



SPECIAL REPORT

PERS 369

6M SIMULATION TRAINING COURSE:
IMPLICATIONS OF LABOUR UNREST

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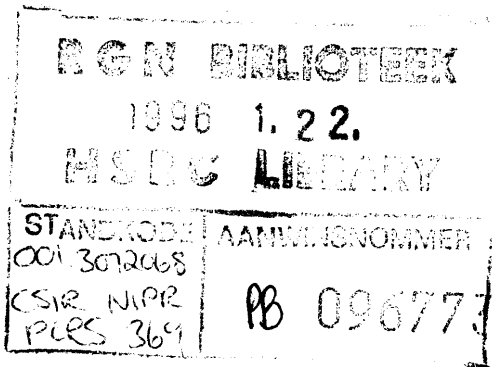
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ORGANISATIONS VISITED

OPSOMMING

Die onlangse stakings in die Oos-Kaap het die vrae laat ontstaan of arbeidsonrus die aanvaarbaarheid van die 6M-Simulasie Opleidingskursus beïnvloed, of 6M instrukteurs die nodige vaardighede het om die 6M in hierdie omstandighede effektief te hanteer en of daar 'n negatiewe houding uit vakuniegeledere teenoor die kursus bestaan.

Oor die algemeen is 'n oorwegend positiewe houding teenoor die kursus waargeneem en ook teenoor die wyse waarop hierdie opleiding 'n gemeenskaplike basis vir die verbetering van kommunikasie vorm. Daar bestaan 'n bewustheid van die gebrek aan kennis oor besigheidskonsepte, wat betref vakunievertegenwoordigers asook werknemers. Daar is ook gevind dat, gedurende periodes van arbeidsonrus, die tydstip van aanbieding en die samestelling van opleidingsgroepe belangrike oorwegings is.

Aanbevelings word gemaak t.o.v. implementeringsbeleid van die 6M-Simulasie by organisasies, die ontwikkeling van 'n vakunie-spesifieke 6M teks, meer aandag aan die hantering van sensitiewe konsepte deur 6M instrukteurs, navorsingsmoontlikhede oor wyer implikasies van die 6M opleidingstegnieke by verskillende bevolkingsgroepe in die algemeen en moontlike navorsing oor die redes vir die arbeidsonrus in hierdie streek.

SUMMARY

The recent strikes in the Eastern Cape raised questions concerning the implications of labour unrest for the 6M Simulation Training Course, whether 6M instructors have the necessary skills to handle the 6M in these circumstances effectively and whether there is a negative attitude on the part of trade unions towards the course.

It was found that in general, there is a very positive attitude towards the course and an appreciation of the fact that 6M training forms a common basis for improving communication. There is an awareness of the lack of knowledge concerning business concepts on the part of union representative and employees. It was also found however that the timing of such a course during labour unrest as well as the constitution of training groups are important considerations.

Recommendations are made concerning the implementation policy of the 6M Simulation in organisations, the development of a trade union-specific 6M text, more emphasis on the handling of sensitive concepts during the training of 6M instructors, research possibilities in respect of the wider implications of the 6M training techniques for different population groups and possible research concerning the reasons for labour unrest in this area.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The recent strikes in the Eastern Cape gave rise to the questions of whether:

- 1.1 labour unrest affects the acceptability of the 6M Simulation Training Course in this area
- 1.2 6M instructors possess the necessary skills to handle 6M training in a responsible and effective manner in an area where labour unrest occurs
- 1.3 a negative attitude exists in labour union ranks towards 6M training and, if so, what effect this has on the acceptability of the course

Two members of the Training Studies Division visited the region from 1 to 7 November 1982, in order to obtain more information regarding these aspects.

2. RESULTS

2.1 Influence of labour unrest on 6M course

An initial negative attitude towards 6M training by trade union representatives was encountered at one organisation only. The following reasons were advanced for this occurrence:

- 2.1.1 6M training commenced immediately after the termination of a strike. Emotions were still running very high at that stage and 6M was viewed as a move from management to manipulate workers.
- 2.1.2 The first group consisted of representatives of the trade union who were well-known for their militant attitude.

2.1.3 A trade union representative who was transferred to Port Elizabeth from the Cape Town factory of the organisation, where the 6M was implemented some time ago, incited people against the 6M.

All the other organisations indicated that they had experienced no problems from trade union representatives. They reported, on the contrary, that trade union representatives are particularly interested in the training because they realise that their members often have no knowledge of the functioning of an organisation.

