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CONCEPTS OF PERSONAL CHANGE IN MODERN
ORGANIZATION THEORY: THE
LABORATORY TRAINING METHOD

A Problem for the Degree of M. S.
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
LINDA WHITBECK SHARP
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ABSTRACT

CONCEPTS OF PERSONAL CHANGE IN MODERN ORGANIZATION THEORY: THE LABORATORY TRAINING METHOD

by Linda Whitbeck Sharp

This study presents a literature review (1950-1967) of the laboratory training method within the framework of modern organization theory. Because the concept of modern organization theory has evolved from the classical and neo-classical organization disciplines, twentieth century organization theory is reviewed. Characterized by systems analysis, modern organization theory views the organization as existing in a world of constant change to which the organization must adapt for survival. Within this perspective, laboratory training is seen as one method for building an organization where effective adaptability to change can take place.

Design components of laboratory training include the training group (T-group), theory sessions, and supplementary activities, but T-groups are the distinguishing feature of this training method. Being an unstructured, small group in which individuals participate as learners, with the guidance of a leader, T-group members utilize their own experiences in bringing about attitudinal and behavioral change.

Although many issues in laboratory training remain unsolved, it appears to be a promising training process capable of helping managers in understanding and controlling more effectively their human environment.

Development, training goals, underlying assumptions and essential characteristics of the laboratory training method are explored. Organization sponsorship and Blake and Mouton's "9,9 approach" are presented as examples of variations in laboratory design. The learning process is viewed as a cyclical phenomena, which may be influenced by the culture and design of the laboratory, group composition, trainer characteristics, and the individual delegate. Among the areas for future development in laboratory training are improved methods for defining the effect of laboratory training in inducing personal and organizational change, tested programs for training professional trainers, and the adaption of laboratory training to various nonlaboratory settings.

CONCEPTS OF PERSONAL CHANGE IN MODERN ORGANIZATION

THEORY: THE LABORATORY TRAINING METHOD

By

Linda Whitbeck Sharp

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PREFACE

Changes as well as improvements in supplies, equipment, facilities, and methods of production and control are rapidly altering the technical, economic, and social environment of the food service operation. Adoption of any new product or method requires adaptable and flexible managers, possessing sensitivity for individuals with whom they associate. Responsibility for training such managers lies within the realm of the administrative dietitian. Thus, it behooves her to have knowledge of all technologic advances in methods of training which help managers adapt to their changing environment. The laboratory training method is one recent innovation in the technology of education. An understanding of the concepts underlying laboratory training may well enhance the dietitian's effectiveness as an administrator and in her efforts toward building a more productive and viable organization.

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INTRODUCTION

Today's organization is a dynamic system existing in a world of constant change. External changes in cultural norms and values, general educational level, economic and political power, and technology reach the organization as demands for internal change. The organization, a human enterprise whose success depends upon the coordinated efforts of its members, requires managers to perform increasingly complex roles in the struggle to adapt to a changing world. It is no longer enough to be a competent specialist or expert; managers need to understand the human side of enterprise, develop interpersonal competence, and examine the social and political forces within which their work is embedded and transacted (33).

In coping with externally induced changes, better mechanisms are needed for adaptability and communication. Laboratory training, directed at the managerial structure, is one method which is receiving increasing recognition for building an organization where effective adaptability and communications can take place (4,9,33). Techniques employed in laboratory training encompass training groups, theory and skill-practice sessions, paired interviews, and informal contacts; but it is primarily the training group which

distinguishes this training method from others. Through small, unstructured training groups, participants learn about groups, interpersonal relationships, and the change process by utilizing their own experiences under the guidance of a leader. And by maintaining a permissive atmosphere, laboratory participants are confronted with opportunities to discover dissatisfactions with present behavior, for collaboration in setting directions for change, and to practice, internalize, and apply new behavior. Thus, laboratory training appears capable of releasing some important forces which can enhance man's ability to control more effectively and creatively his human environment.

Although laboratory training as an instrument of personal change still requires reappraisal and refinement as research proceeds, many concepts germane to attitudinal and behavioral change have been established. This study presents a literature review (1950-1967) of the laboratory training method within the framework of modern organization theory. And because modern organization theory has evolved from earlier theories of organization, brief reviews of the classical and neoclassical organization theories are presented in an effort to place modern organization theory and the laboratory training method in their proper perspective.

