadership training program conducted at a Midwestern corporate university. The four phase evaluation systems consist of: (1) design of training program; (2) launch and evaluating the initial training program; (3) feedback from initial participants, design and administration of evaluation measures; and (4) ongoing training and evaluation. Analysis of the qualitative data from interviews with participants and field notes during the first two iterations of the program highlight three major aspects that were then used to develop a unique measure for the evaluation of subsequent iterations. The study involved a total of 175 managers. This finding was critical in understanding the learning focus of the program and the significance of developing a unique evaluation system that is both meaningful and important to the organization and its members. It also showed that clear content was more important to participants in this particular training program.

THE RESEARCH FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

The research framework (figure 1) for the study of the relationship between ethical practices of training provider and training effectiveness include two variables: dependent variable and independent variable. The dependent variable is training effectiveness that influence by independent variable, which ethical practices of training provider.

A. DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Research design used in this study was a descriptive survey study. This study was conducted through quantitative research method so that all the data can be quantified through questionnaire. Questionnaires were used to identify perception of UPM (University of Putra Malaysia) officers on the relationship between ethical practices of training provider and their relationship with training effectiveness. The data were collected based on respondents perception toward the items listed in the questionnaires.

B. POPULATION AND SAMPLING

The populations of interest were all the employees of the UPM officers who in the Grade 41. The target population must be at least has five years experience in work. This is to ensure the staff has great experienced in training. They must attend training at least once in past 12 months (January – December 2008). This is to make them easiest to remember the experience because it's quite new that

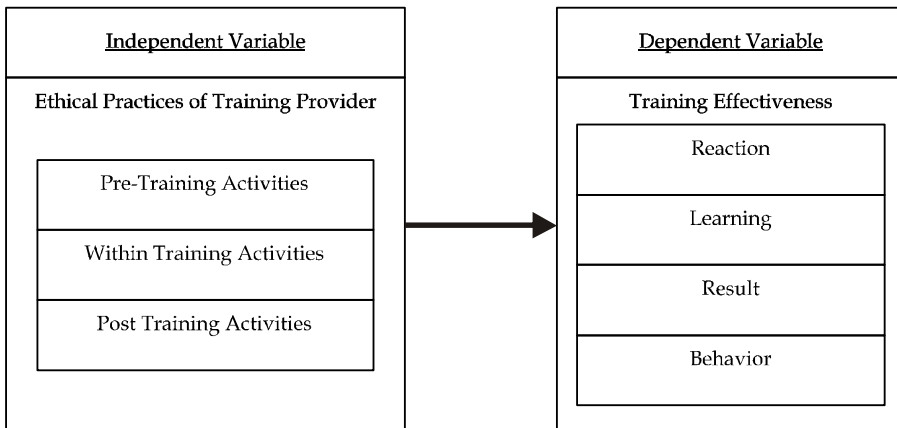


Figure 1:
Research Framework

they attended training. The total numbers of the staff who fulfill the characteristics are 276. From the total of population, there is 164 staff who selected as sample. Based on table for determining sample size, for a given population of 276, a minimum sample size of 162 would be needed to represent the population.

Simple random sampling method was used in this research. The letter of permission and a complete list of names of Grade 41 officers in UPM were obtained from the registrar office, UPM. Therefore, every member of the target population has an equal and independent chance of being represented in the sample.

C. THE INSTRUMENT

The development of the instrument had two major purposes. *First* is to measure the independent variable, ethical practices of training provider: pre-training program, within training program and post training program. *Second* is to measure the dependent variable, training effectiveness: reaction, learning, behavior and result. The measure of the ethical practices of training provider were adapted from the questionnaire which developed by Ministry of Local Government, Kampala (2003) and the measure of training effectiveness were adapted from the instrument develop by TV Rao (2007).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION:

A. ANALYSIS OF THE PERCEIVED LEVEL ETHICAL PRACTICES OF TRAINING PROVIDERS

A total of 170 respondents were involved in this study and only 164 (96.5%) responded to the questionnaire. The first stage of this study is to determine the perceived level ethical practices of training provider by respondents. The result showed that the respondent's perception on the ethical practices of training

provider level received an average of 5.57 from a total of seven. This indicates that the respondent's agreement towards the ethical practices of training provider was high. The ethical practices of training provider were measure by three practices consist of pre-training activities, within training activities and post training activities.