2.2 Skill of 6M instructors

The instructor who experienced problems (refer item 2.1.1) managed, according to his own report and that of his senior, to overcome the opposition from the trade union in the organisation.

Attendance of 6M training sessions indicated that some instructors expose themselves to criticism from the trade union representatives because of the way in which they (the instructors) handle sensitive areas such as the influence of wage increases on production costs.

2.3 Acceptability of the course

Except for the initial criticism against the course at the one organisation, no further problems in respect of the acceptability of the 6M was encountered.

2.4 NIPR evaluation of 6M instructors

The presentations of six instructors were evaluated.

It was found that the training techniques taught to instructors during training are successfully applied in practice. However, aspects which are not always handled efficiently in the practical training situation by organisations are the following:

- adaptation of course content to the needs of a particular target population, e.g. accelerated pace of presentation when the group is familiar with a particular concept.
- adaptation of the question and answer technique to the needs of a particular target population, e.g. avoidance of unnecessary repetition of an answer when a particular group knows the correct answer well.
- lack of awareness regarding the implications of deviation from the prescribed questions and their order when sensitive concepts are discussed, e.g. influence of certain factors such as salary increases on production costs.

2.5 6M presentation to Institute of Personnel Management

A presentation to members of the Uitenhage branch of IPM indicated considerable interest in the 6M, particularly in the use of the 6M training at in-service training centres.

2.6 General

Information relating to general labour problems was gathered during discussions. The following seem to be problem areas:

2.6.1 Absenteeism

An absenteeism figure of 20% was mentioned by more than one organisation.

2.6.2 Sick leave

The view of sick leave as a right rather than a privilege, is the rule rather than the exception amongst employees and is related to the absenteeism rate. Obtaining medical certificates for the unlawful use of sick leave seems to present no problem.

3. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

3.1 Influence of labour unrest on 6M course

- 3.1.1 The experience of the organisation where opposition against the 6M was encountered indicates that implementation of the 6M Simulation during or immediately after a period of labour unrest can be problematical.

It is clear that 6M instructors can find themselves in difficult positions when labour unrest is present in an organisation. The possible influence of negative attitudes towards management was already anticipated during the development of the 6M Simulation and a caution in this regard appears in the beginning of the 6M Instructor's Manual.

- 3.1.2 Although the training of trade union representatives as homogeneous groups led to positive results in other organisations, such groups can create problems during a state of labour unrest. Should an instructor not succeed in bringing about such a group's acceptance of the course, the implementation of the 6M in the organisation may fail.
- 3.1.3 Information obtained during discussions with industrial relations officers indicate that certain staff members of a University in South Africa are creating negative attitudes towards the 6M training. They propagate the view that 6M promotes the "oppression" of employees by management.

3.2 Trade union interest in 6M

Some 6M instructors indicated that certain trade union representatives initially adopted a sceptical attitude towards the course, but in all these cases the negative attitude changed during the course to enthusiasm about the course content.

Trade union representatives in the different companies with whom discussions were held, were of the opinion that 6M training can facilitate the liaison between the trade union, the employee and management because it can form a basis for discussions between these groups - a "common language".

Several trade union representatives also expressed the opinion that trade union officials require a version of the 6M which indicates the effect of trade union claims upon a business organisation and which provides guidelines on how to explain to workers what they can do to make it possible for the organisation to comply with trade union demands. They were of the opinion that their trade unions would welcome such a course.

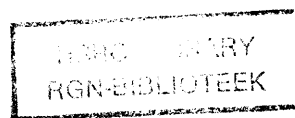
3.3 Role of factual data on the acceptability of the course

The acceptability of the 6M Simulation is in large measure due to the factual basis of the course. Initial 'sceptical' attitudes are in addition overcome by the training techniques. Course delegates are asked to answer questions by means of examples of situations with which they are familiar. No answers are forced upon them and they can therefore not allege that they are being subjected to "brain-washing".

3.4 Evaluation of 6M instructors

The presentations of six 6M instructors were evaluated during the visit:

- (i) One of these instructors was permitted to present 6M courses under supervision of another trained 6M instructor in order to try to overcome certain reservations from our side. A final decision regarding his inability to comply with the required standard was reached and the organisation was informed of this.



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- (ii) One instructor presented his first 6M course during our visit. The course delegates consisted of a group of 8 trade union representatives (shop-stewards). Because this instructor was a machine operator himself before promotion to training officer (since 1 November 1982), the NIPR was particularly interested in:
- his acceptability to trade union representatives
 - his handling of sensitive concepts.

