1.0 INTRODUCTION

All of us would acknowledge the importance of studying a given problem before finding solutions to it. We applaud the value of analysis prior to action in a situation that warrants action. Irrespective of the sphere of operation — be it an educational institution, a cooperation, a government office, or a social service agency — in the context of training, that initial pursuit of information about the situation is often called needs assessment. But what is needs assessment? How should a trainer think about needs assessment in order to plan and execute a useful one? Why should we do these assessments? What are the questions asked? What are the sources contacted? What tools/methods should we use? These are some of the questions that we need to address ourselves to, before we actually conduct a training programme. In this unit, we shall discuss some of these issues and aim to relate them to the context of distance education.
1.1 OBJECTIVES

After reading through this unit, you should be able to:

- explain the reasons for conducting training needs assessment (TNA) in general;
- comment on the various methods used for TNA and their advantages/disadvantages; and
- carry out a training needs assessment, when required, in your organization or your own functional areas.

1.2 REASONS FOR NEEDS ASSESSMENT

There are a few purposes of training needs assessment (TNA). When we conduct needs assessments, we are seeking detailed information about factors which are responsible for the success or failure of an organisation in achieving its goals and objectives. We shall consider some of them here.

- **Optimal performance**: It involves asking such questions as what is it that the exemplary performer knows and does that exemplifies success? How should a course writer use a computer, for example? What is it that a counsellor must know about assignment evaluation? What is involved in producing self-instructional print, audio/video packages? Similar questions must be asked about the performance of all other functionaries in the system of distance education.

- **Actual performance**: It entails asking varying questions such as what does a course writer do that makes the learning materials self-instructional? What do the counsellors already know about assignment evaluation? Why does the management think there is a need for training? What are the employees doing or failing to do? For this purpose, we usually would seek the help of records of employee performance, insider/outsider observations, employee self-appraisal reports etc, and compare their actual performance with the optimal performance aimed at in every functional area.

- **Feelings**: As trainers we would want to know how trainees feel about the topic for training; the significance attached to the topic, and the level of confidence the trainers have in handling the topic, their human attributes as trainers and the overall impact the training programmes have on the trainees. Of course, this is an evaluation exercise, but it would inform us to redesign our training to meet the training needs more effectively in future.

TNA further helps us identify the causes of performance problems on the part of the trainers. One can attribute various reasons for performance problems. We can categorise them as under:

i) **Lack of skill or knowledge**: Even if one wanted to perform better, one just couldn’t do it. For example, if one lacks the knowledge essential to writing behavioural statements on performance appraisals or retrieving data from the computer but attempts to impart training in those very areas, the outcome is easily predictable.
ii) **The environment:** It is possible that trainees may not have the tools, forms or work space necessary to perform a task. The classic example is the computer that “keeps going down” or the purchase of a new but inferior video editing board. In this situation, even the ablest trainer cannot perform well.

iii) **Few or improper incentives:** What are the consequences of doing the job badly or not doing it at all? Perhaps the production of quality materials has been ignored in the past, or the failure to respond to student-needs likewise has been ignored. Do hard workers get loaded down with additional work assignments? Questions of these kinds would tell us about the training policy of an institution. If the institutional policies do not spell out the rewards and punishments related to performance, however much you try to train the staff in any area, the attitude of the staff towards their work will be one of indifference.

iv) **The unmotivated employee:** Traditionally we think employees are motivated on the external circumstances and by an inspiring environment. If the emotional and attitudinal domain of the employees are not positively disposed towards the tasks they are asked to perform, then the motivation of the employees slides down and eventually disappears. If the motivation of performers is to be sustained, they must first be convinced of the purposefulness of their action. For example, you are training tutors or counsellors through teleconferencing which involves a lot of preparation at an enormous cost. During the performance you discover that there is no audience at the receiving end. This is sufficient to demotivate you completely and convince you of the futility of the act. Not even a master trainer can sustain his/her motivation in this situation.

Obviously, we have not listed all the factors here. The attempt is to put together a few factors under categories mentioned above. It is quite possible that one can come out with other equally important categories/factors.

### 1.3 IDENTIFICATION PROCESS

A systematic analysis/identification of training needs involves three processes – (a) organisational/institutional analysis, (b) role/job analysis and (c) individual analysis. Let us discuss these processes of **training needs analysis** for our purposes.

**Organisational/Institutional analysis**

**Organisational analysis** is a process of studying, collecting information and analyzing the state of affairs of an organisation/institution, its functioning in the light of its mission statements, performance of different categories of personnel ranging from top management to bottom level employees and recording performance problems associated with each job category. Evidently, this effort involves huge investments in terms of cost and time. Precisely because of this reason, we should be very cautious in undertaking this process of needs analysis at the organisational level. However, we should remember that any comprehensive analysis involves analysing the institution/organisation in its entirety. Usually this takes place when the institution concerned desires to prepare a comprehensive training policy for the entire institution. It is, however, customary to identify certain problem areas or individual units within the institution for training needs analysis. This mainly depends on the mindset of ‘parts making the whole’. It is
possible that it does work sometimes. But, identifying needs or particular units or personnel in isolation may result in the problem of incompatibility: a tension between the ‘parts’ identified and the institutional objectives/mandates as a ‘whole’. So, we should keep in view the following aspects while doing organisational analysis:

i) The effectiveness/scope of this level of analysis depends greatly on the degree of support it receives from the organisational/institution.

ii) Different types of ‘training reviews’ require different authority, status and technical competence.

iii) A high order objectivity, analytical evaluation and interpersonal skills are necessary.

