

What do we have to do to ensure that training helps people learn?

- A Discussion paper for those involved in training in transition countries

*“If you teach me, I will forget,
If you show me, I will remember,
If you involve me, I will understand”*

Chinese proverb

CONTENTS

1. Purpose of paper
2. A Vignette
3. The key questions
4. Who benefits from training?
5. Defining the needs
6. A Case-study
7. Making sense of the experience
8. What sort of trainers?
9. Defining learning outcomes
10. Roles in Training
11. The role of accreditation
12. Where does this take us?

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1. Purpose of the paper - and some preliminary points

For more than 15 years now I have led public administration reform projects in a variety of “transition” countries in central Europe and central Asia – in which training and training the trainer activities have always been important elements. Initially I did what most western consultants tend to do – shared “our” good practice. But slowly – because I was no longer living in western Europe – I began to see things from the local perspective. And to realise that my job was to help those I worked with explore different possibilities. I also realised that I needed to make my texts simpler – more graphic – and began to develop tables and diagrams to illustrate points. This paper brings together – and develops - some of those tables and points.

The European Union has spent many hundreds – if not several thousands - of millions of euros on training of public servants in the accession states – and in Eastern Europe and central Asia. Despite the European Commission emphasis on project cycle management and on evaluation, I am aware of no critical evaluation it has commissioned of that spending – nor of any guidelines¹ it has issued to try to encourage good practice.

The paper starts with a stark summary of the situation in one recent member state and then suggest eight questions which should discipline thinking about training -

- WHO needs to learn WHAT?
- WHY (motivation)?
- HOW do people (in public service) learn most effectively?
- From/with WHOM?
- HOW do we know such things?
- How sure are we?

A quick history lesson then intervenes – which invites us to consider who basically benefits from training programmes – the individual trainee? The organisation? The trainer? The training supplier? Section ten the uses that to suggest that effective training systems are those in which these interests are balanced – and explores different ways of achieving this. My feeling is that too much emphasis has been placed by donors on the supply side – on identifying and training people they defined as “trainers”, in setting up training institutions. All very necessary - but more attention needs perhaps now to be given to ensuring that the actual staff (and their personnel managers) have the information and mechanisms which would help transform “needs” into something more like “demands”².

Sections five and six look at this issue of needs – the most difficult part of the training process but the one which most manuals skip over with platitudes. Section five sets out a framework – and section 6 looks at one recent experience (in local government training) to make a fundamental point. Those who work on technical assistance programmes are encouraged to think in a linear way – first define the needs; then train trainers to be able to satisfy the needs; then organise and deliver the training; and demonstrate to the sponsors by completed questionnaires that the participants had everything has gone according to plan. I have found myself constantly deviating from this linear model – and use this paper to justify a more “lateral” approach. It argues that our views about “needs” and “learning outcomes” should always be seen as tentative – needing to be tested and improved. And that good trainers recognise this – and structure their workshops and inputs accordingly. The paper uses one recent project to illustrate the point – and the process.

The paper then looks at what this means for the sort of trainer we are looking for. **Those who train trainers** tend to fall into one of two schools –

- Those who focus on the HOW – ie the **dynamics of a training event**; how to make it participative; how to develop “active learning”; how to present etc
- Those who focus on the WHAT - ie **identifying what it is the learner needs to know**

¹ It has issued, in recent years, guidelines on “good governance”, internal project monitoring, project cycle management, institutional assessment and capacity development, ex-ante evaluation

² I have to be careful here. “Demand” we are told in economics is “need backed up with money”. I do not argue for a pure market approach to training. Simply that we need a better balance between the power of the suppliers and the customers. The UK adult learning credit scheme experience has lessons

Is it possible to train trainers who can hold both perspectives in balance?

My apologies for the length of the paper! Once I have your feedback and am able to sharpen the message, it can be made shorter. And, hopefully the tables will make it easier to absorb!

