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Behavioural Abilities Measurement

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Abstract:

Behaviour modification, behaviour measurement and analyses is increasingly gaining significance which is quite evident from increasingly large number of organizations providing behavioural training and development programmes based on their needs analysis, conducting personality tests and introducing customer service as a part of employee's scorecard. These organizations spend huge resources on various interventions which are aimed to further their objective of creating and maintaining good behaviour in the organization towards other employees, suppliers, clients etc. This paper thus attempts to define concepts of behaviour, behavioural abilities or competencies, characteristics of behaviour and behavioural abilities. The paper also highlights what needs to be borne in mind while measuring the behavioural abilities based on the review of literature and highlights the existing gaps in literature to make the measurement of behavioural abilities more meaningful.

Keywords: *Behavioural abilities, behavioural abilities measurement, behaviour modification, behavioural competencies*

1. Introduction

Measurement of the behavioural parameters of employees is required to match an employee with the job that he is best at, and a job with the employee who is best at performing the same. It helps us identify and explore what are the strengths and weaknesses of an employee, what motivates or demotivates him, what he expects and can be expected from him, what he is capable of doing and what potential he has which can be nurtured and realized by the organization in future. Therefore, behavioural abilities of employees of an organization, its components, weights assigned to components, human resource department interventions to affect behavioural ability change and the measurement of these behavioural abilities are significant to almost all the functions of human resource including selection, recruitment, training and development, performance management and succession planning. It is important and proven by research that in order to be successful people hired by an organization should have a ratio of 49:51 between technical and behavioural competencies (McInnes Cooper). Forrier & Sels (2003) also opined that it is useful to include both technical and behavioural capabilities as indicators of ability in reference to employability in the labour market. There are various kinds of behavioural abilities including Communication, Interpersonal skills, Conflict management, creativity and innovation, negotiation, team management, time management, stress management, delegation, problem solving, soft skills etc. which an organization attempts to imbibe in all of its employees as they are the face of the organization and the success of the organization relies on its employees and their abilities. Inabilities of employees in exhibiting good behavioural attitude or behavioural skill impacts the organizations in varying degrees depending on the type of industry and nature of the role and responsibilities of the employees. A number of approaches, theories and models contribute to the understanding of behavioural abilities and their measurement process.

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1. Behaviour

Behaviour is an indicator of action and the individual's internal conditions. Behaviour and action are created by internal conditions of an employee (knowledge, skills, abilities) and stimulated by perception of an employee about the environment (tasks, requirements, outcomes) in which he operates (Straka, 2004).

Behaviours that are exhibited by an individual are a product of the relationships between people, their environment, and the technology that surrounds them (Morris et. al, 2012).

Cooper et. al, (2010) explained three dimensional qualities of behaviour: repeatability (count or rate of frequency), temporal extent (duration), temporal locus (response latency and inter response time).

2.2. Behavioural Analysis

Behavioural analysis attempts to assess and define an employee's natural orientations, predispositions, and motivational factors. Behavioural analysis is based on the predictability of behaviour. Though the behaviour may not be predictable for all the time, it can be measured when a longer time horizon is considered for the reason that humans are predictable (University of Cambridge, 2013).

2.3. Behavioural Abilities/ Behavioural Competencies

A range of measurable individual characteristics which can be further shown to differentiate effective and ineffective performance can be together called behavioural attributes or behavioural competencies (University of Cambridge, 2013).

2.4. Behavioural Abilities Measurement

Measurement of behaviour and behavioural abilities carries different meaning for different stakeholders. While behaviour analysts measure behaviour so that questions related to the existence and nature of functional relations that exists between socially significant behaviour and environmental variables can be answered, human resource practitioners would be more interested in evaluating interventions in terms of their success in impacting behaviour and thereby influencing organizational performance so that they may be in a better position to decide regarding the treatment of various interventions (Cooper et. al, 2010).

To establish if a particular intervention is successful, human resource department needs to determine baseline measures of behaviour prior to implementing a behaviour modification programme and the same should be followed up by the measurement and analysis of results thereafter. The correct measurement of results of an intervention rely on good collection and utilization of the baseline data to enable the human resource department to compare the result obtained with the baseline which serves as a standard against which the success of an intervention is evaluated (Hampton et. al, n.d.).

3. Literature Review

3.1. Scope of Behavioural Abilities Measurement

Individuals perform cost – benefit calculations and act accordingly as per the Rational Choice theory. However social- psychological models go beyond this to understand the origins of behavioural preferences (Darnton, 2008).