Before designing a training programme, it is essential on the part of a trainer (commissioned or in-house) to develop an awareness and understanding about the institution’s mandates/objectives, policies, functions, state of affairs of its operations, work systems and processes, etc. This helps the trainer

• identify the intended objectives and the actual functioning of the institution

• identify the reasons for the gap

• focus on those issues/problems which need training interventions.

An understanding about the working of an organisation/institution helps a trainer appreciate its strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats. Further the trainer can come to grips with its development plans, investment programmes, technological progress, products or services planned, workforce status and prospects, etc. The knowledge of the present and the future scenarios serve as a base to identify the different types of training needs and enables the trainer to suggest to the management a comprehensive training plan to meet the immediate and the future requirements.

Organisational analysis, thus, is basically a process of studying and collecting information on the various aspects related to an institution’s functioning with a view to finding out its training and development needs.

Normally, we can conduct this analysis using the methods of observation, discussion, and interview or by referring to documented information. (We shall talk about these methods at a later stage in this unit). The systematic conduct of organisational analysis is essential because the analysis should provide objective and professional advice on human resources development. This should in turn provide the basis for the top management to decide the nature and extent of the role of training in achieving the organisational objectives. We have given below a few guidelines to such analysis:

i) detailing the objective, scope, terms of reference and duration of the analysis;

ii) obtaining the authority to access relevant information from files and documents on various personnel;

iii) soliciting the cooperation of colleagues/employees at different levels and clarifying the purpose of the analysis (and in the process dispelling their suspicions, if any);
iv) giving advance intimation regarding the time of visits, etc.

v) collecting information regarding institutional objectives/policies and functions – mandated and actual;

vi) identifying external environments that ‘affect’ the functioning of the institution (including socio-demographic features, economic profile, government policies, market forces, competitive conditions, infrastructural facilities, etc.);

vii) assembling all the information collected, correlating one information with the other and interpreting it to find performance problems at different levels;

viii) cross-checking the information data collected, if inconsistencies/discrepancies are deducted;

ix) finalising the analysis report indicating various training requirements in order of priority.

What is important in this process is to harmonise the training needs as perceived or felt by individuals with those of the institution. A judicious synthesis between the two is immensely beneficial or both the institutional growth and individual’s career. We shall elaborate on this.

As institutional training needs analysis would reveal various job positions requiring training intervention. We can select these job-related tasks and carry out a training need analysis oriented to these specific tasks. Once we conduct this, we will more often than not come across the level of performance of individuals. An institution – in our context a distance teaching agency – employs various personnel to perform different tasks, based on their competence level in terms of knowledge, skills and attitude. But, owing to reasons, which cannot be captured in a list, ranging from social to personal, an individual’s competence may not fulfill the level of competence required to perform a task (you can easily think of a content expert employed as professor/associate professor/assistant professor and the level of competence required for translating their content expertise in terms of distance teaching materials, in the open learning system). Clearly, the persons need training. But not any type of training would do. The kind of training to be imparted should suit the needs of each and for this purpose we should go for an analysis of individuals’ needs.

You may notice that we have given you the idea of general to specific (organisational tasks and then individual) type of training need analysis. Some would like to start from ‘individual analysis’ and reach ‘organisational analysis’ (specific to general). Either way is possible and one cannot categorically say which one is better. The question of effectiveness depends on the context in which we operate. But what we should not forget is that we need to analyse training needs at all the different levels of the organisation, job and person, assimilate them by finding out their inter-relationships so as to help both the organisation and the individuals in their development and growth.

Job analysis, is an interact method of identifying training needs: a new or an existing job is analysed to produce a job description, which is then evaluated. The gap between the job description and the knowledge and skills of the current incumbent or the new employees becomes clear which helps design individual training programmes. As is obvious, this method identifies the
needs of the individual and the specific job, rather than institutional needs. Further, the job description we arrive at may quickly be out of date.

At this stage, it is useful to think of the ‘need’ in terms of output rather than input. Usually, as mentioned earlier, we express a need as a gap, weakness or lack of something. (For example, a course-writer needs to know about the preparation of self-assessment questions or needs to appreciate the operation of other functional units in the institution). To turn the need into an objective, we need to think of the end result, i.e., the output. (The date-entry operator for example, can operate the computer with no more than 5% wastage – perhaps we can’t allow even this percentage of wastage, however insignificant it may sound. Or the telephone operator can answer the telephone calls within three rings and put it through to the correct person, to a performance level of 99% accuracy). In essence, the training objectives should be specific, measurable, action oriented, relevant and time-bound. Training objectives, thus should address the following:

- Improving knowledge level
- Changing behaviour and/or attitudes
- Specifying time-frames (what the participants will do during the training programme/at the end of the programme and at their workplaces).