The respondents gave highest response level of on the post training activities with the mean of 5.57 and standard deviation of 1.08. The finding shows that majority of the respondents perceived strongly agree towards the ethical practices of training provider in pre-training program. The second highest response level was within training activities with the mean of 5.46 and standard deviation of 1.01. This shows that majority of the respondents perceived strongly agree towards the ethical practices of training provider within program. The less high response level was the pre-training activities with the mean of 5.41 and standard deviation of 1.00. However, this mean values still near to the average mean of 5.57 suggesting that the respondents perceived that they were highly agree towards the ethical practices of training providers.

B. ANALYSIS OF THE PERCEIVED LEVEL OF TRAINING EFFECTIVENESS

The second stage of this study is to determine the perceived level ethical practices of training provider by respondents. The result showed that the respondent's agreement towards the training effectiveness was high. This study indicates that the respondent's overall perception on the training effectiveness level received an average of 5.65 from a total of seven. The training effectiveness were measure by four elements consist of reaction, learning, behavior and result.

The highest response level of respondents was the results or outcomes with the mean of 6.02 and standard deviation of 1.09. The finding shows that the respondents perceived strongly agree towards the training effectiveness in result or outcomes. The second highest response level was learning with the mean of 5.62 and standard deviation of 1.08. It was the same mean for the behavior which was 5.62 and standard deviation of 1.04. This shows that majority of the respondents perceived strongly agree towards the training effectiveness in learning and behavior. The less high response level was the reaction with the mean of 5.52 and standard deviation of 1.16. This mean values still near to the average mean of 5.65 suggesting that the respondents perceived that they were highly agree towards the training effectiveness.

C. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ETHICAL PRACTICES OF TRAINING PROVIDER AND TRAINING EFFECTIVENESS

The correlation of ethical practices of training provider and training effectiveness showed a correlation coefficient value of $r = 0.939$ at a significant level of 0.0001. The finding indicates that ethical practices were positively correlated with training effectiveness (as cited by Stake & Mabry, 1998). Based on Guilford's rule of thumb as guidance, the finding shows very high relationship

between ethical practices and training effectiveness. Thus, the higher level of ethical practices of training providers would increase the level of training effectiveness.

The relationship between pre-training activities and the training effectiveness factors included overall training effectiveness. The overall training effectiveness displays the correlation coefficient of $r = 0.922$ at significance level of 0.0001, proving that there was a substantial relationship between pre-training activities and training effectiveness. The finding suggests that pre-training activities influenced training effectiveness. This means an increase in pre-training activities would increase the level of training effectiveness.

The relationship between within training activities and training effectiveness is showed by the correlation coefficient of $r = 0.922$ at significance level of 0.0001. The coefficient value of 0.922 being more than the significant value of 0.0001 shows that there were substantial relationship between within training activities and training effectiveness. This signifies that within training activities influenced training effectiveness. Therefore, any increase in level of within training activities will automatically increase the level of training effectiveness.

The relationship between post training activities and the training effectiveness factors included overall training effectiveness. The overall training effectiveness displays the correlation coefficient of $r = 0.890$ at significance level of 0.0001, proving that there was a substantial relationship between post training activities and training effectiveness. The finding suggests that post training activities influenced training effectiveness. This means an increase in post training activities would increase the level of training effectiveness.

CONCLUSIONS

It shows that the result of ethical practices of training provider had high level perception of the UPM staff. This was support by the positive findings associated with general training activity is also found in organizations with a sincere emphasis on ethics (LeClair & Ferrell, 2000).

In this study revealed that the training effectiveness level of the UPM staff shows high level perception. This was support by Mohamed E. Ibrahim (2004) that the results indicate significant positive reactions to the training course. They also indicate significant increase in trainees' knowledge and skills after training. These results lead to the conclusion that the training course was effective.

