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FACTORS INFLUENCE TRAINING EFFECTIVENESS IN MICRO AND SMALL ENTERPRISES

– Case Service-Oriented Company: Katrium OÜ



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The fundamental purpose of this thesis is to identify and examine the factors affecting the effectiveness of training in micro and small enterprises. To be clear, the factors are gathered into three groups: the organizational factors, the management-related factors and the individual-related factors. The literature review provides different aspects of training; thereby laying a foundation for the empirical study. The concept of learning organization, the process to create an effective training, types of training and Kirkpatrick's (1998) four-level model of measuring training effectiveness are presented in this paper.

To examine the importance of these factors to training efficiency, Katrium OÜ-a micro service-oriented firm was chosen as studied group for this research. The qualitative approach was employed in this study. The data was collected by the distribution of questionnaire and face-to-face interview with people at different positions, including manager, employee and trainee in the case company.

The conclusion of this thesis will answer all the research questions which are tied closely with the research objectives. The research findings reveal the critical factors which significantly influence the training effectiveness (i.e. company's internal barriers, managerial support and training motivation). The company could consider to take actions to improve the current training system and maximize its benefits.

KEYWORDS:

Human Resource, Training, Training Effectiveness, Learning, Manager

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS (OR) SYMBOLS

EU	European Union
HRD	Human Resource Development
HRM	Human Resource Management
LO	Learning Organization
MSEs	Micro and Small Enterprises
OECD	Organization for Economic-Co-operation and Development
OL	Organizational Learning
ROI	Return On Investment
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises

1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to give an overview of the study's background and the motivation which led the researcher to come up with this topic. These are followed by the research's scope, the research objectives and questions. In the last section of this chapter, the research plan is presented.

1.1 Research background

Human Resource (HR) is considered as a valuable asset of each organization (Storey, 1989, see Armstrong, 2006, 31). The strong human resource capital and quality of employee is considered as crucial precondition and key driver for the organization's development and sustainable success (EU Commission, 2009). Furthermore, the emerging of economic globalization, technology progress, the raising of intensified market competition are posing the dramatic challenges (Omar et al., 2009, 95) which require micro and SMEs upgrade the employees' competency and qualification. As an efficient and prudent solution to strengthen their HR infrastructure, employee development by training is suggested to be part of Human Resource Development strategic plan (Foot and Hook, 2002, 209).

According to Goldstein & Ford (2002, see Aguinis and Kraiger, 2009, 2), training could be described as "systematic approach to learning and development to improve individual, team and organizational effectiveness". Via training, employees are provided sufficient knowledge and skills which enhance their individual potential and capabilities. They work more efficiently and contribute to the overall organizational value as well as business development. Hence, it could be concluded that training is an essential and necessary activity of organizations at all sizes.

However, the workforce training and development is critical in respect to SMEs (OECD, 2011). Concerning the nature of their business size, micro and small firms are facing the training situation which is characterized by a paradox (i.e.

between training investments, efforts and results) (EU Commission, 2009). To overcome this paradox, the factors which influence the training effectiveness must be clarified and taken into account seriously so that the investment into training is worthwhile (Lin and Shariff, 2008, 293). It is also the expected outcome of this research.

Katrium OÜ is a service-oriented firm which is chosen as the case company. It is a Finnish company with locations in Estonia and Spain. The four key services offered by Katrium are contact center, telephone market research, internationalization and business support services. The main reason for selecting this studied group was the proposal of conducting an internship in Katrium at the time when the researcher wrote this thesis in spring 2015. As a young and micro firm, Katrium is putting an effort in training to build their competent human resource. However, they are dealing with many problems (internal barriers, employer's support and training motivation) in term of increasing the training effectiveness. The researcher saw the match between the company's needs of improvement in their employee training and the research topic. By studying and analyzing the company's training system and relevant actors to identified the critical factors which influence to its training effectiveness. More detailed information about the company will be presented in chapter 4.

To determine these factors influencing the training outcome and its effectiveness, the literature review provides theoretical framework on different aspects of training which are closely related to the research's topic and empirical part. The theoretical framework consists of training concept, learning organization, training process and its different techniques in implementing the training programs. Furthermore, the factors are relevant to manager and employee will be indicated in the last parts of the theoretical framework.

In the empirical part of this research, data is collected from people from various positions inside the case company in order to analyze and evaluate its current training system.

1.2 Topic decision

Training-a practice of Human Resource, is the biggest concern of the researcher. While searching and collecting information regarding training in the context of micro and small enterprises, the researcher was particularly interested in seeking the solutions to increase the training benefits. It was realized by identifying the potential factors that affect the training outcomes and its effectiveness, which is the root of problem. The researcher found that this topic had useful impact on practices.

Additionally, during the time in early stage of this research, the researcher was accepted to conduct the professional practical training in Katrium OÜ from February until May 2015. Being in the trainee position, it was a valuable chance to understand and gain an insight about the case company's HR practices as well as its HR training program. This experience truly inspired and encouraged the researcher. Hence, the researcher's final thesis is dedicated to this specific field of study.

1.3 Scope

The researcher aims to study deeper the relevant aspects and perspectives within the presented topic by defining and narrowing the research's scope. Moreover, it helps to promote the highly practical characteristic, consistency and coherence of this research. To start off, the researcher would like to emphasize that this research is written from the employee's perspective. The second point which needs to be stressed in this paper is that the term "training" refers to both training and development. Therefore, the training programs which are mentioned here cover all the programs for training and developing employees.

Thirdly, the research focuses on the micro and small business context which are categorized by the European Commission. In detail, the micro enterprises are those employing fewer than 10 persons and whose annual turnover does not exceed 2 million euro. Whilst, the small enterprises have up to 50 employees and their annual turnover is not over 10 million euro (EU

Commission, 2005). Next, the research covers the staff who has working experience in Katrium's office, not the company's freelance contracted employees. Finally, the training techniques, which are chosen to present in the literature review, are based on the services provided by Katrium.

1.4 Research purpose

The fundamental aim of this research is to explore and determine the critical factors which affect the effectiveness of training.

In order to achieve the above aim, the objectives are set specifically as the main phases of this research. There are two main objectives which are required to reach.

The first objective of this research is to study and analyze the issues relating to organization and its entities (i.e. manager and employee) in training function. Defining how they influence negatively or positively training effectiveness.

The second objective is to study and assess case company's current training system. By collecting data from different actors within the company, the purpose of the researcher is to understand the perspectives from both manager and employee. It is hoped that this research could be referred as a useful guide for company to optimize the training and increase the benefits of it.

1.5 Research questions

The problem that this research sought is: "Which factors influence the training effectiveness?"

In order to answer the main research question, there are sub-questions which also tie with the two objectives set in the previous section. The theoretical framework should answer the question below:

- Which are the potential factors influencing training effectiveness?

The research questions for the second objective concerning the empirical study are:

- What is training process in Katrium?
- How is the effectiveness of employee training in Katrium?
- Which are the factors affecting Katrium's training effectiveness?

1.6 Structure of the thesis

The research outline is presented clearly in the diagram (see appendix 1). This research consists of five main chapters which flow from the introduction as the beginning, then followed by the theoretical framework and research methodology respectively. The results and analysis of the empirical comes afterward. Finally, the conclusion includes a statement about the connection between the theoretical and empirical part, the recommendations for the company as well as suggestions for further research.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, the relevant literature will be reviewed in different aspects of training. These factors, which affect the training effectiveness, are gathered into three groups relating to organization, manager and employee. After the discussion about the definitions of training and its objectives, the first group concerns to the organizational-related factors will be presented. This group covers the elements and aspects regarding to the organization, i.e. organizational features, learning organization, process to design an effective training program and types of training. It is followed by the management-related group. At the end of this chapter, the group includes the factors about the target audience of training will be described to see to an extent they impact the training outcomes and efficiency.

2.1 Training and its purpose

In order to identify the factors which affect the training efficiency, the organization should understand the training concept and why training is needed. It is the main idea of this section, which addresses the question: what is training and the objectives of it?

Training is “an organizational intervention may be defined as a well thought of set of activities aimed to facilitate learning of knowledge, attitude, and skills among its people in the organization to improve their current job performance and contribute to the achievement of organizational goals” (Edralin, 2004, 1). According to Dessler (2013, 272), training refers to the activities which provide new or current employees the skills which are needed to perform their jobs.

Following, the explanation of Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart and Wright (2011), training is considered as the organization’s efforts which are planned with the aim at helping employees acquire job-related competencies. And the ultimate goal of this HR function is employees apply and transfer what they learn into the job.

The purpose of training is to emphasize the growth and developments of personnel which aim at assisting them have adequate knowledge and skills (Noe, 2010, 5) to perform their jobs more efficiently. In addition, the training is not only for the newcomers but also for the current employees. Especially, the ongoing training plays important roles in human resource development (HRD) which helps employees to be able to adjust and adapt to rapidly changing task requirements (Zahra, Iram and Naeem, 2014, 60). Hence, the training programs are implemented for many purposes of organization, such as: replacement preparation, career objectives or promotion.

Effectiveness is defined by Fraser (1994, 104, see Lin and Shariff, 2008, 294) as a measure of matching between the set goals and achievement. Punia and Kant (2013, 153) summarize that the training effectiveness is the degree to which the training obtains the desired objectives. Noe et al., (2010, 189) support the view that the effective training is designed with the aim of teaching skills and behaviors which help the organization achieve its goals. Thus training is effective and successful when it links to the organizational needs and its outcomes fulfill the organization's target.

Before continuing to the next section explaining about the challenges, which limit the training effectiveness in micro and SMEs, the researcher wants to conclude this part by emphasizing again the training purpose. All in all, training can be exploited as a strategic HRD function to achieve the organizational goal, which is believed as the ultimate purpose of training.

2.2 Organizational-related factors

2.2.1 Featured barriers of micro and SMEs

Due to the special features of SMEs (i.e. size and performance, organization nature and culture etc) (Nicolescu, 2009, 405-407) compared to larger firms, they face many internal and external barriers regarding employee training and development. It would be important for the organization to identify the problems

that they are facing in training. It is considered as fundamental solutions for their progress and growth in the future (Omar et al., 2009, 95).

In the report of European Commission (2009), the challenges and obstacles faced by SMEs in training, which were indicated and gathered into three main aspects:

Addressing SME internal barriers and obstacles for training

The size, limited resources and abilities are the main problems of Micro and SMEs for training, especially the startup companies. Several studies were conducted to explore the reasons behind the training provision and investment in SMEs. The empirical findings revealed three major factors concerning cost of training, time constraints and lack of trainee cover (Marlow, 1998; Matlay, 1999; Kitching and Blackburn, 2002). The common situation in micro and small firms are the scarcity of labor, i.e. the lack of skilled workforce is significant in more than one third of all SMEs in European Union (EU). They encounter the obstacles in finding the qualified staff to provide the adequate training and having a separate department which specializes in training employees within the company. In addition, the inadequate time for training is the sub-consequence of labor shortages. These firms are struggling to get the required capital and find the financial resources for maintaining and expand their business. Consequently, there is a limited budget for training investment (EU commission, 2009).

Another constraint on training is lost-working time. The micro and small firms face more difficulties to organize and arrange training for employees, i.e. formal training (Stone, 2010, 10).

Finding suitable methods and techniques for training

The barriers on the first group lead to other obstacles for micro and SMEs in identifying appropriate training methods, such as training programs and methods for specific needs (on-the-job or off-the job, formal or informal), training and competence development for managerial staff, and validation of informal skills and qualification (EU Commission, 2009). The information deficiencies

(Stone, 2010, 11) affect the employer decisions on training investment, i.e. lacking knowledge to access the available training program and methods. Additionally, the external training on the market might be unsuited to the company size and the cost is expensive that they can afford (EU Commission, 2009).