OVERVIEW OF TWENTIETH CENTURY

ORGANIZATION THEORY

Organization is defined as a system of structural interpersonal relations . . . individuals are differentiated in terms of authority, status, and role with the result that personal interaction is prescribed. . . . Anticipated reactions tend to occur, while ambiguity and spontaneity are decreased.¹

Organization theory is the major element of administrative science, providing the foundation for management activities. Since it is not a homogenous science based on generally accepted principles, many theories of organization have been proposed and tried (13,14,15,31). Of these theories three have had considerable influence on management thought and practice in the twentieth century. For the purposes of this paper they are classified as the classical, neoclassical, and modern organization theories.

Classical Theory

During the first quarter of the twentieth century the search for greater effectiveness and efficiency in organizations gave rise to what may be termed the classical

¹R. V. Presthus, "Toward a Theory of Organizational Behavior," Administrative Science Quarterly, June, 1958, p. 50.

theory. This theory contained motivation and organization approaches (10).

First, with regard to the motivational approach, Frederick W. Taylor (38), an engineer, made the major contribution in what has become known as scientific management. Scientific management combines the study of physical capabilities of a worker, as is done in time and motion studies, with an economic approach which views man as driven by the profit motive. Classical theorists believed that if material rewards were closely related to work efforts, the worker would respond with the maximum performance of which he was capable. With this orientation the scientific management movement stimulated an impressive number of studies of the physiological constraints on simple physical operations, showing that it was feasible to specify precisely the activities involved in routine production tasks.

Secondly, the approach to the formal organization was a significant component of the classical theory. The formal organization was considered a blueprint according to which organizations were to be constructed and ought to adhere. Its major elements included the division of labor, the scalar and functional processes, structure, and span of control (13). In the organizing process each department was conceived as a definite collection of tasks to be allocated among, and performed by, the employees of the department. Consequently, the organization was viewed from a highly

managerial and authoritative standpoint. No conflict was recognized between man and organization. In general, there was a tendency to consider the employee as an inert instrument performing the tasks assigned to him, viewing personnel as a given rather than as a variable in the man-machine system.

Neoclassical Theory

Following World War I organizations expanded in size and complexity. Increasingly, ownership was separated from management and levels of middle management grew rapidly. As a result problems of coordination increased and intensified existing human resistance to an authoritarian structure.

Arising in part as a reaction to scientific management, another school of thinking--neoclassical theory--gained prominence. The original impetus to this study came from the investigation carried out by a research team from Harvard University and the Western Electric Company's Hawthorne Works in Chicago from 1927 to 1932 (35). In these studies a continuous increase in productivity irrespective of changing physical conditions of work was observed. This suggested that the relation between physical conditions and the efficiency of workers might be obscured by psychological reactions. Consequently, researchers turned their direction from physical conditions to the attitudes of groups and individuals.

The neoclassical school is commonly identified with the human relations movement. This movement emphasized the emotional, unplanned, non-rational elements in organizational behavior. It studied the significance of social groupings and interpersonal relationships of workers. A large body of empirical research was conducted by psychologists and social psychologists in areas of leadership and supervision, communications, participation, and job satisfaction.² From these studies and in response to the social need the concept of informal organization emerged. The informal organization refers to the social relations that develop among the staff or workers above and beyond the formal one determined by the organization (35).

In general, the neoclassical theory accepts the classical doctrine but superimposes on it modifications resulting from individual behavior and the influence of the informal group. Rather than viewing employees as passive instruments, neoclassists assumed that members bring to their organizations attitudes, values, and goals; that they have to be induced to participate in the system of organization behavior. The neoclassical school contended that

²Included are theories of motivation proposed by Maslow, Hertzberg, and Argyris; studies relating productivity with job satisfaction by Kahn, Brayfield and Crocket; communication studies by Baveles and Leavitt; and studies concerning leadership and supervision by Mann, Kahn and Katz, Fleishmann and Harris, and Tannenbaum.

workers have many needs other than purely economic ones. In addition, they suggested ways in which management could--by paying attention to the non-economic, social and cultural needs of the workers--increase worker satisfaction and productivity.

Modern Organization Theory

Modern organization theory is an attempt to unite what is valuable in the classical and neoclassical theories into a systematic and integrated conception of human organization. But its major dialogue has been with the human relations approach. In contrast to the promotion of harmony by the human relationists, modern theory writers recognize the organizational dilemma: the inevitable strains--which can be reduced but not eliminated--between organizational needs and personal needs, rationality and non-rationality, formal and informal relations, and ranks and divisions. Whereas the human relations approach did not provide a full view of the organization, modern theorists envision the organization as a large, complex social unit in which many social groups interact.

