



A NEW DEVELOPMENT IN TRAINING BY CORRESPONDENCE — MANAGEMENT TRAINING BY TELETUITION

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THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

In our complex society the need for pursued education has become a prerequisite for every individual who wishes to establish himself as a

fully able, economically active member of the community. In the contemporary career world academic training is an indispensable adjunct to professional work: „training for the job;” and residential training by its very nature is not suitable to satisfying this need. This factor stimulated the demand for correspondence training, a circumstance illustrated by the growth of the world's oldest university teaching solely through the medium of the written word — the University of South Africa (UNISA) which was founded in 1916 and commenced active teaching by correspondence in 1946. During the past ten years registered students rose from 13158 in 1962 to 25444 in 1971 and 28100 in 1972. Before discussing one of its most rapidly expanding departments, the School of Business Leadership, I should like to say something more about UNISA. The University teaches its 344 courses through the medium of the two official languages and caters for all races in South Africa — in addition to more than 1000 students outside its borders. Of the total number of students in 1971, 7,266 or 28,5 per cent were graduates and of these 3273 were registered for under-graduate courses and 3993 for graduate study. The number of graduate students increased by 17,5 per cent between 1971 and 1972. This development may confidently be ascribed to the emphasis placed on the appointment of top-quality academic staff now totalling 520 and high academic standards. Many of the graduate students are lecturers in residential universities of the Republic of South Africa.

THE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS LEADERSHIP

One of the most significant reasons for the increase in the number of post-graduates is the recent establishment of the School of Business Leadership. The School's training methods are independent learning, supplemented by interaction across the three interfaces that are so essential to a student's training programme — between the student and his business environment (the student must be a working student), student and student (compulsory study groups) and student and lecturer (compulsory residential training periods and visits by lecturers to study groups).

The **Master's Degree in Business Leadership** was offered for the first time in 1965. This brings to culmination a four-year post-graduate programme for practising businessmen with at least 3 years practical experience. Today we have 607 registered students for this degree; and we expect the number of graduates to mount to a total of about 100 per year. Since 1969 the **doctoral programme (DBL)** has been offered to students who wish to specialise and do research. At present 15 students are registered for this degree. The DBL was followed up in 1970 by the **Advanced Executive Programme (AEP)** for practising businessmen. This programme comprises one year's teletuition and 4 weeks full-time training. It is designed for more senior businessmen with at least 12 to 15 years of business experience. We have 37 students registered for this course. In 1972 we are introducing our fourth programme for our own MBL and AEP graduates — a **programme of continuous education**. The alumni register for this programme every year, and the predominant aim of the course is to keep them up to date with modern developments in management by means of newsletters, lecture notes and seminars.

In all, we now have 659 students from all parts of Southern Africa, extending in length from Cape Town to Salisbury.

THE REQUIREMENTS OF PROFESSIONAL TRAINING ON A HIGH LEVEL OF DECISION-MAKING

What makes the establishment of a business school and the training of future managers

different from the traditional approach in correspondence education? I think it is the fact that for the first time training by correspondence has moved onto a graduate level in the field of professional management. It is often said that for the stimulation of self-development on this level of decision-making in an organisation it is necessary to emphasise increased awareness and the re-examination of previous experience as ends, rather than the acquisition for the first time of knowledge, analytical ability, techniques of management or the orderly and systematic study of and specialisation in one of the business functions. This implies that the student must become attuned to changing his behaviour in the continuous process of going through the learning loop of observation, analysis, interpretation, planning and acting. The main emphasis in professional training rests on all these elements of the learning process, in distinct contrast to traditional university training where the emphasis rests mainly on the transfer of knowledge and techniques. The traditional methods induce the student to concentrate on memorising facts and to develop insight for the sake of knowledge only, rather than on the application and utilisation of these.

THE PURPOSE OF THE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS LEADERSHIP

The main purpose of the School's training programme is the development, as part of the learning process, of the student's problem-solving and decision-making ability within the organisational system. This development runs parallel with and is complementary to the student's continuous self-development. For this reason the type of student envisaged is one who already has a background of some years' practical experience and is still during the period of correspondence training in the continuous situation of problem-solving and decision-making. The School of Business Leadership as a training institution lends itself **ideally to true full-time training**, because training is offered to executives who are actively busy in occupational practice.

