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Proposing a Comprehensive Training Needs Approach for the Communication Skills Training of Security Guards

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ABSTRACT

Good communication skills are necessary for security guards as they are the front liners of an organisation. In ensuring that the training of these security guards fits within the overall human capital development of the organisation, a robust training needs analysis is proposed. The Training Needs Analysis (TNA), which focuses on three lines of analysis, namely, Organisation, Task and Person (OTP), is recommended in this case. To this end, both qualitative and quantitative methods were adopted for data collection. The qualitative data were collected through interviews and document study while the quantitative data were gathered through survey questionnaires distributed to the academic staff, non-academic staff, students of a public university, and visitors. The qualitative and quantitative data were analysed using SPSS version 20 involving descriptive statistics. Results of the analyses were used to propose a framework for the training of the communication skills in English for the security guards. The study is significant since it considers an alternative approach to analysing the communication training needs of the security guards.

Keywords: TNA approach, communication skill development, security guards

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Support staff of institutions of higher education, similar to their academic counterparts, play a crucial role in promoting the credibility and image of their organisation. Like the other institutions, a public university in Malaysia has given special attention to communication skills training of its security guards as a move to meet the increasing need for a more confident and competent work force, particularly when communicating with both local and international students and staff, and

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the general public. Despite the number of skills training programmes undertaken by the security guards, courses on communication skills were rarely offered, thus their level of confidence and proficiency were still below the Satisfactory Level (80%) expected (Report on Internationalisation, Kuala Lumpur, 2011). Reasons for this lamentable state include inadequate analysis of the needs of learners, a neglect on the expectations of the organisation, a lack of prioritisation for communication in English courses and no proper evaluation and follow-up activities of courses that had been implemented. Since there was no monitoring of the staff who had undergone training, the desired goals of the training remain unachieved.

Needs analysis from a Training Needs Analysis (TNA) human capital development approach, on the other hand, is more holistic as it considers the wants, needs and expectations of the organisation, units, departments and individuals in the respective departments. The TNA approach is typically based on the training needs of the organisation, focusing on the Organisation, Task and Person (OTP) model. The seminal work of Gupta *et al.* (2007) on TNA attests to a need for application of a systematic and comprehensive approach to training. In their OTP model, first, through organisation analysis (O), the organisation's objectives, goals, resource needs and efficiency indices are examined in order to determine where training is needed. Next, through task analysis (T), the organisation establishes the performance standards in order to determine the content of training, how tasks are to be performed and identify the required knowledge and skills needed to perform those tasks. Finally, through person analysis (P), the training practitioner identifies who in the organisation should receive the training. This is accomplished by establishing the level at which each employee is performing in relation to performance standards expected through performance appraisals or proficiency tests. This top down approach to training gives a comprehensive view of how the training is designed, delivered and evaluated.

The literature on research into human capital development adopting a TNA approach with a focus on the OTP model suggests that with careful planning, favourable return on investment can be expected. This is evidenced in the study by Chen and Hung (2012) of Taiwan Coast Guards (TCG) in which significant differences in the training needs of the military and police in the TCG were found. The TNA has proven effective in identifying the organisational core competencies of frequency, importance, familiarity and urgency. Positive results related to the adoption of the TNA were also shown in the New Zealand study by Tang (2011) in which the investigation of New Zealand's Road Transport and Logistics industry showed a significant link between training utility and organisational performance. Tang found company size neither a significant predictor of the quality of the TNA nor qualifications having an effect on organisational performance. It was suggested that in order to achieve maximum returns, trainers should follow closely the TNA as it is important for the organisation to identify all competencies related to jobs. Positive results were also shown in a study of the training needs of the banking sector in Bangladesh by Liza *et al.* (2011) in which all levels of the TNA-OTP typology were followed closely as well as considering the internal and external environments for analyses of the data. In the Malaysian context, a study of human resource development in the manufacturing and services sector by Poon and Rozhan (2000) in which some form of TNA preceded training also showed positive results. Statements of caution were given though for the data used may not reflect the current situation. Findings showed that though training was

systematically undertaken, there was no significant difference in the TNA practices of the organisations.

