

Brief Notes on Training Needs Assessment in human settlement planning and management (TNA)

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“... they must be trained as doers and not merely as analysers, as problem-solvers and not merely as problem-studiers, as action planners rather than as control planners, as innovators rather than merely as administrators”

Otto Koenigsberger, 1978.

This text is meant to be a background paper for the discussions with the HBPRC team responsible for carrying out the TNA. It serves only as an organiser of ideas prior to officially starting with the TNA.

The TNA is an essential activity prior to initiating a training programme. It is an effort to detect performance related problems that lead to discrepancies or inefficiencies in organisations. Problems which may even hinder organisations to fulfil its mission statement or “raison d’être” and accomplish its main goal in the development process. The TNA helps to identify issues, behaviour, procedures, weaknesses and shortcomings that hinder staff to be efficient in their duties which consequently contribute to organizational failures.

The TNA is strategic for both training institutions (providers of training, skills, knowledge, methods) and target groups and organisations (clients, recipients of training). Through a situation audit or scanning of the work environment of the organisation and the functioning and performance of its human resources, the TNA allows the identification of performance areas where gaps exist, where improvements are needed and where more management attention should be given.

In fact, the TNA, when undertaken jointly with the client organisation, becomes an instrument that prepares both the organisation and its staff for necessary institutional and organisational changes that usually follows the implementation of the TNA and its training recommendations. It helps both the training institutions and client organisations to make a choice about what, how and when. The TNA informs. It is a DATA generator on its own.

The TNA is crucial because it helps us to tailor the training programme to the needs and deficiencies detected in the target group. It strengthens the linkage between the training programme with the organisational goals meaning that it helps to fit the content of and the training approaches into the content and needs of programmes, projects and policies currently being undertaken by the target group/client organisation. It helps us to focus the training programme. Consequently, it strengthens the effectiveness and efficacy of the training programme.

First of all, we must ask ourselves what needs to be known to improve performance!

Primarily, one must ask crucial questions before starting with a TNA. This helps to clarify the various steps to be undertaken. It also helps to organise the TNA task force or project team responsible for undertaking the activity of TNA.

WHY should we undertake a TNA?

WHO is the target of the TNA?

BY WHOM will the TNA be carried out?

WHAT is to be assessed?

HOW are we going to assess it?

HOW to evaluate the results of the TNA and the training outcomes?

Training specialists advocate different approaches to training, among them the systematic approach to design an effective training programme. In all of them, a first step is to implement a TNA exercise. This can be undertaken under the classic or conventional model or under a systematic model. The former is commonly undertaken by an "outsider" training institution and relies very much in their skills and ability to do the job. The latter is carried out by the agency that is interested to find out gaps and deficiencies in performance. The agency carries it out alone or jointly with a specialised institutions. The latter model is our (IHS-HBPRC project) concern.

The systematic model follows a certain pattern or organised series of steps:

1. First there is a top management concern about the performance of the organisation and the effectiveness of its staff which causes a decision to start with a TNA;
2. The team responsible for carrying out the TNA formulates a working plan in which activities are described as well as their duration; it also describes the methods employed, the resources needed and the expected results;
3. There is a situation auditing which helps to scan the work situation and detect performance related problems, gaps, odd situations, etc.;
4. The team undertaking the TNA identifies the focus of discrepancies and inefficiencies which consequently helps defining performance areas;
5. This work is translated into a report format where problems and gaps are identified and suggestions and recommendations are made in respect to training solutions, strategies, etc.;
6. The TNA is completed and there is a commitment of the top management of the organisation being scanned to implement and support the training strategies.

Questions to the IHS-HBPRC team

How can we approach an Egyptian organisation? In which way can the IHS-HBPRC team make a contact with a potential client organisation in order to launch a bottom-up process? How can we sensitise top management of organisations about the effectiveness of TNA and the efficacy of training to improve the organisation's performance and that of its staff? Is the systematic approach feasible for our project? Within the time available and other constraints, can we proceed with the systematic approach? How should a TNA for Egypt look like?

The Situation Audit or Scanning the Working Environment

We should pay attention to this step because it is perhaps the most important activity of the TNA. It can be done through different methods. A study of the existing records, data and reports about a specific performance area e.g. programme management, project implementation management; policy making; information

management, staff response to public requests, project reporting, etc. can help to define and describe the existing conditions and performance discrepancies as well as potential situations that may result in future deficiencies or performance shortcomings.

An observation “in loco” is extremely useful since it provides an unique opportunity for “reconnaissance” of the conditions, procedures, reactions and attitudes of individual staff. The situation audit requires a very alert attitude of the TNA team. It also requires a systematic formulation of “crucial” questions or chain of questions that will lead to important conclusions. Informal meetings and discussions with employees during a site visit or in the working place may be very efficient and can be combined with the application of simple questionnaires. This provides a chance to employees to register their own views and experiences.

