

Evaluation of Training

Distance Learning Part 1: Introduction to EoT

Organisations in the public sector and funding agencies, such as the DoPT, use considerable resources to enable people to learn. There are a variety of reasons and motives for this, and it is likely to increase as new employees, technologies or working practices are introduced.

For progressive organisations, learning is considered an investment where, typically, 2-4% of a payroll is invested in training and development. Success for this investment is usually achieved by having a clearly defined policy, with an effective training function for its implementation. As with most forms of investment, the intention is to obtain benefit, both for the organisation and for its employees. Unfortunately, the management of some organisations see training simply as a cost. They fail to recognise the time and money being wasted by people engaged in ineffective learning. Management are usually well aware of the consequence's poor performance, but do not always accept the link between this and having a well-managed, effective training function.

You might be fortunate to work for an organisation that sees benefit in investing in training and development. Alternatively, and less fortunately, you could be working for an organisation that needs convincing that training is a worthwhile investment. In either case, evaluation of training (EoT) will be an essential part of your work: it may also to be your responsibility.

There are different incentives to evaluating training, according to who is doing it and for what purpose. Trainers may face a conflict of interest in that evaluation of training may be a good way of demonstrating success. However, when the results of evaluation are less than satisfactory, it can provoke defensive criticism of the accuracy of the information being used, its relevance or to the adequacy of resources. Generally, trainers may have little incentive to evaluate training unless they also benefit from the process. EoT should therefore take into account incentives for:

- **Funding agencies**, who provide financial support and access to an increasing variety of resources. Here, the incentives for evaluation are to **monitor** implementation of government policy and to obtain information confirming effective use of available resources.
- **Training Institutions** use a major proportion of available funding to provide professional services to client organisations within the public sector. The existence and continuing development of a training institute, and therefore the incentive for evaluation, depends on being able to **prove** that resources are being used to the satisfaction of their clients.
- **Client Organisations**, whose performance is a primary concern of government, and the focal point for evaluation. However, unless there is a valid reason for Heads of Department's and stakeholders to **improve** efficiency, quality or services to customers and beneficiaries, then there's no reason to expect them to do so.
- **People**. An organisation is '*an organised body of people with a particular purpose, such as a business or government department*'. Therefore, training within a client organisation depends on people **learning** - and being able to evaluate both its process and outcomes.

The Government of India, along with other funding agencies, spend a great deal of money on training. It is mostly done through an extensive network of institutional training institutes, which serve national, state and departmental training needs. With the current emphasis on 'value for money', questions to be answered are therefore about whether such spending can be regarded as a good investment. If such questions are important - requiring an answer, then the issue is being able to show how investment in training benefits Indian public services, and the people for whom these services are provided.

When referring to 'training' we are not concerning ourselves solely with courses being run at training institutes: that is a simplistic and wholly inadequate view of the concept to which investment can be directed. With the introduction of distance learning and the policy of 'training for all', there is an immense potential to widen the concept and scope of training to realise far greater benefits from this investment. However, good investment practice requires trainers to be able to account for money spent and other resources used. By using EoT, you can justify investment and promote the use of training to

improve performance. If you can't show evidence of the benefits of training, why should the government continue to support it?

Definition of Training

A planned process to modify attitude, knowledge or skill behaviour through learning experience to achieve effective performance in an activity or range of activities. Its purpose, in the work situation, is to develop the abilities of the individual and to satisfy the current and future manpower needs of the organisation.

A great deal of money can be spent on training, but this doesn't necessarily mean that it has been invested in the 'planned process', referred to in the above definition. For example, spending money building a training centre results in having a building, called a training centre: more money can be spent developing hostel facilities, or providing transport. Is this truly an investment in a planned process to improve performance?

Definition of Investment

The thing worth buying because it may be profitable or useful in the future.

Although this is how the Oxford English Dictionary defines investment, perhaps we should link the two definitions given so that we have a clear concept of an investment in training. It's also worth remembering that our investors are not trainers, and they may have other equally appealing opportunities to spend their money. Another factor, especially at times of economic recession, is that investors are likely to seek evidence to justify their investment. Instead of being impressed by a tour of a training centre and seeing courses being run, they may adapt our definition of training to ask what might be difficult questions to answer. For example, based on the definition of training, above:

- What *planned process* has been used to ensure that the right people are attending **your** courses?
- How do **your** courses *modify behaviour, attitude, knowledge, or skill* - and how is this measured?
- How do **you** assess a *learning experience*, is it during the process of learning or as an outcome after attending a course?
- What evidence is available to show that people who attended **your** course can *achieve effective performance, or at least show a significant improvement*?
- How do **your** courses help *to satisfy the current and future manpower needs* - of a public service organisation?

Notice the reference to '**you**' and '**your**' - because it's you who spent the investor's money. You planned the process, helped people to learn and achieve effective performance. If you, or your director, or colleagues can't answer these questions, can you claim the courses are a good investment? Might they be a waste of money? When trainers are competent and highly motivated professionally, it is in their interests to be able to answer such questions. These are trainers who investors are keen to support, because they are confident that money they invest will result in worthwhile benefits. However, investors are not just from funding agencies, and money is not the only form of investment. For example:

- People, who are willing to be trained, are prepared to invest their time and effort in relevant learning experiences. That is, they will do so - if they regard their investment to be of benefit to them, personally. If not, why should they bother wasting their time and personal inconvenience to attend a course that is of no value to them?