3.2. Characteristics of Behaviour and Behavioural Abilities

- Behavioural abilities are person specific and not job specific (Hecht, 2008).
- When an action is performed, the observable component of the action is called behaviour and the non observable part of an action is called experience which may be cognitive, motivational or emotional (Straka, 2004).
- A reasonably fair prediction can be made about an employee's future behaviour on the basis of his past behaviour. This is the primary reason behind human resource department's exercise to identify the competencies and characteristics required to perform the job successfully, observing and attempting to identify when and how an employee demonstrated particular behaviours and thereby seeking the best match with the competencies and characteristics that an employee possesses (Victoria University of Wellington, n.d.).
- Behaviours which are functional in one context might be dysfunctional in some other context (German Council for Social and Economic Data (RatSWD), 2009).
- Models of behaviour and theories of change are complementary to each other in the sense that to understand how behaviours change overtime or can be changed, it is important that one understands the factors that influence specific behaviours (Darnton, 2008).

3.3. Factors Influencing Behaviour

- The values and behaviour brought by participants into professional training and development programmes, role models of participants in professional and academic environments and the environment themselves are major factors that define participants attitudes and behaviours (Hammer, 2000).
- Personality traits provide a base for predicting the behaviour of an employee as the same are characterized by consistency even while the situations and environment change (doi: <http://www.profileperformancesystem.com/personality-traits.html>).
- Dohmen et. al (2011), states to understand and predict economic behaviour it is important to understand individual attitudes towards risk.
- Morris et. al, (2012) in his report presenting a review of theories and models of behaviour and behaviour change found that the largest number of studies focus squarely on the individual as the locus of behaviour. Though he found varied degrees of impact by external factors, but still each of the theories studied was found to hold that behaviour is an outcome of competing influences which are balanced and decided upon by the individual itself.

3.4. Factors Affecting Measurement Process

- Weightage given to the behavioural evaluation in the overall evaluation process impacts the effectiveness of measurement process (Hammer, 2000).
- There can be various actions that may influence the behaviour of a person. According to NICE (2007), these actions may be taken at individual, household, community or population levels, though it is not necessary that the outcome of such actions or interventions occurs at the same level. For instance, when an intervention is delivered at population level, it may affect individuals. Similarly, community and family level intervention may affect the whole population.
- Policies of an organization can impact behaviour of employees through the interventions implemented and supported by it (Michie et. al, 2011). These policies thereby also impact the nature, extent of measurement of such behaviours.

- Besides this it is important for an organization to address the issues including resource, partnership working and leadership which have an equal determining impact on the success of behaviour change efforts (Moullin & Copeland, 2013) as well as on the measurement of results obtained by such efforts.
- Inability and unwillingness on part of human resource management to measure ROI of a behavioural abilities intervention and resistance on part of top management to support them to be able to conduct a comprehensive and meaningful evaluation of the intervention contribute to a great extent to the measurement process design being limited to the qualitative analysis only (Sachdeva, 2014b).

3.5. Data Collection

- The two ways in which behavioural data is generally collected are self reporting and observation by others (Hammer, 2000).
- Event recording is generally used to detect and record the number of times a particular behaviour is observed. Various timing devices like stopwatches are used to measure duration and response time. Now a days computer assisted measurement has become more sophisticated and easy to use allowing for simultaneous recording of multiple behaviours (Cooper et. al, 2010).
- Participants can report on how they responded to certain situations or how they think they will respond if a particular situation arises (Hammer, 2000). However, researchers are often skeptical about the validity of self reported personal attributes and traits. They fear lest those may not be behaviourally meaningful. Dohmen et. al (2011).

