Corporate training and development policies and practices: a cross-national study of India and Britain

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The aim of this paper is to report on the existing corporate training and development (T&D) policies and practices in India and Britain. The data were collected from written questionnaires mailed to 252 Indian and 174 British companies. The results and discussions are based on the most prominent comparative and international dimensions of T&D such as key responsibility for T&D function, corporate commitment to T&D, major drivers and key result areas of T&D; purposes, levels, instruments, timing, and designs of evaluation; major perceived deficiencies and challenges of T&D function. The two-country comparisons revealed that while some of the findings related to corporate T&D policies and practices exhibited differences, others also reflected similarity. Compared with India, more training is done in Britain, more movement to delegating responsibilities or involving line managers in T&D in Britain, there seems also to be more focus on and involvement of individual employees in Britain. British organisations seem to be more concerned with business results from T&D. It may also be argued that the greater importance attached to business results brings about a growing involvement of employees and managers as opposed to HRD practitioners and that it is the greater movement in this direction in Britain compared with India that accounts for most if not all of the differences in the results of the two surveys.

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It is now almost axiomatic that the strategic goal of modern commercial organisations is to create more intelligent and flexible firms than their competitors by hiring and developing more talented human resources and by extending their skill base. It is imperative in the context of new business realities that organisations should be able to continuously innovate, be customer-focused, and remain cost-competitive to survive, grow and excel in the long run. During the 1980s, Japanese management practices clearly indicated that business success based on high standards of performance was dependent on a highly trained and developed workforce (Brown and Read, 1984). Recent research also indicates a causal link between high commitment practices (including training and development) and improvements in an establishment's performance and competitive advantage (Patterson et al., 1998; Rajan et al., 1996).

Interestingly, much of the existing literature on corporate training and development (T&D) has lamented the *failure* of organisational efforts to significantly improve the knowledge, skills and attitudes of employees or affect business performance (Campbell et al., 1970; Hall, 1984). Many are currently struggling to develop a valid, reliable and operationally viable model to measure and evaluate the effectiveness of T&D programmes (Crawford and Webley, 1992; Cronshaw and Alexander, 1991; Lawson, 1993, 1994; Phillips, 1997, 1999). While there is a growing body of conceptual work on how employees really learn, and a burgeoning body of case studies of innovative corporate initiatives, there has been little synthesis of these bodies of literature in a cross-national context. The need for focussing on the international and comparative dimension of corporate T&D policies has been increasingly felt ever since many nations of the world such as China, India, Latin America, East and Central Europe liberalised, privatised and globalised their economic policies. This trend is indicative of the fact that many of the changes influencing skills deficiencies and acquisitions are common to many countries. An extensive review of existing literature reveals that some cross-national surveys of human resource management policies and practices are available (Brewster and Tyson, 1991; Brewster et al., 1996; Easterby-Smith et al., 1995; Saha, 1993; Towers Perrin, 1992), and a few national level studies are also reported on T&D infrastructure, organisational aspects (the design, development and delivery of training, evaluation), and public policy issues both in India (Yadapadithaya, 2000, 2001) and Britain (Ashton and Felstead, 1998; Goodwin et al., 1999; Tregaski and Brewster, 1998). But there has been a lack of comparative data covering a comprehensive range of corporate T&D issues. Although the trends in company training practices are indicated by national surveys (e.g., CIPD, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002; Industrial Society, various years) and country-specific case studies of particular companies (e.g., Sloman, 1993), cross-national research in this area is rare. Senker and Hyman (2000: 2) noted, '. . . whilst the international dimension is upheld through numerous and valuable country specific studies, genuinely comparative contributions are rare'. This article reports on the current corporate T&D policies and practices in India and Britain by specifically focussing on some under-researched comparative international dimensions of T&D such as key responsibility for T&D function, major driving forces and key result areas, trends and status of training needs analysis and evaluation, and perceived deficiencies and challenges of T&D systems.

Aims of the study

The central purpose of this empirical, survey-based, cross-national study is to describe the existing T&D policies and practices in the Indian and British corporate sectors. The specific research objectives focus on the following issues:

- The corporate commitment to T&D in terms of percentage of payroll spent on T&D, training money spent per employee, percentage of employees trained per year, and HRD or training staff per 1000 employees.
- Major driving forces of corporate T&D initiatives.
- Key result areas of T&D function.
- Trends and status of conducting training needs analysis and evaluation.

Corporate training and development

- Purposes, levels, instruments, timing and designs of evaluating training and development programmes.
- Perceived deficiencies of corporate T&D system.
- Key T&D challenges currently faced by the Indian and British corporate sectors.
- Similarities or differences in T&D policies and practices between India and Britain.