No problem with the group's acceptance of the instructor was experienced and his handling of sensitive concepts also created no problems. The opportunity was nevertheless used to provide further suggestions on the handling of these concepts in the future.

The general reaction to the course was very favourable. Course attendants were of the opinion that they had learned a great deal and were impressed with the training technique. This opinion is confirmed by the following example. During discussion of the concept "maximising use of machinery", one person asked whether he could quickly go to switch off his machine. He did not switch off his machine before attending the training because he was not aware that this action would result in unnecessary costs for the organisation.

- (iii) The NIPR was also interested in the acceptability of a Coloured and a Black instructor to White course attendants.

In both cases no problem was noticed. Particularly noteworthy was the fact that the Black instructor, who is very young, new in the organisation and a graduate, experienced no problem in training a group of White foremen, some of them with very long service with the organisation and with considerably lower educational qualifications.

Apart from the personal acceptability of the instructor, it appears that the training technique, which is geared towards a discussion situation rather than a lecture situation, contributes considerably to this positive attitude between various racial groups.

- (iv) In the case of the remaining two instructors, the acceptability of the 6M for the normal Black worker after a period of labour unrest as well as during a period of reduction of staff and the working of "short-time" was investigated.

Once again the positive attitude towards the course was evident.

3.5 6M presentation to IPM

During a presentation of the 6M to members of the Uitenhage branch of the IPM, considerable interest in the use of the 6M at in-service training centres was expressed. The necessary information relating to this was supplied.

The opinion that the 6M can solve all problems in an organisation was reflected in the questions and comments of some representatives of the organisations at the presentation. The NIPR once again emphasised the fact that this is an unrealistic expectation.

3.6 General

- 3.6.1 Absenteeism, according to information given to the NIPR, is a major problem. Complaints of malpractices in respect of the submission of sick leave certificates were also received.
- 3.6.2 The impression was gained that, in relation to the Witwatersrand, there are fewer Black supervisors in the Eastern Cape region and more White and Coloured supervisors.
- 3.6.3 Discrimination against Blacks, when temporary workers are employed, was also mentioned as a source of dissatisfaction.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Influence of labour unrest on the 6M course

It is possible that labour unrest can have a negative influence on the acceptability of the 6M Simulation in an organisation. Factors which have

an influence are the organisational climate and the calibre of the 6M instructor. The compilation of an information document giving an exposition of the implications of implementation of the 6M training in an organisation where labour unrest is being experienced, will have to receive attention as will more detailed discussions of this matter during 6M instructor training.

4.2 Attitude of the trade unions

It would seem that the 6M Simulation is generally acceptable to trade unions who have the employee's best interests at heart. The need for a 6M course for use by trade unions should be followed up. If the interest from trade union ranks is sincere, attention should be given to the development of a trade union-specific 6M text.

4.3 Evaluation of 6M instructors

4.3.1 Evaluation criteria

The evaluation of the six instructors during the NIPR training course for 6M instructors compares favourably with the quality of their performance in the practical situation. Although one cannot generalise on the basis of these six cases, it would appear that the evaluation criteria developed for the instructor's course highlights critical instructor characteristics and constitutes a reliable measuring instrument.

4.3.2 6M Instructors Course

The handling by the practical 6M presentations of instructors at the various organisations has indicated guidelines for the improvement of the NIPR instructors course. Examples of changes envisaged are the following:

- a modified approach in respect of the training relating to certain sensitive subjects with which instructors experience problems, e.g. the examples used to explain price, quality and the availability of products and the demonstration of the factors influencing production costs;
- more attention in respect of the adaptation of the training technique to the needs of different groups;
- a more in-depth discussion of the reasons for certain stipulated procedures in respect of the presentation of sensitive concept areas and the implications if these procedures are not followed.

4.3.3 Training technique

It has already been determined by pre and post-tests during the development phase that the training technique used for the presentation of the 6M Simulation enhances the concretisation of abstract and unknown concepts and promotes a considerable increase in knowledge of the course content (CSIR Report C/PERS 327¹).

It would appear that these techniques have a positive effect on the relationship between instructor and course attendant. Because the instructors makes use of the knowledge of course attendants to explain the concepts, the instructor is readily accepted by course attendants, notwithstanding more advanced age, longer experience, lower educational qualifications and population differences. This favourable reaction in respect of training staff from different population groups is of particular significance when one takes into account that White factory employees as a group feel particularly threatened by the upward mobility of other population groups in industry. This observation may have positive implications for the improvement of cross-cultural relationships in the training situation in South Africa.

