

A Critical Approach

TNA Vs. TNA

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If you are working in Learning and Development function and looking at the needs of your organization for current and future, it is important to analyse and understand what need to be done to achieve certain goals. That is correct.

The widespread goal is to make a transition from a certain specific state of knowledge, or lack thereof, and skills among a specific group of people to a state that is defined as superior, improved and more useful in the context of achieving some pre-defined goals.

Therefore, a training activity in the life of an organization means that there is a striving to achieve a different—and, by definition, better—and desirable state of its operation.

Not all the training programs will suit all employee and business needs. Therefore, how do you know what is needed, and how to address those needs, and how do you create a bridge from the current skills and knowledge of staff to the expected skill set? Training Needs Analysis (TNA) is the answer.

TNA is one of the most central things that you can do as head of L&D function, and if you get it right, you will deliver the right training, in the right way, to the right people with the right costs. We all know by heart that in conducting TNA, we ought to address the three levels namely; Organizations, Function/Department, and Individual.

The needs arise from deficiencies related to constraints or imperfections in staff activity, primarily deficiencies in knowledge or skills. In this sense, they should be distinguished from other factors, which exert influence on the functioning of organizations. Notably, it is rare that actual developmental constraints would result from insufficient competences of people who are part of the organization.

The importance of TNA is connected to how and why staff need training. Instead of delivering training ad hoc and when a request arises, you can proactively plan how to train and develop staff with skills that will benefit the organization as well as individuals. The condition of that organization may deviate from the expectations due to various legal, institutional or historical

considerations. This discrepancy may also be connected with the social or political context or limited availability of human or financial resources.

The diagnosis of training needs helps to identify the discrepancies between the knowledge held by potential participants and the knowledge, which is desirable for some specific reasons.

However, what if the skills required are not currently available in town, what you should do, and what level of analysis ought to take place? We need to think above and behind the basic TNA.

TNA Vs. TNA

"Training Needs Analysis" (TNA) and "Training Needs Assessment" (TNA) are terms that are often used interchangeably, but they can have slightly different meanings depending on the context. However, in many cases, they refer to the same process of evaluating and identifying the training needs of individuals or organizations.

1. Training Needs Analysis (TNA):

- Focus: TNA is generally more focused on the detailed analysis and examination of the skills, knowledge, and abilities required for a particular job or task.
- Process: It involves a comprehensive analysis of the current skills and competencies of individuals or groups within an organization. This analysis helps in identifying the gaps between the current and desired performance levels.
- Purpose: The primary goal is to determine the specific areas where training and development efforts should be directed to bridge the identified gaps.

2. Training Needs Assessment (TNA):

- Focus: TNA may have a broader focus that includes not only the analysis of current skills but also the assessment of broader organizational and environmental factors that may impact training needs.
- Process: TNA can involve a more holistic assessment, taking into account organizational goals, market trends, regulatory changes, and other external factors that may influence the need for training.
- Purpose: The purpose is to identify not only individual skill gaps but also broader organizational needs and trends that may require attention through training and development initiatives.

In practice, the terms are often used interchangeably, and the distinction between them may not be strictly maintained. Both TNA and TNA processes involve a systematic approach to assessing and analysing training needs, whether at the individual, team, or organizational level.

It's important to note that the choice of terminology might vary based on regional preferences, industry practices, or specific organizational contexts. Regardless of the terminology used, the ultimate goal is to ensure that training and development efforts are aligned with the identified needs to enhance individual and organizational performance.

How Do We Know What We Know?

Many of us know things simply because we've experienced them directly. In 2001 when I was heading the HR & Training functions at one of telecommunication operator at the early stage, so called the trial period, and as part of my responsibilities I was asked to prepare manpower planning and training plan for the coming years. That is one of nature of this functions and the most critical and complex one due to the level of analysis and the financial impact of the outcomes.