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Space is given below for your answer.
   ii) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.

State any three reasons for carrying out training needs assessment in your situation.

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1.4 METHODS OF CONDUCTING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

In training contexts, we decide what the trainees ought to know; we teach/train them how to perform a particular task. They take the cues and use them. Still there are problems. Do you know why? The reasons for offering a training programme vary. Sometimes, it is political, sometimes a personal priority and sometimes a case of a real and pressing need. However, often training occurs because it always has occurred earlier or because it is mandated by the authority. There might be specific performance problems; then again, there might not be. Similarly, there might be new content or might not be.

Once we have successfully identified ‘optimal’ ‘actuals’ and ‘feelings’, it is of paramount necessity on our part to determine the source of information that we need. Other questions should include
• Where is the source of information located?
• What are the constraints on getting the data?
• Who needs to know that you are involved with this innovation, problem, or priority setting? (Remember that pre-training activity has the potential for extending the training function into every aspect of the institution.)
• What is the impression that this effort will make?
• How do we reconcile competing interests and priorities?
• How do we market our department and conduct needs assessment simultaneously?

The other important step in needs analysis is to select appropriate tools to suit the kind of information sought for:

Different purposes and sources require different tools/methods. The factor that separates effective from ineffective tool-use is planning. Do we know why we are contacting the source? Is our purpose clear? Have we established an agenda or an interview schedule to structure our time? Let us now discuss a few methods. But, first we shall work out the exercise given.

**1.4.1 Development Centres**

Development centres in some countries function as service agencies to carry out needs assessment, on request from a client, i.e., an organisation/institution. They use a variety of assessment techniques to ensure the widest possible coverage of skills and attributes. The method used usually is multidimensional in that the technique includes individual group, oral, written and psychometric tests as well as personality and career interest questionnaires. Development centres establish training and development needs for the individuals and the institution based upon clearly defined criteria that transcend the performance of the individuals in their current positions. Further, a development centre designs assessments against clearly identified criteria for specific groups within the institutions so as to effectively meet the requirements of an institution. (Establishment of development centers within the organisation is an expensive affair and may sound too complex for a small organisation). In distance education institutions, the centres for staff development and research are usually assigned the above responsibility.

**1.4.2 Human Resources Audit**

This is simply to look at the number of employees within the institution and their location within its structure, detailing their age and the number of years in their current post. Once the details are collected, we are to make comparison between the number of employees required for the future, usually for the next one to five years. The analysis will identify the number of vacancies arising through retirement and natural wastage, potential promotion opportunities etc. Used in conjunction with future plans, this exercise will help us identify where there will be serious shortages of resources, potential problems, etc., leading to chalking out plans for training and development which will meet future needs. This is an oft-practised strategy. The process is fairly simple and cost-effective because the sought after information is easily accessible. However, it is mostly resented in academia because plans are often seen as “orders.” This can easily be overcome, if the top management interacts with the resenting groups and impresses on the need for it.
1.4.3 Interview

Interview is the most commonly used method for needs assessment. This method requires, first of all, identifying the persons to be interviewed to ascertain their training needs. Usually the interview method is used with senior officials or employees who have unique roles within the institution and who have also specific training and development needs unique to them. However, interviews with a cross-section of the employees are essential to get a clear picture of the situation and the training needs.

There are two types of interviews, ‘structured’ and ‘unstructured’ or ‘open-ended’. A structured interview uses a number of prepared questions as opposed to the unstructured one, where the direction of the discussion is not controlled rigidly. Through interviews, we can easily identify both ‘real’ and ‘perceived’ needs. This technique has drawbacks as well. For example, in an unstructured interview, the outcome will depend upon the direction of the discussion, which may leave out areas of critical importance. Contrastingly, in a structured interview, the outcome will depend upon the questions asked of the individual, and some areas again may be missed. More importantly, the interview provides a subjective view of the individual in areas discussed, which he/she may consider difficult, and it requires the skill of the interviewer in probing those areas and eliciting relevant information.

One may conduct an interview scheduled either face-to-face or at a distance, say, for example, on the telephone. But it strictly depends on the ‘purpose’ within the needs assessment process. Consider the Table 1.1 just to get an idea about the ‘purpose’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. To inform someone about the project</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. To gather in-depth information</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. To discuss difficult, complex, or controversial subject matter</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. To check out a point or two</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. To enlist support from a colleague</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. To look at content that must be illustrated</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. To save money</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. To form a working relationship</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. To periodically nature a working relationship</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. To get an “initial take” on something</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. To get information from many people</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. To get information from a few key individuals</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To reiterate, the mode of interviewing largely depends on the purpose for which it is conducted.