Dealing with current and structural challenges of competence development

The market pressure has posed more disadvantages for the micro and SMEs than their larger counterparts concerning the abilities of recruiting, attracting, retaining and motivating the high qualified human resources (Beaver and Hutchings, 2005). To hire qualified personnel competition is rising. Many micro and SMEs companies are not willing to invest in training because of “brain drain” situation. After training, employees leave the company for better paid positions and conditions which lead to wage demands (Stone, 2010, 10) and let the company bear the cost of training (EU Commission, 2009).

Depending on the nature and business line, micro and small firms find the solutions to overcome these problems in training. One of prudent strategy which can be applied to positively influence training is promoting learning organization. The concept of learning organization will be delivered in the following part.

2.2.2 Learning Organization and its essential features

The impact of globalization, economic and social changes as well as the rapid transition to knowledge-based society require the employees’ knowledge and skills need to be constantly developed so as to keep up with changes, information flow and new technologies (Kumpikaitė, 2008, 25). Hence, it would be beneficial for the organization to understand the nature of learning organization so that they could create a dynamic learning culture and environment to fully support their employees.

2.2.2.1 Learning organization vs Organizational learning

Learning Organization (LO) is the concept which emerged in the late 90s. Since then, it has received much concern and support from the prominent writers and educators (Gronhaug and Stone, 2012). And over the past years, this concept has become as one source of competitiveness in both academic and popular management literature (Hübner, 2002, 4).

LO is described by Garvin (1993, 80) as the “organization skilled at creating, acquiring and transferring knowledge and at modifying behavior to reflect new knowledge and insights”. Pedler, Boydell and Burgoyne (1991) construct a definition for learning organization is one which “facilitates the learning of all its members and continually transform itself” (see Armstrong, 2006, 543). Furthermore, Wick and Leon (1995) have remarked this concept in which LO as one that “continually improves by rapidly creating and refining the capabilities required for future success” (see Armstrong, 2006, 543). Despite the wide diversity and a number of different viewpoints of LO definition, Kirwan (2013, 69-70) believes that the core and fundamental meaning of LO is to create the knowledge via the collective experience of individuals inside the organization, which can be used by the organization and it aims at getting the achievement of improving the performance, thus competitive advantage for the organization.

According to Kezar (2005), Learning Organization (LO) and Organizational Learning (OL) which are two concepts sharing some common characteristics concerning the process of obtaining information, interpreting data, developing knowledge and sustaining learning. Nevertheless, there are differences and divergences exist between the concept of a learning organization and organizational learning. The first one (LO) is a kind of organization while the latter is considered as processes or activities of learning in organization (Yeo, 2015; Ortenblad 2001, see Mbassana, 2014, 17).

The ideal Learning Organization is expected to embrace a culture of lifelong learning, and all employees within this organization are encouraged and enabled to continuously attain and share knowledge with colleagues (Noe et al., 2011, 496). Meanwhile, Organizational Learning is concerned about the

process consists of creating, retaining and transferring knowledge to benefit individuals, groups and organizations (Senge, 1990; Easterby-Smith, et al., 2000; Argote & Ingram, 2000; Hatch & Dyer, 2004; Lopez, 2005; Jamali, 2006; Sun & Tse, 2009; Argote, 2011) (see Naudé, 2012, 523).

Garvin (1993) believes that a learning organization achieves the continuous progress and improvement through organizational learning. Moreover, Armstrong (2006, 323) points out the purpose of organizational learning strategy is to grow resource-based capability of a firm. Similarly, Naudé (2012, 523-527) also supports the view that learning organization can be used as a strategy to enhance the organizational performance and maintaining long-term sustainable competitive advantage in the much intensified business environment.

2.2.2.2 Essential features of learning organization

Gephart, Marsick, Van Buren and Spiro (1996) proposed the key features which organization should focus in order to become a learning organization. These features comprise of (1) continuous learning, (2) knowledge generation and sharing (3) critical and systematic thinking (4) learning culture (5) valuing of employees.

The first feature of a learning organization is **continuous learning**. To engage in continuous learning, the organization whose employees are required to comprehend the whole working system and process that they are deal with. Both individuals and groups inside the organization are expected to put efforts for continuously learning and acquiring new skills as well as knowledge. Then, they will apply what they learn into practice to improve work performance (Gephart et al., 1996).

Knowledge generation and sharing is embraced by many organizations. Training is considered as a human capital investment to increase the employees' value to the organization. To promote and support the creation of a learning organization, different systems are developed for creating, capturing

and sharing knowledge so that people who need it can easier access to use (Gephart et al., 1996).

Critical and systematic thinking occurs when employees are encouraged to think in new ways, see relationships among ideas, identify and test assumptions, and observe their action's results (Gephart et al., 1996).

Learning culture is in which learning is rewarded, promoted and supported by managers at all level and also the organizational objectives. Moreover, there should be the encouragement of flexibility and experimentation from managers. Employees are encouraged to take risks, learn from their mistakes, be innovative, explore new ideas, try new processes and develop new product and services (Gephart et al., 1996).

Valuing of employees is the last characteristic. It means that the employees are valued and recognized as the organization's source of knowledge. Hence, the system and environment within the organization should focus on ensuring the development and well-being of every employee (Gephart et al., 1996).

2.2.3 Training process

In this part, the four phases of training process are described. It is believed that training process as one of determinant factors which affect to the training success. To design an effective training, it is important to take into consideration the different stages of its process. The first phase is needs assessment, and then followed by the design phase and implementation. The last phase of training process is evaluation. Each phase will be explained in detail in these sections below.

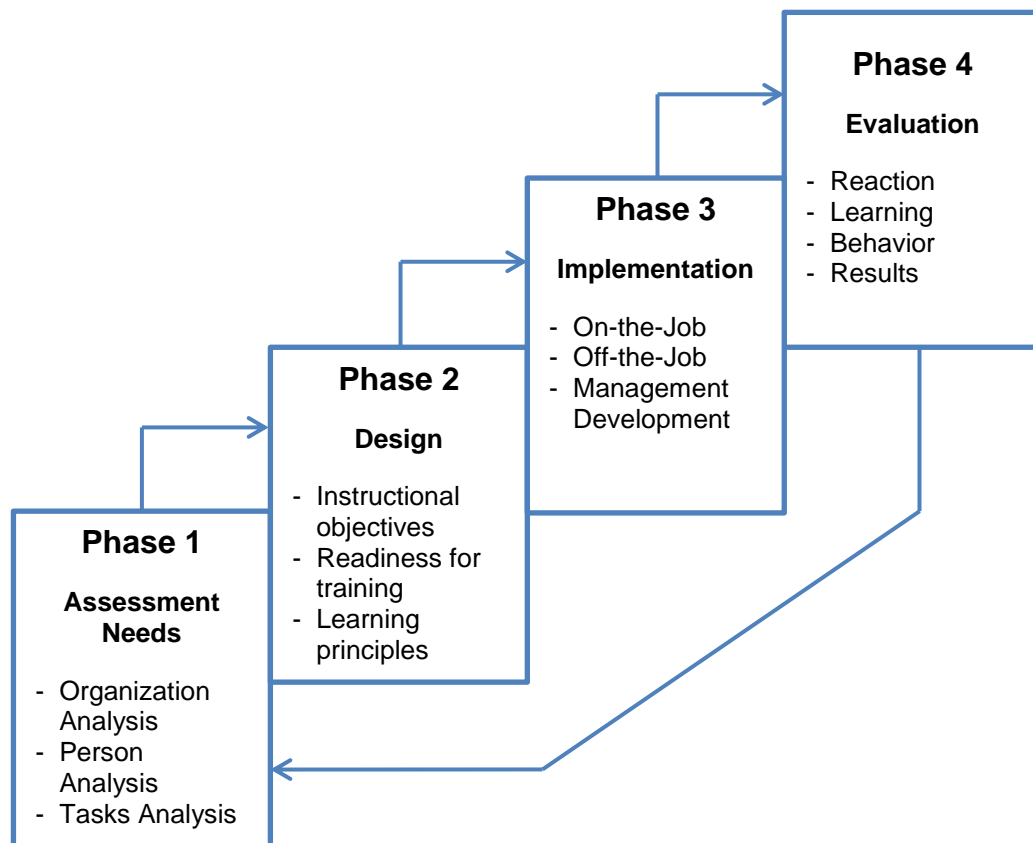


Figure 1. Training process

(Adapted from Noe et al., 2011, see Golli, 2013)

2.2.3.1 Needs assessment

Training Needs Assessment (TNA) is the very first step which addresses the reason to conduct and implement training. In addition, TNA plays an important role in designing and creating a successful and effective training. It is the key factor in determining whether the training achieved desired outcomes (Punia and Kant, 2013, 153).

TNA-a process which consists a set of activities: gathering data (organization, individual employees, and employees' tasks) (Noe et al., 2011, 190). After that, analyzing and evaluating the data to determine the specific types of training which are needed (Edralin, 2004, 2). The ultimate objective of this step is to identify whether the training is necessary to improve the employees'

effectiveness and thus contribute to achieve the organizational goals (York, 2010, 202).

Brown (2002) pointed out the four reasons why TNA should be implemented before developing the training programs: (1) to address and identify the organizational problems requiring training solutions (2) to obtain and receive the management's support (3) to develop data for training result assessment (4) to determine the financial budget and benefits of training.

Chang et al., (2012, 33) suggested that a process of a complete training needs analysis should consist of following steps:

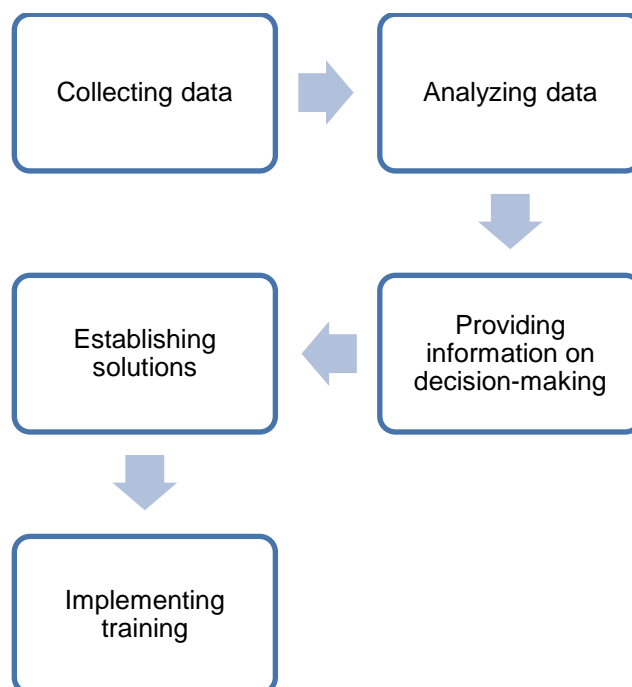


Figure 2. Process of training needs analysis

(Adapted from Chang et al.,2012)

Three specific questions that training needs assessment should address (Goldstein et al., 1991) are:

“Organization – What is the context in which training will occur?

Person – Who needs training?

Task – What subjects should the training cover?”