- Heads of departments, who are willing to contribute time, resources and support for a planned process of training to help improve performance. They will do so, if they believe their investment in training results in measurable organisational benefits. If not, what is the justification for sending key members of staff to attend courses that are of no benefit to the department, nor to the people being sent.

Rather than using the term ‘investment’ - implying a thing worth buying - let’s use ‘evaluation’, to give more emphasis to valuing what is being bought.

Definition of Evaluation of Training

The Oxford English Dictionary defines to ‘evaluate’ as: *form an idea of the amount, number, or value of; assess*. A more detailed definition used for the Evaluation of Training (EoT) is:

The assessment of the total value of a training system, training course, or programme, in social as well as financial terms. Evaluation differs from validation in that it attempts to assess the overall value of the course or programme, and not just the achievement of its laid-down objectives. The term is also used in the general judgmental sense of the continuous monitoring of a programme or of the training function as a whole.

Therefore, to evaluate training we have to form ideas to quantify and value a training process intended to achieve effective performance. However, who is ‘we’? Forming ideas can be done by anybody associated with training - for example: trainees, trainers, directors, managers, HoD’s, funding agencies and beneficiaries. In addition, considering the number of people to whom we have referred, there are likely to be many different ideas about the value of training. There will be some that are favourable and others that are critical - without necessarily being based on factual evidence. As a trainer, you are likely to encounter clients, stakeholders and funding agencies with a variety of ideas and opinions about the value of training - ranging from:

Enthusiasm - believes that training is the key to a successful career.

Supportive - keen to use training as a means to improve performance.

Critical - has had some poor training experiences.

Negative - sees training as a holiday, or a waste of time.

Indifference - does not attempt to value training and takes no positive initiatives.

By evaluating training ourselves, and encouraging others to do so, we can help people to value it as a worthwhile activity and one worth supporting. Rational opinions about training should be based on factual evidence about the process and outcomes of helping people and organisations to improve performance. If we, as training professionals, do not provide this evidence then we should not be surprised that people hold a variety of opinions. Also, bear in mind that some of these people will be senior officials, or funding agencies, with significant influence over investment policy.

BENEFITS OF EVALUATION

A survey reported that 80% of 450 organisations studied carry out only superficial evaluation of training. Often it is limited to ‘*post-course questionnaires inviting trainees to comment on the course tutor, overhead slides and lunch*’. As a result, most of these organisations do not know whether their investment in training is justified. However, according to the survey, the situation is changing due to a drive for improved business efficiency by senior management. This is resulting in moving towards more systematic evaluation of training.

The report lists the following benefits to be gained from evaluation:

- A better link between training and business strategy
- Improvement in training methods
- Better guidance on future training needs
- More credibility for training function
- Better able to prioritise training activities
- Improvement in trainers
- Better service to customers
- More senior management commitment to training
- Better control of training costs
- Improved staff morale
- Improved external credibility for organisation

As a trainer, you might become involved in the evaluation of your organisation's investment in training. This will require you to have the systems to answer three basic questions:

1. Is the quality of training available your client organisation(s) satisfactory?
2. Does the provision of training result in improved performance?
3. Can your client organisation's investment in training be justified?

The sequence of these questions is important, because your answer to the first question inevitably influences the answer to the next one. The questions are also closed requiring you, at least initially, to answer 'Yes' or 'No'. If you were to answer yes, then the next question could be 'How can you prove it'; if your answer is no, then the next question would be 'Where are the problems - and what are you doing about them?'

KEY TERMS

To answer the three questions posed above, you will need to have a system developed around the following definitions:

Internal Validation

'A series of tests and assessments designed to ascertain whether a training programme has achieved the behavioural objectives specified'.

External Validation

'A series of tests and assessments designed to ascertain whether the behavioural objectives of an internally valid training programme were realistically based on an accurate initial identification of training needs in relation to the criteria of effectiveness adopted by the organisation'.

Evaluation of Training

'The assessment of the total value of a training system, training course or programme in social as well as financial terms. Evaluation differs from validation in that it attempts to assess the overall cost benefit of the course or programme, and not just the achievement of its laid-down objectives. The term is also used in the general judgmental sense of the continuous monitoring of a programme or of the training function as a whole'.

We illustrate the relationship between these three terms in Figure 1, below. It is essential to note that systems you develop for evaluating training need to incorporate procedures about the validity of training. This establishes the basis evaluating both training activities, and the training function as a whole.