Methods and data source

The Indian data was collected from a sample of organisations employing more than 500 employees derived from the database of the Confederation of Indian Industry. This sample included organisations in the private, public and MNC sectors engaged in manufacturing and/or service activities. A purposive sample of 500 similar organisations was constructed for the British survey. The respondents were key executives responsible for corporate T&D function in the participating companies.

The data and information were collected using a structured written questionnaire, sent to 407 respondents in India and 500 respondents in Britain. It consisted of questions on, among other things, major driving forces of training and development initiatives; key result areas of training and development function; whether training needs analysis and monitoring effectiveness are performed; purposes, levels, instruments, timing and designs of evaluating training and development programmes. It also included questions on corresponding numerical figures with respect to total employee population, total payroll, total training expenditures, total number of training hours, total number of employees receiving training, and number of HRD staff. Finally, the survey asked questions about major perceived deficiencies of T&D system, and key T&D challenges faced by the participating companies.

The data were collected during February–June 1999 from the Indian companies, and 276 (out of 407) questionnaires were returned (a 67.8 per cent response rate) of which 24 were incomplete. The remaining 252 (61.9 per cent) – 127 private, 99 public, and 26 MNC – were used for the analysis. The data were collected from 193 (out of 500) British companies during January–April 2002 yielding a response rate of 38.6 per cent. Of these, 19 were incomplete and hence, the remaining 174 (34.8 per cent) – 112 private, 44 public, 18 MNC – were used for the analysis.

Most questions had pre-coded answers, while verbal replies for open-ended questions were analysed and then categorised. Initial analysis of primary data focused on the percentage responses to questions as well as the sample size. The figures shown in parentheses indicate percentages of the respective totals. The percentages will not add up to 100 due to multiple responses (except Tables 1, 5 and 11). Since the number of total respondents was different in the two countries, it would not be valid to test for simple differences in percentages without controlling for variation in sample size. Hence, the Standard Error of Difference between Proportions (Sparrow *et al.*, 1994) was used to test whether the percentage difference between the findings in India and Britain represented a significant difference or was simply due to sampling variation. It was computed using the following formula:

$$\text{Standard Error of Difference between Proportions (Z)} = \frac{p_1 - p_2}{\sqrt{\left(\dfrac{p_1 q_1}{n_1} + \dfrac{p_2 q_2}{n_2} \right)}}$$

where: p = sample proportion in favour
q = sample proportion against (1 − p)
n = sample size

Finally, the chi-square (χ^2) test of significance was used to analyse the data presented in Tables 1, 5 and 11 as there was no problem of multiple responses.

Results and discussion

Key responsibility for training and development

Respondents were asked to indicate who in their organisations is allocated the main responsibility for T&D. The personnel or HR or training specialists hold the key responsibility for T&D in respect of a little over 71 per cent of the Indian and nearly 65 per cent of the British organisations. In addition, the line managers or supervisors assuming the main responsibility for T&D accounted for 23.6 per cent of the British firms. However, the corresponding percentage in the case of the Indian corporate sector is only a little over 10 per cent. Presumably, the devolution of responsibility for T&D to line management is more prominent in Britain than in India. Further, unlike the British firms (where someone has specific responsibility for T&D), nobody has responsibility for the T&D function in 4.8 per cent of the Indian organisations (see Table 1).

Corporate commitment to T&D

The respondents were asked to indicate the facts and figures applicable to the year before the survey period in respect of the following: the total amount of salaries and other benefits paid to the employees (payroll), total number of employees who received formal training, total amount of expenditure incurred by the company on formal training of employees, total number of training days accounted for formal training, and the total number of training or HRD staff involved in running training or HRD department. On the basis of these objective measures, some quantitative indicators of corporate commitment to T&D in the respondent organisations were computed such as the percentage of payroll spent on training, training money spent per employee, average training hours per employee, percentage of employees trained per year, and HRD or training staff per 1000 employees. Other things remaining the same, these indicators suggest that the British employers invest more time, energy and resources in training and developing human resources than their Indian counterparts (see Table 2).