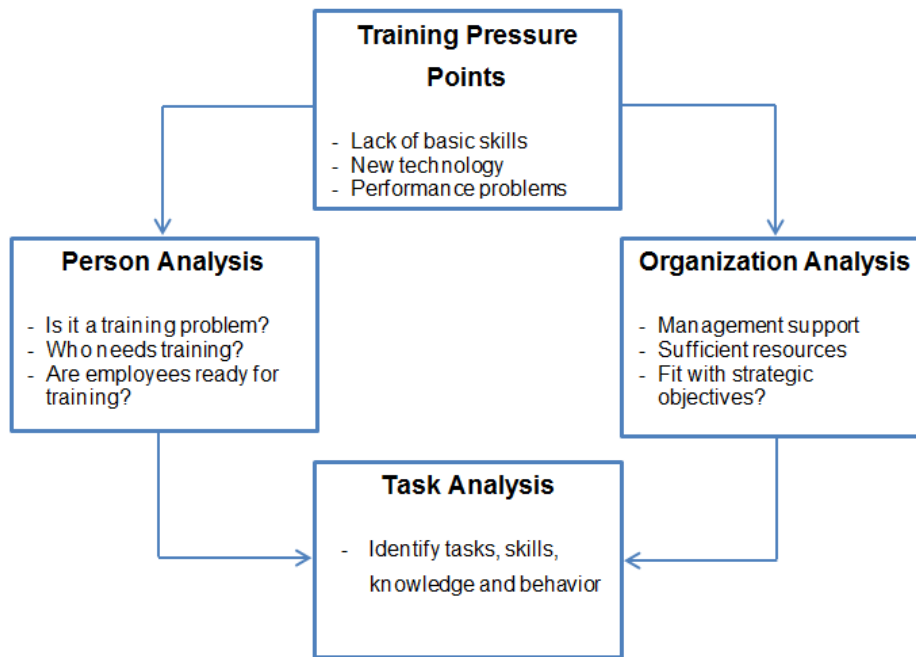


Figure 3. Needs Assessment process

(Adapted from Noe et al., 2011; see Golli, 2013)

Organization Analysis

The organizational analysis refers to the strategic training needs analysis that identify whether training supports the organization's strategic direction (Pradhan and Pradhan. R, 2012). In this assessment level, the organization's characteristics are evaluated with the purpose of identifying a proper and appropriate training in order to meet the strategic objectives of organization. The training needs of organization are defined based on the organization's strategy, available resources (budget, time and human resource), and management support (Noe, 2010, 110-113).

Person analysis

The second level of training assessment regards to the employee's training needs. The personal analysis is defined as a process of determining individuals' needs and the readiness for training activity. These issues needed to be addressed are: (1) to find out whether the employee's performance is affected

by the lack of knowledge, skills or ability; (2) to identify who needs training and (3) to ensure employees' training readiness (Noe, 2010, 103).

The individual assessment is critical to consider whether the training is the best solution to response to a performance problem. The manager should detect and clarify the root of poor performance whether it results from the knowledge and skill deficiencies of employees. An appropriate training will be chosen and applied to positively affect the employees' ability and skills. In addition, via the person analysis, the identification of employees who have adequate ability and are willing to receive the training should be determined. In order to design and produce a training program with high effectiveness, person analysis should be taken carefully. Otherwise, training is wasted when both employee and organization cannot benefit from it (Noe et al., 2011, 193). Moreover, Armstrong (2006) added that employees need different kinds of training and development experiences at different stages of their careers. He suggested the organization to constantly evaluate their employee's training needs to maximize the training effectiveness.

Task analysis

Task analysis is addressed as the central role in training needs assessment by Goldstein (1993). He explained that this activity provides the training needs' content and necessary requirements of a job. According to Noe (2010), each job includes a set of certain tasks need to be completed. To perform well and fulfill these tasks, it requires employees to have specific levels of knowledge (facts, procedure), competency and abilities (physical and mental capacities) (Noe, 2010, 123). In general, the task and all knowledge, skills, abilities relating to it will be identified and analyzed in this level. Besides, the HR professional should consider about the required conditions under which tasks are performed in the task analysis. These conditions comprise of: the job's equipment and working environment, time constraints, safety considerations and others performance standards (Noe et al., 2011, 193).

Need assessment plays an important role in designing a successful and effective training. Its outcome is the crucial input for the others remaining steps

(Noe, 2010, 103-105). Therefore, the organization should take into account those related issues to implement it properly. Edralin (2004) recommended that training needs assessment can be conducted in different forms and methods, for instance: survey, interview, observation, performance appraisal or long-range human resource plans. She also stressed that TNA should be maintained and conducted frequently so that organization can up-to-date the training to respond to the needs of employees.

2.2.3.2 Design

The outcomes of TNA are important input information to move on the next step in training process, which is planning and designing the overall training program. The TNA and training design are often conducted by the internal specialists such as the organization's HR professional, instructional designer, manager, sometimes there is involvement of the program's clients (Noe, 2010, 172) or the external consultants (Edralin, 2004, 2). In order to achieve these goals, Noe (2010, 8) proposed an instructional design approach which is "a process of systematically developing training to meet specified needs". The complete model of Instructional System Design (ISD) is shown in the figure below:



Figure 4. Stages of Instructional Design

(Noe et al., 2011, 189)

The training design process is created and developed based on principles of ISD. The design stage includes the identification of the training goals and objectives (Edralin, 2004, 2). Then based on those set-objectives, the training provider, topics and contents will be defined, the participants who receive the training will be chosen, then the training methodologies and evaluation will be determined. Moreover, the training design also covers the issues regarding to the trainee readiness, the embrace of a learning environment within the organization as well as the financial budget estimation for training (Noe et al., 2011, 194-196; Dessler, 2013, 276).

Forming the instructional objectives of training design plays a significant role in training success. Employees learn best when they understand the training objectives which are set clearly (Noe et al., 2011, 196-197). Dessler (2013, 277) states that the performance deficiencies which was detected in TNA, should be addressed in the learning objectives. Edralin (2004) viewed the training design's

objectives were critical element that should be taken into account seriously and written properly so as to decide the appropriate training content, delivery methods, measurement for training evaluation and other relevant issues. Furthermore, she also mentioned about the standard criteria for objective formulation, which could be built basing on SMART goals: specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely.

However, among the situational constraints are given by learning objectives, the training budget is one of those which have the negative impact to the training effectiveness (Noe et al., 2011, 195). There are different costs comprising of development costs, direct cost and indirect costs, participant compensation and the cost of evaluating the program. Dessler (2013, 277) suggested there should be a preparation to “defend the training program on benefits-versus-costs grounds”.

The next consideration in the design step is to create a learning environment which could highly motivate employees, thus increase the effectiveness of training. Several features are necessary for learning occurs, which include the meaningful material and activities, opportunities for provision of feedback and assistance, knowledge sharing, proper equipment and facilities to support learning as well as and transfer of training into effect when employees return to their job (Noe, 2010, 172-173; Dessler, 2013, 276-279).

2.2.3.3 Implementation

Actual implementing the training is the third stage in the training process. The implication not only refers to the application of training methods but also covers the others aspects such as: foods, budget, equipment, human resource, transportation etc (Edralin, 2004, 3). The three common types for delivering training are on-the-job training, off-the-job training and management development. Depending on the specific situations, organizational goals, training’s set-objectives and training design, the training methods are applied to facilitate employees in the process of learning competencies (Edralin, 2004, 3).

Different techniques of training will be described in section 2.2.4 of this research.

2.2.3.4 Evaluation

This is the last phase in training process which also the most important ones necessary to determine the training effectiveness (Emerson, 2007). The main purposes of evaluating training are: (1) to determine whether the training meets its goals, (2) to identify the training program's strengths and weaknesses, (3) to determine the trainees' reaction and response, (4) to define the financial benefits and the costs of training and (5) to help for better decision in choosing most appropriate training programs in the future (Noe et al., 2010, 210-211; Noe, 2011, 216-219).

The training evaluation regards to the measurement to assess and evaluate the success and effectiveness of training based on the achievement of set objectives (Edralin, 2004, 3). According to Noe (2010), the benefits that the company and trainees receive from the training refer to the training effectiveness. He also mentioned that the training outcomes and criteria which should be collected and analyzed to determine these benefits (Noe, 2010, 216). The identification of training results could consist of trainee satisfaction, return of investment (ROI), performance improvements (individual and organizational performance), new skills knowledge and transfer of training (the behavior on the job) (Noe et al., 2011, 210).

Another evaluation tool is four-level model to measure the effectiveness of training, which was developed by Kirkpatrick (1998). The description and characteristics of each level are explained below:



Figure 5. Kirkpatrick's four-level framework to evaluate the training

(Source: new.edu)

The first level is **reaction** which measures the feedback of trainees towards to the training program and learning experience. Several questions are raised during the assessment level in order to find out to what extent the trainees like the training and whether they feel that it is worthwhile activity to spend their time and effort.

The second level is **learning** evaluation which measures how much the trainees learned through the training, whether they improve their knowledge and skills.

The third level explores the changes in the trainees' **behaviors**. Did the trainees apply what they learned and gained into practices? To what extend about the trainees' improvement results into the implementation when they return to their job?

Results evaluation is the last level in this model. Based on the previous set objectives and goals, the effectiveness of training is defined by how training impacts and influences to the overall organization. The measures for it could be the performance indicators (volumes, ROI, values) and the quantifiable aspects, such as: productivity, employee turnover ratio, growth and development.

2.2.4 Training methods

Choosing suitable and appropriate methods of training is crucial, which decides the success of training. The training methods are based on the specific needs of micro and small enterprises (EU Commission, 2009).

2.2.4.1 On-the-job training

On-the-job training (OJT) takes places when the employees are trained to learn the job while actually working at it (Dessler, 2010, 279) Employees can gain required skills, knowledge and competencies to perform a specific job at the same time they carry the job within the workplace (Heathfield, n.d) .

The most frequent and familiar types of providing OJT are coaching (or understudy method), job rotation and special assignment. Coaching is a training technique in which trainee acquire and learn new task via the instructions and guides by experienced supervisor or qualified workers who master at this work. The trainees may also learn the task by observing their supervisor via this method. The second type is job rotation which means the employees rotate their roles with each other in order to gain experience in a new job or new position. This type is very beneficial for employees because it gives them chances to experience wide range of jobs. The Special assignments are one of practical OJT that are usually used for delivering the firsthand experience on actual problems to the lower-level managers in the organization (Dessler, 2013, 280).

OJT benefits for both parties including employees and companies. Firstly, this method is cost effective for the company because it is mostly facilitated as in-house training by internal resource. Furthermore, OJT does not require complex training course and it highly motivates trainees when they learn by carrying out the job and they can receive immediate feedbacks from supervisors.

Besides the advantages of OJT, there are also several disadvantages. This result of OJT might depend much on the person who delivers the training, i.e. in case he or she is not a good communicator which could cause the

miscommunication and misunderstanding in training. Additionally, the common situation is supervisors are busy and they do not spend much time to support trainees. These problems can decrease the effectiveness of training which consequently, affecting to the trainee's work performance as well as the overall results (lardbucket.org).

2.2.4.2 Informal learning

Informal learning is acquired through various methods including conversation, discussions, guidance or social interaction with others colleagues, teamwork and mentoring (Le Clus, 2011, 362). According to the European Commission (2000), informal learning is “a natural accompaniment to everyday life. Unlike formal and non-formal learning, informal learning is not necessarily intentional learning, and so may well not be recognized even by individuals themselves as contributing to their knowledge and skills.”

Employees can learn and acquire 70 percent of knowledge, information about their job in a formal way via the processes which are not structured or sponsored by the organization. The informal learning happens naturally, people achieve the understanding in incremental steps. Moreover, this method has the positive influence to learner's motivation. Employees can decide the amount of knowledge they want to learn and apply it into practice as immediate applicability. However, informal learning is unplanned, unsystematic and unstructured; hence somehow it does not necessarily satisfy the needs of individual or organization. The other disadvantage of this method is learner could be affected by others and they pick up the bad habits (Armstrong, 2006, 564-565).

2.2.4.3 Job instruction training

The job instruction training includes material and document in which the job's tasks with key points and detailed instructions are listed with the aim at providing step-by-step training for employees (Dessler, 2013, 281). These advantages of this methods includes the increase in safety and productivity, cut

down the cost and meet the standard when employees following the steps. However, job instruction training can demotivate employees due to lack of communication and interaction with a facilitator.