2. Some common faults of training projects in developing administrative capacity

I reproduce below the basic message I left behind in my last project -

- The state system is suffering from “training fatigue”. Too many workshops have been held – and most without sufficient preparation or follow-up. Workshops without these features are not worth holding.
- The Training materials, standards and systems developed by projects are hard to find. Too little material is shared and put on websites – let alone properly maintained ones.
- Training is too ad-hoc – and not properly related to the performance of the individual (through the development of core competences) or of the organisation (through, for example, project management)
- A subject specialist is not a trainer.
- It is not enough, however, to operate on the supply side. Standards will rise and training make a contribution to administrative capacity only if there is a stronger demand for more relevant training which makes a measurable impact on individual and organisational performance.
- In the first instance, this will require Human Resource Directors to be more demanding of training managers – to insist on better designed courses and materials; on proper evaluation of courses and trainers; and on the use of better trainers. More realistic guidelines and manuals need to be available for them
- A serious effort needs to be undertaken to establish a network of training suppliers (or community of learners) which can, for example, share experience and materials - and help develop standards.
- It is critical that any training intervention is based on “learning outcomes” developed in a proper dialogue between the 4 separate groups involved in any training system
- HR Directors need to help ensure that senior management of state bodies looks properly at the impact of new legislation on systems, procedures, tasks and skills. Too many people seem to think that better implementation and compliance will be achieved simply by telling local officials what that new legislation says.
- Workshops should not really be used if the purpose is simply knowledge transfer. The very term “workshop” indicates that exercises should be used to ensure that the participant is challenged in his/her thinking. This helps deepen self-awareness and is generally the approach used to develop managerial skills and to create champions of change.
- Workshops have costs – both direct (trainers and materials) and indirect (staff time). There are a range of other tools available to help staff understand new legal obligations.
- Laws do not implement themselves. They require political and managerial commitment and resources.
- Such commitment and resources are in limited supply. Organisations (state bodies) perform only when they are given clear (and limited) goals – and the commensurate resources and management support. This requires the systems and skills of strategic management.
- This can be developed only through senior management being properly encouraged to prioritise and draft realistic action plans – based on project management principles.
- The core mission of Institutes of Public Administration should be to encourage and help senior management acquire these skills
- But they cannot do this as long as they are trapped in traditional teaching philosophies

This may be a tough litany – but I am by no means the first to make such points. In 2003 G Gajduscsek and G Hajnal published a highly critical assessment of technical assistance projects in civil service training³ One of the points they emphasised was that Western consultants imposed models and procedures on these countries which did not fit the local context.

And another report⁴ bemoaned the fact that the trainers trained at such expense by the Phare programme to train civil servants had crossed to the private sector and were too expensive now to use in the state sector.

³ Civil Service training Assistance projects in former communist countries - an assessment; (Local Government and Public Services Reform Initiative 2003) Available through google scholar from unpan website – but for some reason not available on the unpan site directly.

⁴ Produced unfortunately by consultants (paid by the EC) and therefore not publicly available!

3. The key questions

Training has a purpose. It is carried out to help people learn something. And there are different ways of learning. We need to think very carefully about *who needs to learn; what do they need to learn; and what can you actually do to help them learn that??* Our target group are **adults** – who have different learning requirements from youngster. Too many organisations assume that training consists of gathering people together and filling them up with facts through lectures.

Basic questions for anyone involved in organise training include the following -

- WHO needs to learn WHAT?
- WHY (motivation)?
- HOW do people (in public service) learn most effectively?
- From/with WHOM?

Table one sets out some of the choices available to us as we pose – and explore – these questions.

Table One. A menu for training

Key Questions	Some Choices
1. WHO needs to learn?	Those assuming new leadership role? Newly-elected Councillors? Specialists needing updated in subjects such as finance etc?
2. WHAT do they need to learn?	Facts? Knowledge? Skills? Behaviour?
3. WHO decides these things? And who should?	Employer? Training supplier? Trainee? Professional association?
4. Using WHAT techniques?	Training audit? Structured interviews (focus groups; attestation committee)? Learning from trial workshops? Others?
5. HOW - and from WHOM - do people learn?	From Colleagues and friends? Their own experience? From books and internet? From discussion? From seeing? From courses?
6. WHERE do they learn?	Classroom? At home? On the job? Mixed?
7. WHO decides this? And who should?	Funder? Provider? Trainer? Learner? Mixed (negotiation)?

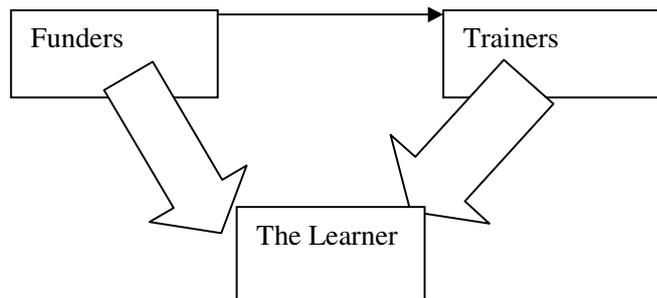
How do we know these things? How sure are we?

4. Training as a power game

4.1 Dominant groups

Management training is quite a mature industry and – for most of its life – the authority of two groups has set the pace (a) **training suppliers** (in which academia was initially dominant) and (b) the **senior managers** who commissioned it. It was these two groups who decided -

- what skills and knowledge were to be developed
- in whom
- who was to provide such courses
- how and where this was done.



As the senior managers usually delegated these issues to the more junior Training or Personnel Manager, most of these questions were decided by the academics **who ran the courses - who were generally subject specialists with no training themselves in training methods.**

And in the early years, the focus of training was seen as the more junior staff; the topics **technical** (eg finance) ; the location a **classroom** ; and the method a **lecture**.

The "recipients" of the training had little influence on such things: and the effectiveness and credibility of training suffered as a result.

Training is something that always seems to be done to someone else. The verb indeed seems to be parsed "I know: you learn: they are to be trained"!