It should, however, be noted that the quantitative indicators of corporate commitment represent averages and are subject to wide variations between organisations both in India and Britain. Various benefits of T&D can be realised only through the systematic implementation of T&D policies and practices. It is not enough to make substantial improvements in the quantitative indicators of corporate commitment to T&D. Much more than the quantity of training, the quality of training should focus on the provision of training, education, development and learning opportunities with a view to continuously improving individual, team and organisational performance. In summary, how much an organisation invests in T&D is of course important, but arguably *how* it invests in various training systems and processes (identifying train-

Table 1: Key responsibility for training and development

Position	India	Britain
Personnel/HR/Training Specialist	180 (71.4)	113 (64.9)
Line Manager/Supervisor/Foreman	26 (10.3)	41 (23.6)
Combination of the above two categories	34 (13.5)	20 (11.5)
No one in particular	12 (4.8)	0 (0)
	252 (100.0)	174 (100.0)

$\chi^2 = 20.722$, p < 0.01

ing needs, defining learning requirements, planning training programmes, implementing training and evaluating training) is even more important.

Training and development: causes and drivers

A majority of both the Indian and the British firms reported 'the continuous pressure for increased quality, innovation, and productivity' and 'an apparent need to improve the skill-mix of the employees' as the major drivers of their T&D initiatives. The other less prominent forces driving their corporate T&D activities were: the urgency to change corporate culture, to achieve better return on investment, and to improve industrial relations – in that order (see Table 3).

The economic realities of the 1990s characterised by severe global and domestic competition, unprecedented product/service market changes coupled with changing customer expectations and preferences, and the introduction of new technology to meet quality standards led organisations to take a closer look at T&D (Goodwin *et al.*, 1999; Yadapadithaya, 2000, 2001). The compulsive forces (external pressures) of a newly emerged market-oriented economy seem to have influenced the corporate sectors in India and Britain to pay more attention to the immediate issues of T&D function (e.g., improving employee skills), and the more strategic aspects of changing corporate culture and an urge to improve return on investment appear to be less important. The

Table 2: Training and development: some indicators

Parameters	India N = 252	Britain N = 174
(a) Percentage of payroll spent on training	1.2	5.4
(b) Training money spent per employee	Rs.253.3	£312.4
(c) Average training hours per employee	4.7	7.3
(d) Percentage of employees trained per year	55.3	61.7
(e) HRD or training staff per 1000 employees	2.3	4.0

Note: (a) Total training expenditures/total payroll
(b) Total training expenditures/employees served
(c) Total number of training hours (hours × participants)/total employees served
(d) Total number of employees receiving training/total employee population
(e) Number of HRD staff/total employee population × 1000

Table 3: Major driving forces of training and development initiatives

Issues	India N = 252	Britain N = 174	Z
Pressure for increased quality, innovation, and productivity	198 (78.6)	142 (81.6)	0.768
Need to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of employees	164 (65.1)	156 (89.7)	5.767**
Need to change corporate culture	155 (61.5)	124 (71.3)	2.082*
To achieve better ROI	135 (53.6)	111 (63.8)	2.099*
To achieve better industrial relations	67 (26.6)	76 (43.7)	3.672**
Needs, wishes and demands of employees	76 (30.2)	31 (17.8)	2.887**

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

latter in particular is perhaps both surprising and worrying given the claimed empha-sis on 'added value' of corporate investment.

Corporate T&D function: key result areas

As many as nearly 87 per cent of the Indian and just over 85 per cent of the British companies reported the main focus of their T&D function on 'organising T&D pro-grammes'. Besides this, measuring and evaluating the effectiveness of T&D pro-grammes emerged as one of the key result areas of T&D function in 85.3 per cent of the Indian and 70.7 per cent of the British firms. It is worth noting that a significant majority (81.6 per cent) of the British compared to a small proportion (44.4 per cent) of the Indian companies also indicated 'liaison and communication (e.g., providing advice to line management)' as one of the critical areas of their T&D function. Finally, 'delivering training' appeared to be an important aspect of the T&D function in only around 37 per cent of both the Indian and British organisations covered by this survey (see Table 4). This trend probably suggests that HRD or training professionals need to function more as 'strategic advisers' and 'internal consultants' than as 'front-line deliv-erers of training programmes' (see also Tjepkema *et al.*, 2002).

Training needs analysis and evaluation: trends

Among 252 Indian organisations, 167 (66.3 per cent) conduct training needs analysis, either exclusively or in combination with evaluation. The corresponding percentage is 78.7 (137, out of 174) in respect of the British companies. On the other hand, as many as 215 (85.3 per cent) Indian and 163 (93.7 per cent) British organisations conduct the evaluation of their T&D programmes (exclusively or in combination with training needs analysis). Finally, 61.5 per cent of the Indian and 72.4 per cent of the British firms reported the practice of conducting both training needs analysis and evaluation. Unlike the British, nearly 10 per cent of the Indian companies neither conduct train-ing needs analysis nor evaluation of their T&D programmes (see Table 5). This trend suggests that most of the firms both in India and Britain conduct training needs analy-sis and evaluation in some form or other.