Conceptualization of interrelationships among complex phenomena is not new. Darwin's theory of evolution integrated all life into a "system of nature" and indicated how living subsystems are interrelated (13). Keynes, an economist, in his general theory of employment, interest,

and money, connected many complicated natural and man-made forces which make up the economy. Germane to scientific management, the concept of man-machine system was utilized, but concentration was primarily at the shop level. The human relations movement shifted away from man-machine per se to interrelationships among individuals in the organization. It remained the task of modern theory to provide a more complete and integrated conceptualization of the organization. Talcott Parsons was one of the first persons to utilize the system approach for study of social structures (29).

The philosophical perspective of the modern theory is that the only meaningful way to study organization is as a system. Systems analysis provides the framework for visualizing the close relationship between a structure and its supporting external and internal environment; it is concerned with problems of relationship, interdependence, and adaptability of subsystems to the organization as a whole (17).

In the systems model, the organization is considered as receiving inputs from the environment and, in turn, delivering outputs to the environment. It emphasizes not only the interconnectiveness of parts and the multiplicity of systems but also the interconnectedness of the systems themselves which are always in a state of movement, either

responding to a change in one part of the organization or adjusting to the effects of another.

Today's organization exists in dynamic interplay with customers, competitors, labor organizations, suppliers, and governments--all of which are in a constant state of change (34). If the organization is to survive, it must meet the external demands of a changing world through internal modification and adaptation. It is the function of the adaptive structure of the organization to achieve environmental constancy by integrating the external world with the organization.

The demand for change recognized by the adaptive structure should always be implemented through the managerial structure. Since change will affect the whole organization and may require modification in basic policy, the decision-making power with respect to adaptation must remain with management.

Thus, managers are required to perform more complex tasks in the struggle to adapt to a changing world. In addition to being a competent specialist, they must understand and be able to effectively communicate and work with the human side of enterprise (33). Employing the laboratory training method within the managerial structure appears to be a promising strategy for building an organization where effective adaptability and communications can take place (4,9,33).

The laboratory training method correctly belongs within the framework of modern organization theory. For in this method of training, experiences of the group are analyzed to yield learnings about self, interpersonal relations, and the functioning and development of the group as a social system. Through analyzing the encounters and conflicts between systems at many levels of human organization, motivation to learn about human behavior and hopefully, actual learning in a context of application, are accomplished. Clashes between personal systems and group systems of participants and staff are utilized for learning. Finally, theory sessions may focus on problems of organizational change, paralleling the planning for personal change which occurs in the training groups.

THE LABORATORY TRAINING METHOD

Among the techniques utilized in laboratory training, training groups (T-groups) are the distinguishing characteristic of this training method. Being an unstructured group in which individuals participate as learners, T-group members utilize their own experiences and behavior to create a productive and viable organization--a miniature society.

With reference to improving society, John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) has stated:

No great improvements in the lot of mankind are possible, until a great change takes place in the fundamental constitution of their modes of thought.³

Through the creation of a temporary miniature society, laboratory training stimulates opportunities for experimental learning and behavioral and attitudinal change in the struggle to improve organizations of the twentieth century.

Laboratory training has become of use and interest in many fields, having been applied in such diversified groups as hospitals, industries, communities, and universities.

³P. H. Irwin, "The Change Seekers," Harvard Business Review, January-February, 1966, p. 92.

Development

The laboratory training method had its beginnings in 1947 at Bethel, Maine at the National Training Laboratory in Group Development, of the National Education Association. The first laboratory session was designed to try out new methods of re-educating human behavior and social relationships. Training leaders were Kenneth D. Benne, then at Columbia University, Leland P. Bradford, of the National Education Association, and Ronald Lippitt of the Research Center for Group Dynamics. Kurt Lewin, of the Research Center and Ronald Lippitt were among the researchers. Joint experimentation of laboratory methods by a number of behavioral scientists and social practitioners has followed this beginning.

National Training Laboratories (NTL), the name used since 1951, has taken responsibility for fostering the development of training laboratories in various segments of society, selecting and developing competent laboratory trainers, providing a professional home base for trainers, and determining and maintaining standards of professional quality in laboratory training (9). And for several years, the NTL was the sole organizer of training laboratories, but recently training laboratories also have been developed under other auspices.

Since its inception laboratory training has undergone various refinements and elaborations. Emerging from the Basic Skills Training Group, the pattern of the T-group has been one of differentiation of new training formats and technologies. Methodology and social organization have also distinguished one T-group from another. As records of T-group sessions have been only sporadically kept, longitudinal documentation of changes in the internal organization and operation is difficult (9). And because of its newness, laboratory training is rapidly growing and ever-changing in its concepts and practices.

