ASSESSMENT OF PERFORMANCE IN THE APPRAISAL PROCESS

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Abstract: Evaluation is, along with the transmission of knowledge by the trainer and acquisition by those who are trained, a fundamental operational military component of the training-educational process. It is a regulating and self-regulating element, with a reverse connection through the training system adopted.

Considering the permanent concern to ensure the compatibility principle of training with modern armies of NATO, by the choice of similar effective training forms and methods, and the importance of evaluation as a distinct stage in the training process, with an effect of correction/improvement, this paper analyzes and proposes the most affordable and effective ways of communications and IT assessing performance with suggestions for use in training institutions.

Keywords: forms and methods of training, evaluation, assessment types and models, performance appraisal, degrading effects.

Assessment, as an integrated component of the entire instructive-educational process, is also a fundamental trainer's tool used for measuring the amount of knowledge acquired, level, performance and efficiency at an established time thus offering solutions to improve the training process.

To evaluate training results implies determining the extent of the training program's operational objectives achieved and the efficiency of the training forms and methods. The essence of evaluation is to apply the necessary corrections to the entire educational process, based on the information obtained after execution.

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In a post-modern sense, evaluation falls in a co-educational approach, in which the trainer and the trainee are learning from each other and evolve together.

The Assessment of Performance in the Evaluative Process

The assessment of performance, as a main component of the evaluation process is performed by issuing an appraisal, under the shape of an observable or measurable result, in the axiological reference frame, and which is contributing substantially to correcting/improving the entire educational process.

Assessment types and models

Depending on the evaluation objective, the strategy used, the trainee's age and the assessed level of training, performance appraisal can be achieved in several ways, as follows:

-verbal or propositional;
-by numerical or literal symbols and colors;
-by ratings;
-in a nonverbal manner.

Verbal/propositional assessment is expressed through verbal language by a variety of nuanced expressions (praise/reprimand, agreement / disagreement, good / bad, right / wrong, accurate / inaccurate, acceptable / unacceptable, well done! etc.). This type of assessment is not too accurate because it is not based on the quantified results obtained by those evaluated, but by using evaluative messages it exercises its regulatory role on their work, inducing certain states of satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

The numerical assessment makes use of numbers, each symbolizing a certain degree of success or failure. The grading scale may vary from one education system to another (10 values in our country and Finland, 5 in Russia, 13 in Denmark, 20 in France, etc.), and the value order of these marks may be increasing or decreasing. Special importance should be given to the extent of the rating scale because, in the case of short scales (4, 5 steps) marking fidelity is high, and the power of discrimination is low, while the wide scales offer discrimination and more precise nuances, but in this case the risk of errors increases.

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The literal assessment, is most frequently used in the Anglo-Saxon countries and requires a rating scale consisting of 6-7 steps, identified by the following letter axis: A (very good), B (good), C (medium), D (weak), E (unsatisfactory), F (poor). However, this type of assessment may vary from one scoring system to another, so US literal mark is given on the basis of their score: 100 points A- (excellent), B 80-90 points (good), C 70-80 points (average), D 60-70 points (weak), 50-60 points E (semi-failure) and less than 50 points: failure. Also, there is another determination (in 3 steps) as follows: H (Honor) - very good performance, S (Satisfaction) - satisfactory, environmental and U - unsatisfactory.

The colors assessment is a very old tradition, sometimes expressed through colored balls: white (excellent, very good), red (satisfactory) and black (unsatisfactory). It is still currently used, informally, especially for young children in kindergartens, color being more impressive because it can be associated with different geometric or figurative shapes (flowers, birds, butterflies, etc.). We mentioned this method of scoring as in the past this was used in our higher education.

Assessment through marks is performed by standard verbal expressions, each designating a degree of achievement/performance. Such 6 marks may be granted: exceptional, very good, good, accordingly adequate, satisfactory and unsatisfactory. Each of these marks is defined by the descriptors of performance represented by various formulations and explicit breakdowns of performance desired by the evaluated ones, hierarchically classified and which ensure consistency, comparability in scoring and greater ease of use.