THE PROBLEM OF THE TRADITIONAL CORRESPONDENCE INSTITUTION OFFERING PROFESSIONAL TRAINING ON A HIGH LEVEL

The traditional correspondence institution works with students that are in full-time employment; and the teaching process consists of imparting knowledge and techniques (to the student) by means of written work. In this case, independent study forms the basis of the teaching process. In the training of managers on post-graduate level the chief requisite is that the knowledge and techniques transferred should be integrated in the working executive's learning process. With some students acquiring learning solely by independent study, this integration process may occur; but in general a barrier seems to arise between knowledge obtained from independent study and the use of it, with the interaction across the interface of student and the business environment, — memorising or knowledge obtained only for the sake of knowledge is the end result. In traditional correspondence training teaching techniques are employed, such as programmed teaching, films and video-tapes, but all merely to assist the student in memorising the knowledge required for examinations.

In correspondence training it is also common to experience a high drop-out rate because of a lack of motivation, guidance, critical comment on own individual progress and self-discipline or self-control. In full-time residential training the planning, control, motivational and operating (learning) functions are present in one location. In traditional correspondence institutions the planning and control functions — administrative and academic staff — are located in one centre, while the operating or learning function is located in another centre (the student) — the motivational function of the lecturer being usually missing. This decentralisation of the learning function causes a lack of motivation, guidance and critical comment on own individual progress. Management training in general is one of the more expensive types of training for both university and student. The student is a working executive and time is in his case a valuable factor. A high drop-out cannot be afforded.

THE SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF MANAGEMENT TRAINING — DECENTRALISED SEMI-AUTONOMOUS STUDY GROUPS

When the University of South Africa was approached to introduce management training for experienced managers, the abovementioned barriers seemed insurmountable. A solution was obtained — the development of continuous interaction across the interface, between student and student in the different locations. A system of study groups, at present totalling 50 was established. Like any other operating system, a study group must have a strategy, it must be structured. Under strategy we include its purpose, its objectives and the deployment of resources — the type of student, teaching techniques and contents of course material. The School now consists of headquarters, decentralised semi-autonomous study groups and students doing independent study.

THE PURPOSE OF A STUDY GROUP

The main purpose of study groups is to give the working student practical exercise in integrating his practical experience and the knowledge obtained from independent study of his lectures and from fellow-students experiencing the learning process under quasi laboratory conditions. Study group discussions may be seen in the comparative light of a pilot plant operating next to the actual plant. Tonight a problem solution is being tried out in the pilot plant (the study group), and tomorrow it will be tried in the actual situation — with a feedback or a learning loop back to the study group again. The study group becomes the focal point of integration, of knowledge techniques and practice. The study group integrates the university into the practical business world. Another purpose is to make correspondence training more effective.

In the study-group system more decentralisation of the educational process is possible, resulting in a more effective functioning of correspondence education.

A part of the control function is now also decentralised and the motivational function is brought back. The study group as an interacting system, controls and motivates its members. In

analysing the purpose of the study group we must always see it in relation to the purpose of the School, that is, the development as a part of the learning process of the student's problem-solving and decision-making abilities within the organisational system. The aforementioned issues have clearly demonstrated how important the study group is in our training programme.

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY GROUP

Continuing from the purpose of the study group, we now turn to the objectives or targets of the group which serve to indicate or measure to what extent the study group has succeeded in attaining its purpose. It is of course evident that most of these objectives can measure only indirectly to what extent the purposes have been attained.

The group objectives consist of attaining more than the minimum mark of 50 per cent for group assignments, weekly, or almost weekly. To attain its purposes the study group must, by means of group work, be impelled and motivated to work as an integrated system. The fact that a student is directly dependent on the other members of his group for examination entrance, and indirectly dependent on them for success in passing the examinations, motivates and impels him to contribute to group activities. Study groups are kept informed of the performance of other groups; and in this way a strong element of competition is introduced, to play a very important role in motivating the group to function as an integrated system.

A more positive motivation is the knowledge that the experience obtained in the group is extremely useful to the student in his work situation. It is common to find strong leaders in a group keeping the group together by force of leadership. Only under leadership does a group become an integrated system, (both formally and informally). The informal integration usually leads to the development of a "study-group personality" in the corporate student group, with an individual "group" approach to the assignments.

In some cases the employers of the students also put strong pressure on them to pursue their studies, successfully. In spite of a generally very high student motivation to learn and develop, the conflicting demands of career duties, private life and other academic courses, cause situations to develop with some frequency where a negative motivation of the student assumes greater importance for the attainment of group cohesion. The obvious danger inherent in the latter motivation is the temptation to yield to memorising.

DEPLOYMENT OF RESOURCES IN STUDY GROUPS

The deployment of resources, representing type of student, teaching techniques and course content must be carefully planned and integrated to attain the objectives and the purpose of the group.

TO BE CONTINUED

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