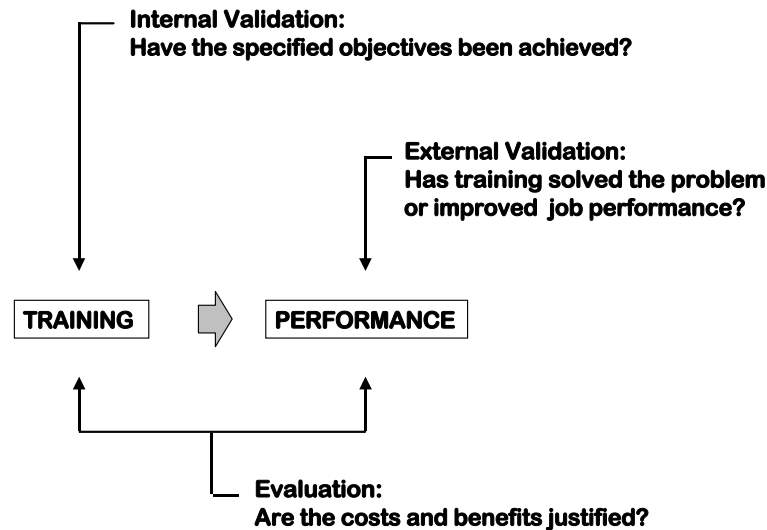


Fig.1

As an experienced trainer, you can assess whether people achieved the objectives specified - in other words, you will arrange to carry out *internal validation*. The results of this process will be to give you information about the quality of training being provided. This will enable you to plan further training, or make improvements to the training being provided.

Reasons for doing *internal validation* include it:

- Provides trainers with feedback about the training they provide
- Checks whether trainees have achieved the specified objectives
- Enables the quality of training to be monitored
- Indicates where the effectiveness of training can be improved
- Indicates where training can be more efficiently delivered
- Provides the basis for certification

Now consider the people you have trained, where they have achieved the objectives specified - based on the identification of their training needs. They will now return to their jobs and a process of *external validation* will now be used to ascertain whether they are now able to perform to a satisfactory standard. This process is likely to be done by the people concerned and their management.

Reasons for doing *external validation* include:

- Involving departmental management and stakeholders
- Focussing on actual performance
- Relating to identified training needs
- Establishing the basis for the transfer of learning from a course to job performance
- Indicating validity of specified training objectives

- Giving
- Essential data for cost benefit analysis
- Proving the benefits being obtained from training

Having completed the training and established its validity, both internally and externally, the organisation may now decide to evaluate their investment. This might be done by senior management, funding agencies, clients and stakeholders, or by customers or beneficiaries. Each will use what they consider appropriate criteria and it could be done with or without your involvement or knowledge. While doing this evaluation, it is likely that the results will also be used to evaluate the training function, as a whole.

Reasons for doing an *evaluation of training* include it:

- Recognises the importance of satisfying the needs of clients
- Provides justification for the investment in training
- Establishes the benefits of having a training function
- Encourages management to make further investment in training
- Enables training to be valued from different perspectives
- Includes cost benefit analysis
- Provides professional discipline for training management
- Encourages careful scrutiny of training proposals

CONTEXT FOR EVALUATION

One extreme for evaluation of training is that it's a random affair, using personal value judgements and without factual information. The other extreme is for every facet of training is measured, and the facts used to evaluate investment. Neither of these extremes offers a tenable basis for EoT.

1. Doing no evaluation may suggest that training is an act of faith that shouldn't be judged in materialistic terms. Politicians and senior officials would not wish to say 'no' when asked if they believed in training the workforce.
2. Why waste time doing something nobody has asked to be done? Most trainers are happier helping people to learn and develop, rather than attempting to validate what they and their trainees accomplish.
3. Training institutions may be asked to justify themselves by their 'output' - the number of people trained, instead of the 'outcome' - what has been accomplished about improved performance.
4. EoT may discover things we don't really want to know - lift the wrong stone and a scorpion might bite you. Some trainers, and training institutions are classified as 'passive providers', because they are content to offer a recurring menu of courses. They may seek feedback on their performance, but not on its performance-related outcome.
5. People may feel offended when accused of knowing the cost of everything and the value of nothing. Therefore, attempting to strike a sensible balance between seeking the costs of training and establishing value or benefit is likely to prove difficult.
6. Obtaining information about the costs and benefits of training is the start of a process of improving both the effectiveness of training and the efficiency with which it can be delivered. Therefore, EoT leads to decision-making about investment, strategy, quality, utility and professional development.

7. Perhaps a justifiable reason for not doing EoT is the absence of TNA. Without details of performance problems and training needs, it is unlikely that you'll be able to link training to organisational performance.

Although EoT can be an uncomfortable experience, it is an essential feature of the systematic approach to training. It enables trainers to justify their existence and the professional services they offer. It is also psychologically rewarding to know that you are helping people to learn, organisations to prosper, and beneficiaries to benefit. Questions for you to deal with concern:

- What system and procedures should be used?
- Which techniques and tools are suitable?
- Who are the stakeholders?
- What should be done with the information obtained?

Inevitably, you will experience difficulties when evaluating training. Some difficulties can be attributed to common factors, which can be dealt with by management action and further development of institutionalised systems. Other factors are perhaps unique to your role and your organisation. Some of these factors can be regarded a 'self-imposed' - difficulties you can tackle personally - or they are 'externally-imposed', requiring action by others. Here, we will consider a selection of common factors that create difficulties for trainers when evaluating training.