2.2.4.4 Audiovisual-based training

This is the training method in which the employees are offered the prepared material on CDs, DVDs or in-work books. In addition, others audiovisual techniques, for instance: PowerPoint, videos, audio clips can be used as supplement instruction for the trainees to learn the task or job. (Noe et al., 2011, 199)

The advantage of this method is that it cuts down the cost of training for the organization. In addition, the visual aids and useful expressions are more interesting, easier for learner to absorb the information, which cannot be easily illustrated and explained in a classroom or in verbal method. It also allows trainees the possibility to review material and control the pace of the lesson. Another positive characteristic of audiovisual training is the persistence of delivered presentation which means training is not affected by trainer's goals and skills. The limitation when using audio-visual training is it could demotivate the trainees when there is a lot of provided material, lack of written dialogue, overuse of multimedia effects and features (music, drama ect) which is out of the key point and not relevant to core problems (Noe et al., 2011, 200-201).

2.2.4.5 Computer-based training and Electronic-learning

Computer-based training

Computer-assisted instruction (CAI) and computer-assisted learning (CAL) are similar terms with Computer-based training (CBT). Sometimes, CBT and CAI are used interchangeably. In general, in this method, computer is used as a medium of instruction without requirement of connecting to a network. The computer-assisted instruction (CAI) refers to a system that distributes and delivers instructional materials via CD-ROMs, floppy disk or directly through a computer terminal in an interactive format (Noe et al., 2011, 200-201).

CBT can enhance the learning process and results when computer offers the multimedia capabilities. It increases the collaborative, interactive and realistic features of training lesson. Take for instance: CBT is popular applied for interactive multimedia training to provide a complex training environment that combines of image, animation, video, graphics, photos, sound (Noe et al., 2011, 200-201; Dessler, 2013, 284). Therefore, it helps trainees easier to understand and motivate them in the process of learning and improving knowledge.

Other pros of CBT concern about the learning time and cost effectiveness which is less expensive comparing to instructor in a classroom. This advantage gives the company flexibility in planning and scheduling the training for their employees. Furthermore, by using CBT, the organization could easily customize the material and program to fit for individual learners (Noe et al., 2011, 200-201).

The emerging of technology and rapid growth internet have transformed and leveraged learning process with more innovative methods. Internet-based and Web-based training are the higher levels of CBT. Learners access and receive the material on internet and World Wide Web technologies (Anohina, 2005). An example is Sun Learning eXchange (SLX) which is developed and launched by Sun Microsoft. It is a learning portal and platform to facilitate web-based training. It not only delivers to learners the instructional videos, on tools and software but also provide many broad capabilities (recording, social network, cloud tags) (Vestrics, 2013).

Electronic-learning

The term E-learning has first appeared in US and became more popular and prominent in the late 1990s. The letter “E” in E-learning is the abbreviation of electronic which refers to kind of learning is organized via any electronic medium. It was based and developed on the earlier methods (computer-based training, web-based training, open or distance learning). Learners receive training through the Internet or the organization’s intranet. They also can exchange, sharing information and interact with each other across these networks. Moreover, E-learning offers the useful tools, collaborative problem

solving as well as links to others online information resources so that learners can take benefits to maximize the training efficiency and improve their work performance (Anohina, 2005, 96; Armstrong, 2006, 583-586; Noe et al., 2011, 201).

E-learning could be a practical method of training which well adapted to SMEs with fewer employees. It brings benefits to both organization and its employees. This training method is cost effective which lower than other formal in-house trainings. The other outstanding advantage of E-learning is its flexibility and convenience enabling people to learn without constraints of time and geographic limitation. Hence, it can be adjusted to a daily working schedule. Additionally, E-learning can be fully automated and it allows learners can define their self-paced learning. E-learning makes employees feel more motivated because it gives the autonomy to their learning process and deliveries the just-in-time information and guidance from facilitators. (EU Commission, 2009, 40-41).

2.2.4.6 Blended learning

Blended-learning is the combination of multi methods including both technology-based learning and face-to-face instruction within a structured learning programme. The purpose of blended learning is to avoid over-reliance on particular single teaching and learning method. Furthermore, by using an appropriate mix of multi approaches (conventional instruction, e-learning, self-directed leaning, experiential learning, individual and collaborative study, formal and informal processes), it aims to inspire and motive people learn over extended periods of time. (EU Commission, 2009, 41; Armstrong, 2006, 570).

2.3 Management-related factors

As discuss in the previous sections, the barriers might decrease the training effectiveness in micro and SMEs, which include not only the financial constraint, poor strategic planning, high cost, low motivation among employees but also the lack of managerial support (Omar et al., 2009).

Training is one of the most important responsibilities of all management levels in the organization. It is required much effort from employers and managers to have an effective training. Their support plays a vital role in the success of training. Nevertheless, they only probably invest in training when it is a practical solution which creates a significant improvement (Noe et al., 2011) in performance, productivity and profitability. In fact the owner/managers of micro and SMEs lack of information about the available training for them and evidence of training benefits to their business (EU Commission, 2009). Thus it is one of the reasons why training is neglected and received inadequate investment.

Along in the line to determine the role of manager in training context, Ellström (2012) synthesizes the meaning of management support for subordinates' learning at work from the previous studies. She mentions the similarities in the dimensions and themes of management (i.e. the encouragement of risk taking and knowledge sharing, feedback provision, promote learning climate and role models for learning) between the findings of Viitala (2004) and Ellinger (2005) (see Ellström, 2012, 2-3). Moreover, it is viewed that in each step of training process, there is the participation of managers. For instance: they take an active role to determine the training needs. The needs are defined by managers in top, middle and lower position respectively with three organizational levels (strategic level, tactical level and operational level) (Wognum, 2001, 408). By observing employees, manager recognizes and discovers the defects or the required skills which employees lack to perform the tasks. Then the manager also participates in coaching, assisting and helping the employees to learn and improve those skills (Noe et al., 2011, 190-195). In a learning organization, the manager plays as a significant actor to create and promote the learning culture within the organization (Gephart et al., 1996). Additionally, the training outcome is depended on the trainer's knowledge, experience and ability to motivate employees (Punia and Kant, 2013, 159). Therefore, the organization should pay attention to develop the qualification and competency of the managers. As a result, the quality of training will increase significantly.

Regarding the role of the manager, Kraut, Pedigo, McKenna and Dunnette (1989) identified the relative importance between seven component tasks and

three different levels of management in the organization, which is illustrated in the pyramid below:

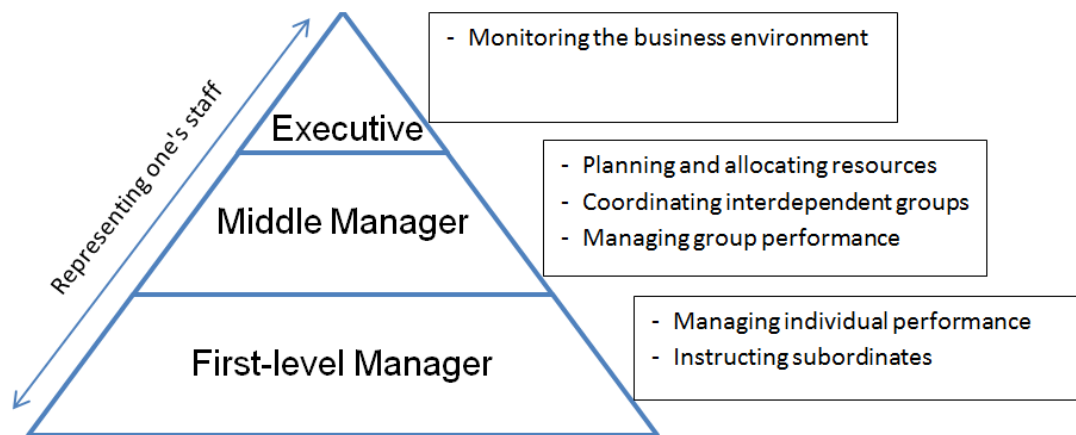


Figure 6. Tasks correspond to three levels of management

(Adapted from Kraut et al., 1989)

It appeared that managing individual performance and instructing subordinates were the two main activities done by the first-level management. They are also known as first-line managers/ front-line managers or in specific, the position of them in organization by names are: team leader, supervisor, office manager, project manager. The same result was found in a study carried out by Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) in 2005. The survey included 750 employees from different sectors. Its findings demonstrated the critical role of line managers as facilitators and provider of learning. The report also exposed the strong association between the effective provision of coaching and guidance by the line managers and levels of employee commitment, satisfaction and motivation. And more than half of the discussion with employees in evaluate the effectiveness of training was responsible by the line manager (CIPD, 2007, 3-4).

Besides the front-line managers, the top and senior managers are also the key actor in training and development. They contribute considerably to the success of training. Especially, in the micro and small firms, the owner is usually the manager who participates in coaching and supervising the subordinates. Their active support to lower managers and employees; their commitment and role-

modeling behavior are critical and need to be encouraged (CIPD, 2007, 10-15). Finally, they should take the initiative in empowering employees (Noe, 2010, 10) by providing the climate in which continuous learning and knowledge-sharing are embraced and spread throughout the organization. To sum up, the organization could create HRD strategy to achieve both training and organizational objectives by understanding the important role of manager in training function.

2.4 Individual-related factors

This is the last group of factors concerning the target audience who receive the training. There are a number of studies examining the correlation between the individual characteristics (i.e. motivation, attitudes, behaviors and self-efficacy of employees) and the effectiveness of training. Noe and Wilk (1993) suggested that attitudes and motivation to learn playing a crucial role in achieving training success. Similarly, training motivation is indicated as a mediator strongly influencing on training performance by Tai (2006). His findings highlight the mediating role of training motivation in the relationship between training framing from supervisor and training effectiveness. In line with previous researches, Punia and Kant (2013, 155-159) explore the factors which are responsible in making training effective in their recent study. They conclude that three factors (motivation, attitudes and emotional intelligence) emerge to be stronger than other factors.

Employees' mindset towards to training could create barriers in training. They likely resist the training if they do not see any benefits which could be attained from this activity (Noe et al., 2011, 195). The perception of benefits is found as a factor that has a significant effect on employees' attendance in training and development activities (Noe and Wilk, 1993). It implies that employee's engagement in training can be resulted from their understanding of training (Noe et al., 2011, 194-195). The clear human resource development policies and strategy towards to learning (Hill and Stewart, 2000, see Omar et al., 2009, 97) might encourage and motivate employees, such as: career structure, promotion, reward, incentive. Especially, the recognition about the matching

between training needs and career goals can be a source of employees' motivation. Likewise, the positive feedback provision and support of manager and peer encouragement might foster the learning culture among employees (Noe et al., 2011, 194-195).

Furthermore, people also tend to refuse to change and update their knowledge and skills due to the self-efficacy when they feel that the training is beyond their capacity. The motivation to learn of employee increases if they believe that they possess the needed skills for training and they can learn the training's content. To reduce the resistance to change and to enhance the readiness characteristic of employees, the organization may provide several literacy trainings and access to basic learning skills before the actual training (Noe et al., 2011, 195). Besides, the effects of work environment, such as inadequate and insufficient resources, job information, materials, equipment and supplies, which are suggested by Mathieu and Martineau (1997) as situational constraints influencing employees' training motivation (see Battistelli, 2008, 202).

In the next chapters, the methodology for implementing the empirical research is being presented. The factors are mentioned in the literature review will be examined in the studied group and followed by the reveal of research findings.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To begin with the research methodology, there is an explanation the reasons of choosing between the quantitative and qualitative data methodologies. The research design and target group continue respectively. The next section concerns about data collection. Lastly, the validity and reliability of the research are presented.

3.1 Choice of methodology

It is believed that choosing an appropriate research method will add more value to the research study. It allows the researcher gain information which he/she is seeking. Furthermore, it also contributes for the validity and reliability of empirical part which increase the quality of research.