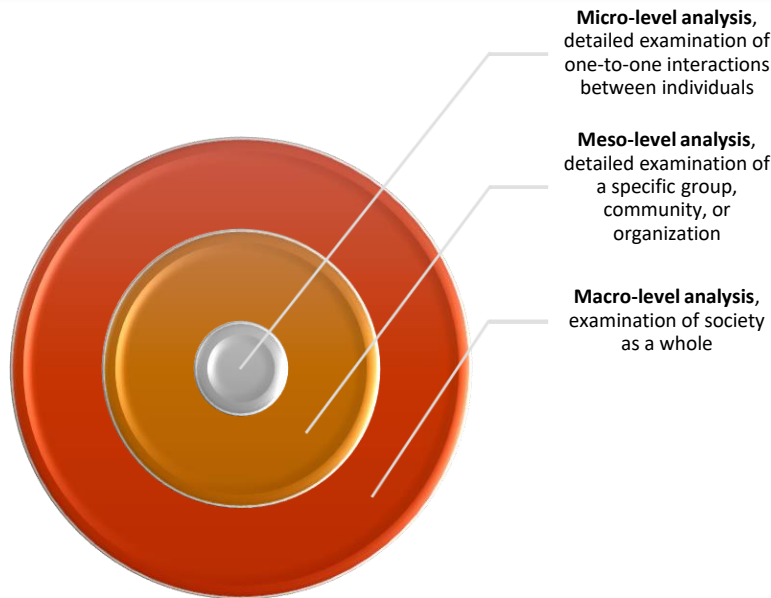
TNA is the single most important step in training design for the simple reason that, if TNA is not performed or is not performed properly, the training will not be properly focused. The result will be that the training will not cover what people really need to know to do their jobs. Decision-makers will predictably ask for return on investment (ROI) studies of the training, and such studies—when conducted—will show disappointing results.

During the preparation of the training plan and at the early stage of TNA, I was surprised to know that there is no college for telecommunications, and undoubtedly, there were no local graduates with knowledge or education about telecommunications engineering, and/or telecommunication industry.

I have to hold the analysis and think, was it enough to conduct the TNA at the principal levels, obviously the answer was **No**. We have to think more widely and study the business environment as it will affect the budget, and that is when we thought to adopt another approach to TNA to scan and analyse the business environment.

The Critical Approach

Sociologists define three major levels of society, and use data to understand types of behaviour that occur at the different levels and the interconnections of these levels.



So instead of analysing organization, function, and people, which is the basic TNA approach, we have decided to, look it from different perspectives that is Macro, Meso, and Micro Analysis levels, which is more comprehensive, demanding and complex, *Sociology Perspectives analysis.*



This approach permitted us to understand what we have to do in both plans, Manpower and Training, what level of financial investment we have to put in place, and what training programs we have to introduce.

The training needs analysis is a vital phase in planning training that will successfully close the gap between the actual and desired situations. It ensures that the right remedy is applied to the

right problem. Since limited budgets are available for training, the preferred areas of training must be those ensuring that the anticipated outcome will be achieved, as well as maximum gains for the professionals and their organization and that is done through conducting Training Needs Assessment after the completion of Training needs analysis.

It is ought to be mentioned that on later years we have invested in in-house training academy to elevate the performance of local staff and thus reducing the number of expats by 25%.

Final Words

Either HR or Training management are as simple as so many people think, particularly the CEOs. The study of both disciplines from various viewpoints or adapting other disciplines such as marketing, finance, and Sociology is necessary to show the strategic worth of this department.

About Author



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A veteran, Practical-academic, seasoned and accomplished HR and Management senior executive with almost 40 years with local, regional and global companies in different industries coupled with more than 15 international awards and recognitions. **A MEMBER OF THE HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW ADVISORY COUNCIL, AN OPT-IN RESEARCH COMMUNITY OF BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS,** and a Fellow member of the Royal Society of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce in UK.

Prof. Sadik is the Co-founder, Vice President, Educators Learning Solutions Ltd, (Educators) UK, and holds different positions such as Regional Director-North Africa for International Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, USA, Collegiate Council Member & Professor of HR Management, Global University of Science & Technology, Latvia, Executive Member, Ajeenkya D Y Patil University, International Academic Council (IAC), India, Professor of Management, The George Washington University of Peace, USA, Regional Director-Egypt, Chartered Institute of Management & Leadership, USA, Vice President of Chartered Institute of Leadership & Governance, USA, and last but not least Board & Advisory Committee Member at Arab Trainers Union, Jordan.

In 1998, he was nominated for Professional Excellence Award in HR from "SHRM" in USA, and in 2006 for Sheikh Rashid Bin Maktoum Award in the United Arab Emirates as the Best Arab Manager. The Stevies Award laureate in 2007 as first Egyptian/Arab winner, and who was ranked among the top 20 HR Most International Influential Thinkers in 2014 from UK, 2015 **Peter F. Drucker** in Management, UOSF, Panama.

As writer, he is a regular international contributor at HR-Future magazine in South Africa, and published 3 books in India and Germany. He frequently called in HR conferences and summits to opine in current practices and provide his insights. He is associated as adjunct professor at

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In Egypt, he used to teach with University of Maastricht, Maastricht School of Management, Cairo Outreach Program, Eslsca – Business School, Paris, Arab Academy for Science, Technology & Maritime Transport, and RB College, UK.