Timescale

If evaluation of the benefits of training is to take place at the level of job performance or above, it cannot be done immediately after the training has taken place. Sufficient time needs to be allowed for the changes to take effect. There is a conflict between, on the one hand, the need to allow time for the effects of training to become apparent, and on the other, for evaluation to take place as soon as possible after training to minimize the effects of contaminating factors on the results.

Contamination

Contamination refers to the effect of factors other than training on the outcomes achieved. From the training evaluator's point of view, these other factors contaminate the results of evaluation. We must be careful not to assume that any improvement occurring after training is the result of training or, alternatively, that a failure to improve after training is conclusive evidence that the training was wrongly designed or delivered. We need to be aware of other factors, which may have a positive or negative effect on the results of training. The results of this evaluation could be contaminated by:

- Changes in business objectives.
- Changes in technologies and systems.
- Leadership style of managers.
- Changes in work methods or culture.
- Conflict between implementation of training and non-training initiatives.

Other potential contaminating factors can be: work group pressures, the demands of clients and the self-motivation of the individual trainees. Although contaminating factors create problems and difficulties in evaluation, they may be important in producing desirable results for the organisation. It is often essential that management, when faced with a problem, does not select one solution - such as training. Instead, several solutions, or interventions may be implemented simultaneously. For example, to improve the effectiveness of supervision, the following approaches might be chosen:

- Provide training for supervisors
- Review selection criteria and procedures
- Increase the number of meetings between supervisors and their managers
- Review the content and priority areas of supervisory jobs
- Increase delegation to the supervisors.

In this example, we see training in its proper context as an integral part of management in the organisation, not as a separate activity on its own. Nevertheless, we should take account of contamination, although in many situations we need to learn to live with it rather than try to eliminate it.

Management Support

If you are to persuade senior officers and stakeholders to give you their full support, you will need to work closely with them. This is because setting up procedures for validation and evaluation requires more than their consent for you to take action. You will rely on them to dedicate time and effort to:

- Provide you with the resources needed to undertake an EoT strategy.
- Provide you with criteria to judge the corporate effectiveness of training.
- Agree with you the levels at which evaluation will take place.
- Arrange for the performance data, which you will need as the basis for the evaluation.
- Discuss and agree action to be taken in response to the findings of evaluation.
- Arrange the provision of regular information and constructive views when their trainees' post-training results are being followed up.
- Integrate evaluation measures with other personnel systems within the organisation, such as appraisals, performance-based awards, management by objectives and so on.

An important part of working with management is the ability to explain your proposed course of action in a positive manner, responding creatively to any objections. In explaining how you would like to proceed in evaluating training, you will need to think of possible objections and of ways in which these can be countered.

1. Here you should point out the importance of a timescale. The effects of training do not become apparent immediately after it is completed. If we are to evaluate changes resulting from training at the levels of job performance or the operation of a department, we cannot do so immediately after training. We need to allow sufficient time for the changes to take effect.
2. You should explain to management about the nature of competence and skills. It is vitally important to evaluate competence in using skills required in the job, as distinct from simply having knowledge. When these skills are productive rather than reproductive, a large element of subjective judgement of the trainee's competence is involved.
3. The issue here is contamination. In measuring the effects of training, we must be careful to measure things, which can properly be attributed to training and not to other factors. Many other possible influences could affect job performance, positively or negatively.

PERFORMANCE v RESOURCES

Figure 2 shows two axes illustrating two factors critical to the evaluation of training. As mentioned in the definition, effective performance - shown on the vertical axis - is the expected outcome of the training process: we are using the horizontal axis to show investment of appropriate resources. Let's consider these factors separately, also in the context of training in the public sector.



Fig. 2

PERFORMANCE PARAMETERS

Training Needs Analysis

The government is seeking to improve performance across organisations in the public sector - from higher agricultural yields, to increased traffic on the railways, to improved primary health services, better tea quality. These are just a few general examples; no doubt, you could provide more that are specific to your organisation. Training Needs Analysis provides the link between organisational performance and training - TNA consultancies are based on three key factors that affects performance - 'environmental factors'; 'motivational factors'; and 'behavioural factors'.

As trainers, we can only help organisations in the third of these factors - helping people to develop knowledge and skills relevant to their needs. However, there's no doubt that the other two factors are important when seeking to improve performance. You may therefore have a situation where, having provided effective training, no improvement in performance is achieved - due to flaws in the working environment, or poor motivation by the people concerned. The risk is that such failures are attributed to poor training. This is especially so if you have no evidence to show that the people trained acquired relevant knowledge and skills, but were unable to use them because of other factors. Although we are concerned here with EoT, it will be more effective if done in collaboration with TNA.

Standards

Although we have used the term 'performance', it has little meaning unless it is closely associated with standards. These provide criteria to judge either the process or the product of a person's performance, or that of an organisation as a whole - without them it is difficult to achieve, or to measure effective performance. A typical performance standard that can be used for training purposes provides the following information:

Performance Objective What a person is doing in clear, unambiguous terms that feature one activity-related verb.

Performance Criteria Significant features of a person's performance that determines their competence.

