

Ensuring efficacy and efficiency of training investment based on ISO 10015 Quality Assurance (Draft Version 1)

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Abstract:

Efforts and good intentions to train regional and local planning authorities of new member States of the Council of Europe in a new approach to sustainable spatial development planning (Resolution 2, CEMAT, 2003) are exposed to high risk of failure if not based on sound training principles and effective training management. Without these essential ingredients, CEMAT's goal to invest in training might result in waste of scarce resources, loss of credibility of the parties involved and a demotivation of partners (ENTO, UNITAR) responsible for the implementation of sustainable spatial development (SSD) training. ISO 10015, an international standard for quality assurance of training could lower risks of failure and increase likelihood of successful implementation of CE's Resolution 2.

Intended Objective

The resolution 2 (2003) of CEMAT pertains to the expressed wish of the Ministers responsible for Regional Planning of the Member States of the Council of Europe to:

..start immediately a training programme in the new member States of the Council of Europe, in order to help regional and local planning authorities perform, as well as possible, the task for which they have responsibility.¹

The resolution further calls for:

- Establishing of a list of training centres in the field of the territorial dimension of sustainable development existing in the member States of Council of Europe.

¹ Res.No 2, 17 September 2003 13th Session of European Conference of CEMAT, Ljubljana, Slovenia as cited in Draft Programme of ENTO/CE, dated 6th January 2005.

- Promoting the implementation of the International Training Centres for Local Actors Programme (CIFAL) and examining modalities of collaboration with UNITAR and ENTO
- Inviting the international organizations to support the preparation for a duty book which be sued for this training
- Establish a Pan-European Network of CEMAT Model Region committed to develop good practices of implementation of the Guiding Principle for Sustainable Spatial Development (GPSSDEC-CEMAT)

Training without quality assurance is high-risk investment.

Capacity building for training is crucial to ensure successful implementation of Resolution No 2 “ of CEMAT 2003 conference. However, ministers also need to take into account that training as an instrument for change and improvement often does not provide expected results. Many times, investments in training are not successful and intended objectives through training are not met leading to disappointments and unhelpful attributions of blame. Inefficient and ineffective systems of education and in-service training exist in many countries (Saner,Strehl,Yiu, 1997).² However, it would be misleading to look at the education and training sector as if it were a beauty contest. What matters are the results or outputs (skills acquisition, know-how acquisition and increased behavioural competencies of trainees), not input figures (number of trainer, number of training programmes or number of training Centres etc.). At the final end it is the outcome measures, which determine whether or not a given training system is effective or ineffective (applied to resolution No.2: increased application of new approach to spatial planning by New members of Council of Europe).

Training as an investment versus training as expenditure.

While it might be relatively easy to have CE members countries agree on the need for training in SSD, it is less easy to know how to assess the return on investment of agreed training programmes. How can for instance the Members of the Council of Europe know whether the money paid for SSD training will return in form of more efficient and effective performance of local and regional authorities in new member countries? How can one measure the benefits of the intended training? How can the local and regional authorities be sure that newly trained staff does not simply walk off and take with them the newly acquired knowledge and skills?

² Results of comparative research involving 10 central governments and two provincial governments published by the International Institute of Administrative Science, Brussels. 1997

What about quality of training investment?

What quality system could best support a local or regional government agency in a new CE member country in improving the efficiency and effectiveness of its SSD training? Different quality standards and instruments are available to measure quality of training, such as ISO 9000, the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM), or some form of Total Quality Management systems.

Several governments have used either of the three quality instruments mentioned above with mixed results. Some felt these standards were sufficient, others considered the three instruments as being too bureaucratic, too industry oriented and not sufficiently adjusted to the peculiarities of the training process. A survey of seven countries indicated a trend away from the three traditional quality instruments.³

None of the quality instruments mentioned, however, address the actual pedagogical process itself and the interaction between organisational performance objectives and the training intervention within companies or public organisations.