In other parts of the world, where the TNA-OTP approach was not adopted for human capital development, dismal results were reported. In a study of the training needs of calling taxi drivers in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India by Anitha and Sandhya (2013), operators were urged to offer training to drivers in areas related to care and manning the vehicle with safety as well as to develop politeness strategies with passengers and learning emergency safety skills. They also found a positive correlation between communication skills training and customer satisfaction. In Greece, in a study by Brinia andViligennis (2013) on the training needs of officers of the Municipal Police of Thesaaloniki, officers were found to receive inadequate training which contributed to a reduced degree of service response towards the needs of the public. Gaps and shortcomings were found affecting the general organisational level, especially, the problem of communicating content with the public. A similar scenario was seen in a study of the corporate sector in Pakistan by Sherazi, *et al*. (2011). Disparate results were shown by virtue of a lack of comprehensive training management which only focused on person level analysis for training. Similar findings were true on a study on oil and non-oil companies in Libya (cited in Jamil, 2006) in which the approach and techniques used to select participants for training but not involving analysis of employee needs. Only the opinions of the superiors were sought, clearly showing no evidence of adoption of the TNA-OTP approach.

In light of the above findings on adoption and non-adoption of the TNA approach to needs analysis for communication skills development, this study was conducted to consider the TNA as a proposed dynamic approach to needs analysis for communication skills training in English for the security guards in the present context. The study had the following research objective:

Research Objective: To propose the Training Needs Analysis (TNA) approach to analyse the lacks, needs and wants of the security guards and their organisation.

The following research questions help in guiding the study:
RQ1: What are the target needs and expectations of the organisation?
RQ2: What are the communication skills in English needed by the security guards to perform tasks set by the organisation?

2.0 METHODOLOGY

The study adopted both a qualitative and quantitative approach to data collection and analyses. Qualitative data were collected through interviews of two top administrators of the said public university regarding their expectations of the quality of service of the security guards. Additionally, documents were studied with regard to the vision of the university, past courses organised and future training programmes proposed for the communication skills development of the security guards. The university has targetted a level of 4.5 from a maximum of 5 for performance achievement. This target is high but it is the expectation of the university. An achievement below 4.5 is regarded as not meeting the expectation of the university.

The quantitative data were collected through questionnaires distributed to visitors, undergraduate and postgraduate students and academic and non-academic staff of the branch campus of the public university. There were two parts to the questionnaire: Part A elicits background information of the respondents as regards category, status, gender, age and languages spoken. Part B elicits information regarding the respeeondents' perception of the quality of service of the security guards, the quality of the security guards and the interaction ability of the security guards. The quality of service component aims to measure the respondents' perception of the security guards' knowledge of their duties and responsibilities. Altogether ten items were constructed. The quality of service of the security guards component aims to measure the attributes and attitudes of the security guards. Seven items were constructed. The interaction ability of the security guards component aims to measure the communicative ability in English of the security guards. Seven items were constructed. All items, which measured the satisfaction level of the respondents towards the quality of service rendered by the security guards, the quality of the security guards and the interaction ability of the security guards,were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from Very Satisfied(VS) to Very Dissatisfied (VD) (See Appendix A). Reliability indices of the sub-sections of the questionnaire had earlier been calculated using SPSS version 20. They were as follows: Quality of service (0.76), Quality of security guard (0.78) and Interaction ability (0.81). The findings were analysed using simple descriptive statistics.

3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This paper will report the interview, document study and survey findings, in answer to the two research questions:

RQ1: What are the target needs and expectations of the organisation?
RQ2: What are the communication skills in English needed by the security guards to perform tasks set by the organisation?

3.1 Profile of the Respondents

A total of 260 participants responded to the questionnaire, of whom 116 (44.61%) were students (22 diploma, 78 undergraduate, 16 postgraduate), 132 (50.76%) were staff (48 academic, 84 non-academic), and 12 (4.61%) were visitors. Of these, 139 (53.46%) were male and 121 (46.54%) were female. 240 (92.3%) were locals while the remaining were international students, staff and visitors. About two-thirds of the respondents, i.e., 177 (68.0%) were below 30 years old while there was sparse representation in the 31-40, 41-50 and above 50 age groups at 16.9%, 8.84% and 6.15% respectively. Clearly there were more younger respondents who were local diploma and undergraduate students and non-academic staff than the older respondents.