In the case of this research, the qualitative methodology was employed to match with the research objectives. The qualitative research gave the researcher the possibility of studying a particular subject in depth in organization (Myers, 2013, 9). On the other hand, one feature of qualitative method that the researcher saw much benefits for this current research, was to allow the interviewer understand more the interviewees' attitudes, beliefs, motivations, emotion and behaviors (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1996; Myers, 2013).

3.2 Research design

After the research problems were identified, the research design was built to answer the research questions. The questionnaire was created into 2 versions and set in English only. One version was for manager (see Appendix 3) and another was dedicated for the company's employees and interns (see Appendix 4). The questionnaire consisted of different types of question, i.e. the open question and closed question. The former encouraged respondents to provide extensive and developmental answers in their own words (Saunders et al., 2012, 391). The latter was applied to collect opinion data via evaluating different training criteria. The questionnaire included a cover letter (see Appendix 2) in

which the researcher self-introduce and explain the purpose of this research survey.

The questionnaire was sent and handed out to all interviewees (i.e. managers, employees and trainees) several days in advance before the actual interview. The structure of questionnaire in both versions is similar, which consisted of four parts. Following was the order of questionnaire: (1) participant background, (2) training, (3) training evaluation and (4) recommendations for future implementation.

However, the differences between two versions concerned about the type and direction of questions. The reason for this was the researcher could reach the core problems from different actors' perspectives. In the manager survey, there were thirteen questions in total. All of those were open questions which aimed at finding information to study the current training system within company. While the one for employees and interns had fourteen questions. Excluding the first two items regard to the interviewees' background, there were seven closed-ended and five open questions. The approach of this version was training assessment with the purpose of determining the factors that affected negatively and positively to training effectiveness. Hence, the questionnaire comprised different formulated criteria regard to the training content, trainer, learning environment. As a type of closed question, the rating was exploited in designing this research survey. The respondents answer based on five-point formulated scale from lowest 1 to 5 highest. The middle point was 3 (average/fair) which was used to measure and analyze the answer.

3.3 Target population and sampling

One objective of this research was to study the case company training system, and then evaluated it to discover the factors influence company's training effectiveness. Thus, the target population for this research was the staff from the case company Katrium. The researcher asked eight people who worked in Katrium's office in Tallinn, whether they wanted to participate in the research's survey. All of them accepted the invitations and showed their willingness to

contribute for this research. Furthermore, understanding Katrium's training system from different actors' perspectives was the research's approach. Therefore, eight participants were in different positions in company including two managers, two subordinates and four interns. They had the working experience in the company from 1 year to 3 years (for manager) and at least 3 months (for employee and trainee).

3.4 Data collection

Face-to-face interview and distribution of questionnaire were two major methods to gather qualitative data in this research. At the beginning, the researcher intended to collect the primary data by only interview. However, on the time when the research survey was implemented, two trainees already completed their internships and left the company. Due to the geographical distance, time constraint and personal reasons, the researcher contacted and sent two trainees the questionnaire to complete via email.

Except this, the face-to-face interviews were conducted with the other six participants. The purpose of research is the main reason why data collection was done mainly by interview. It allowed the researcher gather valid and reliable data which was relevant to the research questions and objectives (Saunders et al., 2012, 372)

The Semi-structured in-depth interview was used in this research. This method was characterized by a high flexibility, which was the reason to select it. Although the pre-formulated questionnaire was handled to interviewees, it still allowed interviewer can modify the questions (Denscombe, 2003) or put up some additional ones to gain much depth and important insight about the discussing problems (Saunders et al., 2012). Moreover, the other advantage of semi-structured interview is the interviewees can freely share and express their ideas. The conversations were also open to go depth into the discussing problems.

Besides, the author of this paper also took advantage of using the secondary data which is closely related to the research topic and previously published by

others researchers, i.e. books, articles, journals (Myers, 2013, 120). The secondary resource is approached for this study including many available journals, reports, textbooks, dissertations, publications whose topic regards to HRM, HRD, training and development. They are from official and reliable resources, such as: Turku University of Applied Sciences library, theseus.fi and specialized HR websites.

3.5 Reliability and validity of the research

Reliability and validity are two main key characteristics which ensure the quality of research. Reliability refers to the consistency of findings if the same data collection methods and analysis procedures are repeated. There are four types of threats which might affect to the research reliability. They are: participant error and bias; researcher error and bias. A research's validity refers to which extend the accuracy of the results (Saunders et al., 2012, 192-194). The validity could be higher in the semi structured interview if the interview is carefully carried out in the consideration of the scope: to define research questions, to be able to explore response and themes from various perspectives (Saunders et al., 2012, 381-383).

The studied group included eight people which were considered as sufficient amount of participants to represent for the case company. Moreover, there were the participation of managers, employees and trainees. Thus it increased the reliability of this research. The questionnaire was designed in English and handled out the participants in advance so that they could prepare before the actual interview. The participants freely asked if there were some questions they did not clearly understand.

Interview was conducted individually by face-to-face and English was used as the communication language. However, English was not the mother-tongue of both interviewer and interviewee. The difference in the English level caused some barriers in misunderstanding and communication. Both parties already tried to overcome this situation by giving examples to express and describe their ideas.

The researcher explained to interviewees the research topic, the purpose of interview and the information which they provided was only served for this academic study. Furthermore, all interviewees agreed and felt comfortable to do the interview in the work-place, so there was no pressure or emotional constraints. Therefore, it might affect positively to their answers.

During interview, the interviewees were given time to think before they answer in each question. They were treated equally by the interviewer. The order of questionnaire was followed, except there were several additional questions the researcher put up to understand clearly the interviewee's answers and to gain more needed information. And none of them showed their hesitate attitudes as well as refused to answer.

4 EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1 The case company

Katrium is a Finnish-owned company which was founded in 2007. The head office of Katrium is located in Tallinn (Estonia). In 2013, the company expanded and opened the second office in Fuengirola (Spain). The company belongs to the micro and small firm with fewer than 10 people employed. During the researcher's internship period in Katrium's office in Tallinn, the company had a total of five people with permanent contracts and four trainees who were working there. Besides the official employees, Katrium also has outsourced and contracted with free-lancers depending on different projects.

The business line of Katrium includes four key services specializing in contact center, market research, internationalization and business support services. The company continuously puts effort to provide the services with high quality, cost effectiveness and meet the demand of the customer. The main target and potential customers of company are SMEs in Finland. However, Katrium's markets spread and cover Baltic countries, other parts of Europe and Russia. The entrepreneurial spirit, customer satisfaction and long term orientation are values which company always embrace and maintain for a sustainable development (Katrium, n.d).

4.2 Interviews

The researcher invited in total eight people to participate in the survey and all of them worked in Katrium's office in Tallinn. Among these, there were two managers, two employees and four trainees. Before the interviews were actually carried out, the questionnaire was sent in advance along with the cover letter in which the researcher explained the purpose of interview, the research topic and the usage of their answers. These also repeated in every actual interview.

All the interviews were conducted in English at Katrium's office in Tallinn. The interview and distribution of the questionnaire took place in duration of one week which was from 30/04-07/05/2015. The length of interviews was approximately 15-20 minutes with the employees and trainees, and 30 minutes with managers.

To ensure the confidential and commitment with participants, their answers were anonymous and analyzed by encoding as in the following table. The table represents the key properties of participants including: name code, position and detail job description.

Table 1. Interviewees' code name and background

Name	Position	Job Duties/ Responsibilities
M1	Office manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Office management - Recruiting and training the English speaking interns - Book-keeping related tasks - All kind of paper works (tax, contract & agreement) - Project management (English-speaking project)
M2	Project manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recruiting, training and responsible for the paper work of the Finnish interns - Project management - Marketing tasks - Contacting the customer - Preparing invoice and contract information for office manager
E1	Employee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In charge some projects - Assisting the project manager - Market research survey via telephone - Responsible for customer calling service task
E2	Employee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Market research survey via telephone - Versatile marketing tasks - Customer research - Assistant and back office tasks
T1	Trainee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Updating the databases - Searching company information required by new

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> projects - Doing phone interview - Update the company's website
T2	Trainee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Updating the databases - Searching company information required by new projects - Doing phone interview - Update the company's website
T3	Trainee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creating and updating the databases - Marketing tasks - Doing phone interview
T4	Trainee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creating and updating the databases - Marketing tasks - Making customer follow-up calls - General office tasks

4.3 Data analysis

The research results will be discussed in this part. It is structured by dividing into four sub-sections which cover the problems stated in the research objectives. The first three sections' content is summarized based on the personal interview with two managers (M1 and M2) of Katrium's office in Tallinn. Lastly, the collected data from the qualitative research interview (E1, E2, T1, T2) and questionnaire (T3, T4) will be presented.

4.3.1 Katrium OÜ training system

Training Process

Market research survey via telephone and contact center are the major services in the business line of Katrium, Both services are offered and operated in different languages depending on the requirement of customer and the characteristics of each project. To be able to perform these tasks, the company has certain steps to train their employees. And company's managers are directly responsible for training and coaching the employees and trainees. Below is the diagram which illustrates the training process in Katrium.

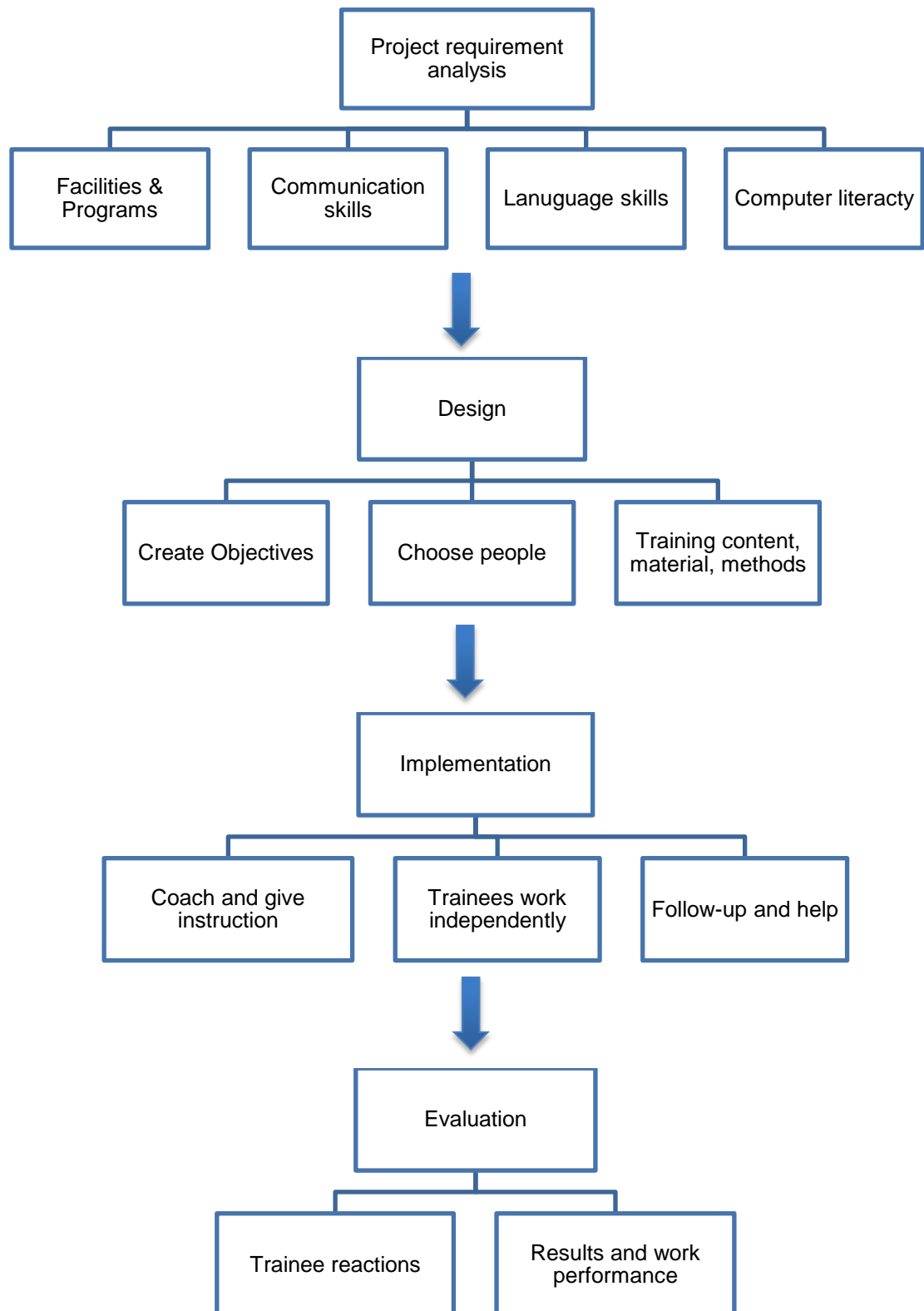


Figure 7. Training process in Katrium (source: author)

Training methods

There are 3 primary types of training which are commonly used within Katrium. The first is on-the-job training by which the employees learn how to do the work when actually performing it. In some cases, the material and instructions are not provided fully then the most efficient way is trainees practice on the work and they gradually improve their skills to do it better. Job rotation, one application of on-the-job training, is applied for the manager positions in Katrium. Because of scarcity in human capital, each manager in the company is also responsible for others tasks.