4.2 Some lessons

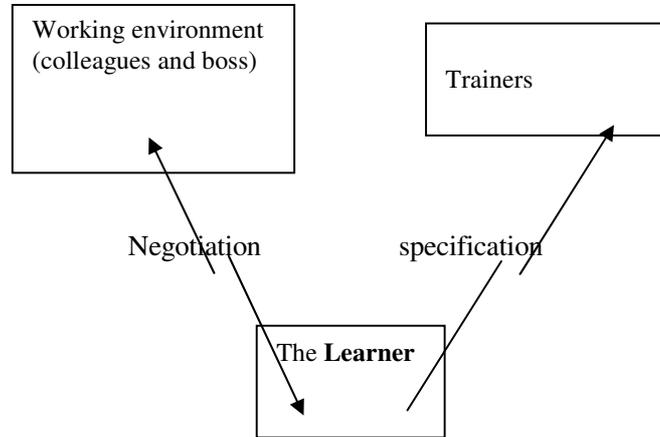
Several decades down the line we seem to have "learned", at considerable cost, three big lessons about organisational training strategies

- good and highly appreciated courses can give managers new enthusiasm, perspectives, skills : which, however, are wasted *when they return to an organisation which does not allow the newly acquired skills and attitudes to be applied since it is not willing or able to change.*
- some organisations aware both of the need to change, and of the role of training in that process, find that the courses they have sent managers to have been structured in a *traditional scholastic way which, however unconsciously, teaches conformity and respect for authority* : rather than the inter-personal and strategic skills involved in managing effective change.
- the scale of global change means that *top levels of organisations now have critical - and continuing - learning needs* : only if these are properly addressed will management development elsewhere in the organisation be effective.

In recent years it has been realised that effective learning requires

- the "learner" to feel that (s)he is in control of the process
- to be integrated in and supported by the working environment
- an initial process of helping him/her develop a set of individual learning "targets"
- training suppliers to respond to these.
- in a highly participative way

Formal, scholastically-based training is of limited value unless linked to - and supported by - the working environment. There is little point in someone going on (say) a one-month course unless the individual's immediate manager strongly supports this whether as part of project development or management development - and to the extent of new responsibilities being given on return.



More and more organisations in the West are realising that the sort of change they need to make can only be done by **the whole organisation** engaging in joint learning - led from the top.

4.3 A contradiction?

In transition countries, however, training funders and providers generally share the traditional assumption of their omniscience: and assume that "training" is a fairly routine and self-contained activity concerned to update the information and understanding base of junior staff.

The only "training" in which senior staff might permit themselves to get involved relates to the development of their understanding of EU policies.

Those involved with training programmes for public sector change in transition countries therefore face a challenge so great as almost to be a contradiction - how to help staff develop new values for example of initiative and cooperation when both the power structures which are funding their work and the local trainers who are supplying much of the input embody the old values and traditions?

4.4 Who benefits?

In section ten of this paper I set out the four groups whose proper involvement in a training system determines the value training adds. These are -

- The **client** – who commissions the training in order, one assumes, to achieve specific objectives for the *organisation*
- The **training manager** – who helps define the learning outcomes; ensures the course structure is designed to meet these; selects and briefs the instructors; and gets the participants to the agreed location.
- The **instructor** (trainer) – who prepares and delivers the training material
- The **learners** – who should have some influence over the course structure and their learning process

Who has really benefitted from the vast sums of money spent on training?

- The Individual staff member?
- The Organisation?
- The Trainer?
- The Training organisation?

And how do we make sure that organisations actually improve as a result of training? These are two crucial questions at the heart of this paper.

5. Defining the needs

The textbooks on training tell us to begin with a “training needs assessment” (TNA). But this phrase is actually a bit misleading – since a workshop giving knowledge or skills update may not actually be the real need of the department or the state body. What is very often needed is a refocussing of the organisation’s activities – with a concentration on some priorities or new ways of doing things – and a training programme to help ensure that those involved develop a commitment to the change and an understanding of what it means for them⁵.

The first step should, therefore, be to identify what is actually needed –

- skills or knowledge upgrading of specific members of staff who have had their “needs” signalled by some procedure⁶?
- or, on the other hand, a programme of new systems and procedures and skills with consequential training needs for the structure as a whole?

And the answer you get to the questions posed about needs will very often depend on the person you ask.

Many TNAs fail to recognise that there are three different levels of perception, need and “interest” in organisations–

- That of the individual official
- That of his immediate boss
- That of the ultimate source of authority in the organisation – eg the Minister and/or official statements of strategic direction

Box 1 offers one picture of the varying results you could get from needs assessments conducted with different groups of people.

Box 1; How position affects the definition of needs

Ask -	And he will define the need as -
The individual	Lack of knowledge
The individual’s manager	Lack of skills – or appropriate behaviour
The head of the organisation	Need for new procedures

Various mechanisms exist (such as the annual performance review) to try to bring these into line⁷.

Table 2 lists the more usual tools – and makes a brief assessment of each. TNA is a phrase which is used, rather loosely, to cover a variety of very different practices – from comprehensive studies of the legal, structural and managerial context in which a state body operates⁸, on the one hand, to the informal conversations and text, on the other hand, which justifies a list of training activities.