Training needs analysis: methods

A majority of both the Indian (71–80 per cent) and the British (75–93 per cent) com-panies used line manager requests, employee requests, and the performance appraisal

Table 4: *Key result areas of training and development function*

Key result areas	India N = 252	Britain N = 174	Z
Conducting training needs analysis and preparation of training calendar	167 (66.3)	101 (58.0)	1.727
Organising training and development programmes	219 (86.9)	148 (85.1)	0.543
Delivering training	94 (37.3)	64 (36.8)	0.109
Measuring and evaluating the effectiveness of training and development programmes	215 (85.3)	123 (70.7)	3.666**
Liaison and communication	112 (44.4)	142 (81.6)	7.684**

** $p < 0.01$

results to analyse training needs. The training audit and strategic business analysis (e.g., analysis of business plan) were also used by 70.8 per cent and 64.2 per cent of the British organisations, respectively. However, the corresponding percentages in respect of the Indian organisations accounted for only 48.5 and 37.7 (see Table 6). This suggests that more modern methods which link the identification of T&D needs to strategic business objectives are less used in Indian organisations and as such, there is therefore a need in India to become much more proactive in their approach to the analysis of training needs.

Aims of measuring and evaluating T&D

As many as just over 78 per cent of the Indian and 83.4 per cent of the British firms reported the aim of measuring and evaluating their T&D programmes as 'to determine whether or not the T&D objectives are being (or have been) met'. Another 73 per cent of the British and 52.6 per cent of the Indian companies intended to determine whether their T&D programmes justified the cost.

On the other hand, a significant majority of the Indian (89.3 per cent) and more than one half (57.7 per cent) of the British organisations reported 'determining the effectiveness of various components of a T&D programme (e.g., content, training aids, the instructor)' as one of the major purposes of conducting training evaluation. More than one half (around 53 per cent) of both the Indian and the British organisations reported the main aim of evaluation as 'to conform to policy guidelines and documentation of T&D efforts (e.g., terms and conditions of ISO 9000 accreditation in India and Investors in People award in Britain)'. Finally, 68.7 per cent of the British establishments aimed at gaining practical insights through the evaluation of T&D for designing, developing and delivering more effective future programmes. The corresponding percentage in respect of the Indian organisations is only 32.6 (see Table 7).

These aims or intentions of evaluating T&D programmes clearly suggest that progressive organisations demonstrate their decreasing willingness to spend money on

Table 5: Training needs analysis and evaluation: trends and status

Particulars	India	Britain
Analysing training needs only	12 (4.8)	11 (6.3)
Evaluation only	60 (23.8)	37 (21.3)
Both training needs analysis and evaluation	155 (61.5)	126 (72.4)
Neither training needs analysis nor evaluation	25 (9.9)	0 (0)
	252 (100.0)	174 (100.0)

$\chi^2 = 19.875$, $p < 0.01$

Table 6: Methods used to analyse training needs

Particulars	India N = 167	Britain N = 137	Z
Line manager requests	134 (80.2)	112 (81.8)	0.334
Employee requests	127 (76.0)	127 (92.7)	3.897**
Performance appraisal	119 (71.3)	103 (75.2)	0.767
Training audit	81 (48.5)	97 (70.8)	3.927**
Strategic business analysis	63 (37.7)	88 (64.2)	4.599**

** $p < 0.01$

Aims	India N = 215	Britain N = 163	Z
To determine whether or not the T&D objectives are being met	168 (78.1)	136 (83.4)	1.285
To determine the effectiveness of various components of a T&D programme (e.g., content, training aids, the instructor)	192 (89.3)	94 (57.7)	7.097**
To determine whether the T&D programme justifies the cost	113 (52.6)	119 (73.0)	4.044**
To decide who (number and type of prospective trainees) should participate in future programmes	81 (37.7)	69 (42.3)	0.917
To assess which participants gained the most or the least from a specific programme	85 (39.5)	47 (28.8)	2.161*
To gain practical insights in order to design, develop and deliver more effective future programmes	70 (32.6)	112 (68.7)	6.967**
To conform to policy guidelines and documentation of T&D efforts	115 (53.5)	86 (52.8)	0.140

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

faith and an increasing pressure to justify T&D costs (Yadapadithaya, 2001). Furthermore, it is imperative for those responsible for corporate T&D to focus on evaluation and to clearly demonstrate and communicate to management that T&D efforts are making worthwhile contributions.