The second method is informational learning which is believed one of the most efficient ways for employee to improve their knowledge and skills. Through the discussions, guidance from managers and other colleagues, employees learn faster and they feel not likely resist to learn. People are encouraged to ask questions and share their work experience. This is especially important for the telephone survey and customer service tasks when it is required a good communication and problem-solving skills, such as: how to talk with people and make them interest in participating the survey. There could be various situations happen and the advices from skilled and experienced staff are most helpful.

Job-instruction is the third training technique which mostly used in customer-database-related tasks. The trainees is given the manual consists detail information of how to do create, update and manage the customer databases as well as customer registries. All the steps are listed down with explanation that instructs people how to operate the program, fill new online form and edit required information.

Training effectiveness measurement

The two managers (M1 and M2) were asked about the measurement to assess the training outcome. Both of them indicated the training results were evaluated, which depended on each project and task. Interviewee M1 stated that the most common elements (work performance, productivity and quality of final result) were determined as the major means for training effectiveness. M1 also

explained in detail the measurement methods to evaluate the two main tasks done by employees and trainees. If the task related to customer databases, the training effectiveness was measured by the number of processed items. While the market research via phone was measured by the number of successful interview employees make. She said that before each project and training, the goal was set clearly with the amount of interviews should be conducted successfully. The aim of setting the goal was to compare with the actual result and to evaluate whether the training was efficient by the improvement in employee performance.

On the other hand, interviewee M2-project manager added that the training effectiveness was also assessed through the reactions of employee and trainee. She mentioned about the project and monthly evaluation forms in which there were different criteria for self-evaluation to see how they improved their skills knowledge and performance. After trainees filled out the form and shared their opinions whether they were satisfied or dissatisfied with the training, there was face-to-face discussion with supervisor. According to M2, the purpose of this conversation was to give the feedback for improvement and to find the solutions for the problems and difficulties which trainees were coping.

Learning culture and environment

With regard to the learning culture and environment within company, both M1 and M2 shared the same idea that learning was supported from all levels of management in Katrium. In order to make the training more meaningful and efficient, managers listened and communicated with employees to better understand them and find out their expectations. M1 stated that being support and responsiveness were an approach that all managers within the company aimed at. The employees' opinions and new ideas are respected. The positive feedbacks were to encourage employees to be more creative and productive. M1-Tallinn office manager stated that Katrium was a flat structure firm in which the equality was highly appreciated and complied. "Different people have different reactions so I try to find the compromise in these opinions and be equal to everyone", she explained. M1 also indicated that employees were

given autonomy to manage their work. Although most of tasks were independent work but the collaboration and teambuilding were promoted. As the last note for this question, M1 told that all staff in the company was willing to share knowledge, experience and help each other if someone had any troubles at work.

4.3.2 Barriers faced by Katrium in training

As a micro firm, Katrium are coping with many barriers and challenges which affect the outcome and effectiveness of training within the company. One of the biggest internal barriers is the lack of resources including: human capital, finance and time. According to the own experience of the researcher, due to the company size and limited number of employees, each officer in Katrium has to handle multiple tasks. M2 claimed that the company had neither a separate human resource department nor a person who should be responsible for personnel. Consequently, it led to the situation in which the manager directly involved in all HR activities, i.e. recruiting, training and development, performance appraisal, compensation and salary etc. The large amount of work needed to be done in short times, which made managers unable to spend sufficient time for trainees, thus causing the neglect in training.

Another internal barrier regards to the financial constraints. Katrium is struggling to maintain and develop the business with limited financial assets. It is not able to afford external training or outsourcing training which could provide more adequate training. This view was presented by M2, she said:

“We want to have outsourcing training so that there would be someone who could give proper training but I just think about the realistic situation. Of course, we need money for it but the company’s current financial situation is not so positive to allow any external training, so we just do in-house training by ourselves”.

The motivation of trainees in training is somewhat impacted by language-related task, which is an existing barrier factor. M1 provided more detail to demonstrate this view. She explained that as the main customers of Katrium were Finnish

companies, most projects had to be done in Finnish which required sufficient language skill. Thus, the tasks were limited in certain number for international trainees to participate. Besides, the training material, which was an important part of training, was discussed in the interviews. M2 noted that “we need to improve the quality of materials, they are quite old now. Even though the manuals contain the main idea of showing how to perform the task, it is still not the new version”.

The data from interviews with Katrium’s managers reflects the issues which were presented in the theoretical chapter 2.2.1 about the barriers in training caused by the size and specific features of micro and SMEs. In the case of Katrium, among those organizational factors could influence training and its outcomes, the internal barriers (lack of human capital, limited financial and time), which strongly emerge and are more dominant than other factors. In the comparison with the interview results and literature, it can be concluded that the findings were consistent with the previous studies which found labor-financial-time scarcities having considerable impact to training (Marlow, 1998; Matlay, 1999; Kitching and Blackburn, 2002).

4.3.3 Perspectives of Manager

As mentioned in the previous section, the labor shortage strongly affects training in Katrium and leads to other sub-consequences. The two managers (M1 and M2) in Tallinn office faced the same obstacle in training, which was the lack of time. They agreed that time was the “biggest challenge” to them and inadequate time was addressed as one of the reasons which decreased the effectiveness of training. M2 shared that she felt quite stressed due to the high level of time and work pressure. The involvement in multi-tasks made managers incapable of focusing on training activities and having enough time to give the proper training as well as fully support employees.

Furthermore, Interviewee M2 pointed out the barrier concerning the lack of relevant education for her work. She explained that her academic study had not specialized in HRM and she had never taken any HRM classes. Hence, it was quite challenging for her to instruct and train people without much HR

knowledge and skills. “Training is a part of my work, so I am just teaching people and hoping they understand what I am saying”, she said. M2 added in her answer that she really wanted to be more supportive and encouraging employee by feedback provision when they made mistakes, though sometimes she found difficulties to express her ideas. She also noted she could take some online courses on this area to improve her knowledge. Due to time constraint, the large amount of work load and lack of workforce which made her not have time for self-learning.

Meanwhile, M1 indicated that training motivation of employees and trainees was an obstacle for managers in Katrium. From M1’s own experience, she said that it was hard to motivate them in training. Among various reasons behind this situation, she mentioned about time issues, trainees’ interest and needs. She stated the insufficient time for delivering proper training and assisting, which could demotivate trainees. Moreover, in the particular case of Katrium whose business was characterized by certain provided services (i.e. telephone market research, customer database management); there were tasks which required the involvement of all employees and trainees. M1 referred to the fact that:

“Each person has a different personality, education background and interests. People are likely resistant to learn the tasks which they are not really interested in. It is difficult to force someone to do the things that they don’t like.”

On the other hand, the business of Katrium is mainly project work. Each project requires specific programs and different tools to input and process the data. These instructions and programs are provided by customers. Both of M1 and M2 mentioned that they had to figure out and learn by themselves before coaching employees. M2 shared that there were complicated projects; the information and instructions from the customers were not clear so it could not avoid mistakes when coaching and training the employees.

In the last part of conversations, interviewees M1 and M2 were asked about the role of manager in training. Both Katrium’s managers shared the same idea that a manager had a significant influence to the training and its success. This

viewpoint is reinforced by following explanation. Due to the fact that Katrium is a micro firm, the manager is at the same time a supervisor and a trainer. To leverage training within the company, the manager's role was identified by M1 as leadership, supervising, teaching and supporting employees. This was consistent with the findings of Kraut et al., (1989) and CIDP (2005) who found the line managers as facilitators and learning providers.

Regarding the manager training and development, M2 emphasized that the managers themselves should have much knowledge about the issues in training and understood everything completely before they started teaching someone else. She expected more support from the company to managers so that they could have had chances to improve their qualification and knowledge competency which might enhance the quality of employee training overall. This sharing of M2 was an important point which was in accordance with the viewpoint of Punia and Kant (2013): the knowledge, skills and ability of managers contributed to the training outcomes and increased the training effectiveness.

In the next section, the data from employees' and trainees' interviews and questionnaires will be analyzed and described.

4.3.4 Training evaluation from employees and trainees

The data gathered from the interviews and questionnaires of employees and trainees in Katrium, was analyzed to answer the question 2 and 3 of empirical research objectives:

- How is the effectiveness of training in Katrium?
- Which are the factors affecting Katrium's training effectiveness?

There were a total of 6 respondents including 2 employees (E1, E2) and 4 trainees (T1, T2, T3, T4). To analyze the results, the researcher used two statistical approaches which were the frequency distribution and the average.

From the researcher's own experience, due to the same task assignment (i.e. customer database management, telephone market research) and task

requirements, both employees and trainees were received the same level of training. In other words, there was not much difference in training between employees and trainees in the company. Hence, it did not affect to the results of training effectiveness which was evaluated by employees and trainees.

Training overall evaluation

To evaluate the overall training, the participants were asked to rate each criterion based on 5-point scale from 1 to 5 (poorly conducted to well-conducted; not interesting-very interesting; not useful-very useful for my work; and ineffective-very effective)

Table 2. Respondents' frequency distribution in training overall evaluation

Training Overall Evaluation	1	2	3	4	5	Average
Level of Well-Conducted		6				2.00
Level of Interestingness	2	3		1		2.00
Level of Usefulness	1	2	2	1		2.50
Level of Effectiveness	1	4		1		2.17

It can be seen from the table above that all means of four training evaluation criteria are below than the moderate level and there is not much difference between these results. There were two people felt that the training not interesting at all and one person assessed that training was useless for his job. In particular the case of the training effectiveness ranging from ineffective-very effective, four participants rated training somewhat ineffective and one trainee assessed that it was totally ineffective. Their reactions and responses towards training were not so positive. From the results, the assumption can be made that the training within Katrium was not really meaningful to the trainees. It was likely that they were not satisfied with the training they were received from the company. In the following parts, it is attempted to find out the reasons and factors behind the low level of training effectiveness.

Knowledge and skills acquisition from training

Table 3. Learning outcome and training content evaluation

Scale	1	2	3	4	5	Average
Learning Outcome		3	2	1		2.67
Training Content	1	2	3			2.33

In order to assess the amount of knowledge and skills employees and trainees gained after training, they were asked to rate in the ranking between 1-learn nothing and 5-learn a lot. Half of the responses rated 2 for this criterion which was under the moderate level. The underlying assumption was that employees and trainees did not attain the knowledge and skills that they expected in the training. Take for example to illustrate for this view, trainee T4 shared:

“Neither I gain as much valuable experience as I expected nor achieve my learning objectives”.