1.4.4 Observation

We can use observation schedules to look at any job. It involves a trained observer observing an individual on-job for a day or more over a period of time. Observers can either monitor the person for short, two or three hour periods and then make notes or have a structured checklist in which they
will make notes against agreed criteria. This method can identify areas other than training needs, for example, inefficient working ways. This method requires an observer who is trained in the method. Observation techniques help the observer see an individual operating in his/her context and in a number of different work situations; if he/she is an academic manager, the observer will see how he/she behaves in course-brief meetings; in dealing with counsellors/course writers/students etc., and in deciding work priorities. The drawback of this technique, however, is that anyone observing another person is bound to influence the way they react. Therefore the observation has to be done over a period of time. Further it is time consuming and can be seen as disruptive by the individual being observed.

**Observation schedule**

It is a highly acclaimed front-end tool. But, some have reservations about this tool as well, for which the main reason is the belief that observers alter employee performance. Thus, observation is a less effective tool for gathering information about actuals, unless we are working incognito. (But then, it may be professionally unethical). Observation is, however, a very effective tool for seeking optimal performance. If employees know that you are observing, then their efforts will more closely approximate optimal performance. Observation-schedules, more often than not, focus on behavioural processes and not on cognitive ones. After decades of a behavioural orientation to education and training, professionals seem to be now interested more in what an employee thinks about and knows that the work is being done. Very many times, interviews, not observations, get at the kind of information. However, observation provides information about what is really happening at work at two levels. The first level of observation seeks a broad gestalt. At this level, we get answers to questions of the following type:

- What goes on?
- What are the major components of the job?
- What are the most frequently recurring challenges?
- In what order do things usually happen?
- What kind of information is shared?
- What kinds of references or tools are relied upon?

At the second level of observation, the trainer seeks such details as

- What separates effective performance from ineffective performance?
- What kinds of response attract clients?
- Which ways work best?
- How are work areas arranged?
- Is there anything that coordinators of learning (study) centres are doing that appears to be influencing the quality of performance? etc.

However, the above questions may be relevant where the performance is physical or related to psychomotor skills. To get the information about the process of developing a self-instructional unit in print, for example, we have to change techniques appropriately.
1.4.5 Performance Review/Appraisal

This method focuses on the outcomes of employee performance. Training-professionals seek print-outs, records, etc., to capture the details of what clients are doing from the results of their actions. We can examine records to generate the details of performance. We shall elaborate this point.

If an institution conducts performance reviews or an appraisal scheme, it compares the appraisal with the job-specification to find out what is missing. In other words, the institution tries to identify the gap between what should be done or what could be improved in job-performance. Alternatively, the performance review/appraisal scheme may do this by comparing job performance against specific performance criteria/objectives, and may include a section on training needs. The performance review/appraisal is detailed because it looks at the needs of each individual. The analysis of the appraisal can provide useful inputs to the accuracy of information within the job description and the appraisal system. That is, the method can be limited, if the future plans of the institution are not communicated to all employees. For example, a departmental head may wish to expand and develop his/her department based on the past record of performance but may not be aware that the top-management plans to reorganise and the department is to be merged with another.

1.4.6 Questionnaire Survey

A survey is usually an anonymous device for soliciting opinions from a large number of respondents. If you want the opinions of many, and/or statistical significance, surveys are an excellent tool. Surveys, because of the potential for anonymity, are particular effective for gathering the information required. One can prepare/produce questionnaires for part or whole of the institution. Sometimes, however, questions get misinterpreted and fail to elicit the information required. Questionnaires are generally used to identify institutional or departmental needs rather than individual needs. For administering questionnaires, institutions may use assistance form inside the organisation or outside or both in the formulation of questions, rating process, coordination and analysis of the results, etc. The use of questionnaires helps cover a large number of individuals.

However, as in any research context the number of responses can be very low. A response of 50% is workable, and time and effort have to be invested in ensuring that individuals realise the importance of the questionnaire. For example, the respondent should be convinced of on the fact that the outcome of the responses shapes the training and development of the institution.

The two basic question-types are structured items and open-ended items. Structured choice items are far better than are open questions. A forced choice item will say “which one of the following” or “rank this list” or “rate these according to …………” In this case, we provide respondents with a fixed set of options to which they respond in a predetermined fashion.

1.4.7 Review of Plans

A review of the institution’s plans for the future gives valuable and necessary information in identifying the training and development needs. It is this information that will enable the priority in training and development to be established to meet future as well as current needs. The only reservation against the technique is that it cannot point to individual’s needs and that it cannot identify specific problem areas.
1.4.8 Desk Research

Desk research is a review and analysis of external factors as well as internal. For example, assessing the level of new employees in the institution will help design training programmes to meet their needs. It helps us identify the availability of formal courses and obtain relevant information about them. Through desk research, we can review the current training and development programmes and ascertain whether or not they are still relevant to meeting the current and future needs.

This can incorporate the techniques of human resources audit and the review of plans. It helps an institution keep up-to-date with outside influences and developments. Though cost effective and simple to do, like the review of plans, it is inadequate for identifying individual needs and so is limited in its application. In other words, desk research cannot be used as a sole method for identifying training needs because it is a process isolated from the people whose commitment and involvement is needed for the training to be successful.