⁵ The reader should note that this is a rather traditional way of thinking about change – which assumes that top management decides and then “sells” or “tells” the change to subordinates. See Robert Quinn’s Change the World for a more rounded view

⁶ Eg attestation

⁷ for example, the Bulgarian Ministry of Environment has developed a very interesting self-assessment process – ISPA Measure 2002/BG/16/P/PA/003

⁸ An example is “Report on admin capacity” (May 2007) accessible at www.envtraining.eu

Table two;TNA Tools – a brief overview

Tool	Advantages	Disadvantages
1. questionnaires to target group	Precise questions can be posed	Already assumes that a specific group of people need training Respondents may not be aware of (or be willing to indicate) their gaps in knowledge or skills
2. personal development plans	Administratively convenient	Respondents may not be aware of (or be willing to indicate) their gaps in knowledge or skills
3. consultation with persons in key positions, and/or with specific knowledge	Can be done quickly	Misses out the views of those who will receive training
4. direct observation	More likely to pick up all relevant issues	Takes time – and skills
5. review of job specifications or of new requirements	Can be done quickly and cheaply	As this is a desk exercise, it could miss some key issues
6. individual interviews	Brings neutrality	Respondents unwilling to be open with strangers Takes time – and skills
7. focus groups	Brings neutrality Less costly	Could get “groupthink”
8. workshops used to sharpen preliminary definition	Participants have something tangible to react to and the time to think about their needs	The group may not be representative – or may not wish to offer negative comments

Many of these options require resources or skilled staff which are not available in transition countries. The challenge, therefore, is to develop a clear and easy-to-use framework for state bodies to use at this critical stage of the process. A friend and I have developed a diagram⁹ which argues for –

- A stronger interaction between the clients, training managers and trainers in the needs definition; and
- a recognition by all three groups that each workshop is an opportunity to test and improve understanding of both client needs and the performance of trainers.

This doesn't happen of its own accord; it needs authoritative guidelines¹⁰. And also training managers with the authority to implement them.

⁹ Page 29 of Learning from experience – the role of training in developing administrative capacity in Bulgaria – see key papers folder of my website www.freewebs.com/publicadminreform/

¹⁰ I recently prepared a small manual on assessment methodologies – giving specimen questionnaires

6. A Case-Study

This section describes how a team I led tried initially to assess training needs of municipalities – and how we then adjusted our thinking about the way to meet those needs in the light of workshops and the dialogue we had with our “trainers”. Section 6 tries to draw out the lessons from the experience.

6.1 The needs assessment

semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions in its two pilot counties with senior representatives of town and village governments, accountants, responsible secretaries, heads of communal service enterprises, and rayon heads and representatives. Almost 100 individuals were interviewed with each interview lasting between one and two hours.

The main four issues around which we structured our discussion were:

- perceived **roles and functions** within the existing systems (political and managerial),
- the working of **local budgets**
- capacity building needs and **training preferences**,
- the role of **IT** in raising effectiveness of the staff and working spaces.

This allowed us to organise 10 workshops in its two pilot counties.

- Some of the workshops focused on towns and had mixed groups (mayors, councillors, senior officials and NGOs)
- Other workshops focused on villages – and consisted of all relevant groups (with separate discussions)

In all cases there was a specific focus eg property management but the structure in all cases was interactive and problem focused – to give participants an opportunity to demonstrate in practical terms the problems they experienced in dealing with their responsibilities. And in all cases, we explored in an open way with the groups how they thought the project could assist them in the next 12 months.

5.2 what emerged from the initial workshops

The following ideas emerged –

Table 3. What municipal personnel seemed to be asking for

Request for Materials	Request for Workshops	Request for Other assistance
database for funds	How to apply for grants	Help arrange town twinning
How to manage and finance communal property areas – experience of other countries	arrange workshop with councillors from 4 towns on next steps to strengthen municipalities	set up dialogue between, for example, LSA and LSG
Lake protection and access – experience of other countries	“budget implementation”	legal consultations
Corruption	Course on lobbying	Assistance in visiting good practice in other KR municipalities
Local economic development	Property management	Assistance in arranging town twinning
Concept for establishment and development of the regional and local professional LSG centres	Workshop for planning and establishment of centres, training of the centres’ trainers.	Regional resource centers (i.e. legislative information)

Legal consultations were needed, we were told, on the following topics:

- Legislation on LSG issues
- Land issues
- Rights and obligations of service providers and consumers
- Housing issues
- Taxes
- Social protections

Councillors requested the following training topics:

- Foreign countries experience in Committees operating
- Budget Implementation

- Mechanisms for submitting legal amendments
- IT trainings
- English languages courses
- Exchange of experience with other municipalities.

The importance of tenant and citizen groups being involved in project work was also emphasised. All this is useful in identifying a range of PRODUCTS for the municipal “market”.

Table 4

Type of Product	Example	Present provision
Information and data bases	On funders	Materials on laws
Briefing notes	How to apply for grants	
Case-studies		
Training modules*	Municipal property management Budget transparency	Urban Institute modules Material produced by World-bank funded project
Exchange of experience	Waste management system in one town Data base	

6.2 Commentary

People want to learn from seeing and doing. This means presentations about relevant experience from other municipalities – in one’s own country. It means getting proper advice on specific problems.