It is important that the performance standards agreed are realistic and achievable and, having agreed them, **assessment measures** can be agreed with a client and stakeholders. These specify the tools or techniques used to measure a person's performance. TNA will often highlight the lack of clear standards where failure to have them may be a major cause of poor performance. For effective evaluation it is also essential to establish performance criteria to provide the basis for suitable measures of assessment

RESOURCE PARAMETERS

Referring to Figure 2, the other axis is labelled 'resources' to indicate financial and other resource investment implications needed to implement training. As the government moves towards a policy of 'value for money', far greater emphasis will be given to justifying this. An emerging feature of evaluation is likely to be for departments and funding agencies to closely examine resource implications required to support training proposals, and the outcomes expected from institutional course provision. In addition, as distance and open learning is introduced, funding allocation could be diverted from training institutes towards departmental training functions. Consider some resource implications that are likely to be taken into account:

Costs

These could be institutional costs required to run a course, or a breakdown of the costs of running a training institute. Evaluation is likely to examine costs per course participant - with the implications that such costs should be justified and perhaps reduced. With the increasing use of generic training packages, it will be possible to introduce standardised costs for national calendar courses - with these costs linked to EoT.

Time

Absence from the workplace to attend training courses costs money and possibly reduces operational effectiveness while staff are away. Can this be justified? Time for training and development has the potential to provide real benefits, but only if it is invested wisely - taking into account both the needs of the individual and those of the employing organisation.

Facilities

The main commitments are the provision of training institutions. At present these absorb most funding support, although this may change following the introduction of distance and open learning, also with the government's policy of providing 'training for all'. An evaluation of institutional facilities is likely to focus on indirect costs of running them, and the utilisation made of them. Most public sector training institutions feature large modern buildings on valuable sites. Considerable infrastructure resources are needed to provide training facilities - administration, amortization, hostels, transport, maintenance, staff quarters, etc. These are mostly fixed costs that have to be balanced against their professional use.

As with hotel bedrooms, unless training rooms have a high level of occupancy it becomes difficult to justify their continuing availability - or indeed the existence of an institution. The comparison with hotels is of relevance because if bedroom occupancy levels fall much below 60%, management is likely to be changed, leading to closure if utilisation cannot be improved. We have chosen hotels as an illustration because many hotels now offer training facilities on a commercial basis. So, as part of evaluation of facilities, consideration might be given to using commercial facilities, as an alternative venue for certain courses.

Faculty

If a training institution has only one member of faculty, then its capability is limited, irrespective of other resources that are available. However, if a training institution has several tutors, then it has greater potential to run courses and offer other professional services. A legitimate and important area for evaluation therefore concerns the utilisation of available training personnel. This could focus on the hours a tutor spends running courses - 'contact time', or their deployment to provide professional services for client organisations. These services may include carrying out TNA consultancies, developing training materials - or evaluating training.

Figure 3, below, builds on our consideration of the basic axis, showing a **desired standard of performance** and a lower level of performance as a consequence of **no training**. EoT should examine both issues.

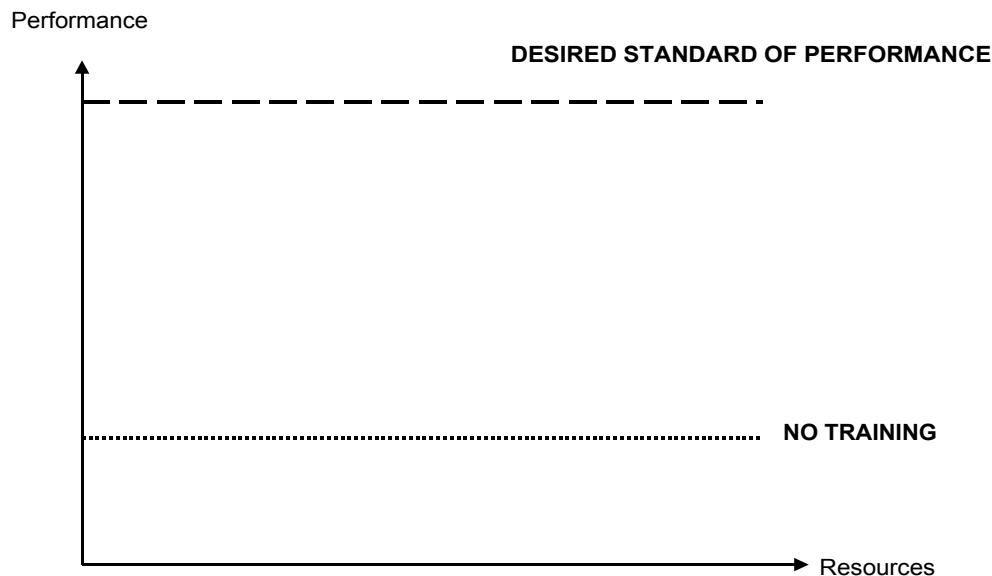


Fig.3

DESIRED STANDARD OF PERFORMANCE

An apposite point to make is that if you don't know where you are going how do you know you've got there. Consider an example faced by trainers involved in Information Technology. A training institution has used its resources to build and equip an 'IT Centre', with modern computers and competent trainers. They are asked to run a series of 5-day 'IT Appreciation' courses. These courses are listed in the national calendar and people from a variety of public sector organisations are nominated to attend. Although such courses may meet a genuine need, a wider concern, for EoT, would be evidence of specific training needs, and a design brief that includes agreed standards of performance.