ISO 10015: the new solution to the quality question

Realising the need for more sector specific guidance of quality assurance of training, a working group was created within ISO to draft a guideline standard for training. Twenty-two country representatives developed the draft text over several years culminating in the publication of a final official standard ISO 10015 issued by the ISO secretariat in December 1999. The new ISO standard offers two main advantages namely:

- a) being based on the process oriented concepts of the new 9000:2000 ISO family of standards and being easily understandable for administrations used to ISO related Quality instruments; and
- b) being a sector specific, that is pedagogical oriented, standard offering public administrations specific guidance in the field of training technology and organisational learning.

What follows is the description of two key features of the new ISO 10015 standard.

a. Linking SSD training investment with improved administrative performance

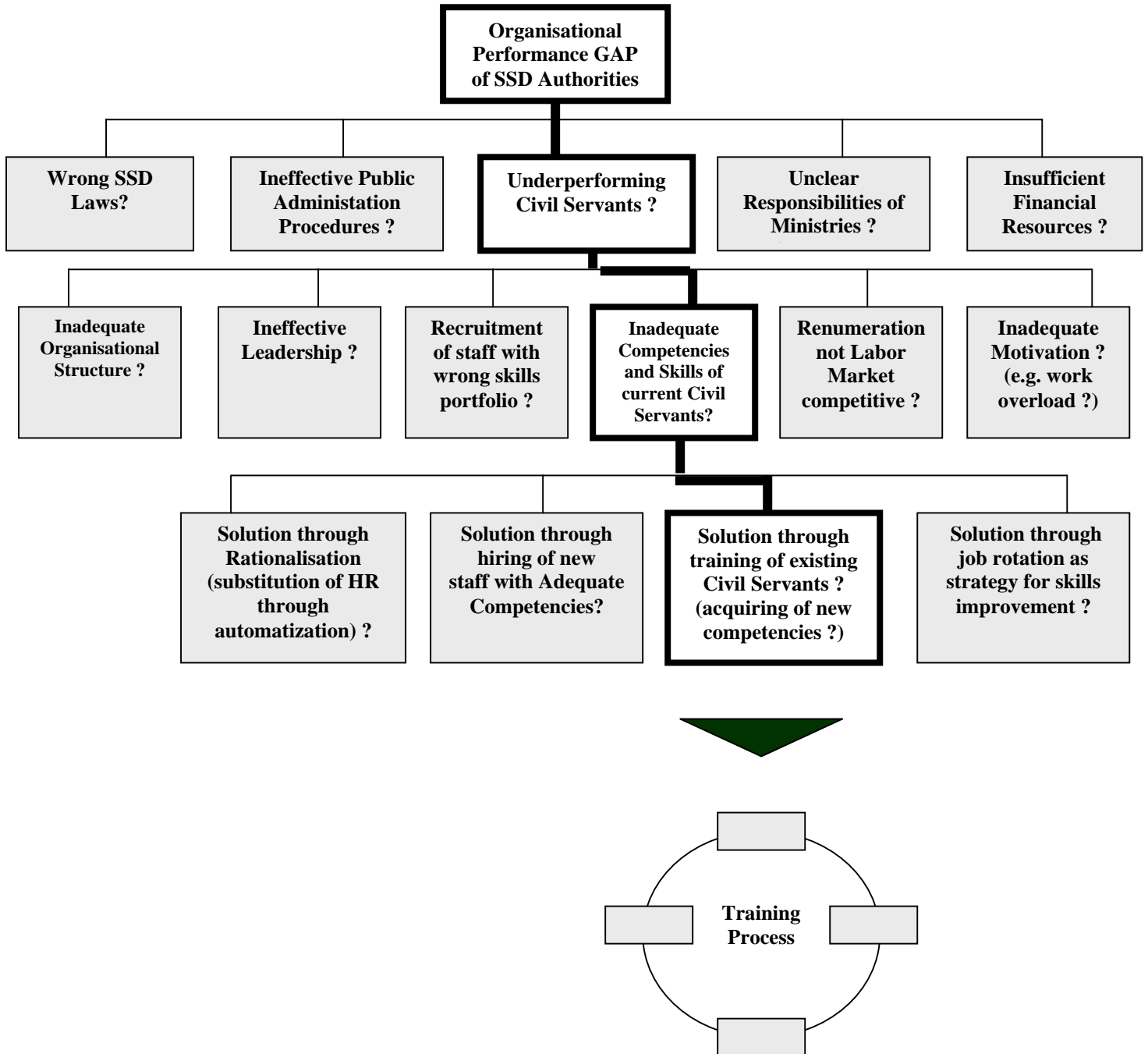
While it can be useful to test the professional competence of trainers or certify the pedagogical concept of training programmes, the key to assessing return on investment of training is its link to administrative performance. When asked the question why do you pay for training, an administration should be able to link its decision to organise training with concrete performance needs of the administration. In other words, the key client is the administration, not only the civil servants being trained.

