

Lesson-23

CRITERIA FOR METHOD SELECTION

INTRODUCTION

There are different criteria which one can choose between different teaching and learning methods. For example these criteria could be learning objectives, learners' profile, and learner participation and availability of human resource and material resources for enabling training.

This section outlines several bases for such a choice. However, let it be argued that there is no single, simple criterion which one can use to select a method, but that it is nevertheless important to evaluate and use different methods rather than be wedded to a single one.

The first reading "Factors to Consider the Selection of. Methods" discusses human factors, objectives of teaching and training, subject area and time and material factors as important considerations

Another reading focuses on the Relationship between Principles of Effective Learning and Teaching Methods.

Students are also advised to read the section on "Overview of Training Methodologies". The question "what methods shall we use?" at all phases of the design and instruction activity. The decision is multi-dimensional; hence no rigid compartmentation is possible or desirable.

PRINCIPLES FOR SELECTION OF TEACHING AND TRAINING METHODS FACTORS TO CONSIDER IN THE SELECTION OF METHODS

1.Human Factors

The Teacher

The teacher's knowledge, managerial and teaching experience and personality are all factors of primary importance and are intentionally mentioned at the beginning. To put it bluntly: the teacher has to have a clear and significant message to pass, and his personality has to be acceptable to the students or trainees so that effective communication links can be established quickly and easily. If these conditions are fulfilled a well chosen and properly used method is likely to ease and stimulate learning. If they are not fulfilled unfortunately the method may become an end in itself.

Teachers are advised on teaching methods by their directors of studies, by senior colleagues in special "teaching methods" courses, through manuals, etc. But eventually each teacher has to assume personal responsibility for choosing the best methods for his

particular teaching assignment. He ought to be able, therefore, to make a rational appraisal of his abilities and to try to employ methods likely to enhance-not reduce-the impact he hopes to make. Role-playing for example is an exercise requiring some knowledge of psychology. a lot of experience with various types of human problems in management-and the ability to react quickly in discussions. That is why a teacher who does not possess these qualities, but has an analytical mind and experience in solving business problems. might give preference to the case study method.

In training trainers one should encourage teachers to use a greater variety of methods; but certainly not impose upon them which they would feel uneasy.

The Participants and the Environment from which They come

Methods of teaching must respect

- the intellectual level and educational background of the participants;
- the participants, age and practical experience; and
- the social and cultural environment.

For example., in training programmes intended for supervisors, middle managers, small entrepreneurs who have had only a basic education and who have been away from school for a long time, lectures should be replaced by short talks using visual aids, extensively; concrete. Examples should be given and no high-level theories presented; simplified case studies should be used instead of long and complex cases; simple programmed books should be recommended instead of the usual textbooks.

In regard to the participants' practical experience, a distinction must be made between young people with little or no management experience, who first learn about management in a university or other type of school and participants with practical experience, either from managerial functions or from specialist work in various functional departments.

In the former case, much of the information is new to the students and it is difficult to link the teaching process with any previous experience. However, these students are open minded and often more receptive to new ideas than the later group. In training people with experience, only possible but absolutely essential to make an appeal to the participants experience by relating the teaching to it. However, in this group some of the participants with practical experience may take the attitude of "knowing better in advance"; if so, the teacher's main problem may be how to change their air of self-complacency and make them aware of what they need to learn to do the it jobs better. In such cases it is rarely sufficient for the teachers to talk about new methods and techniques of management. Practical assignments, case study discussions or simulation exercises are more likely to help the participants realize that they have gaps in knowledge and skills and that training may be the answer.

Experienced Managers have the capacity to learn directly from each other provided a favorable atmosphere is created and method are used which stimulate this' learning. Discussion groups, working parties, syndicates, consultancy assignments and Practical projects carried out by groups of managers are well suited for this purpose.

The complexity of the problem is increased by social and cultural factors in the environment. It must be remembered that many of the participative teaching methods were developed in the United States- a country with its own particular social and cultural characteristics. High achievement motivation, little respect for formal authorities, priority given to action before contemplation -these and many other cultural factors may be absent in the country to which one or another teaching method is to be transferred.

Fortunately, educators are now aware of this problem and special studies are available on the question of transfer. A number of experts with considerable experience in developing countries have also confirmed that, in general any participative method may be used in any environment provided that it is instilled gradually with for knowledge of the environment, making the necessary modifications of the method and without hurting national pride.