1.4.9 Group Discussion

A number of individuals within an institution may sit together to discuss specific issues. The individuals may be a team within a department or a number of officers at the same level. The purpose of the discussion needs to be clearly defined, i.e., to identify areas of concern or difficulty and areas of strengths and possible actions, needed to resolve these areas of concern and build on strengths, etc. The group may meet several times with the assistance of a facilitator to guide and direct it. The facilitator may be member of the group who has received specific facilitation training for this purpose. Group discussion ensure commitment from the participants and builds team work and recognition of others’ strengths and weakness as well as one’s own. It identifies need that, if met, can have an immediate impact on the success of the institution. Further, a group discussion helps identify needs of individuals and group training and development needs. It places a heavy premium on the skill of the facilitator to form, guide and stop the group once the tasks have been accomplished. It is also possible, however, that the groups may talk but not resolve issues without some form of feedback form senior officers. Sometimes, it is quite likely that the public nature of the forum may stifle honest discussion.

The suitability of the methods described here for our purposes will depend upon a number of factors such as the culture and size of the organisation, the human resources available, the expertise they can bring to the implementation of such methods, the level of training needs you wish to identify, (i.e., is it an organisational need or for a department or individual?), the amount of time and money available, etc. We, however, recommended the use of a combination of the above methods.

We can undertake the identification of training needs at several/different levels within an institution. We may undertake needs identification at corporate, departmental, team or individual level (including both the job and person). It can also be undertaken by specific groups such as directors/deans/heads of departments/new employees and so on. These are not mutually exclusive. Approaches to needs analysis, however, differ. For our immediate purposes we may identify the following two:

i) Assessing the needs of all the staff to get a full picture of the institution:
   It is based upon the principle that even employees who may already be
Implementational Aspects

...competent could be improved further and their strengths should be further strengthened. (This approach usually starts with the top management and cascades through the institution. The Chief Executive (say, a Vice-Chancellor) defines his/her objectives and provides mission statements from which senior officers (both academic and non-academic) derive their objectives. They in turn communicate their objectives to their team and team objectives get defined. In the process, the training and development needs for each group and individual emerge. It might even be the other way around.

ii) Identifying and investigating those areas within the institution which pose operational problems: This approach can identify training needs which will have high priority for the institution. It can also identify areas where problems and issues do not result in training needs but may require an alternative solution or approach. (This approach, is usually more short-term in application and deals with current problems whilst the former is more strategic and development in character. However, indentifying training needs, by exception, has the advantage of making an immediate contribution to the organization ’s success).

Putting to use both the approaches simultaneously will prove to be beneficial to any institution/ organisation.

Activity 1

Three methods of conducting 'needs assessment' have been mentioned below. Point out one advantage and one disadvantage in each method.

Note: i) Space is given below for your answers.

ii) We have not given any answer at the end of this unit.

1) Interview

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2) Observation

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3) Questionnaire survey

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1.5 DETERMINING THE PRIORITY

Once we complete identification of training needs the next stage is to analyse the results so that we can determine the priorities. Let us see some guidelines which will be of assistance to us in the analysis.
If the approach taken is the analysis of training and development needs for the total organisation, then, we should do the following:

- Examine the organisational plan and draw out the general themes. For example, is the institution on its way to expand adding a few more faculties or develop new courses?

- Identify the training, which will support these themes and make a direct contribution to the success of the institution. (That is, the institution could make a strategic decision to improve or focus on student service and thus the need for student service training within the plan will appear as a high priority).

- Consider if there are needs which, if not met, will severely inhibit the attainment of the institution’s goals. For example, a particular department (say media production unit needs specific training in a technical area) which if not met, will prevent the institution from developing a new multi-media product as quickly as it had planned.

If the level of needs analysis is a particular department, i.e., a team of individuals, the same process as the above should be applied relating it to their objectives. If the approach, however, is to analyse by exception, there may still be a number of needs identified and a limited amount of resources, the priorities still need to be defined. If this is so, we should ask the question, which need when satisfied will make the greatest contribution to the organization?

The analysis of training needs and the determination of their priority are vitally important to decide the value of the training to the institution, and the data on which the training plan will be based. We should note that not all needs are training needs, and sometimes the under performance of a particular unit can be caused by the organisational structure or methods of work. It is necessary to thoroughly investigate perceived training needs to ensure that the actual needs they are correctly identified. The consequences of wrongly identified needs are a waste of money, time and effort on everyone’s behalf and frustration because the training may not meet the need, nor make a contribution to the immediate and long term success of the institution.

In essence, needs analysis should provide information regarding:

- whether or not training is appropriate;
- what kind of training is favoured, for whom, and by whom;
- what other supporting interventions (like job aids, training of officers, expert systems, workstations redesign, or incentives) will solve the problem, introduce the new system, or respond to the mandate;
- strategies for involving other related professionals in the effort;
- the content of courses, if training is judged appropriate; and
- how training and other interventions will be received by training providers, customers and others.