Questions to the IHS-HBPRC team

For the case of Egypt, what are the most appropriate ways to carry out a “situation audit”? Considering the matters of hierarchy and prestige, in which way can a situation audit be processed within a target public organisation in Egypt? Are questionnaires an effective and acceptable way of making inquiries to Egyptian officials and public servants?

In fact, the situation audit helps us to find out the discrepancies for which new skills, methods and techniques are needed to change policies, programmes and management decisions and turn them more effective and responsive to the changing conditions in the external environment.

What a situation audit may disclose:

- the way the employees carry out their duties in a programme, project or within the organisation as a whole;
- the type and quality of outputs of individual staff or project teams;
- the way the communication and articulation between individuals and project teams take place, the way interdepartmental communication is undertaken;
- whether the organisation is meeting its main goals or not;
- whether the motivation of the staff is high or not and the reasons behind low performance;
- whether the staff is timely responsive, accurate and effective with the means and instruments at their disposal or not;
- the way public requests are processed and the way problems are solved within the project team.

The information acquired through the method mentioned above will help the TNA team to focus on specific performance areas which will gradually lead to prioritisation for training purposes, both in themes and subject areas as well as target groups. The areas have different levels and will imply that target groups will occupy different levels in the decision making chain. The matrix below helps to organise them.

Levels of Intervention	Type of Institution	Target Group	Main Tasks
POLICY	Line Ministries Development institutions.	High officials and middle level staff. Senior administrators	Policy and decision making; formulation of policy papers,

	Legislative bodies. Central, Municipal & State government Agencies	Leading politicians Civic leaders. Urban managers.	development advises; formulation of laws, regulations; allocation of resources. public sector management
PROGRAMMES	Ministerial Divisions and departments. Municipal departments. Special foundations. Government agencies. Private-Public Partnerships.	Urban managers. Middle level career professionals; Administrators. Chief planners, economists and sociologists. Programme teams.	Monitoring and programming of activities and resources; organisation of policy goals; framework setting for policy implementation; programme management;
ACTION PLANNING	Administrative subdivisions of Government; Local government bodies and divisions; Technical Units; Public-Private Partnership Project Units	Technical staff. Professional cadres. Planners, architects, engineers, geographers, sociologists and economists. Multidisciplinary project teams. Financial and budgeting offices. Project managers.	Articulation and liaison with lowest levels of government Liaison with various actors; objective and project planning; preparation for implementation; meeting the means with the ends; project control; action orientated planning activity; co-ordination, conflict resolution;
PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION	Local level public agencies; NGOs; Training institutions; Formal and Informal private sector; Technical Units Engineering divisions;	Technical staff; Project implementators; Project managers; Co-ordinators; community leaders; field staff, building supervisors; community groups;	project control and implementation monitoring; liaison for execution; activity oriented planning; budgeting and time control; participatory implementation; co- ordination; conflict resolution;

Questions to the IHS-HBPRC team

For the case of Egypt, is this matrix applicable to the Egyptian situation? What are precisely the target groups that one can identify in the Egyptian situation? Can we design a similar matrix for Egypt? Can we determine accurately the target group and their specific tasks and needs in the Egyptian context?

Each one of the target groups with their specific tasks and responsibilities will certainly require different types of training, training methodologies and training strategies. Therefore, the TNA team must formulate key questions once the TNA exercise is completed in order to define the most suitable training modality and strategy.

The same type of key questions should be formulated in relation to the training programme which will be drawn from the results of the TNA. It is assumed that the TNA helped to define WHY there is a need for training. So, one must ask further:

WHO is going to be trained (the target group)?

BY WHOM is the target group to be trained (outside organisations, consultants, joint teams)?

WHAT are they going to be trained (the subject, the core theme, the specific issue)?

HOW are they going to be trained (classroom sessions, practical sessions, individual training, group training, field work, research, on-the-job training, etc.)?

HOW are the results of training to be monitored and evaluated?

We can make an ad-hoc (and incomplete) list of training needs that may emerge from the TNA and according to each one of the target groups and their tasks and levels of responsibilities within the decision making chain. Though, they will have one common characteristics: to be problem solving oriented. The definition of the type of training will be an exercise on itself as the TNA progresses.

- process learning (*understanding, interactive, procedural, self-conscious*)
- exchange and exposure to experiences (*pragmatic, awareness of problems, creative solutions, contact with concrete experiences, insight of reality*)
- development of skills, methods and techniques (*learning how, techniques and methods related to activities and problems*)
- Self-realisation (*self-reliance, awareness of his/her own role, exposure to common situations, critical thinking*)