Another factor could be disparity between what is 'desired' by departmental management and what training institutions can achieve. A 5-day course gives only a limited opportunity to learn about IT so, although management and prospective trainees may desire many things, an institute should offer only what can be delivered. The design of training requires careful consideration of constraints that limit what can be achieved - in this instance, a lack of time and the likelihood of differing training needs. A legitimate aim for EoT would be to establish where course participants are 'going', and what evidence is available to show they've got there.

Failure to limit expectations to what can be realistically achieved may lead to a large number of dissatisfied people. Former trainees might complain that the course didn't give them sufficient time or opportunity to learn things of interest to them; client organisations complain of continuing work-related

difficulties. These people's views about the course and training generally will not have been enhanced by their experience, nor are they likely to support further training interventions.

Standards of performance, both related to the outcomes of training and to actual work, are likely to become a major concern in the development of EoT. By implication, the IT illustration exposes potential flaws in a range of training activities, such as: TNA, design, course provision, on-job-training management of training and the responsibilities of funding agencies.

NO TRAINING

Doing nothing could be a decision of management - perhaps reflecting negative opinions about training identified in the introduction. However, although no formal training may have been done, it doesn't necessarily mean that people are not learning. Occasionally, well-run departments of government have adopted the principles of the '*learning organisation*'. This will especially occur when using or developing advanced technologies and associated systems. People can only learn from internal expert resources - which are not likely to be found at a training institution. These are issues worth including in EoT, because informal, effective, training is being done.

Another reason for doing nothing is that resources do not permit training. Despite government policy of 'training for all', some organisations are unable to provide training for subordinate staff. Depending on the opinions of management, this may lead to:

- Low **standards** of performance of individuals, working groups, or an organisation as a whole. This could be caused by management accepting the situation and reducing standards, or because non-training factors block attempts to introduce change.
- Low **levels** of performance, where individuals lack knowledge or skills to improve their performance. Although management may wish to improve standards of performance, they lack the support of a formal training function and access to resources.

A variation on 'no training' could be 'training for some' - implying that, for example, training is mostly limited to gazetted officers. Other factors, such as location, may limit what can be achieved - although with the introduction of distance learning this is no longer necessarily an obstacle.

What may become apparent is that a response of 'no training', when asked about training provision, is likely to lead to more searching questions. Doing no training may at times be a justifiable option, but this justification will need to be explained - perhaps with some difficulty, if levels of performance are low. A crucial aspect of EoT is likely to emerge when consideration is given to:

- Doing **no training** - where no attempt is made to provide formal on-job-training - nor seeking help from training institutions.
- Doing **ineffective training** - whether by failing to organise training on-the-job, or using incompetent people as trainers, or by poor nominations for institutional training.

Perhaps because of resource limitations, or a large number of subordinate staff, or wide geographical spread, doing no training is justified. Also, if organisations do not have a formal training function, they may find it difficult to provide evidence of any training they are doing. Doing ineffective training costs money and uses other resources - but does so without benefit to anybody.

EFFECTIVE TRAINING

Figure 4, below, illustrates two triangles, where one represents **effective training** and the other training that is ineffective - with both using the same resources. The two triangles could represent two courses intended to meet a similar training need.

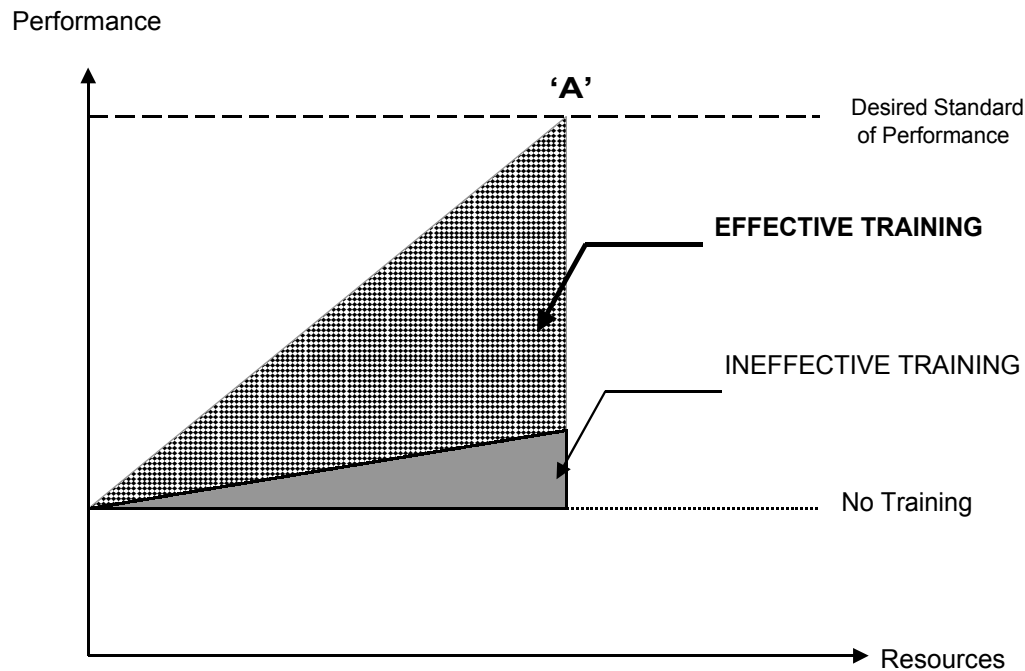


Fig. 4

It's evident that the triangle reaching point 'A' is the one offering greater benefits - bearing in mind that both courses require similar resources. However, in respect to effective training, we can make some general observations about the illustration:

- Unless TNA has been done, we are unlikely to have a clearly defined desired standard of performance. Without this information, and not knowing where a course is going, how can we claim it's effective?
- How were the courses assessed? Should we assume that the same measures were used for both of them? Perhaps, if EoT is used, we can have specified criteria and measuring instruments that will be common to both courses.
- The line drawn to represent 'no training' is too simplistic, as it assumes all course participants are starting with the same entry behaviour. Another approach to assessing the course could be around 'learning gain', where the emphasis is on helping individual participants to improve - without attempting to impose an arbitrary standard.

Nevertheless, if we look at the illustration for a funding agency's point of view, both courses cost the same to run - one was successful in achieving agreed standards and the other wasn't. If EoT has been done, hopefully based on TNA, then the funding agency and training management have factual evidence to decide about further courses. However, if neither TNA nor EoT has been done how can such decisions be made? Let's consider other issues, using our IT training course as an illustration:

- As we've discussed earlier, unless a clearly defined standard of performance has been established it is difficult to establish an outcome. Our IT trainers are unlikely to know the performance problems of each trainee and their needs, in respect to IT. Having been asked to run a 5-day course, they will do their best to do so - but they will be guessing at the desired outcomes.

- Perhaps criteria for nominations for the course were vague, thus attracting people with a wide range of abilities. If so, it's unrealistic to expect trainers to create effective training for all of them.
- Off-the-job training is rarely a complete solution to a training need. Most off-job training has to be supplemented by continuing training on the job. Evaluating the course without including transfer to the work situation will result in a distorted picture that is unfair to all concerned.
- IT training at or near the work place, using computer-based training systems is now readily available. This provides people with an opportunity to learn at a suitable time and pace. So, who decided to locate all of the IT training resources at a training institution? Also, who decided that the course should be of 5 days duration?

It would be easy to continue throwing bricks at an imaginary IT course, especially in the absence of TNA. Nevertheless, it's true that most of the problems mentioned above could be avoided by having analysed both training and non-training needs. Perhaps an essential feature of EoT is that it is based on thorough TNA, as well as learning processes that develop skills and knowledge.

The definition for training refers to a *'planned process.... to achieve effective performance'*, which implies that if you want to achieve effectiveness you have to plan for it - something lacking with our IT course. EoT is a feature of this process and we can use it to report on both the process of training and its outcomes. Using a famous golfer's comment that the more he practised the luckier he got; perhaps it's worth pointing out that the more we focus attention on all aspects of the Systematic Approach to Training, the more effective we are likely to get. However, let's consider different perspectives of 'effective training':

Training Institutes

An effective institute might be one that runs a wide range of training courses, using available resources and marketing its services to a wide range of client organisations. Perhaps also it attracts funding from a variety of sources, attracting applications for tutorial appointments from keen, able officers who see institutional tenure as good for their career prospects. Trainees also like to attend courses at such institutes, which are usually fully booked. However, when carrying out EoT - when the focus of attention is on 'process' and *'effective performance ... to satisfy ... the needs of the organisation'* - we may view the situation somewhat differently. For example:

- EoT could be less concerned with the output of the institute - in respect to the number of courses being run, or people trained - and more interested in the **outcome** achieved. If there's no evidence to suggest improved performance, can the claim for institutional effectiveness be justified? In our IT course illustration, although people attend the 5-day course, it may not help them achieve a significant improvement in their performance. When there is compatibility between a high output and proven performance-related outcome, then an institute can truly claim to be effective.
- Stakeholder opinions within a client organisation will influence training effectiveness. For many public sector organisations training is seen as nominating people to attend courses being run at training institutions. The availability of TNA consultancy services should help to change this perspective - yet, in relation to effectiveness, there remains the problem of responsibility for improving job **performance**. Although institutes may run good courses for helping people to learn, ultimately effectiveness lies with client organisations. They have the responsibility to help trainees use their newly acquired knowledge and skills to achieve desired standards of performance. EoT can explore the effectiveness of links between the output of a training institution and the outcome of a training process.