Levels of evaluation

The question of what to evaluate (choice of evaluation criteria) is crucial to the evaluation strategy. Evaluation of training can be carried out at any of the following four levels (Kirkpatrick, 1959, 1976, 1998): (a) *reactions* (did the learner like the training?), (b) *learning* (what was learnt from the training?), (c) *behaviour* (how much did learners change their behaviour as a result of the training?), (d) *results* (how much organisational improvement resulted from the learners' behavioural change?).

Predictably, all the respondent Indian and British firms conducting training evaluation (either exclusively or in combination with training needs analysis) carried out at the first and immediate level of obtaining and analysing participants' reaction. This would reveal whether the trainees were pleased with the T&D programme as demonstrated by their immediate reactions about the trainer, method of presentation, usefulness and interest of the subject matter, facilities, and so on. In addition, 74 per cent of the Indian and 69.3 per cent of the British firms also evaluated their T&D programmes at the second level: 'learning'. This would indicate whether the participants have learnt new knowledge, skills, and attitudes reflected through changes in their abilities as a result of training. However, smaller proportions of both the Indian and the British firms reported their practice of conducting evaluation at the third – job behaviour – level (36.3 per cent Indian and 53.4 per cent British), and fewer carried out evaluation at the fourth level – results (14 per cent Indian and 42.3 per cent British)

(see Table 8). Behaviour level information would reveal whether the trainees changed their behaviour based on what was learnt as shown by changes in their job performance. Finally, the results level information would indicate whether the change in behaviour positively affected the organisation in terms of reduced turnover, improved safety, higher productivity, decrease in employee grievances, and so on. Overall, the immediate reaction by the trainee is used as a pragmatic approximation for the effectiveness of T&D programmes (cf. Brinkerhoff, 1989; Tannenbaum and Yukl, 1992; Yadapadithaya, 2001).

Evaluation instruments

An evaluation instrument is a data-gathering device that may be found in a variety of forms: questionnaires, attitude surveys, paper-and-pencil tests, performance tests, interviews, observations and performance records. A majority of the Indian (87.4 per cent) and the British (82.8 per cent) organisations reported the wide use of *questionnaires*. The content analysis of these questionnaires or feedback forms revealed that most of the questionnaires pose questions to the participants to elicit their views and immediate reactions to the instructors, method of presentation, programme content, type of instructional material used in the programme, support facilities, and suggestions from the participants to initiate future improvements.

A little over 76 per cent of the British and 62.3 per cent of the Indian organisations used 'performance records' of employees to monitor the effectiveness of T&D programmes. More than one half (55.8 per cent) of the British companies also used employee attitude surveys, but the corresponding percentage in respect of the Indian establishments was only 28.4. Finally, other instruments of evaluation such as interviews, paper-and-pencil tests, performance tests, and observations seemed to be less popular in both the Indian and British organisations covered by this survey (see Table 9). This finding seems to be at odds with the findings on level of evaluation since tests of some nature would be expected at level 2. An additional apparent anomaly results

Table 8: Levels of evaluation

Level	India N = 215	Britain N = 163	Z
Reactions	215 (100.0)	163 (100.0)	0
Learning	159 (74.0)	113 (69.3)	0.992
Job behaviour	78 (36.3)	87 (53.4)	3.319**
Results	30 (14.0)	69 (42.3)	6.215**

** $p < 0.01$

Table 9: Evaluation instruments

Instruments	India N = 215	Britain N = 163	Z
Questionnaires	188 (87.4)	135 (82.8)	1.262
Attitude surveys	61 (28.4)	91 (55.8)	5.392**
Paper-and-pencil tests	32 (14.9)	63 (38.7)	5.276**
Performance tests	45 (20.9)	47 (28.8)	1.774
Interviews	36 (16.7)	69 (42.3)	5.501**
Observations	42 (19.5)	37 (22.7)	0.749
Performance records	134 (62.3)	124 (76.1)	2.844**

** $p < 0.01$

when comparing level 3 and level 4, and the use of performance records as an evaluation instrument.

Timing of evaluation

Evaluation data can be obtained prior to training, during training, immediately after training, or at a specified time after the end of training. A significant majority of both the Indian (92.1 per cent) and the British (90.8 per cent) companies reported the practice of conducting evaluation immediately after training. In addition, 42.3 per cent of the British firms also evaluated the existing knowledge, skill and attitude levels of the employees before their participation in T&D programmes. However, the practice of conducting pre-training evaluation was reported by only a small proportion (22.8 per cent) of the Indian organisations (see Table 10).