The possible implications of using the training technique developed for the 6M to promote greater co-operation in the field of training between different population groups, should receive attention. Interviews with Whites who have been trained by instructors of other racial groups can furnish relevant information in this regard.

From discussions with management, training officers and employees, it would appear that the acceptability of the 6M Simulation for employees in the Port Elizabeth region is based particularly upon the impartial communication of factual information by means of technique which is visually attractive and which promotes understanding. The success of this approach for the training of, especially, unsophisticated employees has positive implications for the training of this target population in general, and should be followed up in other training programmes, e.g. industrial relations training.

4.3.4 Attitude of the ordinary employee towards the 6M

The fact that the ordinary employee reacted enthusiastically to the 6M even after a period of labour unrest was of special interest. From discussions with course delegates as well as Blacks in general, two conclusions in particular are important.

- (i) The sacrifices and hardships which strikes entail for the ordinary employee were fully experienced. Except for short-term hardships, such as loss of income, many employees realised for the first time that organisations can move their factories to other centres. Male employees were also placed under great pressure by their spouses not to endanger the security of their families.

The lack of knowledge of employees regarding the operation of business organisations was pertinently brought to their attention in this way.

- (ii) From discussions with particularly Blacks it is clear that the positive reaction to the 6M is attributable to much more than the course content. These people feel that the 6M, which is presented in a manner they can understand, apart from its relevance to the work situation has a far greater influence on their lives. Many aspects of the Western way of life are clear to them after 6M training, e.g. the fact that the Westerner is very time-bound, the emphasis on standards and the necessity for obeying regulations.

They also feel that, for the first time, they are recognised as individuals and not as a faceless mass.

In addition, they feel more capable in handling their own domestic budgets, they know what to look for when purchasing articles and are aware that capital (e.g. for an own business) can be obtained from other sources. They feel that this knowledge increases their self-esteem, both inside and outside the work context.

4.4 6M presentation to IPM

4.4.1 6M for In-Service Training Centres

The impact of the 6M Simulation training in the Eastern Cape can possibly be expanded if it is offered at In-Service Training Centres. It will offer a service to smaller organisations who cannot or do not wish to undertake training themselves.

The biggest obstacle is to find an instructor who can be trained to present the General 6M Text and who possesses the necessary skill to identify and to explain the organisation-specific aspects where necessary.

If the broader impact of the 6M training is kept in mind (see item 4.3.4), attention should be given to the opportunity of presenting 6M Simulation training at an In-Service Training Centre provided that the NIPR can properly supervise the initial implementation of the training.

4.4.2 Misconceptions regarding the possible influence of the 6M Simulation

The misconception that the 6M will solve all problems in an organisation is often encountered. The reason for this is possibly attributable to the ignorance of White management regarding the attitude and needs of, particularly, Black workers, as well as an inability to adapt to the changing circumstances in the industrial setting, e.g. the upward movement of Blacks in the labour hierarchy.

4.4.3 General

The interest revealed during the presentation indicates that regular information sessions regarding the 6M can be of value in the various regions. The NIPR has also been approached by several organisations regarding the possibility of a seminar where organisations offering 6M training can share experiences and discuss solutions to problems. It is suggested that attention be given to the possibility of arranging regional seminars regarding the 6M.

4.5 General

Except for a general attitude on the part of employees that all available sick leave should be taken because they are entitled to it, the following managerial practices, which came to the attention of the NIPR, may contribute to the high absenteeism figure.

(i) Overtime

Employees at some organisations are required to work seven days a week during certain times of the year. Payment for overtime does not, however, compensate for the lack of time, particularly after wages have been paid, to give attention to personal matters.

It was unfortunately not possible to obtain more information about the implications of this problem. It is possible that the matter was only brought forward as an excuse by employees.

(ii) Unfair practices regarding the provision of employment

Dissatisfaction at one organisation existed because Coloured supervisors employ their own acquaintances as temporary employees while Blacks are constantly waiting at the gates for employment. If Black employees believe that they are being discriminated against in this way, a negative attitude towards the organisation can result.

In view of the far-reaching implications which the labour unrest in the Eastern Cape region has for the country as a whole, a more in-depth survey should be undertaken to supply more information about the circumstances which cause dissatisfaction and which in turn create a breeding-ground for large scale labour unrest.

5. REFERENCE

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