Training Goals

While some variation of the stated goals is evident, depending on the staff and delegate composition, there is agreement on the general goals of laboratory training. One goal is self-insight or increased self-understanding of emotional reactions and expressions in the individual. By penetrating beneath the surface of the personality some unresolved conflicts may be eliminated, thus allowing for improved social sensitivity and behavior flexibility. A second goal is increased awareness of feelings and reactions of others. Laboratory training creates a climate in which people are able to observe, study and react to each other. This climate enables participants to recognize individual

differences, to accept them, and to understand better how their own needs and desires often distort their views of the situation.

Gaining understanding into group processes is a third goal. Aside from becoming acquainted with procedural skills, participants become aware of cues--facial expressions, apathy, dominance, formation of cliques, acts of superiority and hostility--all of which can indicate how well the group is functioning. And members find their place in a group, recognizing need satisfactions and reducing anxieties.

The final goal is concerned with developing awareness of the character of members' respective organizations. If achieved, participants will be better equipped for diagnosing and solving individual, group, and organizational problems. And curriculums of most laboratories provide help to learners in integrating new behavioral patterns with typical ways of behaving in home settings.

Thus, achievement of these goals brings about significant personal changes in laboratory participants--changes in attitude and behavior toward self, others, and groups. Hopefully, these newly acquired understandings, insights and skills will lead to more productive, adaptive, and satisfying relationships in the organization.

Underlying Assumptions

In developing a more integrated model for learning, the laboratory approach is a cross-professional and cross-disciplinary approach which attempts to draw relevant aspects from the behavioral sciences. The behavioral sciences are especially germane in providing knowledge and concepts useful in diagnosing situations and in planning processes of change--processes with which laboratory training is centrally concerned. And it was the idea of one of the founders of laboratory training, Kurt Lewin, to base action on carefully collected and analyzed data. Growing from this idea, experimental data are used to influence action of laboratory training whenever possible, and action itself creates still more data for evaluation.

But experimental data alone are not sufficient in bringing about action. Consequently, laboratory training, being directed toward change, is also based on intervention: the integration of knowledge and intelligent action. And it is believed that behavioral skills can be learned only through processes of participation in which the learner is involved (9,18).

Still another assumption is that laboratory training must affect the delegate in terms of his social roles. In the organizational setting, much work is done through personal contacts with others and effectiveness in dealing with

others is often deterred by lack of interpersonal understanding and skills. By emphasizing the socially relevant aspects of behavior, delegates become more effective in their interpersonal relationships.

Laboratory training relies heavily on the group as a medium of change. Learning, of an emotional and attitudinal nature, is facilitated by group membership and group conditions can be set up which realistically represent the dynamics of the actual organizational setting where change is to be made.

Essentially, the direction of personal improvement lies within the trainees themselves; no attempt is made to tell them whether to change or how to change. The function of the trainer is primarily to help create conditions under which effective growth and development can take place.

Design Components

The laboratory chosen for description in this section will be a typical residential laboratory where participants live at the conference center, spending all their time in training activities. Delegates generally come from various business and industrial organizations and are managers holding either line or staff positions. The entire group typically consists of from 50-75 delegates. After a brief orientation session to the laboratory, most schedules

invariably include T-groups, theory sessions, and supplementary activities.

A T-group usually consists of 10-16 people, including 1-2 trainers, meeting once or twice a day for 2-3 weeks. The group meets informally, beginning without agenda or rules of procedure. With no assigned task an initial vacuum is created; members struggle to fill this vacuum with meaningful activity and relationships. Group members are free to participate as they desire. As members fill the vacuum with their behavior, data are created from which they will have the opportunity to learn about their own behavior, actions of others, and group development. The trainer observes problems of communications, power, and interpersonal relationships to bring into the discussion at the end of the session. Also, tape recorders are generally used to enable the group to recapitulate and study its earlier experiences. Relevant to the types of issues resolved in T-groups Schein and Bennis contend that:

T-groups do have in common the kinds of issues or dilemmas which have to be resolved in the process of building a group and learning from this procedure--what to do, how to spend time, how to distribute power, control and influence, how to develop group standards and a climate which permits maximum learning, how to develop group goals and a sense of group progress, how to keep the group process within bounds. It is the particular solutions to such dilemmas which make each group unique.⁴

⁴E. H. Schein and W. G. Bennis, Personal and Organizational Change Through Group Methods (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1965), p. 17.