Looking at the diagnostic tree below (Figure 1), an administration has to recognise first what is the performance challenge it faces and what are the causes of this challenge.

³ Raymond Saner; "Quality Management in training: generic or sector-specific? ISO Management Systems, Geneva, July-August 2002, pp 53-62.

Applying it to Resolution 2, an administration of a new member country should ask itself why it is currently not able to apply the new approach of SSD? Is it because it has the wrong laws? Or it might be that the new laws are in place but the procedures to apply them are missing? Is the quality of its administrative services poor because the staff is not equipped to deal with the new approach and does not know how to apply it?

Figure 1: Why Training?
 (Adapted from ISO 10015 Training, 1999, Figure 1, p.V)



If the performance gap is linked to under-performing human resources, then the administration should ask itself, why do our people under-perform -- Is it because their competencies do not fit the job requirements? Are they remunerated below labour market rates and hence are de-motivated or ready to switch jobs? Is the current administrative leadership deficient and staffs are simply de-motivated? If none of the above is applicable, it might be that their under-performance is due to a deficient skills set of the current staff. If so, then training would be the right solution.

ISO 10015 in this regard offers a clear road map in guiding an administration in making sound training investment decisions by asking the top civil servants to connect training to performance goals and use it as a strategic vehicle for individual and collective performance improvement. As a result, the success of training is not only measured by whether individuals have improved their professional competence, but also whether individuals have positively contributed to the administration's performance because they benefited from effective in-service training.