3.2 Survey Results Organized According to the OTP Typology

3.2.1 Organisation (O) Level

At organisation level, information presented relates to knowledge of the vision and the way forward for the university; targets to be achieved by a given date; achievement or non-achievement of key performance indicators; and values, thinking and beliefs necessary for the achievement of the targets through interviews of university administrators and document study of courses offered and implemented.

A summary of the interview and document study findings is contained in the following table.

Table 1 Summary of interview and document study

No	Item	Comment/Response
1	Vision of University	Global stature
2	Targeted date for international stature	2020
3	Targeted Key Performance Index (KAI)	4.5 from a possible of 5
4	Sections/Units affected	All units
5	Courses offered and undertaken	Ethics and Values, Etiquette and Protocol, Standard People Practice, Transformation of the Mind
6	Courses required	Effective Communication in English, Effective Counter Service, Conversational English, Speak English with Confidence, Effective customer Service, English for Front Liners, Cross-cultural Communication

As shown in Table 1, the university has the vision of becoming an international educational hub by 2020. In line with that aspiration, the university management has set a high benchmark of 4.5 (90%) to be achieved by all departments and faculties when discharging their duties. The Security Unit of the Registrar's Office was no exception. Being the unit responsible for security and harmony on campus and establishing and maintaining good rapport between the campus community and the outside world, the security guards play a pivotal role in ensuring that the good image of the university is sustained. Job related skills such as courtesy; discipline; knowledge of events, top university personnel and location of buildings; and good communication, including communication in English, are highly desired. Through interviews of two top university administrators and document study it was found that courses on communication were marginalised to give way to prioritised courses such as Ethics and Values and Etiquette and Protocol.

3.2.2 Task (T) Level

At the task level, information presented relates to required knowledge of name of buildings; location of buildings, faculties and schools; knowledge of daily events and activities on campus; knowledge of rules and regulations applicable to students and visitors; availability of staff to answer enquiries; accuracy of feedback on enquiries; and skills in English and attitudes needed to perform tasks

effectively, for example, greeting visitors, giving accurate information and directions to specific locations, asking politely, confidence in speaking, and ensuring that law and order on campus and residential ground is maintained.

Table 2 Overall performance of the Security Unit

No	Item	Obtained Mean	KAI Mean	Implication
1	Quality of service	3.50	4.5	Below target
2	Quality of security guards	3.56	4.5	Below target
3	Interaction ability	3.19	4.5	Below target

Table 2 shows the overall performance of the Security Unit in which all components recorded below target achievement, attesting to a critical need to review the lacks of the unit in meeting the expectations of the university. The respondents showed weak satisfaction to items in all three categories, namely the quality of service of the security guards, quality of the security guards and their interaction ability but which were not adequate to enable the SecurityUnit of the Registrar's Office, Kuala Lumpur, to transform and migrate to international stature. More detailed analyses of the individual components are presented in the following tables.

Table 3 Grievances on campus environment/security guards

No	Comment
1	Buildings without name/label
2	Name and signage of buildings in the Malay Language
3	Inadequate supply of communication gadgets
4	Inadequate number of security guards
5	No room for inspection at entry point
6	Rough and unfriendly
7	Inaccurate giving of directions

Table 3 depicts some of the more serious grievances against the Security Unit and information on campus environment obtained from document study, which could be grouped into three, namely, poor labelling of buildings, inadequacy of manpower and gadgets supply and limitation of space. A poor system of labelling buildings was revealed through comments made, such as buildings are without name or with name but in the Malay Language which can pose a translation problem to some of the security guards if foreign students and visitors enquired about the location of buildings in the English Language. Besides manpower was in short supply to enable effective overseeing of the entire campus grounds. There was also insufficient supply of communication gadgets to ensure effective vigilance by the security guards. The small space at the entry point for vehicle inspection and answering visitor enquiry also posed a safety hazard to other motorists intending to enter the university premises from

the main road. These weaknesses will have to be addressed if quality of the campus environment is to improve.