Workshops need to be practical and specially structured – on problems. We were very aware of the useful training material available on the law – and the important technical topics such as local finance and municipal property. We did not want to duplicate that. And, equally, we felt that there was a lack of focus on the key part of the municipality – which is the elected Heads and councillors. That is what makes local government different.

6.3 A change of direction

But as we listened to the conversations in our workshops, we realised that lack of clarity in roles was undermining effectiveness (leading to conflict for example between councilors and officials) and that this issue was best tackled at the level of a **single municipality**. This, actually, is how we had started our work in 2005 in both counties – but as it is labour-intensive, we had felt it then necessary to work with specific target groups from a range of municipalities.

It was our local trainers who helped us develop a new approach which went beyond the boundaries of these selected target groups. At a workshop in March 2006 they suggested, very reasonably, that they should be part and parcel of the team planning, implementing and evaluating the workshops which our EU visitor (a German mayor) would participate in the following month. That would be the best way to learn about such processes.

We decided to use that visit to test the various assumptions we had been making about target groups, subjects, types of trainers etc.

In the first planning meeting, one of our (new) trainers suggested that the stand-off between the councilors and the executive should be one of the main issues to be explored – and so we opted to run a workshop in her village. Although our visitor was already familiar with the country, we arranged that he should spend the first day interviewing various individuals – covering the various roles – elected leadership, officials and citizens.

On the second day, the councilors, officials and citizen activists assembled. Our expert presented his findings. After initial discussion which developed some ideas, the meeting divided into small groups to develop these ideas further. The result was a great success – with a spirit of fatalism changing as the workshop went on to one of enthusiasm. “You have restored hope to us” was the verdict at the end of one of the workshops. And results followed.

7. Making sense of the experience

Four things worth knowing

- Things
- Oneself
- Other people
- What other people think of us

Schumacher¹¹

7.1 Different ways to learn

As we planned our initial work we were concerned with the elected element in local government – the councillors, the chairmen of committees, the mayors – who were perhaps being ignored with all the emphasis on technical subjects. We felt more emphasis needed to be given to what after all defines local government – these elected people, the skills they need and their accountability to local people. But then the phrase we found ourselves using was “the softer skills” – which are those involved in the roles and relationships which were one of the subjects of the consultancy-type work we started to do in April. The immediate focus of both the prescriptive and organic models is the individual (and their topic needs) - whereas the method we were struggling toward is more holistic. The prescriptive model is formal and disciplined; the organic is more anarchic. These differences are set out in Table 5.

Table 5. Models of learning

	Prescriptive learning	Organic learning	Holistic learning
Immediate Focus	The individual student	The individual practitioner	The unit or organisation
Style	Hierarchic	Spontaneous	Disciplined but interactive
Example	University	Community development work	Consultancy
Assumption	That missing knowledge is best developed through courses delivered through lectures	That new skills and knowledge is best developed through doing	That people will discover relevant action by structured dialogue
Problem	Attention and memory span	People may not learn from mistakes	Leadership domination may not allow process

We don't want to suggest that the holistic is a superior model – rather we want to suggest that each model is appropriate under certain conditions.

7.2 The notion of core competences

Local government is – or should be – a very different animal from local state administration. But what exactly is the difference? The difference stems basically from the very different accountabilities of the two systems – local government is elected by local citizens and is responsible to them.

The basic task, therefore, of local government is to ensure that community needs are met. Of course, in trying to pursue the needs of the local community, the municipality has to obey the law – but its masters are the local community, not those who happen to form the central government of the day. It does not and should not take instructions from LSA – unless these are backed up by law.

This answer leads to another question – what skills are needed to pursue that basic task?

Clearly the starting point is an understanding of local needs. How is that obtained? Not just by living in the area and asserting you know the local problems!

¹¹ No Not Michael, the racing driver! Ernest, the guy who wrote in, 1973, the famous book Small is Beautiful.

- It requires **analysis** –since you have to be able to prove to others that what the priorities are. And all this requires skills of observation, listening and argument.
- It requires **decision-making skills** (which is not the individual rationalistic act most textbooks assume!)
- It involves **implementation skills** (which are both people-orientated and technical)

Table 5 sets out the argument in more detail.

Table 5. Core Competences needed in local government leaders

General competence	Example	Skill Requirements
1. Analyse local problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requirement to collect statistics and draft reports • Development of local strategies 	analytical problem-solving drafting reports
2. Listen to citizens and report back to them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • complaints • Budget transparency hearings • Annual reports 	Political communications
3. Identify and develop new projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building a school • Establishing municipal resource centres (annex 1) 	Project management
4. Manage the municipal team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruiting staff; • Weekly team meetings 	Basic management
5. Manage resources (money; land; property)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing budgets • Land and property management 	Professional skills of classification, measurement and valuation
6. manage services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waste management 	General management

Excellent manuals have already been developed by UN Habitat¹² and other bodies such as the Urban Institute¹³ which makes the task of drawing up training material for a particular country a simpler task than starting from scratch.