Theory sessions are included each day to provide intellectual understanding of what is happening at the emotional level. These sessions allow participants to fit their T-group experience into a framework of concepts and ideas, enabling them to relate to back-home realities. Theory sessions appear to be most effective when they accompany T-group experience and when content is closely related to needs of T-group members at the time of the presentation. Topics generally center on individual and small-group dynamics in the early days of the laboratory experience, organizational and role dynamics during the middle period, and change and application during the final period.

Supplementary activities may include skill-practice sessions, paired interviews, and informal contacts. The purpose of skill-practice sessions is to stimulate a specific behavior, facilitating study in a particular area such as communications, or to practice a skill important for further learning such as observation or leadership. In paired interviews, T-group members are randomly paired to interview each other; these interviews help individuals to identify problems and bring them into the T-group. Informal contacts with the staff in individual or seminar sessions increase in importance in furthering learning as the laboratory proceeds. Some seminars are scheduled by staff members--others may be requested by the delegates. Aside from seminars, informal

contacts with the staff may develop at meal times, coffee breaks, cocktail hours, or recreation periods.

Laboratory training sessions may vary greatly in terms of goals, delegate population, length, staff characteristics, and training design as well as sponsorship and setting. Since laboratory training is a philosophy of learning not limited by fixed variables, precise methodology is determined by the needs and specific situations in which the training is to be done. Of particular emphasis herein will be the nature of the sponsorship and Blake and Mouton's "9,9 approach" (7).

The focus of this paper has been predominantly upon methodology within a laboratory training center such as the NTL. However, this training innovation may also be adapted to nonlaboratory, organizational sponsorship. In organizations, laboratory training is utilized mainly in programs of self-improvement and organizational change. Both family groups (a particular supervisor and his work group) and vertical or horizontal slices across the levels of the organization have been used in composing T-groups (4). Generally, T-groups are combined with other efforts such as consultation, on-the-job coaching by trainers, and the feedback and discussion of research results. Problems of transferring learnings from training to action are less evident where the distance between "reality" of training and work situation is reduced. Schein and Bennis (33) conclude that

it is difficult, but not impossible, to establish the appropriate climate necessary for effective laboratory training in the non-residential setting. Whether or not resistance to self-examination and re-education is increased must still be determined. Although the residential laboratory provides a more integrated and intensive learning experience, evidence to date indicates that laboratory training methodology can be adapted and used constructively in effecting behavioral change in an organization (9).

Blake and Mouton's (7) "9,9 approach" adapts laboratory methods for the resolution of intergroup and organizational problems by emphasizing organizational change rather than personal learning. The term "9,9 approach" originates from their conception of a managerial grid, a method of designating various styles of leadership. Based upon two key variables--concern for people and concern for production--the managerial grid identifies five theories of managerial behavior. Number 1 in each instance represents minimum concern whereas 9 stands for maximum concern. Team management ("9,9 approach") theory is based upon the idea that production is from the integration of task and human requirements into a unified system of interplay toward organizational goals.

In order to achieve the goal of becoming a 9,9 organization, Blake and Mouton propose a six phase approach which considers achievement of production through mature

interpersonal relationships, integrated with the purposes of the organization. Phases 1 and 2 involve management development while phases 2-6 are designed to help managers work toward 9,9 goals of organizational development. During the first phase trainees are exposed to behavioral science theory, T-group sessions, and feedback experiences, having the opportunity to study alternatives for dealing with people in connection with production. The focus in the second phase is on team training, involving direct interpersonal feedback among actual work group members. This phase attempts to resolve problems of communication and decision making among those whose work requires close cooperation. Phase three is designed to achieve better integration between functional groups and various organizational divisions. Broad organizational improvement goals are set by the entire managerial force in the fourth phase. A change agent attempts to help the organization realize these goals in phase five. Directed toward stabilizing the change, the sixth phase is designed to insure that changes have become firmly established in organizational operations. Line personnel, rather than outside specialists, serve as the trainers for laboratory sessions. By focusing educational methods on the organization itself, Blake and Mouton hypothesize that the entire organization can be brought to a higher level of performance.

Essential Characteristics

To facilitate learning by laboratory training several basic conditions are necessary: focus on experienced behavior, feedback, desire to learn, and psychological safety.

Immediate experiences of participants provide the basic data for laboratory learning. Focusing on here-and-now experiences, analysis, conceptualization, practice, and generalization are determined from data stimulated by individuals interacting with one another. Implicit in this approach are emotional experiences which aid in understanding concepts of human behavior and reference points of reality to which concepts can be related and compared.

