

INDUSTRIAL TRAINING (III)

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1. INTRODUCTION :

In part I of this article (Vol. VIII No. 2 Oct-Dec 1994), the objectives of industrial training and students' role during training were discussed. Part II (Vol. VIII No. 3 Jan-March 1995) was devoted for giving guide lines for the students regarding what learning situations occur during training and how these should be utilized. In this last part, it is proposed to discuss the placement officer's functions, skills and attitudes.

A clear definition of the Placement officer's role is needed if his visit should prove to be a meaningful educational event. The three individuals (The student, the work-supervisor, the Placement officer) who are usually involved may hold different perceptions and expectations about the role of the Placement officer. This could lead to one or more of the group feeling dissatisfied with the visits of the Placement officer. To avoid this, certain role and functions of the Placement officer and skills and attitude which will help in carrying out the role and the functions are suggested.

2. PLACEMENT OFFICER'S ROLE AND FUNCTIONS :

The purpose of placement gives

some guidance in defining the role of the Placement officer. The central function of the Placement officer is to facilitate the achievement of the aims and objectives of Placement. He acts as a facilitator or mediator. He carries on his functions through his visits. The tasks to be carried out in the visits are of general nature or special nature. The general tasks are :

(a) Finding the potential of a particular Placement :

This can be done by collecting the following information during Pre-Placement visit or first visit :

General information about the establishment such as Annual turnover, Product, Organisation Pattern, Number of employees, Different engineering processes, Specialised Machinery/equipment etc. in use, the nature of work a student is likely to carry out.

(b) Maximising the use of available potential for learning :

This can be achieved by covering the following points:

- [i] Discussing the programme of work with the student and establishing relationship of the

work he is going to perform with the subjects he has under gone in theory.

- [ii] Pointing out that the student will learn the various industrial procedures which may differ from what he has learnt in class, and he should try to find out reasons for this difference, if any.
- [iii] Pointing out that general practical expertise and specific techniques which could be acquired in the industry will not be available in the class or laboratory work.
- [iv] Pointing out to student that the responsibility to ask and search information would be on him and hence he must show the initiative.
- [v] Asking him to collect information about
 - [a] company structure and broad outlines of functions of various departments or sections. If it is a small concern various different functions going on.
 - [b] Various administrative procedures.

Discussion on these lines will broaden, out the students' perception

- (c) **Fixing the mechanism for continuous assement**

The review mechanism should involve both the student and the work place supervisor. The Placement Officer would play a central part in the implementation of such

a procedure. He should explain the procedure of review to the student and the work supervisor. The reviews should be fortnightly.

Some special tasks he may have to tackle during his visit, (may not be at all placements but at least at a few placements) are outlined below :

- (d) **Fulfilling a pastoral role :**

Especially for the students who are going for practical training for the first time, placement is an entirely new situation of which he has no earlier experience. There may be some genuine difficulties, unhappy situations. The student must have a feeling that under such conditions he can always look for guidance support and help to the placement officer.

- (e) **Making the student aware of his role in the organization**

Any misconception of the student as regards his role should be discussed and the proper position should be explained to him.

- (f) **Maintaining link of student with the college**

Placement officer should pass an information to students such as examination results any news about the college and other students etc.

- (g) **Discussing the student's progress**

Recieving feedback on the students performance, behaviour, aptitude, attitude, motivation and so on is a vital aspect of his visit.

- (h) **Acting as a mediator**

Sometimes the placement officer has to help in reconciling problems between the student and the organisation.

(i) Representing the Institution and the course

The Placement Officer is the main link between the college and the industry and also can be seen as an ambassador of the college. It will be his responsibility to provide relevant information about the college, the course, the role of the placement in the course, skills and knowledge to be expected from students based on his class in which he is studying etc.

3. THE PLACEMENT OFFICER AND HIS VISITS :

The visits should be well planned and should have commonly accepted and understood aims and objectives.

[a] How many and when ? :

The first visit should take place soon after the commencement of the placement. Depending on the duration of programme, the frequency of visits should be decided but preferably time gap between two successive visits should not be more than three to four weeks. If such frequency cannot be maintained, in between, the student and the work supervisor should be contacted on phone. During the first visit, the framework as mentioned in the students guide-lines should be set up in consultation with the student and the work supervisor. The review procedure should be explained. In

the subsequent visits, it should be seen that the reviews are being under taken. Any specific problems of the student or work-supervisor may be discussed. Any new learning opportunities if discussed may be included in the framework. The framework may be revised if necessary.

In the last visit the programme as a whole may be considered and the progress assessed. This will help in completing the final review.

All the visits should be arranged in advance informing the work supervisor and the student regarding time and date of visit.

[b] Visit style:

The style should depend on the situation. In some organisations a formal and businesslike approach is required while in some others, a relaxed and informal manners are appreciated. Towards students, no prejudice should be allowed to play which might have been created because of student's bad academic performance. Mediocre, lazy students may work hard and enthusiastically during placement. There need not be over defensiveness regarding employer's views on the college course, administration etc.

The Placement Officer will be looked upon as " professionals" and the employers expect from him a professional behaviour. He should therefore be well dressed, well mannered, punctual and move with self confidence.

4. SPECIAL INTER-PERSONAL SKILLS AND ATTITUDES

The Placement Officer's functions call for special interpersonal skills and attitudes. They have been mentioned below

His relationship with the workplace supervisor should be cordial, of relaxed friendliness between equals who must be regarded as each having their sphere of expertise. He need not either try to dominate or be submissive. He should allow the student and the supervisor to talk.

An attitude of intense interest in the student, in the placement, in the organisation, is necessary. He should listen carefully to what the student or the worksupervisor says and should have the skill to lead gently the conversation towards some point where he wants to probe deeply without being too inquisitive.

Any important issues that are

unclear, should be diplomatically pursued. Many times the student or the supervisor gives a rather more glowing account of the placement than is truly justified. In such delicate situation, the attitude of cordiality should be maintained and direct confrontation should be avoided. But He should try to judge the real situation.

In all difficult situations the over-riding skill to be displayed by the Placement Officer is the judicious exercise of the so called "Common" sense so that without displeasing or disturbing anybody concerned he will do his job.

Last, but not the least, bearing in mind the range of task the Placement Officer has to handle, one may ask "How can one individual be expected to possess or acquire all the skills and know-how needed?" The answer to this is that awareness of what is required leads to its acquisition.

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