Nonverbal appreciation is expressed by the assessor through his/her mere presence, body language, silence, time, space, and color of things. In terms of emotional instability, it may make such assessments uncontrolled and with a low character of objectivity. Sometimes it can have positive effects by stimulating the assessed person to prepare better, but also it can influence and stimulate negative feed-back from him/her.

The difficulty of these evaluative systems through scores, both literal and through colors is represented by the inability to divide or add them in calculating a final grade or graduation rate. Therefore, most often, while making a hierarchy, they resort to converting these ways of assessing into figures.

Evaluating the performance of the assessed has several meanings such as: it highlights their progress during the training program, it ranks the group according to the results and it determines the level of achievement over operational objectives of the training for each. The efficient assessment of results functions involves its use in aiming the enhancement of positive motivation over those evaluated for training activities in general, and the improvement of training in particular.

In the theory and practice of training evaluation, several assessment models are used as follows:

✓ the assessment model by reference to the group is based on comparing the evaluated person with each other or by comparing results obtained at a certain benchmark. In this case, the instructor's capability of comparing results is valued at an 'institutional standard' (employable within the final evaluation) and at a standard developed by himself/herself, applicable to each evaluated person and to the group (employable in terms of formative assessment). In this context, assessments indicate the progress of the training operational objectives, which become appraisal operational objectives;

✓ the assessment model by reference to fixed standards is used by relating the results obtained to the systems of reference unit for the entire group. This model facilitates sorting or achieving rankings and ensures high value objective decisions being made;

✓ the individualized assessment model is based on comparing the results obtained by the evaluated person with other results he/she previously obtained, which will highlight progress or regress in training on its part. The specific feature of this model of assessment is represented by the achievement of a diverse training, in accordance with the evaluated features and particular aspects.

Achieving a rigorous and objective assessment can only be obtained based on the use of performance descriptors, criteria and evaluation indicators, which are well formulated and which highlight the fulfillment of the operational objectives in training.

Disruptive effects in assessment and grading

Researches and assessment practice highlight some of the difficulties and dysfunctional aspects in making an objective assessment. Thus, the

accuracy and objectivity of evaluation are influenced by certain circumstances generating significant variations in the grading results revealed by the same examiner at a time or different times of evaluation (considerable inter-individual) or by exploring variety (inter-individual variability).

Scoring differences were highlighted by a number of experimental studies in the field by using the method of multiple evaluation and assessment. From this point of view, we will further analyze their disruptive effects, most commonly found as follows:

➢ the "halo" effect is meant to achieve evaluation by extending sequential qualities to the whole conduct of the assessed people. Thus, evaluation is influenced by an instructor evaluator's preconceived opinion, favorable or unfavorable, about those evaluated as good or weak, disciplined or undisciplined etc. A strong emotional character favors the evaluated person who enjoys a good position (sympathy towards the evaluator) and even if they do give erroneous answers, this will be overlooked and will be appreciated. On the other hand, problematic trainees (those who dislike the evaluator) are hunted in committing errors of response, and in some cases they will be negatively assessed, even if they have provided complete and correct answers.

To reduce / eliminate negative consequences of this effect in the evaluation process, we can use the following solutions:

- use of external evaluation and assessment by others than the instructor;

- classification of the assessment work to ensure anonymity of the assessed person;

- resorting to permanent volitional effort from the trainer to overlook old assessments of the evaluated person and to self-induce an objective evaluation.

The "halo" effect may be combined with the stereotype effect, which represents a fixation in the opinion of the trainer on the assessed. Thus, it is induced that a first success / failure check will lead to the same results as a second or third check. Once confirmed this tendency to categorize the assessed based on the first check also adding to the lack of professional conscience from the trainer, this can become an extremely serious phenomenon.

The "halo" effect may be generated by the evaluated person's behavior, related to: eye- contact, pleasant tone and rate of speech, neat attire, clear and legible writing, good performances in training, right conduct, etc. or vice versa.