Client Organisations

We are using this term to cover departments of government, public sector undertakings, or working groups employing people from the public services. Each of these organisations is expected to achieve a desired standard of performance, although for many this will be a challenging aspiration rather than reality. For EoT, our concern is to assess and value the effectiveness of training done either within the organisation, or on its behalf by training institutions. Consider some issues this will involve:

- The SAT process places emphasis on work place activities - TNA, coaching, mentoring, assessment, for example. Many organisations do not have a recognised training function, nor the services of a training manager, which results in two options. The first is a decision to ignore training for improving performance, and the second is to rely on a training institution to provide professional services. Of course, a third option would be to establish a training function, but that is outside the remit of EoT.
- As mentioned earlier, off-job training courses should be linked to a process of transfer of learning, so that trainees can apply and further develop their skills under normal working conditions. Unless client organisations prepare for this, and have necessary resources, then achieving a desired level of performance will be difficult. In these situations it would be unfair to lay responsibility on either the training institution or the client organisation.
- TNA consultancies identify both training and non-training needs. This presents three scenarios: in the first an organisation acts on TNA recommendations, tackling both training and non-training needs; in the second they only act on training recommendations; the third is that TNA isn't done and neither is any attempt made to link training to performance. EoT has the potential to ask stakeholders in such organisations to make decisions about training - not attributing blame, but raising issues that need to be addressed.

Funding Agencies

Both government and non-government agencies provide financial support for training. EoT can be used to review their effectiveness in respect to achieving a desired standard of performance, or for them to assess how their funds have been used. In both situations EoT can review the process, outputs and outcomes resulting from funding support. Criteria for assessing institutional or organisational performance have to be agreed, as an initial stage of EoT and then used when appropriate. Taking our IT course as an example, can a training institute be 'blamed' for running the course when they were offered funds to purchase computers and to run 5-day courses? Equally, haven't funding agencies the right, and obligation, to assess the effectiveness of training that results from their funding support?

EFFICIENT TRAINING

You note that Figure 5, below, shows two triangles. These illustrate the relationship between achieving a desired standard of performance against resources used. Both triangles show that the desired standard of performance has been achieved.

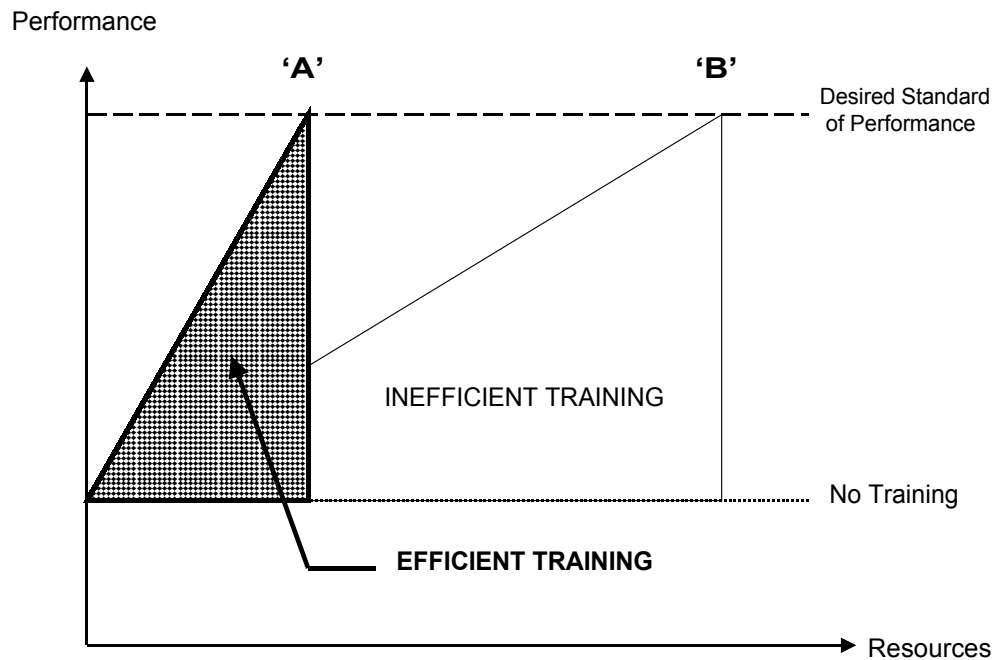


Fig. 5

The difference between them is that 'A' shows performance being achieved using fewer resources than 'B'. Consider some issues this raises - bearing in mind that both 'A' and 'B' are effective:

- To what extent are training resources 'price sensitive'? Is a rigorous examination proposed to ensure 'value for money'? In the IT course, to which we've referred earlier, what process was used to establish valid justification for resource expenditure? Did the training institute concerned already have computer-training resources and, if they had, what was the utilisation rate? These questions could be included in an EoT aimed at improving efficiency - because if resources are spent with 'B', rather than 'A' less funding support is available elsewhere.
- With the government's policy commitment of providing 'training for all' greater attention is likely to be needed to provide effective training for lower cadre workers. This can only be achieved if the training is provided efficiently. It's pointless training twenty people effectively, if there are a thousand with similar training needs. Equally, there's no benefit in training a thousand, if it's ineffective.
- The introduction of distance learning has the potential to improve efficiency. However, it is not enough to have a package that can provide effective training. An efficient system is also needed for its implementation. EoT should therefore be concerned with both effectiveness of the training and efficiency.

At present, it's perhaps unrealistic to expect training to be both **effective** and **efficient** - although it's a desirable aspiration. However, with the introduction of TNA consultancies and the development of EoT, we can develop our functional capabilities to realise the aspiration.