Objective feedback of data concerning behavior appears to be an effective method for improving individual and group performance (25). By obtaining information about performance and determining how far this deviates from the desired goal, feedback may stimulate change and give direction to subsequent behavior. Feedback has the most powerful effect when based on observed and experienced behavior and when reported instantaneously. Problems of giving and receiving feedback are often covered in theory sessions.

Participants must possess the desire to learn to obtain maximum benefit from laboratory training. Feelings and thoughts need to be brought forward with the recognition

that learning and change may be desirable; unlearning must take place before learning can be initiated. To increase the desire to learn the laboratory must work toward creating an atmosphere of psychological safety--that is, an environment which reduces personal defensiveness and encourages collaboration and trust among members. In part this environment is accomplished when laboratories are held away from the pressures of society, where mistakes can be made without repercussions to the individual or society. Also, building an attitude of inquiry and experimentation into the laboratory structure gives the delegate a sense of support and safety.

The Trainer

Trainers may vary greatly in terms of personality, educational background, experience, and theories of training. The task of the trainer is complex and no one set of traits can be considered essential. However, it is believed that the trainer should have competence in two areas: his own inner life and group dynamics (9). The former is achieved most firmly by exploring one's own subconscious or by psychotherapeutic experience. With regard to the latter, a well-developed background of training in one of the behavioral sciences and actual experience in working with groups seems most beneficial. And it is helpful for potential trainers to first participate as a group member.

The function of the trainer varies, depending upon his competence, theoretical orientations, perceptions of the demands of the situation, and the nature of the group. Certain general functions of the trainer can be identified, however. His primary function is to help learners form groups for learning purposes and to learn from the experiences they develop. Conditions which encourage the exploration and development of changing and flexible relations between trainer and learners must be a part of the laboratory design.

Through acceptance of criticism, non-evaluative comments, and the ability to raise questions, the trainer establishes a model of behavior. And by his behavior--the way he reflects feelings and clarifies comments--he introduces new values. Intervention may occur every few minutes or may not be made for an entire meeting. However, when intervening the trainer should try to make wide, generalizing remarks pertinent to many group members; frequently his interpretations should be in the form of a question that he wishes the group to examine. He may facilitate the flow of communications by raising questions, clarifying issues, and encouraging full participation. Finally, the trainer generally introduces concepts and knowledge derived from his experience and research findings (37).

In an effective laboratory the trainer utilizes numerous roles in facilitating learning. He functions

alternatively as participant or encourager and as observer or interpreter of individual and group behavior. It may be desirable at times to serve as consultant or counselor. Often it is necessary to be a teacher in supplying concepts and knowledge needed to analyze situations (4).

Depending upon their attachment to the organization, trainers possess legitimate or expert power. Here, power refers to the ability to influence--primarily the ability to influence through representing and transmitting values which are desired by the trainees. Because of position, external and internal staff trainers are viewed by trainees as having expert power whereas internal line trainers have legitimate power. The trend appears to be toward a team approach, employing both external and internal trainers using legitimate and expert power.

Thus trainers, both external and internal to the organization, have been employed in laboratory training. Under the assumption that only a skilled outsider can provide the perspective, detachment, and energy necessary to affect alterations in existing patterns, reliance has been primarily upon the external agent. However, there are advantages in having internal trainers conduct the laboratory sessions. For instance it is argued that the insider possesses intimate knowledge of the trainees and he does not generate the suspicion and mistrust which an outsider often does. Furthermore, his acceptance and credibility are

guaranteed by his organizational status (4). Blake and Mouton (33) indicate it not only gives line managers the opportunity to learn effective teaching skills, but also when organization members accept responsibility for teaching, they feel increased responsibility for assuring that the learning is utilized on the job.

The Learning Process

The learning process can best be explained as a cyclical process. The sequence of steps, which are overlapping and interdependent, start with dissatisfaction of a problem. Next, a new behavior is selected and after practicing this new behavior, evidence on results must be obtained. Finally, the new behavior is generalized, applied, and integrated into the total pattern of behavior and the cycle begins again with the finding of new dissatisfactions and problems (5).

Dissatisfactions with attitudes, understandings, and behavior usually come to the learner before or early in laboratory training. Initially this may be a vague, unfocused feeling but it becomes more defined as learning proceeds. Often accompanying these dissatisfactions are emotional problems--fears of failure, anxieties about acceptance, and uncertainties about unanticipated consequences of change--creating ambivalence about entering into the learning situation. Thus, the first motivational problem confronting the

laboratory is to provide conditions under which the individual can test the reality and depth of his dissatisfactions, enabling him to accurately diagnose his learning needs.