Evaluation design

There are two basic ingredients of evaluation: (1) a reliable and valid way of measuring the outcomes of T&D programmes, and (2) the ability to demonstrate that any changes which occur are the result of the training. At least in theory, one can come across five different models or designs of measuring and assessing the effectiveness of T&D programmes. First, 'one-shot programme design' involves a single group which is evaluated only once after the T&D programme is completed. Second, 'single group, pre-test and post-test design' collects data both before and after the programme. Third, 'single group, time series design' involves a series of performance measurements both before and after the programme. However, it is extremely difficult to isolate the effects of testing and external factors (changes in the culture and climate of the organisation, booming economy, etc.) in the absence of a control group comparison. Therefore, the fourth design, 'pre-test – post-test, control group design' makes a comparison between two groups – an experimental group (receiving the programme) and the control group (not exposed to the programme) by gathering performance data both before and after the programme. This is considered as one of the most powerful evaluation designs available, since it combines random selection and the use of a control group (Campbell and Stanley, 1963). Finally, 'post-test only, control group design' is used to make comparison after the training between the randomly chosen experimental and control groups.

Most of the Indian (74.9 per cent) and the British (80.4 per cent) organisations reported the normal practice of adopting 'one-shot programme design' to measure and assess the effectiveness of their T&D programmes. Undoubtedly, the information obtained in this one-shot evaluation is better than no evaluation at all. Although negligible proportions of both the Indian and the British firms used more systematic and scientific evaluation designs such as 'single group, pre-test and post-test design', 'single group, time series design', and 'post-test only, control group design', not even

Table 10: Timing of evaluation

Timing	India N = 215	Britain N = 163	Z
Before training	49 (22.8)	69 (42.3)	4.060**
During training	40 (18.6)	32 (19.6)	0.252
Immediately after training	198 (92.1)	148 (90.8)	0.448
At a specified time(s) after the end of training	39 (18.1)	15 (9.2)	2.459*

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

a single Indian or British company reported to have been using arguably the most scientific 'pre-test – post-test, control group design' to evaluate the effectiveness of T&D programmes (see Table 11).

Training and development system: deficiencies

As Hamblin (1974) points out, the various levels of evaluation – reactions, learning, job behaviour, organisational unit and ultimate value – act as powerful links in a chain of cause and effect. Training leads to reactions, which lead to learning, which leads to changes in job behaviour, which lead to changes in the organisational unit, which lead to changes in the achievement of the ultimate goals of the organisation. But this chain is as strong as its weakest link, and it can be broken at any link. Trainees can react favourably to a course – they can enjoy it – but learn nothing. They can learn something, but cannot, or will not, or are not allowed to, apply it. They apply it, but it does no good within their own area of competence. It does some good in their function, but does not further the objectives of the organisation.

It is worth noting that a little over 65 per cent of the Indian organisations perceived the 'absence of transfer of learning' from the training to the workplace as one of the major deficiencies of their T&D system. The other two major weaknesses reported by 46–47 per cent include 'lack of a clear written policy on T&D', and 'weak interaction between the industries seeking training and the institutions providing training'. On the other hand, 61.5 per cent of the British organisations reported their 'inability to evaluate the effectiveness of T&D programmes more rigorously' as one of the key weaknesses of their T&D system. In addition, another 45.4 per cent also indicated the serious problem of 'absence of transfer of learning' (see Table 12).

Earlier research studies on transfer of learning have provided convincing evidence that the work environment – the physical, social, and psychological conditions that individuals experience at work – can either encourage or discourage the acquisition and transfer of new skills and ideas (Baldwin and Ford, 1988; Tannenbaum and Yukl, 1992; Tannenbaum, 1997). The other key determinants of transfer of learning cited in the literature include: the support and encouragement of the immediate supervisor and co-workers, the availability of equipment to allow the use of newly acquired skills and ideas, and timely identification and minimisation of situational constraints (e.g., unclear task assignments, unrealistic time pressures) (Reid and Barrington, 1997; Tracey *et al.*, 1995). From this analysis it follows that the primary responsibility of organisations and the focus of corporate T&D policies and practices should be to create and foster a climate that promotes the successful acquisition and transfer of new skills and ideas.