1.6 DEVELOPING AWARENESS OF NEEDS

In many training situations the major challenge, or at least the first, is to develop in participants, the awareness of a need. This is essential primarily because most often we conduct training programmes as a routine and
Implementational Aspects

participants are simply told to attend. Occasionally, even such programmes prove to be a pleasant relief from the usual work routine. In many instances, however, participants see training events as an imposition, a waste of time, or even insulting. This leads them to feel apathetic, resistant, or hostile. Obviously, training contexts become tense. If we learned from earlier diagnostic work that a genuine need for training does exist, the initial phase of training must be concerned with overcoming participants’ resistance. Further, to sustain the interest of the participants what is important is to focus the training on their needs—present and future. People generally welcome training, when they believe that the outcomes of the training would help improve their efficiency. In other words, people resist training when

i) they cannot imagine how they could be more effective or satisfied in their work

ii) they do not believe their work could (or should) be done any differently than they are doing it now;

iii) they believe others are more responsible than they are for how their work turns out;

iv) they do not believe in their own ability to operate differently than they have been.

These characteristics often apply to people who have slipped into bad habits/routine over long periods of time in a job. They occur most commonly among people whose behaviour pattern is not counterbalanced by sufficient challenges or stimulation to maintain an open approach to their work.

1.6.1 Identifying the Job Needs

They may have come to identify the job and themselves with how they have been handling it and their identities as a workforce are defined by what it does. In such instances, to acknowledge a need for change could be threatening. It would seem to imply that they have been doing something ‘wrong’ all their years on the job or that they themselves are inadequate.

Some would even see learning new skills as assuming total responsibility for what occurs on the job. Some others may resent the assumption that an outsider (i.e. trainer) knows something about their jobs that they themselves do not. More importantly, the general lack of faith in training — what is learnt in laboratory conditions may not be applicable to their field situations — would make some feel apprehensive about it. And this might be a strong cause for their resistance. Dealing with adults has yet another dimension too. Most of them may not have been in a training situation for a long time or a few of them may have done badly in their studies. If people have come from these situations they may question their ability to do well in training contexts and fear imminent embarrassment or failure.

If any one or a combination of these situations seem to exist, they must be taken into account, if the trainees are to look at the training experience positively and optimistically.

Our role as trainers is to facilitate the trainees to envision that things can be better on their job than they are now; that changes in their own behaviour can lead to improvement and that through the training experience they can be enabled to do what is necessary to move towards realizing that vision. This phase of training calls for methods that shift trainees’ view from a “closed” to an “open” orientation.
1.6.2 Skills Needed to Create Awareness

What skills are emphasized in developing awareness of need?

A sense of need exists when people see a discrepancy between what could (or should) be happening in their work and what they currently are able to do. They believe in their own ability to bridge that gap and also in the capacity of the training programme to help them accomplish this goal. Those who come under this category have the qualities of self-awareness, self-confidence, and knowledge of what is possible in their work roles.

When qualities such as these are lacking, we as trainers must be able to develop them. Of course, it is easier said than done. For one, qualities such as these cannot easily be imparted, as they are essentially attributes, which have to come form within. However, bringing an attitudinal change is essential because trainees look differently at training contexts which can be categorised into their perception of the trainer, self and training per se.

The above mentioned points would make a lot of sense if you compare the roles and functions of academic and support staff of a distance teaching university with their counterparts at a face-to-face university.

1.6.3 Perceiving the Trainer

Trainees who doubt the value of learning new things see the trainer as irrelevant or intrusive. They do not see him/her as being on their side, nor able to see their positions as they do. This being the usual situation, the trainer’s task is to work towards understanding the viewpoints of the trainees and communicating the awareness to them. This role of a trainer in such situations is of paramount importance. With proper guidance, the trainees articulate their needs, putting into words the moments at which they themselves are likely to feel less productive or satisfied with their work than they would like to be. Once this is established the trainer’s task will indicate how the intended experience can relate to those needs and how it helps the trainees act more effectively in their work situations.

A word of caution

We should be very careful while presenting this message. It should not diminish the trainees’ dignity or the quality of their previous efforts. The trainer is someone who is a specialist, someone who has invested greater attention or done something innovative in a particular aspect of his/her field, work life, and who is sharing the fruits of that endeavour with the group. The trainer’s confidence must be based on his/her own expertise or sense of self-worth and not on a demeaning comparison of his/her own abilities with those of the trainees. For example, a distance education expert imparting training to academics on the preparation of self-learning materials may be an expert in instructional design, but the trainee academics would be experts in their own fields. Here the specialist trainer should not imagine or create an impression that s/he is superior to others who have come to attend the training programme. Some elements that enhance the credibility of trainers are:

1) **expertness** (providing evidence of the trainer’s demonstrated ability or knowledge, usually when he/she is introduced)

2) **trustworthiness** (by being honest and frank in presenting oneself to and interacting with the group and by relieving participants’ concerns about being evaluated by the trainer)
3) **dynamism** (indicating genuine caring and involvement through enthusiasm, effort, eye contact and careful preparation will encourage participants to attend receptively to the trainer’s message).