Table 4 Grievances on quality of security guards

No	Comment
1	Not sensitive to needs of visitors
2	Lacks knowledge of designated location
3	Unable to give clear directions
4	Unfriendly counter service
5	Needs to be more professional in discharging duties
6	Uncooperative

Table 5 Difficulties faced by security guards

1	Confusing double standards rules and regulations for local and international students
2	Language problem when communicating with international students
3	Difficulty in give warnings to:
i	international students to display identification card
ii	international students to not collect keys if no booking had been made for residential college rooms
iii	international students to not squat in friend's room
iv	students to not park at unauthorised lots
v	students to not smoke on campus
vi	international students to dress appropriately
vii	international students to not enter or leave premises after 12 midnight
viii	international students to not bring in outside food into college rooms

Further data obtained from document study are depicted in Tables 4 and 5. Table 4 highlights the grievances against the security guards while Table 5 shows the difficulties faced by the security guards.The security guards were found lacking in knowledge of names and location of builings and were unable to give clear directions to locations. Additionally the counter service personnel were unfriendly and uncooperative, were not well informed of events and activities happening on campus and thus were not able to discharge their duties effectively. On their part, the security guards felt that they had not been professionally trained to handle students, especially the international students, on matters related to informing and giving warnings on dress code, rules and regulations on behaviour on campus and in residential colleges and parking of vehicle. A major contributing factor was their inability to communicate effectively caused by poor command of the English language. This language problem also manifests itself on multiple occasions as shown in their failure to give warnings to international students on matters related to, among others, smoking, dressing, residential college rules and regulations, vehicle parking and display of identification tag. This lack of ability to enforce law and order on the international students was construed by the local students as unfair treatment or 'double standards' treatment.

Results obtained from the questionnaire survey are shown in the following tables.

Table 6 Quality of Service of the Security Guards

No	Item	Obtained Mean	KAI (targetted) Mean	Implication
1	Ability to give information about on-going event on campus	3.48	4.5	Below target
2	Ability to give accurate direction to location on campus	3.76	4.5	Below target
3	Ability to direct vehicle to parking lot for visitors	3.72	4.5	Below target
4	Ability to handle enquiries	3.62	4.5	Below target
5	Ability to control flow of traffic	3.68	4.5	Below target
6	Ability to provide efficient counter services (handlng visitor's pass / keys)	3.65	4.5	Below target
7	Availability of staff at the counter	3.76	4.5	Below target
8	Enforcement of rules and regulations on local students	3.57	4.5	Below target
9	Enforcement of rules and regulations on international students	3.03	4.5	Below target
10	Promptness of response to security issues	3.50	4.5	Below target

As shown in Table 6, all items measuring the quality of service of the security guards received below target achivements indicating a critical need to train the security guards to be more knowledgeable, skilful and to have more positive attitudes and values towards their profession. The best performing item was ability to give accurate direction to location on campus and availability of staff at the counter, both at 3.76, and third was ability to direct vehicles to parking lots for visitors (3.72), indicating that the security guards had some satisfactory skills of their profession but which were not adequate to match the more wanting quality of service expected in the international arena. The three weak performing items were enforcement of rules and regulations on international students (3.03), ability to give information about on-going event on campus (3.48) and promptness of response to security issues (3.50), indicating near dissatisfaction of the respondents about the ability and attitude of the security guards. It can be noted that while the weakest performance is related to language problem, the second and third weakest performance are related to their lack of readiness to act with professionalism. Complaints have also been voiced out regarding their lax attitude on strangers. Strangers, such as salesmen, have on occasions been found entering the campus grounds and conducting business.

3.2.3 Person (P) Level

At the person level, information presented relates to identifying individuals who should go for retraining and at a given level to meet the challenges at the workplace.