7.3 Motivating the individual

And what assumptions are we making about our audience? When we define the target-group we need to think of them not just as holders of positions – but as individuals with experience, emotions, skills, information, behaviour. And we need to ask if it is facts, understanding, skills or new behaviour they need? And why do we think this? What proof do we have?

You may think your purpose is just to give the participants information – but the question is whether they will understand it and use it!! The English have a saying – “You can take a horse to water but you can’t make it drink!” *The challenge for training activities is to ensure that your audience is motivated to understand and apply the information conveyed in presentations and papers!* That’s why we have used Schumacher’s quotation at the beginning of this section. Too many training sponsors think that those undergoing training are just empty vessels into which facts should be poured.

One of the delights of working with municipal personnel is their thirst for knowledge – unlike many civil servants, municipal personnel are faced every day with real problems crying out for solution. They are motivated – and are not satisfied only with facts. They want to solve problems!

¹² www.unhabitat.org/pmss/getpage.asp?page=download&alt=1&publicationID for volume 4 (Training Tools) of the series *Key Competencies for improving local governance*. Into which languages of the region has it been translated?

¹³ Although based in the US, it has won numerous contracts in transition countries and developed manuals in areas such as local finance, communal services and housing - www.urban.org

And solving problems requires people skills – and that requires us to understand ourselves – our strengths and our weaknesses. Useful questionnaires are available which get people thinking - and go down very well¹⁴.

7.4 The different purposes of workshops

Training workshops are used for a variety of purposes, including -

- Pass on information (eg a new Law)
- Help people understand how things work (eg property market; local finance)
- Build team spirit
- Stimulate people to see things in a different way
- Motivate them
- Get them to behave differently
- Help develop new skills (eg negotiation)
- Help people understand their role in a new project
- Help them pass an examination

One tool which (if used properly) helps clarify the precise purpose is that of “learning outcomes” – ie a detailed statement of the new knowledge and capacities the participants will gain as a result of attending the workshop. This is now an essential part of any workshop organisation – and, of course, sets the standard against which the results of the workshop are assessed. But too few training organisers treat it seriously enough. Used properly, it forces us to do two very important things -

- to make more explicit our assumptions about what knowledge and skills the participants have – and whether they are in fact correct
- to explore whether the way the course is structured will in fact develop the knowledge and/or skills. This doesn't happen just by lecturing at people!

7.5 The learning process - making our assumptions explicit and testing them

The final point, I think, to emerge from my recent experience is we need to encourage the people we work with to celebrate the learning process more. *The technocrats have been too powerful – for too long – encouraging people in a belief that “experts” could (and should) produce*

- *final definitions of needs*
- *formalistically-drafted “learning outcomes”*
- *definitive lectures and handouts*

This is not the way the world works! Our definitions are always partial – and our training will that much more powerful to the extent that we encourage trainers to treat as an open question what the needs of those at workshops are – and to realize that *they have as much to learn about how to transfer knowledge, understanding and skills as their “trainees” have to learn about the particular subject which is the focus of any workshop.*

8. What sort of trainers?

Table 6 below was developed during one of my projects – and offers a possible typology which will hopefully stimulate discussion. It indicates that different types of people are used as trainers – with each bringing something to the event which others don't but, at the same, time having a certain weakness. **Academics**, for example, are subject specialists – used to telling their students what they have to do to pass examinations! And any practical experience they have is generally out-of-date.

Those who are **practising experts** in Ministries are strong on the law – and probably have had reasonably recent experience of trying to apply it locally. But they will have had little training in structuring the knowledge to make memorable presentations and generally have little experience of using discussion groups let alone case-studies effectively.

¹⁴ Eg Belbin; and strategic thinking

And then there are those (generally younger) who have been trained as trainers – but do not have the subject knowledge or experience to be trainers themselves. But they make excellent **moderators** – able to identify in advance what knowledge or insights a particular group of people need; able to find the trainer who seems most appropriate; and to structure the event in the most effective way. Such a person is necessary to try to ensure that expert trainers actually deal with needs of workshop participants

Table 6; Roles and strengths of different types of trainer

	Practitioner	Moderator	University Lecturer
Based in the capital	Strong on legal aspects; weak on problems of local implementation Tends to use traditional non-interactive teaching methods	Generally strong on moderation skills and encourages interaction Can lack understanding of local context	Strong on theory; weak on practice and problems of local implementation Uses traditional non-interactive teaching methods
Resident in regions	Strong on local practice – sometimes weak on presentation skills	Reasonable understanding of local context Moderation skills not as developed	Strong on theory; weak on practice and problems of local implementation Uses traditional non-interactive teaching methods

The challenge facing all trainers is how to ensure that the participants on their courses are motivated to learn. Some of this lies outside the influence of the trainer – and is determined by the process which selected (a) the subject and (b) the participants. If the training is linked to a change programme at the work place and the participants feel they have been able to shape the course agenda, motivation will be high. But motivation also depends on the attitude the trainer brings to the workshop.