Next, the question in which employees and trainees were asked the aspects they expected to learn but not yet covered in the training content. The respondents (E2, T2, T3 and T4) shared the similarity in which they expressed their interest in learning the tasks which were relevant to their studies and professional career. T2 said Information technology was his academic studies and he was not interested in learning market research task. T4 expected that the company should have assigned the appropriate tasks to trainees, which were more relevant to their studies, abilities and more useful for their future career. Based on the findings, it could be assumed that the training content somewhat did not properly meet the trainees’ needs. There was a gap between the trainees’ expectation and the actual training.

Obstacles and barriers faced by employees in training

In the interviews, manager-related factors were indicated as the most common obstacles faced by employees in training. All the answers addressed the same problem concerning the time constraint. E1 said that “supervisor is busy and she does not have much time to help me all the time”. Work and time pressures

were also pointed out as the barriers by E2 and T4. T4 shared that she had to work under time pressure while there was a limited number of people. Likewise, E2 also said “a lot of work has to do but there is lack of people”. It can be realized that this situation was the sub-consequence of the company’s feature (size and the labor shortage) was earlier addressed by both manager M1 and M2.

On another facet, T2 mentioned about the training information and material provided by the supervisor. He claimed that:

“Sometimes, the supervisor does not explain clearly, and late in providing needed information so there is not enough material for doing the job. I ask for help but I also manage by myself.”

Training motivation was indicated as the barrier by participant E1, E2 and T3. Take for instance, in the case of T3, he shared that if the type of jobs did not match his interest, then he found it difficult to motivate himself to learn. T3 also noted that the company should have changed the tasks for trainees sometimes to avoid being bored. It can be assumed the training motivation was affecting by the lack of interest. This problem was also mentioned by manager M1 as the challenge she coped with in training.

Furthermore, E1 raised an important point about a proposal of increasing salary as incentive or rewards to encourage employees in training participation. She added that as in employee position, she felt it was realistic if the company wanted to motivate people to involve in training. Regarding the training environment (facilities, materials, office), most of the participants complained about the un-updated training materials, slow computers and small office space. They addressed it as a source of training motivation.

“They should change the office and improve the working space for better performance. At the moment, the work place is open-office and quite small. I am distracted by the noise when there are many people making calls at the same time. The computers are old and too slow. I suggest that they should

buy a desktop computer instead of laptop, which is more powerful and faster, people will be more motivated “, T2 said.

Trainer evaluation

Table 4. Respondents' frequency distribution in trainer evaluation

Trainer Evaluation	1	2	3	4	5	Average
Trainer's Knowledge of Subject			5	1		3.17
Trainer's Preparation	2	2	2			2.00
Style & Delivery		4	1	1		2.50
Understanding your Needs	2	1	3			2.17
Responsiveness & Support		1	2	3		3.33
Producing good Learning Climate	1	1	1	3		3.00

All employees and trainees were asked to evaluate the manager (supervisor/trainer) by whom they received the training. According to the results of 6 criteria, there were gaps between mean of each criterion. Responsiveness and support of trainer received the highest average score (3.33) comparing to others 5 criteria. It is followed by trainer's knowledge of subject and produce good learning climate (3.17.and 3.0 respectively). Comparing to the means of other criteria, these trainer evaluation results were higher and more positive. When asking the respondent's opinion about the company's managers, most of the respondents shared the same opinion that managers were very “helpful and knowledgeable”. E1 said “supervisor is willing to help even though she is busy”. E2 found that she was motivated when she learned much from the guidance and advice of the supervisors. Furthermore, T4 mentioned that the support from the supervisors, which motivated her to return the work with good results and reach the overall goal. From the findings, the assumption could be made in this part was company's managers played a significant role in the training activities. They were responsible for delivering the training, assisting and motivating the other subordinates and trainees.

Nevertheless, there were still drawbacks of manager in the training in term of training style, training preparation and understanding the needs of employees. These viewpoints were indicated in responses of E1, T1 and T3. Specifically, T1

said that there was the neglect in the training preparation of supervisor before coaching and training trainee, thus it affected the quality and overall outcomes of training. Concerning training style of supervisor, E1 said:

“She does not quite understand how slowly I learn a new program. She is really quick when instructing me how to use a new program on the computer, so sometimes I get lost and confused during the training.”

Be back to the obstacle which was the lack of HRM knowledge and skills, mentioned by manager M2. It can be assumed there was link in the answers of manager M2 and employee E1. It is implied that due to the manager’s skill and knowledge deficits which negatively impacted to the training, thus decreased its results. Besides, T3 expressed the idea that the employers and managers should put more effort to understand what trainees expected so as to provide a better training.

Learning environment

The participants were asked to assess the learning environment in Katrium. This criterion refers to the environment in which continuous learning is embraced, people are encouraged to ask questions, try new ideas, and be creative. According to the responses, employees and trainees had positive views of the learning environment within Katrium’s office in Tallinn. For example, E2 said that she liked the atmosphere in the company when people were willing help each other and open-minded to share knowledge and take new ideas. She also noted that “asking question is the best way to learn”. T4 shared that she received a lot of encouragement and support from the managers and other colleagues. It could be concluded that the employees were quite satisfied with the learning environment in the company, which might influence the training motivation of employees, thus increase the training result.

Result combination and comparison

The results of all rating questions are combined altogether and displayed in these bar charts below. The purpose is to define which factors have positive

influence to training effectiveness and which factors received the negative feedback from the employees and trainees.

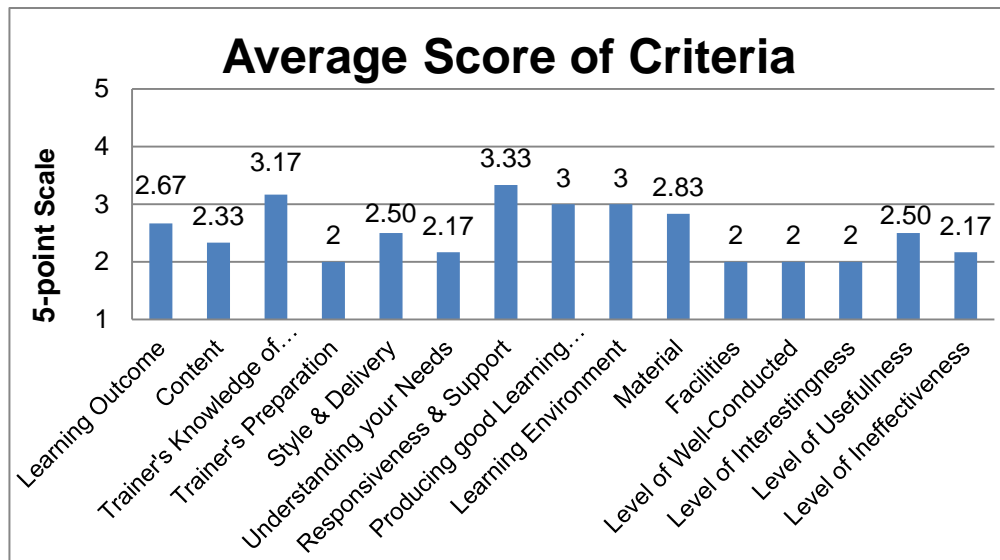


Figure 8. Average scores of all criteria

Among those criteria to evaluate manager, the manager's support and responsiveness as well as providing good learning climate were received the positive responses from employees and trainees. Likewise, the learning environment was also had good feedback. However, the training motivation and the company's internal barriers (the lack of resources) were indicated as the problems behind the ineffectiveness of training.

5 CONCLUSION

5.1 Research conclusion

This study combines both theoretical and empirical research with the purpose of identifying the potential factors which have the influence on the training and its effectiveness within the micro and small enterprises. The two main objectives are set up together with the research questions which are presented below:

The first objective is to study training and the potential factors which closely relate to organization, manager and employee. Then see how important these factors are in relation to the training effectiveness. The theory framework covers the relevant aspects of training regarding three main groups of factors as follow:

- The first group is organizational factors concerning the features and internal barriers of MSEs, training content, learning environment, training materials, facilities, and training space.
- The second group is management-related factor including several elements such as knowledge, preparation, support and responsiveness, delivery style as well as producing the good learning climate.
- The third group regards to individual-related factors: self-efficacy, motivation and attitude towards training.

The second objective is to discover the training system in Katrium and find out which factors affect its training effectiveness. The data was gathered by distribution of questionnaire and the in-depth interview with managers, employees and trainees who had working experience in Katrium's office in Tallinn. The 3 major questions in the empirical part are summarized in the answers below:

Question 1. What is the training process in Katrium?

Although the training considerably depends on the project characteristics, Katrium follows four main steps to train their employees. The first step is to assess the requirements of project. Following by the establishment of company

and training objectives; choosing people and methods to suit with project needs, then preparing training content. The third step is carrying out the training by coaching and giving instruction, later trainees do the tasks independently and the supervisor follows up to support. The last step is to evaluate the training via the work performance and the reactions of the trainees, whether they found training interesting and transform what they attained into practice. From the evaluation of employees and trainees, it could be concluded the training process was poorly designed. There was neglect in each stage of training, take for instance: the improper needs analysis, assigning inappropriate people and tasks that caused the employee resistance to learn.

Question 2. How is the effectiveness of employee training in Katrium?

Through the collected data from managers and employees, results showed that the training system in Katrium was still poor and being neglected. It was not received the adequate investment and efforts from the employer and company's managers. The training likely did not satisfy the needs of its target audience. The level of training effectiveness of in Katrium was not high. Thus, company and employees were not fully beneficial from training.

Question 3. Which are the factors affecting Katrium's training effectiveness?

The study revealed various factors which affect to the training results and its efficiency, take for example: management support, training motivation, poor training content, training space, un-updated materials and inadequate facilities. In an effort to improve the training system, recently, the company has replaced the old computers with the new ones. It was received the positive feedbacks from employees and trainees.

Among those factors above, there are three factors which are appeared stronger and more dominant on others according to the results of the qualitative research.

The first factor is related to the features as a micro firm of Katrium. The company size caused the internal barriers, such as the scarcity of labor, the lack of financial assets and time. This type of factors negatively affect to the

training effectiveness. These research results were in consistent with the findings of Marlow (1998), Matlay (1999); and Kitching and Blackburn (2002) who also found these above factors were the obstacles that micro and SMEs faced in training.

The study found that the managers played an important role in training of Katrium. Being in different positions (manager, trainer, supervisor), they involved in all the steps of training process from coaching, assisting the subordinated and trainees; and evaluating training outcomes. The trainer characteristics, such as: knowing the subject, critical feedback provision, being supportive and responsive, promoting a culture of learning, which were viewed as the main theme of management by Viitala (2004) and Ellinger (2005) (see Ellström, 2012, 2-3). In the case of Katrium, these characteristics above were demonstrated as critical factors for training success by both company's managers and employees.

From the research results, the training motivation was addressed as the factor which had significant influence to the training effectiveness. This finding was in accordance with the previous studies (Tai, 2006; Noe and Wilk, 1993; Punia and Kant, 2013). The low level of motivation towards learning and training was the barrier which was faced by both managers and employees.

5.2 Recommendations for the company

Based on the data collected from the employees and trainees' interviews, the recommendations for the company are given following the phases of training process.

Analysis of training needs should be done more carefully so that the company has a clear picture of all related elements. Proper training needs assessment helps to create a good training plan which assigns the right people (study background, abilities and interest) to the appropriate training. The company should put more concern and effort in this step to match the needs of the company with the needs and interest of trainees.

Design: at the moment, the design phase in Katrium's training process has been neglected. The inadequate design creates unforeseen troubles when carrying out the training. Besides setting up the clear training objectives, the company should ensure about the quality of the learning environment, trainer and trainee's readiness. The company should support the trainer (manager) by giving them more chances to improve their knowledge, skills and competency before they are responsible to train other employees. .