Table 7 Quality of Security Guards

No	Item	Obtained Mean	KAI Mean	Implication
1	Knowledge of name of buildings / faculties / office on campus	3.69	4.5	Below target
2	Knowledge of location of buildings / faculties / office on campus	3.76	4.5	Below target
3	Politeness and respectfulness	3.62	4.5	Below target
4	Responsiveness to enquiries	3.70	4.5	Below target
5	Friendliness	3.57	4.5	Below target
6	Offering assistance (i.e. leading visitor to designated location)	3.60	4.5	Below target
7	Attending to visitor / staff / student needs	3.26	4.5	Below target

The quality of the security guards and their ability to interact with the students, staff and visitors are depicted in Tables 7 and 8. Again all items were rated below the expected target of 4.5. The three items receiving weak satisfaction level were attending to visitor / staff / student needs (3.26), friendliness (3.57) and offering assistance (i.e. leading visitor to designated location) (3.60). The top three satisfactorily rated items were knowledge of location of buildings / faculties / office on campus (3.76), responsiveness to enquiries (3.70) and knowledge of name of buildings / faculties / office on campus (3.69) but which were not near the expected 4.5 target level. Interestingly the better rated items were those related to knowledge of their job specification whereas the weaker rated items were those related to their values and behaviour.

Table 8 Quality of Interaction

No	Item	Obtained Mean	KAI Mean	Implication
1	Greeting staff / students / visitors	3.39	4.5	Below target
2	Enquiring the identity of visitors	3.40	4.5	Below target
3	Asking the purpose of visit	3.41	4.5	Below target
4	Ability to point out wrong doing to local students	3.41	4.5	Below target
5	Ability to point out wrong doing to international students in English	2.97	4.5	Below target
6	Ability to communicate in English	3.06	4.5	Below target
7	Ability to manage social conversation in English	3.07	4.5	Below target

As shown in Table 8, perhaps among all the data presented in the above tables, quality of interaction data by far received slight and below satisfaction levels. The three items showing below satisfaction level were ability to point out wrong doing to international students in English (2.97), ability to communicate in English (3.06) and ability to manage social conversation in English (3.07), clearly indicating a serious need for the security guards to upgrade their communication skills in English since there is a need for them to be communicating effectively with the international lecturers, students and visitors.

The above data revealed that in all aspects of quality of service of the security guards, the quality of the security guards in respect of knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and quality of interaction, as analysed using the OTP typology, the perception is one of critical concern to examine all aspects of lacks, needs and wants of the organisation for training to be effective and efficiently managed. This was the main concern, too, of previous studies conducted in which was found a lack of comprehensive management of training, focusing only on the person (P) analysis only whilst neglecting the organisation (O) and task (T) needs of training (Shenrazi, 2011; Brinia and Villigennis, 2013). Training, by examining the lacks in the person alone may not integrate well with the vision and aspirations of the university for an effective and efficient Security Unit, in this case, if the training did not fit within the overall training development plan. Additionally Tang (2011) highlights the importance of identifying all competencies related to the job. This concern is echoed by Anitha and Sandhya (2013) who reiterate the importance of offering training related to job requirements as they saw a positive correlation between communication skills training and customer satisfaction. A srudy, in the Singapore context, on the perceptions of security guards of their relationship with police officers and the public, showed similar results. The security guards believe that with better training, their image with the public will improve (Nalla, Hoffman and Christian, 1996). In a follow-up article, the security guards believe government sponsored training is crucial to improving and strengthening their professional standards and to creating a more positive public image. (Nalla and Hoffman, 1996). Similar calls for improvement in training and management were found in studies in the American context. In one study, little training for the security guards, poor communication between school and the security guards, and a lack of guidelines to deal with actual situations were the main training concerns (Caine, Burlingame and Arney, 1998). In another study, due to increased crime cases on campus, such as drug abuse, and the reluctance of authorities to report such crimes to the police, has prompted the universities to strengthen physical security measures such as providing counselling, before and after incidents, and other measures to improve campus security (Hinkle and Jones, 1991). In sum, a comprehensive training programme that takes into account the needs of the organisation, the task to be performed and the type of person to be trained is of utmost importance.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The paper has considered an alternative approach to human capital development by examining the training needs of the organisation, the tasks to be performed and the persons requiring training. In summary, the vision of the organisation was identified and in line with that vision, the quest to reach and attain internationally recognised quality standards of service provision was also identified. Units and departments failing to reach the set targets expected were recommended to offer training and re-training of their staff for knowledge and skills upgrading and enhancement of positive attitudes and values to work. This integrated approach to human capital development values the expectations of the organisation, identifies the weaknesses of past training programmes as seen from the output of the training programmes, recognises the need to set standards as benchmarks for achievement of targeted goals and informs areas needing improvements through evaluation of the training programme.

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