A permissive, trustful, and non-judging atmosphere helps to broaden the range of possible new behaviors from which the learner may select. In this type of atmosphere patterns of perception, valuation, and behavior are generated as group members feel free to interact with one another. The learner must be aware of these phenomena and select the different practices which may help him to reduce his dissatisfactions with his present behavior.

Once the learner feels a need for learning and has selected behaviors which might fill this need, he must have opportunities to practice. New behaviors need to be tried in situations where they can be discarded if they do not work, otherwise learners will be hesitant to behave differently when back home. Being defenseless and awkward at this point, the primary emotional need is for support.

Through the reactions of others as well as through his own internal responses, the learner needs help in assessing the effectiveness of any newly developed behavior. Here, feedback is of utmost importance in letting the learner know how his behavior is affecting others.

If the learner's new behaviors are to be applied to other situations, his experiences need to be generalized. And to become a part of his normal behavior the learner must

be able to integrate the knowledge acquired in the laboratory with his position in the home situation. The learnings an individual gains from the laboratory are valuable only to the extent that he is able to utilize them in his back home setting.

New ways of behaving lead to new dissatisfactions and problems and the learning cycle continues. This cycle proceeds until termination of the laboratory or until an equilibrium is reached in which new behavior on the part of one member no longer proves to be disconfirmatory information for another member.

Components Influencing Learning Outcomes

Many factors influence the learning outcomes in laboratory training. The main forces in learning and shaping events include the culture, design, and staff of the laboratory, group composition, and the individual delegate.

Germane to laboratory culture, it appears crucial for the delegates and staff to be insulated from the regular pressures of everyday existence so that the set of values affecting activities at the laboratory can grow without outside contamination. Laboratory values, including the control and authority system employed, should be congruent with values of the delegates. Legitimacy of interpersonal relationships should be assessed in terms of their effect on the group and susceptibility to change (4).

The culture of the laboratory is determined more by its design than any other single factor. Laboratory design encompasses decisions concerning the sequence of activities, the amount of time spent on T-groups, theory sessions, and other events, the size of groups, staffing, recreation periods and data collection. Schein and Bennis (33) hypothesize that the longer the laboratory, the greater the likelihood that what is learned will become integrated with the self and back-home norms and values. Training objectives need to be defined with due consideration to the time dimension. Related to the character of the T-group, interpersonal episodes around such issues as intermember conflict, personal exposure, and problems with authority seem to have the greatest impact. Studies focusing on role playing and feedback and their influence on learning have demonstrated that these techniques are effective (9). Bennis (4) believes that voluntarism regarding participation is essential for ethical reasons and realistic learning considerations.

As the size of the group increases, the problem of maintaining effective interaction increases. A large unit reduces the opportunity members have to talk to one another and consequently to influence each other. Although conclusions about the appropriate size of groups have not been reached, it is generally agreed that the upper limit should be the size which still allows all group members to be aware of each other's presence (25).

Group composition is a potent factor, finding direct expression in the character of group interaction. Efforts may be made to compose groups either homogeneously or heterogeneously. Some prefer homogeneous groupings based on similar back-home roles or similar personality orientations. Studies indicate that, at least initially, homogeneous groups reinforce and permit expression of the individual tendencies of members (9). And it is assumed that homogeneity may facilitate communication and the transfer of learnings to the back-home situation. Another view places value in composing groups heterogeneously--with as much variety as possible in age, sex, geographical location, job role, level of responsibility, and status. Investigations suggest that groups composed of a variety of types are likely to elicit a wide range of issues for exploration. These findings are in agreement with the assumption that varied composition multiplies learning opportunities. But it should be noted that dichotomous groups are likely to be less efficient at problem solving and display more frustration and anger and less perceptual accuracy (9).

As recognized earlier, laboratory trainers may vary considerably in personality, experience, educational background, and theories of learning. Personality characteristics often find expression in training philosophy and behavior. Some studies suggest that the trainer adapts his style to each particular group; and, his style of participation

may be utilized as a model by group members (9). Although the trainer's values, competence, and collaboration are crucial for the success of the laboratory, the issue of the trainer's role is a relatively unexplored area. Selection of trainers will become more refined as the personality correlates necessary for efficient management of training problems are recognized (37).