### 1.6.4 Trainees’ Self Perception

When trainees see how a programme fits into their lives and see some benefits and success for themselves emerging from it, they are most likely to value and invest in it. Sometimes, these possible outcomes are clear to them. Sometimes we must clarify them as part of the training programme itself.

We can motivate the trainees extrinsically by highlighting the rewards training can bring and intrinsically by encouraging them to identify values within themselves which they can satisfy through the training. To further the discussion, extrinsic motivation grows as the outcomes of training become clear and appealing to participants. We can enhance this process by specifying the training objectives as concretely as possible and by doing so in ways that relate to how the trainees can make immediate use of them. Intrinsic motivation grows as trainees see that improvement in their performance will meet their personal needs better than before.

### 1.6.5 Training

The way we plan and execute training programmes affects the involvement of the trainees. ‘Learner Controlled Instruction’ (LCI) is immensely helpful in making a training programme effective. This is based on the premise that learning has a quality of personal involvement and it is self-initiated. LCI approaches the learner with a clear statement of objectives to be achieved, an explanation (or sample) of the evaluation that will be used to demonstrate satisfactory achievement of the objectives, a list of the resources (materials, activities, and people) available to help the learner master the objectives. This list may be referred to as a “learning map” since it describes useful “stopovers” on the route from the trainee’s position at the start to his/her ultimate goal. Once the basic parameters of the training are established, we should provide the learners with opportunities to make decisions regarding several aspects of the training: This should include

- **Pacing:** some learn slowly than (but ultimately) can do just as well as others,
- **Sequencing:** when particulars are allowed to determine where to begin their work and how to proceed, they often can make more individually appropriate decisions than can a trainer who is unfamiliar with their backgrounds and interests.
- **Problematising:** Training-inputs should contain the trainees’ own problem situations. When they are asked to report on what they found to be worthwhile in self-selected reading, when they suggest topics for group discussion, etc., they would see training as directly relevant to their needs.

Obviously, a trainer in this situation takes the role of a “facilitator”. He/she mediates between the learner and the resources available, which can include printed materials, audio-video aids, case-studies, field trips, and so on, rather than acting as a mere mouthpiece for the content of the programme. However, learner controlled instruction need not be the sole method of instruction. It can be integrated with other appropriate approaches. Nonetheless, LCI methods involve trainees in making decisions that procedure more relevant, memorable and motivating learning experiences.
Check Your Progress 2

Note:  
   i) Space is given below for your answer.  
   ii) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.

Identify at least 3 reasons (from the point of view of trainees) why training is usually ‘taken for granted’.

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1.7 FORMULATION OF OBJECTIVES

A systematically designed training programme must determine learning objectives in consonance with the objectives of the organisation/institution, trainee-categories and trainer-types. These objectives usually refer to qualitative statements describing expected modification of competence and behaviour in a trainee after having undergone a training module. This modification does not occur either in isolation or by chance or arbitrarily, as is mostly supposed in many training contexts. A systematic approach to training warrants meticulous planning at every stage. Training objectives serve as a standard specification of an output to which the trained behaviours must conform ensuring the quality of the product after training. This is of strategic importance not only because it defines and controls quality of products but also because it substantially influences all the subsequent stages of the training system.

A statement of objectives serves as an end towards which we should direct our entire training activity. In fact, we develop statements of objectives on the basis of each identified training need. Since mostly, more often than not, we carry out training need analysis in terms of knowledge, skills and attitude, training objectives also tend to fall into these categories. We shall look at a few of them here.

1.7.1 Cognitive Objectives

Knowledge component of training is more educational in nature and develops the perception and understanding of the trainees. Cognitive objectives provide the trainees with the required knowledge/understanding of subjects, situations, procedures, etc., which are considered necessary to perform a task/job. But they interpret and apply this understanding in their own way to specific situations. The implication is that cognitive objectives are less amenable to behavioural expressions and the behavioural outcomes are unpredictable. Knowledge inputs to achieve cognitive objectives are of complex nature. Since knowledge inputs like theories, principles, etc., are derived form different sources, they may reflect ambiguity and divergence of opinions which are more common specially in the field of social sciences, creating the problem of uneven understanding which adversely affects uniformity of job behaviour in the learner.
But conceptual and theoretical knowledge certainly broadens the outlook and mental horizon of the trainees and stimulates their analytical, critical and comprehending faculties. These materials also indirectly but favourably influence the skill improvement process as well as develop for positive attitude. Thus, despite certain limitations, cognitive objectives serve useful purposes in differing degrees. For example, they are highly unstructured and require more of knowledge inputs of diverse fields like conceptual, behavioural, technical, analytical and communication than those of skills.

### 1.7.2 Conative (Skill) Objectives

The concern of conative objective is with the formation of improvement of know-how, art of doing things or methods of job-performance. Since skills are specific to a particular job – course editing, for example – it is essential to decide training objectives with reference to skills in behavioural terms which can be called cognitive objectives. The following are characteristics features of this type of objectives:

- **Job-centred:** a cognitive objective specifies the work behaviour required of the trainee at the end of his/her training.