➢ The "anchoring" effect is due to over-rating results by leaving out some aspects that are less common and identifiable within most forms of response given by those assessed, which involves developing new scales of assessment;

➢ The "Pygmalion" Effect / "Oedipal" effect occurs when assessing the results obtained by the assessed person is influenced by the fixed opinion which the instructor assessor made about their capabilities. Any instructor makes in time some ideas of those who are trained, in accordance with their training opportunities. Finally, these opinions will influence, consciously or unconsciously, the behavior and returning opinions of those who are trained. One way to reduce this effect is for the instructor to trust the training possibilities of the evaluated person and convince him/her that they are able to obtain results;

➢ The "contrast" effect or the "error of sequence" occurs when the evaluating instructor emphasizes two contrasting qualities of the evaluated person occurring immediately in time and space. Usually he/she tends to make a permanent comparison and ranking of those who are trained. Thus, at a relatively high rate, it happens that the same result can be rated better if it is followed by the assessment of a lower score (after a poor representation, a good one seems to be better), as otherwise may be rated as mediocre if it is immediately followed by good answers of another assessment. Awareness on the effects of the instructor assessor due to contiguity evidence is a very important first step in removing unwanted effects generated by this phenomenon;

➢ The examiner's personal equation is a tool used by any assessor to develop their own assessment criteria and structures. Some of them are more generous, using higher scale values, while others are more demanding, mainly exploiting the intermediate scale values or the low scale value. Also, some of them use positive assessment as a tool in encouraging and stimulating the assessed person, while others focus on the goal or even more, compelling the assessed person to make extra efforts to obtain a

certain assessment. Some assessors appreciate more creativity and originality, while others, compliance with the training content.

Therefore, from our point of view, the most revealing feature of this effect is the variable exigency over assessments, manifested by the assessors. The effect is visible both at the same instructor assessor and at the external assessors, manifested in an assessing manner related to personality structure of their erudition, intellectual qualities, temperament and morale of their emotional balance.

A first step in reducing / eliminating this undesirable phenomenon can be made through increased knowledge and awareness of the assessors, as well as all the impacts and effects of their action.

➢ Logical or instrumental error consists in the substitution over objectives and key parameters of assessment with secondary purposes or related to a way of mixing them. Thus, the instructor assessor can be guided in his/her assessment by second-order aspects or correlative aspects related to the essential objectives of the evaluation, such as: the smooth flow and confidence of response, accuracy and systematization of speech, the effort of the rated person to achieve certain results, the degree of diligence etc. Yet, this phenomenon must not become the rule, even if in some instances this deviation is justified.

➢ The "central tendency" effect is due to the instructor assessor's conduct in his/her attempt to avoid the extremes of the rating scale and the desire to avoid failing in assessing the evaluated person. This effect is manifested especially with novice teachers, and most assessments tend to have average values, defeating the obvious discrimination between the middle levels on the one hand and the very good or weak levels, on the other hand.

➢ The "similarity" effect occurs when the instructor assessor tends to appreciate those assessed by reporting to himself/herself (by contrast or similarity); thus, their rules are the main criteria for assessing the results.

➢ The "order effect" appears due to the inertia phenomenon when the instructor assessor awards approximately the same level of appreciation for a succession of answers, when in fact they differ in quality. It is a trend to assess the identical sequence of consecutive samples, without discrimination, to achieve the required values.

In conclusion, the evaluation process must be planned, organized and carried out in full compliance with the new techniques and training methods and it needs to be used for the purpose of performance improvement and not just to perform a simple verification of the knowledge acquired.

Appraisal, as part of the educative-training process, is comparable to the training activity as a whole, something which highlights the need for its application both for those that are trained, and those who train them.

Of the many characteristic aspects of the evaluation process, evaluation of training is limited to a set of activities, according to certain intentions, which implement immediate data, comparing them to a range of functions and purposes previously established and well defined. The fundamental goal of the assessment training is not just to obtain certain data, but to improve the entire educational process, to take well founded and accurate action, to permanently adapt training strategies to the peculiarity of the situation, to those of which are thought, to the existing economic and institutional conditions, etc.

Therefore, **the assessment is a process of obtaining information about the trainee, instructor, training system, using specific assessment instruments, in order to issue value statements related to the evaluation criteria of this information and the formulating appraisals starting from which certain corrective decisions on the content will be taken based on methods, tools, strategies, approaches or end-products of training.**

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