Training and development challenges

With regard to the key challenges of corporate T&D function, significant proportions of both the Indian and the British organisations reported the following three critical

Table 11: Evaluation design

Design	India	Britain
One-shot programme design	161 (74.9)	131 (80.4)
Single-group, pre-test and post-test design	42 (19.5)	11 (6.7)
Single group, time series design	7 (3.3)	9 (5.5)
Pre-test – post-test, control group design	0 (0)	0 (0)
Post-test only, control group design	5 (2.3)	12 (7.4)
	215 (100.0)	163 (100.0)

$\chi^2 = 17.524$, $p < 0.01$

Deficiencies	India N = 252	Britain N = 174	Z
Lack of a systematic and comprehensive training needs analysis	85 (33.7)	36 (20.7)	2.934**
Absence of transfer of learning	164 (65.1)	79 (45.4)	4.033**
Lack of a clear written policy on T&D	120 (47.6)	24 (13.8)	7.254**
Failure to evaluate the effectiveness of T&D programmes more rigorously	37 (14.7)	107 (61.5)	10.039**
Weak interaction between the industries seeking training and the institutions providing training	117 (46.4)	28 (16.1)	6.495**

** $p < 0.01$

issues: (1) creating a system of more valid, reliable and operationally viable measures to evaluate the effectiveness of their T&D programmes; (2) making *learning* as one of the fundamental values of the company; and (3) integrating T&D into initiatives for change management. The other major challenges were the firm's ability and willingness to commit major resources and adequate time to T&D; to gain the willing cooperation and support of the line manager; to link organisational, operational, and individual training needs in order to clearly establish connections between strategic business objectives and T&D activities; and to retain employees after training (see Table 13).

India and Britain: similarities and differences

The two-country comparisons revealed that while some of the findings related to corporate T&D policies and practices exhibited differences, others also reflected similarity. Statistically significant differences were reported in the findings between India and Britain in respect of the following: key responsibility for T&D ($\chi^2 = 20.722$, $p < 0.01$), corporate commitment to T&D, trends and status of training needs analysis and evaluation ($\chi^2 = 19.875$, $p < 0.01$), evaluation design ($\chi^2 = 17.524$, $p < 0.01$), and the perceived deficiencies in the T&D system. On the other hand, findings were more or less similar between the two countries with regard to the causes and drivers of T&D initiatives, key result areas of T&D function, aims of measuring and evaluating T&D, levels of evaluation, evaluation instruments, timing of evaluation, and the key challenges of T&D function.

It is worth noting that compared to India, more training is done in Britain as indicated by the percentage of training expenditure and the percentage of employees trained, more movement to delegating responsibilities or involving line managers in T&D in Britain, there seems also to be more focus on and involvement of individual employees in Britain. Furthermore, British organisations seem to be more concerned with business results from T&D. It may also be argued that the greater importance attached to business results brings about a growing involvement of employees and managers as opposed to HRD practitioners and that it is the greater movement in this direction in Britain compared to India that accounts for most if not all of the differences in the results of the two surveys.

Summary of key findings

Major findings of this cross-national study are summarised below:

Table 13: Training and development function: key challenges

Challenges	India N = 252	Britain N = 174	Z
Create system of more valid, reliable, and operationally viable measures to evaluate T&D	224 (88.9)	125 (71.8)	4.495**
Make *learning* one of the fundamental values of the company	187 (74.2)	113 (64.9)	2.059*
Integrate T&D into initiatives for change management	154 (61.1)	134 (77.0)	3.447**
Commit major resources and adequate time to T&D	172 (68.3)	70 (40.2)	5.739**
Gain the willing cooperation and support of the line manager	112 (44.4)	86 (49.4)	1.013
Link organisational, operational and individual training needs	153 (60.7)	79 (45.4)	3.119**
Retain employees after training	98 (38.9)	72 (41.4)	0.516
Use T&D as a developmental tool for individuals and teams	143 (56.7)	61 (35.1)	4.405**
Ensure that T&D allows the soft skills (e.g., leadership, communication) to develop	91 (36.1)	66 (37.9)	0.383

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

- Generally, the key responsibility for T&D is assumed by the personnel or human resource or training specialists. A greater proportion of the British firms than their counterparts in India assign the main responsibility for T&D to the line managers or supervisors.
- The major driving forces for undertaking corporate T&D initiatives in both India and Britain include: continuous pressure for increased quality, innovation and productivity; and the need to update the skills of employees.
- Organising T&D programmes, and the measurement and evaluation of these programmes appear to be the key result areas of corporate T&D function, while 'delivering training' assumes less importance as a part of T&D. Fewer firms in India than their counterparts in Britain seem to attach importance to 'networking in the form of liaison and communication' as one of the key elements of their T&D function.
- Although a majority of the firms evaluate the effectiveness of their T&D programmes, either exclusively or in combination with the training needs analysis, a relatively smaller proportion conducts both training needs analysis and evaluation. Traditional methods such as line manager requests, employee requests, and performance appraisal are widely used to analyse T&D needs. Fewer firms in India than in Britain seem to use modern methods of training audit and strategic business analysis to determine T&D needs.
- The major purposes of evaluating T&D programmes include: determining whether or not the T&D objectives are being met, whether the T&D programmes justified the cost, and conforming to the policy guidelines and documentation of T&D programmes.