b. Organising training on the basis of pedagogical principles and processes

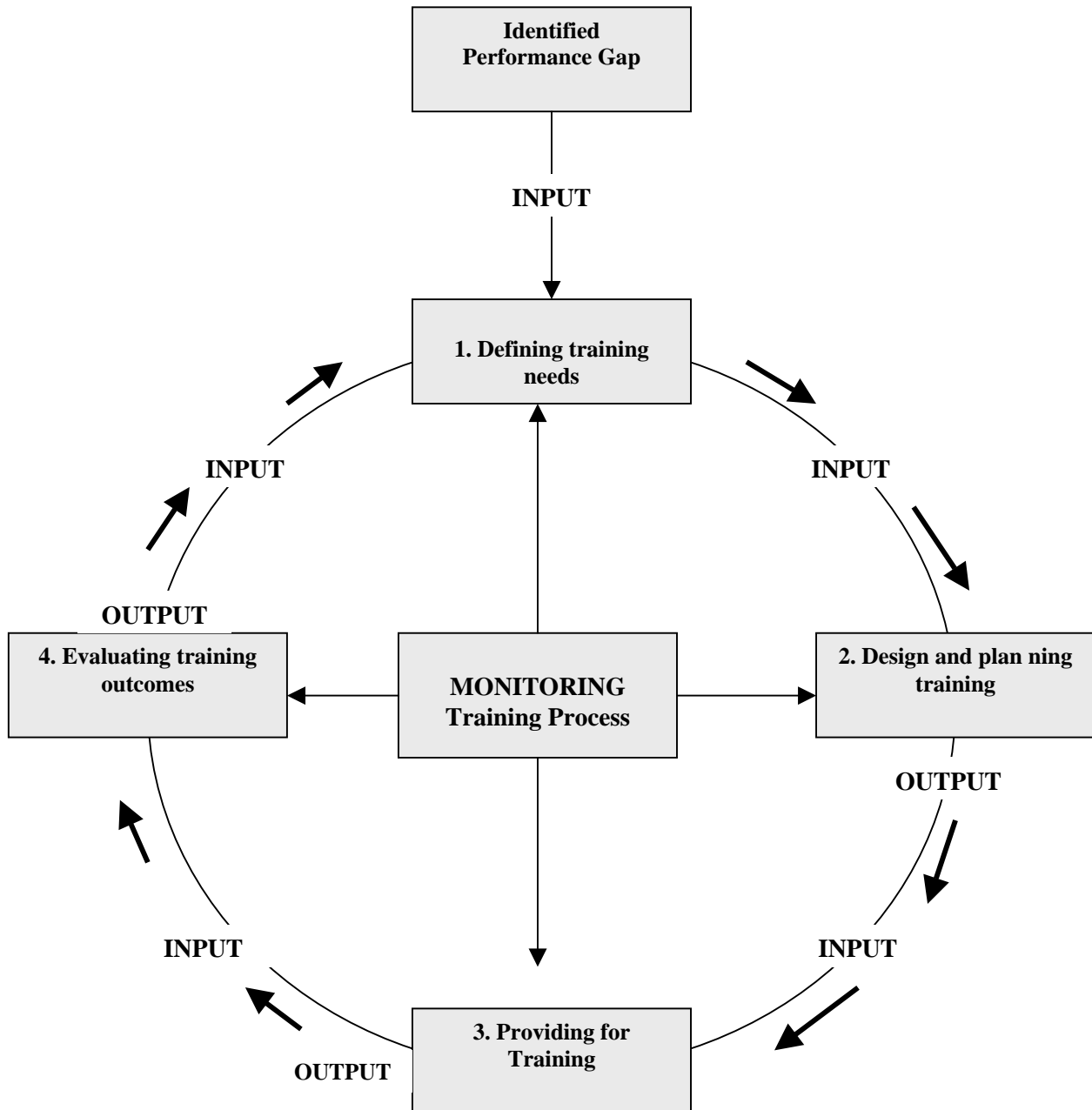
Training as an intervention strategy is called into place once an administration has determined that training of the current staff is the optimal approach to close the performance gap. Consequently, the next critical phase of investing in staff is that of establishing an appropriate training design and effective learning processes. In this regard, ISO 10015 serves as the management tool to ensure that training is organised efficiently in regard to the use of resources (finances, time and energy) and effectively in regard to closing the performance gap.

Following the well-known Deming Cycle, ISO 10015 defines training in a four-step process, namely, Analyse-Plan-Do-Evaluate. Each step is connected to the next in an input and output relationship (see Figure 2). As a quality management tool, ISO 10015 helps to specify the operational requirements for each step and establishes procedures to monitor the process. Such a transparent approach enables training management to focus more on the substantive matter of each training investment rather than merely on controlling of expenditure.

Unlike other quality management systems, ISO 10015 helps an administration link training pedagogy to performance objectives and link evaluation with the latter as well. Such a training approach provides administrations with constant feedback regarding its investment in human competencies. Similarly, at a higher aggregate level, ISO 10015 offers administrations the opportunity to examine their training models and to validate their training approaches and operating premises by the use of comprehensive data.

Input-Output Process of Training

(Elaboration of ISO 10015 Training, Figure 2, p, 2)



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Conclusion

In order to ensure success of SSD training investments, administrations need to consider how ensure effectiveness and efficiency of training investments. Only the quality of an administrations' human capital can ensure long-term success of Resolution No. 2.

Training is “mission critical” and should not be considered as an activity “nice to have” instead training needs to be managed carefully like any other major investment.

ISO 10015 offers a means to ensure that training is linked with organisational performance needs. It also offers a transparent and easy way to ensure that training design is based on the sound logic of the four steps of any training process. In other words, the use of ISO 10015 would provide a supportive hand to the professionalism of ENTO and UNITAR’s and strengthen the resolve of the CE community of countries to see Resolution No. 2 be applied successfully.

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