Moreover, in order to maximize the training effectiveness, the learning environment should meet the demand for sufficient training. The instructional material should be updated frequently. It is a good signal that the company is improving the current situation by replacing old laptops with new ones.

Implementation: Choosing the appropriate type of methods contributes to the training outcomes. In the case of Katrium, excluding the current traditional methods, the company can take advantages of innovation and technology to employ others types of training recommended via survey. It is understood that the company is dealing with limited financial resource, which does not allow outsourcing training because of high cost. However, e-learning and blended learning could be employed as the innovative training methods for both managers and employees. There are many reliable online resources of universities and companies (such as: www.coursera.org) which are considered as open-universities providing free online courses and material for learning. Furthermore, European Union also offers various resources for leveraging training in SMEs. Although the problem in the company is a lack of human capital, still supervisors should spend more time to instruct and help trainees carefully. This viewpoint was indicated in most of employees and trainees' suggestions. It is believed that a manager as a behavior-model is a good way to encourage, inspire and motivate trainees in continuous learning.

Evaluation: The positive and critical feedback provisions are expected from supervisors. At the moment, Katrium is using the monthly evaluation to assess the training. It is a good practice to measure training efficiency however; the form is still poor due to the limited numbers of assessment criteria. Hence the

evaluation does not bring a high result. The evaluation form should be redesigned with clearer criteria. The company also should maintain the face-to-face discussion with employees to understand their training needs and expectations better.

The adequate investment and effort will enhance the training outcomes and bring back much benefit for the company. The effective training leads to efficient results. After the training, the employees probably need less time to perform the same tasks as they did before and become more productive, which raises the employee performance which includes both quality and quantity improvement of the work. Consequently, the enhancement of employee performance contributes positively to the overall organizational performance.

5.3 Suggestions for further research

Due to the limitations of this research, the theoretical framework and empirical research are still shallow which may not cover all the factors and fully deliver information about their importance to the effectiveness of training.

It is needed to emphasize that this research sample is a micro firm whose business support services mainly specializes in telephone market research, contact center and internationalization services. Hence, the research findings may not represent the larger size enterprises and MSEs in others industries. For the future studies, there are several suggestions that the author would recommend to take into consideration:

- Focus to analyze and examine each factor separately to identify to which extent it affects the training effectiveness, i.e. the support of manager; the mindset, attitude and motivation of employees towards training or types of training in service business.
- Expand the sample of research in a bigger size so that the result will be more reliability and consistency.

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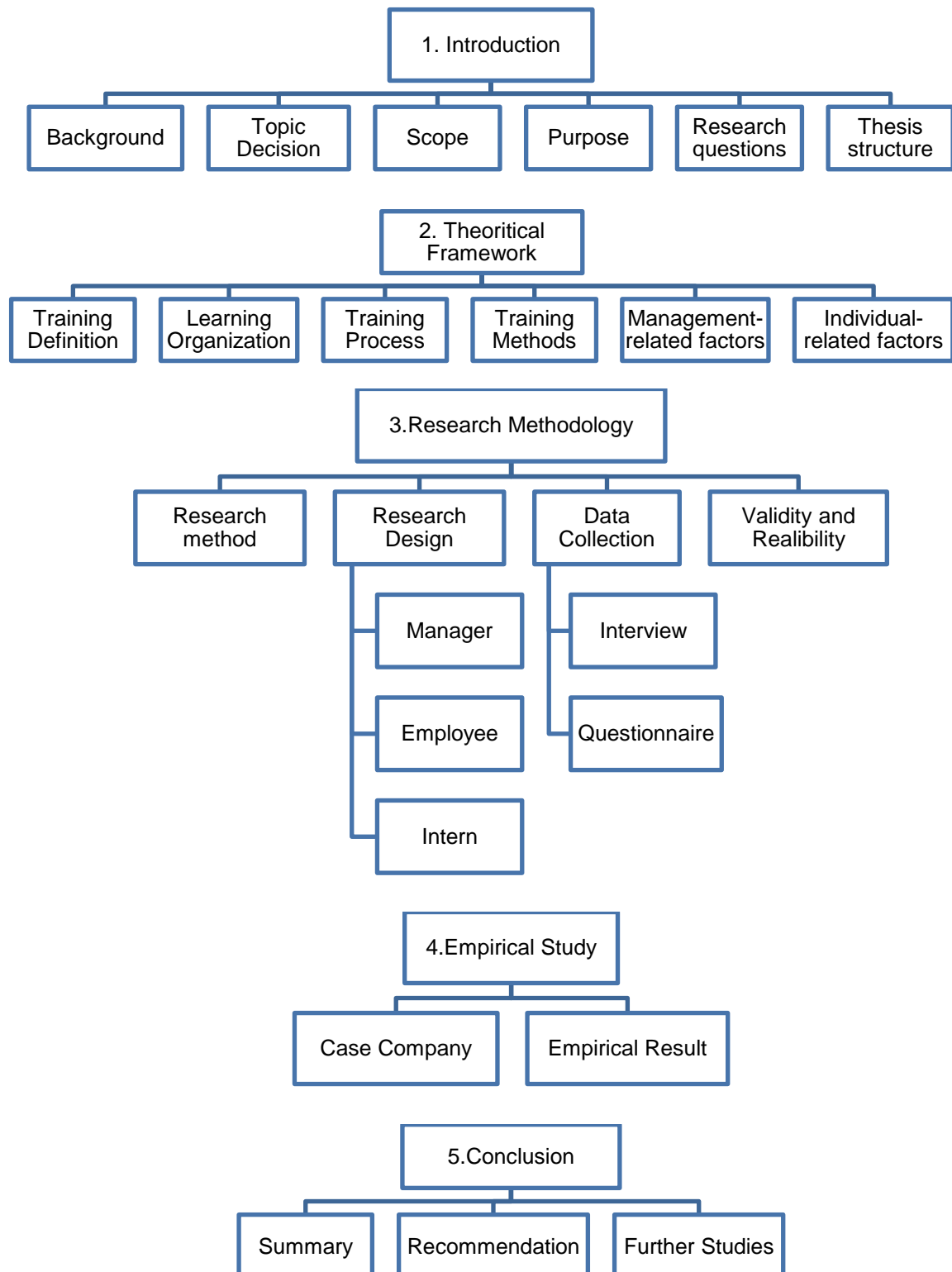
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Appendix 1. Research Structure



Research structure

Appendix 2. Cover letter

Dear participant,

My name is Linh Luong who currently a senior-year student at Degree Programme in International Business at Turku University of Applied Sciences.

I conduct this survey as part of an academic research for my bachelor thesis. It is under the supervision of MSc. Nicolas Le Grand, a lecturer at Turku University of Applied Sciences. The purpose of this research is to study the issues concerning to training effectiveness in Micro and Small Sized Enterprises. Katrium Oü is the micro service-oriented company which is chosen to demonstrate for this research.

As the Katrium's staff, you are invited to participate in this research by answering this survey regarding to the company's training system. Your opinions are valuable and crucial source of information to this study. The researcher believes that the result will be two-side benefit for both the company and employees.

I would sincerely appreciate your efforts if you could take time and share your opinions and experience about this presented issue. It should take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete this survey. The individual responses are anonymous and the provided information is used only for this research. Depending on your particular circumstance, the survey could be conducted by either face-to-face interview or sending to personal email.

For any further information and questions about this research, please contact me at linh.luong@edu.turkuamk.fi

Thank you for your participation!

Best regards,

Linh Luong

Appendix 3. Interview questions for manager

Part I: Participant background

1. Employment status:
2. Describe the kind of tasks which you are responsible within the company?

Part II: Training

3. Could you please explain the training system within the company?
4. What kinds of current training methods are implemented in the company?

Please choose if there are any methods in the list below:

- A. On-the-job training (Learn by doing and working at the job)
 - B. Informal learning (Unofficial way of learning, for examples: from discussions, guidance or from the others colleagues etc)
 - C. Job Instruction training (Listing tasks with detailed instructions)
 - D. Audiovisual-based training (Training by offering pictures, audios, videos, PowerPoint, films etc)
 - E. Computer-based training and Electronic-learning
 - F. Blended learning (The combination of multi learning methods including both technology-based learning and face-to-face instruction)
 - G. Other (please specify):
5. What are the existing challenges and obstacles faced by the company regarding to training?
 6. As the manager, what difficulties you meet in training? How do you overcome those? Could you please share your own experience?
 7. What has the company done to promote the learning culture and environment? For example: knowledge-sharing, encourage of asking questions, using technology and innovative etc

Part III: Training Evaluation

8. How does the company assess the training effectiveness? Or by which targets or criteria, company can measure the training result?

Part IV: Recommendations for Future Implementation

9. In your opinion, which methods in the question 4 are the most efficient which can be exploited in order to increase the training effectiveness? Or other methods (please specify)?
10. What aspect do you think need to improve in the current training system?
11. Has the company had any plan for investing in training or build up a better training system in the future?

Discussion questions:

12. How do you think about the role of manager in training?
13. From your point of view, which factors affect to the training effectiveness?

Appendix 4. Interview questions for employee and trainee

Part I: Participant background

1. Employment status:
2. Describe the kind of tasks which you are responsible within the company?

Part II: Training

3. What kinds of current training methods which you have received from the company?

Please choose if there are any methods in the list below:

- A. On-the-job training (Learn by doing and working at the job)
 - B. Informal learning (Unofficial way of learning, for examples: from discussions, guidance or from the others colleagues etc)
 - C. Job Instruction training (Listing tasks with detailed instructions)
 - D. Audiovisual-based training (Training by offering pictures, audios, videos, PowerPoint, films etc)
 - E. Computer-based training and Electronic-learning
 - F. Blended learning (The combination of multi learning methods including both technology-based learning and face-to-face instruction)
 - G. Other (please specify):
4. What have you not learned that you expect to learn during the training?
 5. From the perspective of employee, what are the challenges and obstacles you meet in training? How do you overcome these barriers?

Part III: Training Evaluation

6. To what extend do you feel you have learned from the training?

Learn nothing 1 2 3 4 5 Learn a lot

7. What did you like most in the training? Why?

8. How do you rate the content of training?

Very poor 1 2 3 4 5 Excellent

9. Please rate your trainer for each following aspects:

- | Very poor | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Excellent |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|-----------|
| - Knowledge of subject | | | | | | |
| - Preparation | | | | | | |
| - Style and delivery | | | | | | |
| - Understanding your needs | | | | | | |
| - Responsiveness and support | | | | | | |
| - Producing a good learning climate | | | | | | |

10. How do you feel about the learning environment within the company? For example: knowledge-sharing, encourage of asking questions, using technology and innovative etc

- | Very poor | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Excellent |
|-----------|---|---|---|---|---|-----------|
|-----------|---|---|---|---|---|-----------|

11. Please assess the resources and facilities:

- | Very poor | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Excellent |
|----------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|-----------|
| - Material | | | | | | |
| - Facilities(room, computer etc) | | | | | | |

12. How would you rate the training overall:

- | | | | | | | |
|------------------|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------------|
| Poorly conducted | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Well conducted |
| Not interesting | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Very interesting |
| Not useful | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Very useful for my work |
| Ineffective | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Very effective |

Any comments:

Part IV: Recommendations for Future Implementation

13. In your opinion, which methods in the question 3 are the most efficient which can be exploited in order to increase the training effectiveness? Or other methods (please specify)?

14. What aspect you wish to improve in training? Have you had any recommendation or suggestion?

5-Point Scale: 1 – 2 – 3. Fair/Average – 4 – 5

Learn nothing

Learn a lot

Very poor

Excellent

Poorly conducted

Well-conducted

Not interesting

Very interesting

Not useful

Very useful for my work

Ineffective

Very effective