2. Objectives of Teaching and Training

As a rule training needs and objectives of educational and training programmes in management are defined in terms of changes to be effected in knowledge, attitudes and skills-which should afterwards lead to improved managerial action. Various training situations will be concerned with various types and levels of knowledge, attitudes and skills. A preliminary analysis of needs will help to identify what objectives a particular programme ought to have. Methods will then be selected with regard to their ability to impart new knowledge. Influence attitudes and develop practical skills.

In this connection B. Hawrylyshyn has developed a simple but interesting model based on the experience of the Centre d'Etudes Industrielles in Geneva. In this model six participative methods are related to the general skills which a manager should possess wh~tever his special field of work or level may be in the hierarchy. Each method in the model. Can serve various purposes; however a method reaches its peak of effectiveness only in connection with a specific purpose. This can be well demonstrated with the case method; pertinent data are given to the trainee in the description of the case. He has to diagnose and analyze the problem, consider alternative solutions, discuss those solutions and modify them after hearing his colleague's views. He does not have to make decisions or implement them; consequently he is not trained in the skill of decision-making and there is no reliable feedback on the correctness of his solutions

The main lesson to be drawn from this model is that if training is intended to improve multiple skills (which is usually the case) a combination of teaching method~ must be used A similar type of analysis could be made to determine which methods are most likely to affect the managers' attitudes or impart a specific kind of knowledge.

Let us take the example of using specialist knowledge and experience in the preparation of management decision on complex business matters. It is of little use to lecture about the value of specialists to a manager who overestimates his own individual judgment and is not willing or perhaps able to use the specialist services which are available to him. Team work in syndicates, participation in business games or practical projects might make such a manager aware of his drawbacks so that he will begin to change his attitudes towards team work and the importance of specialists. His interest in

new knowledge and skills will undoubtedly be awakened.

On his. Leadership style, communication abilities. and behavior in general, a manager may get more direct and stronger feedback from other participants in sensitivity training or as a member of a team working on a group project than in years of work in a managerial position.

Obviously, knowledge, skills and attitudes are inter-related and this must not be overlooked when setting the objectives of training and choosing teaching methods. Furthermore they are related to certain specific management functions or subject areas or, in many cases to multi-functional situations and inter-disciplinary problems.

3. Subject Area

Various subject areas (finance, personnel, operations research, general management etc.) have their own specific features. For example, operations research techniques are based on the extensive use of mathematics and statistics. It is usually taught through a combination of lectures (using audio-video aids) and exercises during which the technique is practised. This may be supported by reading assignments. In certain cases lectures may be replaced or supplemented with programmed books- However, the main thing from the management point of view is not to know the technique itself, but to know when and how it can be used. This ability can be developed through practical projects simulation exercise, business games, case studies, etc.

In programmes concentrating on the behavioral aspects of management, communication, leadership and motivation, training methods may be selected and combined in ways which give the participants numerous opportunities to analyze human behavior and at the same time directly influence the attitudes and behavior of the participants themselves. These programmes use case studies dealing with the "human side of the enterprises", business games emphasizing communication and relation~ between participants. role playing, sensitivity training and various other forms of group discussions, assignments and exercises.

It should be noted that it is often possible to choose from several methods, if we want to deal with a particular subject or problem. Thus the analysis of a balance sheet can be taught through the case study method, a combination of case study with role playing, a-lecture, as a classroom exercise or by reading a text or a programmed book on the subject. This is possible because the principal methods are versatile enough to be made in teaching a number of different subjects. Lectures, discussion and case studies are being used in virtually all subject areas. However, in management education and training the principal problem is not how to deal with specific subject areas and functions, it is much more important to :

- explain the relationship between various sides and functions of the enterprises and show the highly complex character of the management process
- help the participants to avoid a one-sided and oversimplified approach to multi-dimensional situations
- promote general management skills, which essentially lie in an interdisciplinary approach to management. and to combine and co-ordinate the various functions of management.

Once again, a sound use of participative methods can be of great help. A senior management seminar, for example, may start with a complex case study illustrating a

business problem from multiple angles and arousing the participant's interest in specific subject areas, methods and techniques which, if properly integrated, will help them to take the right action in a complex situation. This may be followed in the second phase of the seminar by a more detailed study of these specific subject areas, methods and techniques. The final phase may be devoted to the integration of specialist knowledge and skills in general management through another complex case, business game or similar exercise or if possible through working on a practical project which requires this interdisciplinary approach.

4. Time and Material Factors

Decisions about the choice of teaching methods are not independent of time, financial resources and other factors.