The individual delegate is an important but incompletely understood agent in the learning process. What the individual learns from laboratory training is dependent upon such factors as his background, previous experience and needs, the reasons he came to the laboratory and his expectations of it, his sensitivities, and position in the group. Apparently, what the individual is like before coming to the laboratory significantly influences the learnings acquired. Argyris (2) contends that those who benefit most from T-group experience seem to possess at least three attributes: a relatively strong ego that is not overwhelmed by internal conflicts; defenses which are sufficiently low to allow the individual to hear what others say to him; and, the ability to communicate thoughts and feelings with minimal distortion.

Research in the area of individual behavior has tended to concentrate on the problem of identifying personality characteristics which may be relevant to behavior in groups. M. B. Miles (9) has found that threat-oriented individuals are less receptive to feedback of certain kinds

and that ego strength, flexibility, and need-affiliation are relevant in facilitating unlearning, involvement, and the reception of feedback. Findings by Watson et al. indicate that responsive, outgoing persons are more likely to apply laboratory learnings (9). Far more research is needed regarding the characteristics of the delegate and the benefits he will gain from laboratory training.

Many questions concerning the learning outcomes of laboratory training are incompletely answered or remain unsolved. The list of needed research can be extended almost indefinitely in the areas of laboratory design, trainer and delegate characteristics, and group processes. However, the meagerness of research does not reflect lack of concern but rather the difficulties in setting up the research design and gathering reliable data. Although an integrated research-training design, where evaluation is part of the laboratory planning from the onset, may be ideal, it is the hardest to engineer. While the trainer desires to adapt the training design as the laboratory proceeds, it is in the interest of the researcher for training design to remain constant. Also, there is an insufficient number of delegates willing to be part of the control group as well as a lack of funds and staff resources to conduct systematic studies. Before and after training measurement designs present problems in developing assessable and reliable

performance indexes. And when data are gathered through interviews and observation, results may be biased with factors having little to do with what actually has been learned (33,37). Regardless of these difficulties, research is proceeding, making adaptations of design and data collection as required by the particular situation.

SOME NOTES ON FUTURE DEVELOPMENT
IN LABORATORY TRAINING

The present status of laboratory training has evolved from continued experimentation and change. Just as it would have been difficult to predict this evolution with any certainty twenty years ago, it is likewise difficult to predict future developments in any detail. There are, however, several areas of unsolved problems; their solution will largely determine the future growth of laboratory training.

One major concern is the extent to which laboratory learnings lead to improved performance in the home situation. Unfortunately, laboratory training participants frequently report that their initial enthusiasm diminishes under the pressures of everyday existence (9). Argyris (2) contends that effective laboratory education must be followed by changes in the organization, its policies, managerial controls, and technology. And, improved methods need to be developed to determine more exactly the effect of laboratory training in inducing change in organizations.

As interest in laboratory training has spread into fields of industry, health, community organization, and education, the demand for competent trainers has steadily increased. Not only may laboratory training be harmful to

participants but methodologies may be discredited if trainers do not possess adequate skill and ethics. But no well-tested program for training professional trainers exists. The best solution for this type of program seems to lie in a close collaboration between NTL and various university centers.

Closely aligned with modern organization theory, laboratory training integrates scientific and engineering concepts from a variety of disciplines. This is evidenced by a growing integration with findings from the behavioral sciences engaged in interpersonal learning, personality development, planned change, psychiatric and clinical theory, group dynamics and problem solving. But a related limitation is the lack of integration of behavioral science concepts into a unified theory of behavior-change-in-group phenomena (9).

Although many training laboratories have included research programs within the limits of available means and resources, numerous questions remain unsolved. Current research needs to be systematically and thoroughly examined to determine which components of change processes have been scientifically validated; future research programs require increased objectivity and refinement. Perhaps by involving researchers and trainers in the goals of both, research interests and training needs can be reconciled. And the development of continuing relationships among the NTL,

universities, and organizations concerned with planned change would facilitate empirical research and the generalization of theories.

A final area of growth potential exists in adapting laboratory training to various nonlaboratory settings. Promising beginnings have been made in academic institutions as well as organizations and agencies engaged in programs of organizational change. Comparative research upon laboratory and in-company training should increase both knowledge of the laboratory training method and of the processes of organizational change.

Despite the unsolved problems of laboratory training, there seems to be a growing demand for this method of training by a diverse range of social organizations (9,33). And, although reappraisal and refinement is required as research proceeds, laboratory training appears to be a promising educational process capable of helping managers in understanding and controlling more effectively their human environment.

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