3.6. Research in the Field

- There are many researchers who have contributed to the field of behavioural training and development programmes and thrown light on the various constituents of behaviour which distinguish one employee from the other on the basis of varying degrees of behavioural competencies that they possess. Behavioural Competencies framework developed by Georgia is a very good illustration of what behaviours could look like to guide evaluators of employee behaviours in the organization. It consists of 18 competencies with detailed description of each one of them (Hecht, 2008). McInnes Cooper, (n.d.) defines and provides examples of typical behaviours which are associated with behavioural competency. The behaviours including accountability, attention to detail, change leadership, client service, commitment to learning, communication, conflict management, cultural awareness, ethics and integrity, flexibility, initiative, organizational understanding, planning and organizing, problem solving, relationship building, results orientation, stress management, team leadership, teamwork have been considered as indicators of behavioural ability and what is required to demonstrate that one carries the said behavioural ability has also been pointed out in detail in the study.
- Personality traits do not change with time as they relate to the habit, thought and emotion of an employee, however, behaviour traits ie. the way of conduct, what an employee says and how he says what he intends to, what an employee does and how he does it, can be altered to a certain degree (doi: <http://www.profileperformancesystem.com/personality-traits.html>).
- Recognising the fact that behaviour can be changed with the use of various models available in the literature and owing to the increased importance of influencing behaviour to be able to achieve positive policy outcomes, behaviour change was chosen as the first review of Government Social Research Knowledge Reviews. The report of the advisory group of Government Social Research members presented over 60 social- psychological behaviour change models and highlights the issues to be considered while using the models to bring out change in behaviour (Darnton, 2008). One of the recent contributions to the field was made by Michie et.al, (2011) who developed a new framework of behaviour change in terms of 'behaviour change wheel' with three layers: behaviour system, intervention layer, policy layer. It further shows linkage between components at these three levels. This tool may help an organization to design and select interventions and policies on the basis of analysis of human behaviour.
- Nice (2007), suggested that training interventions should focus on generic competencies and skills rather than on specific models. They believed that a range of behaviour change methods and approaches should be employed and there should be a regular review of the allocation of resources to these interventions and programmes.
- Moullin & Copeland (2013), focussed on the identification of behavioural ability outcomes which required ensuring that employees of the organization and the processes used by it are able to achieve the outcomes and process outputs required. They developed a strategy map to illustrate the link between capabilities, processes and outcomes. It serves as a tool to help stakeholders understand the outcome and process output that a programme aims to achieve and thereby creates an understanding amongst employees as well by highlighting as to what they are being evaluated against.
- Moullin & Copeland (2013) described an approach of integrating the Theory of Planned Behaviour into the Public Sector Scorecard to address and provide a solution for the missing link between outputs and outcomes of behaviour change.

4. Findings & Recommendations

- Models on behaviour and behaviour change can only pave a way to understand employee's behaviours and how to possibly impact it. However, application of a model providing indicators of behaviour without making an attempt to understand in depth the processes of changing behaviour will not serve the purpose (Darnton, 2008). The reason underlying the same is complexity of human behaviour. Human behaviour does not change instantly, it takes time to change. Perceptions of employee about a particular human behaviour though may be altered relatively faster. There needs to be thus more attention

paid to the working of these processes or activation of the change process resultant to an intervention of the human resource department.

- In order to identify which intervention to start with and when, whether to implement an intervention or not, setting a baseline for the purpose serves as an effective tool (Hampton et. al, n.d.). For instance, for an organization with most of the employees, say around 95 percent of them with good communication skills might not be as benefitted by a communication skills training and development programme intervention as by a team building, stress relieving or a motivational training and development programme when it is faced with problems of violence, absenteeism, employee turnover. Thus to identify which intervention will contribute most to the organization it is important that the decision is based on a baseline which may be, for instance, score in a communication skills test. Standardisation of procedure may thus provide more meaning to the intervention and the results it produces.
- Nice (2014), recommended that in order to make behaviour change interventions work, it is important that an organisation's policies, strategies, resources and training all provide behaviour change support. It was pointed out that employers should take step forward to ensure that the employees understand the importance of being supportive, motivating people and showing them empathy. They must ensure that employees are provided behaviour change training and at the same time professional development of employees, knowledge of behaviour change theories, methods and skills should also be focused on. It is needless to mention that to have this behaviour change support flowing in, the impact of such support and effectiveness of various interventions to actually lead to a change in behaviour needs to be exhibited in measurable terms.
- In view of the development of the approach to maximize value than trying to cut on expenses, it has become all the more necessary that all the departments of an organization including human resource department aligns its value measurement design to this transition for all the human resource interventions to be able to survive and grow in the dynamic and competitive environment (Sachdeva, 2014c).

5. Conclusion

Organisations often wonder if a particular training and development programme brought the results they are hoping for or if they can expect it to deliver the results they are expecting from the programme. They however do not have sufficient guidance available to answer this question and to assess and measure the success of behavioural programmes as is easily available to them, for instance, in case of a sales or a technical training and development programme. At the most, the effectiveness of such programmes is restricted to evaluation of the training design, infrastructure, trainer's efficiency etc. There is not enough work done to enable or guide an organization to convert the results of such programme into monetary terms. Though to measure the behavioural abilities change and its impact on the organization, it is important that one has knowledge about what causes a particular behaviour and how can it be changed, it is also equally important that one goes beyond and makes efforts to determine if one actually could make a change in the behaviour or at the least the perception of behaviour that the participants carried. The human resource department must measure the success of various interventions to ensure the resources are not being wasted and they are being utilized effectively. Complexity of human behaviour, difficulty in measurement, lack of knowledge should not be used as excuses for not conducting the measurement at all. Effective measurement of behavioural abilities provides an evidence of the contribution that an intervention makes to the employee's development as well as the organisation's growth (Sachdeva, 2014a). Also, it paves a way to the understanding of what needs to be focused on, which behavioural ability the employees are lacking in, in which direction should the resources of human resource department need to be employed to be able to get the best outcome. It is only then that the ultimate goal of both the employees and the organization be effectively achieved in the true sense.

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