Preparation time (which affects the cost of the teaching material as well varies for the different teaching material as well) varies for the different teaching methods. As a rule complex case studies and business games require long and costly preparation which includes testing with teachers or experimental groups, and making necessary revisions

The length of the course predetermines the kinds of methods which can be used. The longer the course the better are the chances that the teacher will be able to use business games, complex cases and practical projects. This is not to imply that participative methods should be eliminated from short appreciation or survey courses, however, only methods which are not time consuming and are liable to quickly pass the message can be used in these courses.

The time of day is more important than many course designers would imagine. For example, in the post-lunch period (1400-1600) it is more desirable to have enjoyable and attractive sessions which require active involvement.

The teaching facilities may be a limiting factor in some institutes, or in courses given outside the institute e.g. in small towns. Factors such as the number of rooms available for group discussions or syndicates or the altered in advance.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE LEARNING . AND TEACHING METHODS

Education and training for management like any other educational process fulfils its role only by creating situations which are favourable to learning in which learning actually takes place. That is why "all schemes for management education and executive development exploit or depend on the basic principles of human learning.

Of course, principles of learning are not put into effect through the teaching method alone. Motivation to learn for example, depends on a number of other variables, such as the challenge of the participants' present or future job, his own "achievement motivation quotient" or the stimulation provided by the environment. However, the methods used in teaching and training can influence motivation to learn and therefore should be examined

and applied with this in mind

Some selected aspects of the relationship between principles of learning and teaching methods are discussed in the following paragraphs.

1. Motivation

The motivation to learn is enhanced if the presentation of the material is interesting, emphasises applicability and shows benefits to be drawn from application. To some extent this can be obtained through any methods are directly concerned with applying theoretical knowledge to real life situations. The diverse ways in which they can be combined *and* sequenced can add to the *enjoyment* of learning and minimise participant fatigue

2. Active Involvement

The principle of active involvement is perhaps the main “raison d’être” of Participative teaching methods. As a rule, the deeper the involvement, the higher the motivation the more the participants retain and the better they are equipped to apply it. It should not be overlooked however that the method itself although considered as highly participative, does not assure that each person will be fully involved. Involvement also depends on organization of case study preparation, leadership style and other factors. The participant may also be passive if he considers the material to be of poor quality or the performance of the teacher to be below his own professional level.

3. Individual Approach

On-the-job training is a method which can be based on the training needs of one individual with full regard to his present and future job. It has, however, many limitations and that is why group training programmes should also involve work outside the enterprise. They must take into account the fact that individuals have different capabilities and learn at different places, have personal styles of study and application and should be subject to individual control of performance. The over-all course design and methods of teaching have to provide, therefore, not only work in groups and teams, but also the opportunity for individual reading, thinking exercising and application of knowledge.

This can be done through:

- compulsory individual assignments (reading, exercises, projects etc.);
- use of teaching aids for individual learning like magnetic tapes, video-tapes, teaching machines, computer terminals accessible to individuals
- the breaking down of group assignments and projects into assignment for each individuals;
- voluntary additional work by the more capable participants

4. Sequencing and Structuring

Some methods are better suited than others for introducing new topics and ideas, for correctly sequencing them or for *explaining* the *structure* of a *vast* and complex area. *That* is why in certain situations the teacher cannot be without lectures and reading assignments.

5. Feedback

Different types of feedback are needed and have to be provided in learning:

- feedback on one's competence and behaviour (as seen by the other course participants by the trainer and by the trainee himself)
- feedback on what was actually *learned*, and one's ability to effectively apply it.

Direct feedback on the soundness of decisions is an integral part of business games, whereas in case discussions the only feedback on the individual's analytical abilities is the opinion of other participants and of the discussion leader. Strong feedback on behavior rural patterns is provided by participation in role playing business games and sensitivity training (group dynamics) practical exercises, consultancy assignments and application projects provide feedback on the practical usefulness learning.

6. Transfer

This principles requires that education and training help the individual to transfer what he has learned to live situations. Some teaching methods, like lectures, study of literature or discussions do not pay much attention to this transfer. On the other hand, in many participative methods the element of transfer is strong. For this reason the methods of simulation and practical application projects are considered by some teachers as the most effective ones.

Exhibit C shows one way to rate the potential of some teaching methods to apply the above-mentioned selected learning principles. A simple three point rating scale has been used and rating is based on the author's personal assessment.

Examining teaching methods from the viewpoint of principles of learning shows the necessity to properly sequences and combine various teaching methods in order to secure the greatest impact on learning. It also explains why there is a growing interest in certain methods; those with high motivational feedback and transfer capabilities. This, of course, does not eliminate other methods which are needed for different purposes. Neither should it lead to an overestimation of a single method which in tact, may fulfill its role only in combination with other methods (business games) or serve only very special purposes (sensitivity training).