An ethical practice of training provider is the principle link in helping the training become effective. Applying ethics in training make good sense and it is useful to have multiple codes, holding one up against the other, not so that we can justify what we want to do anyway, but so that we can recognize different manifestations of ethical value and better deliberate their implications (Stake & Marby, 1998).

The result of this study shows that the ethical practices of training provider level of the UPM staff was very high relationship with training effectiveness. The integration of three major perspectives in ethical practices, namely pre-training

program, within training program and post training program as mentioned in the preceding chapter is necessary or understanding why training is effective.

Future research are suggested that the relationship between ethical practices of training provider and training effectiveness may affect the organizational performance and to investigate the impact of ethical practices of training provider on others professionals such as support staff and academicians.

Bibliography

- Alder, G. Stoney, Marshall Schminke & Terry W. Noel. (2007). "The Impact of Individual Ethics on Reactions to Potentially Invasive HR Practices" in *Journal of Business Ethics*, 75, pp.201-214.
- Bergenhengouw, G.J. (1996). "Professional Code and Ethics for Training Professionals" in *Journal of European Industrial Training*, Vol.20, No.4, pp.23-29.
- Beu, Danielle S., M. Ronald Buckley & Michael G. Harvey. (2003). "Ethical Decision-Making: A Multidimensional Construct" in *Journal of Business Ethics: A European Review*, Vol.12, No.1, pp.88-107.
- Camerer, Marianne et al. (2006). *Final Report: Preparation of Guidelines on How to Prevent Corruption and Promote Integrity in the Selection and Employment of Professional Consultants*. Washington D.C., United State of America: University of Stellenbosch.
- Carson, A. Scott, Mark Baetz & Shelley McGill. (2008). *Codes of Conduct in the Private Sector: A Review of the Academic Literature form 1987 to 2007*. Ontario, Canada: University of Laurier.
- Farrell, Brian J., Deirdre M. Cobbin & Helen M. Farrell. (2000). "Codes of Ethics: Their Evolution, Development and Other Controversies" in *Journal of Management Development*, Vol.21, No.2, pp.152-163.
- Ibrahim, Mohamed E. (2004). "Measuring Training Effectiveness" in *Journal of Management Research*, Vol.4, No.3, pp.147-155.
- LeClair, Debbie T. & Linda Ferrell. (2000). "Innovation in Experiential Business Ethics Training" in *Journal of Business Ethics*, 23, pp.313-322.
- Lingham, Tony, Bonnie Richley & Davar Rezaia. (2006). "An Evaluation System for Training Programs: A Case Study Using a Four-Phase Approach" in *Career Development International*, Vol.11, No.4, pp.334-351.
- Napal, Geetanee. (2003). "Ethical Decision-Making in Business: Focus on Mauritius" in *Journal of Business Ethics: A European Review*, Vol.12, No.1, pp.54-63.
- Pütz, Mark Sebastian. (2007). *Benchmarking between Training Providers as a Permanent and Effective Quality Assurance Tool*. Duesseldorf, Germany: Central Agency for Continuing Vocational Education and Training in the Skilled Crafts.
- Stake, R. & L. Mabry. (1998). "Ethics in Program Evaluation" in *Scand J. Soc Welfare*, 7, pp.99-109.
- Stedham, Yvonne, Jeanne H. Yamamura & Rafik I. Beekun. (2007). "Gender Differences in Business Ethics: Justice and Relativist Perspectives" in *Journal of Business Ethics: European Review*, Vol.16, No.2, pp.163-174.
- Taylor, Robert. (2001). "Putting Ethics into Investment" in *Journal of Business Ethics: European Review*, Vol.10, No.1, pp.53-60.
- Valentine, Sean, Martin M. Greller & Sandra B. Richtermyer. (2006). "Employee Job Response as a Function of Ethical Context and Perceived Organization Support" in *Journal of Business Research*, 59, pp.582-588.