- Unsurprisingly, organisations rely mostly on the participants' *reactions* to monitor the effectiveness of training.
- Related to the previous point, a majority of the organisations use *questionnaires* or feedback forms as an instrument to gather relevant data for evaluation.
- In most of the cases, evaluation is usually done immediately after the training, and a majority of them use *one-shot programme design* to conduct the evaluation of their T&D programmes.
- Absence of transfer of learning from the place of training to the workplace is perceived as a major deficiency of the corporate T&D system in both India and Britain. In addition, more than one-half of the British organisations also expressed their concern for a rigorous evaluation of T&D programmes.
- Finally, the corporate sectors in India and Britain are currently facing three major challenges to their T&D function: (a) creating a system of more valid, reliable and operationally viable measures to evaluate the effectiveness of T&D, (b) making learning one of the fundamental values of the company, and (c) integrating T&D into initiatives for change management.

Conclusions

The new economic and business environment characterised by worldwide competition has influenced modern corporations in three profound ways. First, progressive organisations must achieve higher standards of productivity, quality, and effectiveness in order to survive in the new environment. Second, companies must adapt or change their business strategies to take into account the new realities of intense global and domestic competition. Finally, corporate cultures, many of which were formed in a regulated or monopolistic environment (e.g., Indian public sector), must be retooled for the challenges of a competitive environment. In this context, corporate training and development is recognised and valued by most of the successful organisations as a powerful competitive tool. Corporate commitment to T&D should be demonstrated not only in quantitative terms, but also more importantly in its quality. In this context, Tannenbaum (1997: 447) states: 'Rather than the amount of training, *it is the quality and appropriateness of the training, the supportiveness of the work environment, and the use of appropriate training policies and practices* that determine how well training contributes to continuous learning'. Economic conditions, labour market structure, and the organisation of the national education and training system will influence corporate T&D policies and practices in each country.

As the T&D efforts in many organisations continue to expand, many new competing programmes will be proposed, and senior management and board members will continue to ask hard questions about the projected value or likely financial impact of T&D investments. Evaluation of the economic and non-economic benefits, and the investments associated with the T&D programmes is absolutely critical to determining how T&D initiatives contribute to corporate performance. There is little doubt that the growth in T&D is associated with a commensurate interest in its evaluation. Current methods and processes used by the vast majority of firms both in India and Britain for measuring and accounting for the economic and non-economic benefits of T&D programmes are inadequate and less than robust. This situation perhaps lends weight and credence to calls for more evidence based practice in T&D (see Hamlin, 2002). Though new models of evaluation are conceptually appealing, the utility of almost all T&D initiatives still remains as much an article of faith as an empirical fact, and documented successes or descriptions of new approaches have been disappointingly low. In summary, corporate T&D initiatives should be planned, developed, budgeted, conducted and evaluated with great care.

The present study is more descriptive than analytical in nature. Predictably, as one of the major limitations normally acknowledged by similar surveys (Brewster *et al.*, 1996), the results of this study can only reveal general trends in the corporate T&D policies and practices in India and Britain, and may not contain convincing logical explanations of the reasons for and obstacles to adopting particular T&D policies and

practices in each country. Future research needs to explore the possible linkages between organisational characteristics and trends in corporate T&D. For instance, ISO-accredited firms in India and Investors in People (IiP) accredited companies in Britain may be more likely than non-accredited organisations to be involved in the T&D innovations. Furthermore, the capacity of any individual firm to initiate and sustain human resource innovations is constrained by the extent to which these innovations are similarly adopted by other firms in its industry in a given country. Internal contextual factors (e.g., ownership pattern – public, private, MNC; nature of the organisation – manufacturing or service; industrial sector – banks, insurance, pharmaceuticals, telecommunications, information technology, software, oil and gas etc.; age of the unit – old or new; size – small and medium or large; ISO or IiP accreditation status), and external variables (e.g., legal, social and political environments, unionisation, labour market conditions and national cultures) may influence the corporate T&D policies and practices in many ways. It is therefore essential to probe through detailed case studies both in India and Britain those organisational conditions whose presence, or absence, may help explain the differential adoption of T&D policies and practices. However, what is also of interest and value from this study is the general trend of a high degree of similarity in practice between India and Britain, and future research could usefully focus on analysing reasons why that is the case.

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