In a recent project, we worked exclusively with subject specialists – who, by virtue of their expertise, could not readily accept that they had a lot to learn about presentation and the learning process!

Indeed, in all projects I've worked in, I've had difficulty with the very word "trainer". In a glossary I drafted recently I defined Trainer as "someone who has the skills and experience to set up the environment in which people learn for themselves – through case-studies, role playing etc. Too often the word is used to describe "instructors". There are lots of views about what makes a good trainer – box 2 is a typical list -

Box 2; Profile of a good trainer

- ◆ Well prepared sessions - and resources
- ◆ Variety of teaching methods used
- ◆ Good relationship with the trainees
- ◆ Interested in the needs of individual trainees
- ◆ Easy to understand
- ◆ Knowledgeable about the subject
- ◆ Makes students feel enthusiastic
- ◆ Create a good learning atmosphere
- ◆ Friendly and enthusiastic
- ◆ Uses appropriate language/humour
- ◆ Supportive
- ◆ Respectful of individuals
- ◆ Experienced
- ◆ Gives praise and highlights success rather than failure

That's quite a demanding list! I have drafted recently a paper on Assessment methodologies which contains forms to help training managers to assess the performance of a trainer – using some of these qualities. A critical question is how such qualities can be developed in trainers – particularly those don't see themselves as trainers but as subject specialists.

A lot of “training of trainer” courses concentrate on the techniques - of presentation, for example. A lot of this can be helpful but we suspect that the main feature which creates a good trainer is an openness of mind.

Someone who is interested in a subject; is aware that he is always learning; and who sees opportunities for advancing that learning in every encounter with another human being is the sort of person who most easily demonstrates the qualities needed from a trainer – respect, knowledgeable etc

9. Defining learner outcomes

Let's face it – a lot of training is “hit and miss”. A course is offered – and specific individuals are told by the boss to attend. How do we really know that this particular subject – packaged (hopefully!) into a particular mix of presentations, discussions, tasks, working groups, case-studies etc ; and led by individuals with a particular mix of knowledge and skills – will actually lead to results? And results, furthermore, at two levels - first for a group of people whom the trainers have never met before; and then for the organisations the course participants belong to?

The only answer is “custom-design” – ie that the course is designed with specific individuals in mind. All too often the focus of course design is simply the subject matter – what do people need to know, for example, to submit a successful bid for resources for a waste management plant? Such a question is, however, only the first question of the design process. Once it has been answered – and a list of “must-knows” has been drawn up, the next question is *how much of this will the people attending the course already know?*

And the only way, it seems, to answer that question is when the learners are actually sitting in front of the trainer.

There is, however, a way out of the dilemma which includes some of the following options-

- Draft clear “**learning outcomes**”. These are developed by the training managers and trainers (a) making explicit their assumptions about the skill or knowledge deficiencies of the learners and (b) then drafting statement about what the participant will know or be able to do at the end of the course. Drafting such a statement has the additional advantage of making those providing the training understand that the course will need to use more than presentations to achieve results.
- Contact some or all course participants before the course and invite them to articulate some of the questions and issues they want the course to help them with
- Ensure that the workshop starts with a properly organised session which can help identify the key issues or questions the participants want the course to deal with (casual questions about “expectation” rarely work)
- Adjust the course structure accordingly
- Treat each workshop as an opportunity to refine your understanding of needs and adjust the programmes and use of tools accordingly
- Test the knowledge of participants before and after the course (see section 8 below)

Of course all of this will be done only by trainers with a commitment to that style of working. When the trainer is a subject specialist with a full-time job in state administration, it will not be easy to do.

And those who commission training are normally reluctant to insist that the trainers operate in such a way. The roles of the training manager and of the trainer - and the relationship between them - is a crucial issue addressed in the next section.

10. Roles in Training

10. Four key roles

At least four different groups are involved in any training –

- The **client** – who commissions the training
- The **training manager** – based in the training centre: who helps define the learning outcomes; ensures the course structure is designed to meet these; selects and briefs the instructors; and gets the participants to the agreed location.
- The **instructor** (trainer) – who prepares and delivers the training material
- The **learners** – who should have control over the course structure and their learning process¹⁵

With E-learning we add a fifth – the provider of the technical infrastructure.

A friend and colleague¹⁶ and I developed recently the diagram overleaf – which looks at each of the four roles and tries to define (a) what each person needs to bring to the process if training is to be effective and (b) the results (or outputs) which should come from the **dialogue** which is needed between each group as we move through the training cycle. Learning outcomes, for example, come from a proper discussion between the client and training manager to which the latter brings questioning and analytical skills to make sure that the learning outcomes are relevant and realistic.

10.2 How can they be properly developed?

My feeling is that effective training systems require two things –

- **A system which ensures such a dialogue actually takes place.** I am not generally a fan of procedural documents (the EC has far too many of them!) But a written document which sets out a set of procedures and roles – and which the various people involved in training feel obliged to follow – would help.
- **Mechanisms** which help each partner to this dialogue **better understand his/her role** – and **develop their capacity** to play it.