- **Predictable:** unlike cognitive objectives, conative ones are easily predictable. They are not subject to individual interpretation and application in one’s own way because they do not basically provide to the trainee the ‘what’ of the job but the ‘how’ part. Thus, we can predict the behavioural outcomes.

- **Customised:** conative objectives can be tailor-made to suit time and learning requirements of the trainees and their organisation.

### 1.7.3 Affective Objectives

In learning processes, attitudes of the trainees play a crucial role. Positive attitude is a prerequisite for learning knowledge and skills. As you may be aware, attitude is a subjective aspect and is formed in a individual on the basis of his/her knowledge, experience and relationships with other people. Although it is complex phenomenon, a first step any training programme should be towards helping the trainees develop positive attitudes. Our discussion so far clearly reveals that we cannot decide training objectives in isolation. Nor can they be imposed from top without the knowledge of the training requirements of the trainee – clientele. We should therefore decide on the objectives through the collaborative efforts of the organisation and the trainee – groups.

### 1.7.4 Specific and Overall Training Objectives

Organisational analysis, job-oriented analysis and individual analysis reflect the team work resulting in training specifications. These training specifications are generally skill-oriented rather than knowledge-oriented because of the emphasis given to skill-component in a training system. This demands that we have to determine objectives on the basis of the training specifications. One can visualize two types of training objectives in this context: *specific training objectives* and *overall training objectives*. The former may be defined as a statement of ideal or standard specification of performance in line with each training specifications for which a trainee gets trained. Thus, there will be a series of *specific learning objectives* depending on the number of items under training specifications. Each of these objectives acts as a criterion behaviour in the learning process of the trainee guiding
the trainer to use it to facilitate learning. After the learning experience, trainees must be able to demonstrate standard performance as per specific learning objectives and any differences will indicate deficiencies in the training. As the name suggests, these objectives should be specific, concrete, tangible and measurable, facilitating time-bound result. Writing of specific learning objectives denoting expected behaviour modification in respect of each skill or task gives an exhaustive list of sign-posts that guide the trainer.

We can treat overall learning objectives as key objectives which intend to guide the overall results a training programme has to achieve. We may regard the overall learning objectives as statements of major commitments, critical performance and overall outcomes to be achieved/fulfilled by synchronising specific learning objectives. Thus, they constitute expected results of training in its entirely as against the specific objectives which focus on the outcomes of the various components of a training programme and their interdependence.

As we are aware, training objectives may denote two aspects: quantity and quality. As the term means, a quantitative objective concerns with the number of persons to be trained during a particular period of time at a particular cost. In contrast to this, a qualitative objective is associated with the standard of competence to which the trainee will be trained. We should note here that training is an expensive proposition which, therefore, must strike a judicious balance between quantity and quality. Both aspects are important for a training programme and they are not mutually exclusive. You can easily relate the foregoing analysis of training objectives to training situations in distance teaching institutions. You can formulate objectives of the above types when you design training programmes for course writers, tutors, counsellors, support-staff, administrators and the regular academic staff themselves. Depending on the priorities of training, you could set the objectives specific to each category of staff, each situation and each task to be mastered or each behavioural change to be effected. Besides systematic planning and careful execution of a training programme, the importance given to it by the institution of the trainees too will determine how best the objectives are achieved. A well planned and systematically conducted training can also fail to achieve its objectives if the trainees treat the training programme as a pleasure trip or their institution treats it as a mere ritual devoid of any serious purpose.

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**Check Your Progress 3**

**Note:**
1. Space is given below for your answer.
2. Compare your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.

What is the importance of formulating training objectives?

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1.8 LET US SUM UP

Before one actually gets down to the business of training, one should be very clear about what exactly the trainees’ need in order that they function better in their workplaces, once the training is over. In essence, training needs analysis is of paramount importance in the training design process. And this exactly is the focus of the unit. In this context, we have discussed the rationale for and the processes involved in carrying out training needs analysis. This unit, as a consequence, presents various sources and tools for identifying needs. Prioritising the needs and designing a training programme accordingly are also important. We have also focused on creating awareness of needs in training contexts and translating these needs into training objectives. All these are essential for ensuring the effectiveness of training.

1.9 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

The following may be three possible reasons, among others:

i) Your organisation/department is new and wants to train the personnel for the first time to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to develop distance education programme.

ii) Your staff are highly qualified in their respective academic disciplines but have no idea about distance education and/or instructional design.

iii) You have been offering correspondence education for some years but now your organisation wants to modernise it through multimedia based distance education.

Check Your Progress 2

Of many, three reasons for taking training programme for granted are:

i) That the trainees feel that whatever has been imparted in laboratory conditions may not be useful for real-life situations.

ii) That the trainees may have fallen into a habit-trap and feel that what they do is the correct way of doing and it could not be done differently.

iii) That the trainers believe that others, not they themselves, are responsible for how their work turns out: it is those others who need training.

Check Your Progress 3

Training objectives serve as a standard specification of an output to which the trained behaviours must conform ensuring the quality of the product after training. This is of strategic importance because it defines and controls quality of products and substantially influences all the subsequent stages of the training system.