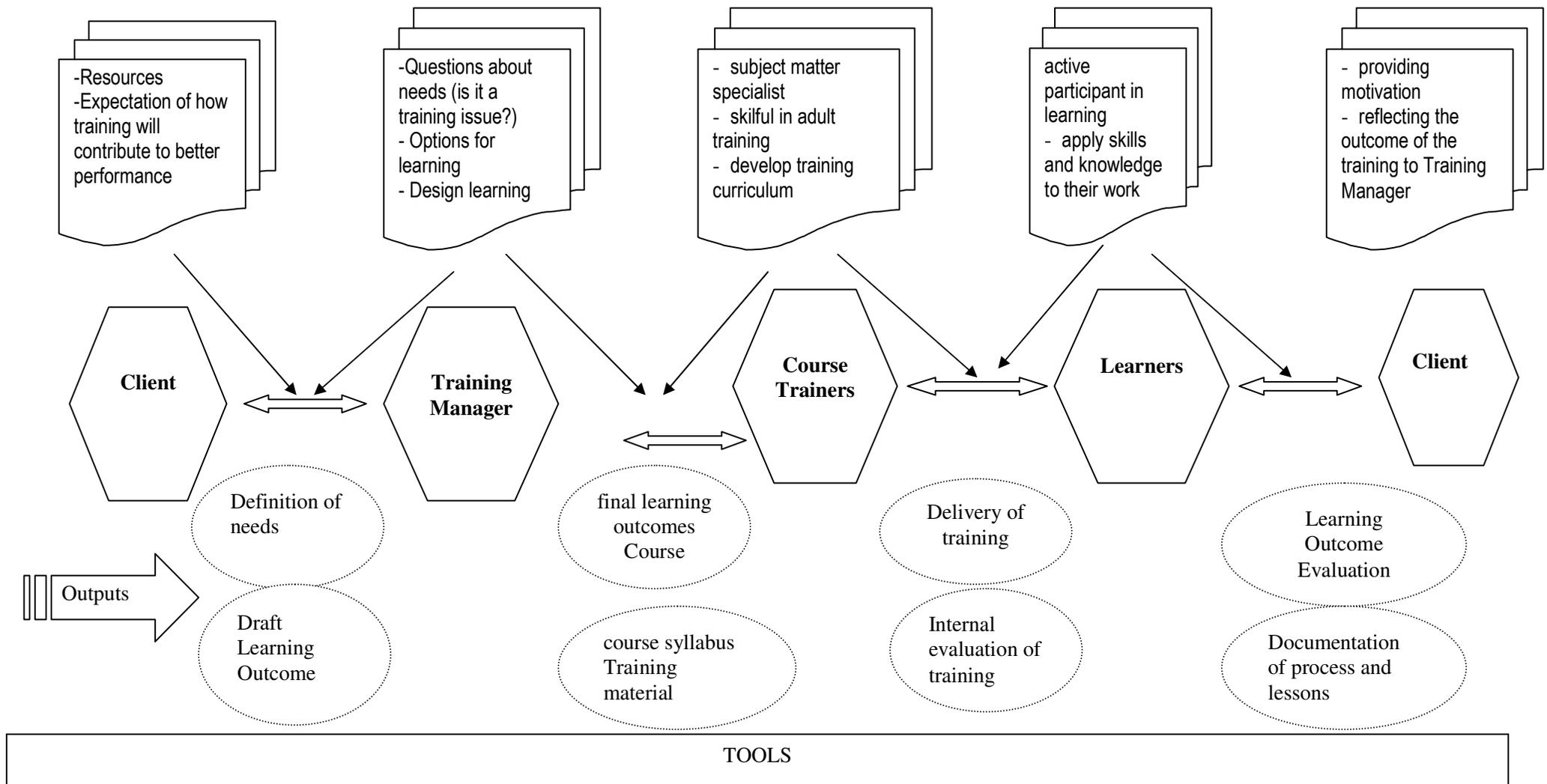
Some possible mechanisms -

- **Develop a professional training ethic;** The diagram also emphasis the importance of training managers and trainers committing themselves to “continuous learning” – and treating every workshop as an opportunity of improving their understanding of needs and refining their learning tools and skills.
- **Strengthen the consumer voice ;** Achieving improvements in systems always requires operating on both the demand and supply side. So far, we have dealt only with the supply side – the activities, skills and behaviour required of trainers and training managers. **But change generally needs pressure from the demand side. Clients, for example, need to know what it is reasonable to expect from training.**
- **Create a “training community”– consisting of those involved in different roles in current training;** create a real training community or network which can bring together the various groups listed above to supply a real impetus for change.
- **strengthen the role of training manager;** A problem frequently encountered is that training managers do not have the status, time and confidence to ensure good learning outcomes and monitoring of course structure and materials and trainer performance. Too often, too much, is left to the instructors – who, as subject specialists, are assumed to have the knowledge and skills to package their knowledge in a way which leads to effective learning. But being a subject specialist and being a trainer are two entirely different things! How can training managers play a stronger role?

¹⁵ Since they are adults

¹⁶ My thanks to Daryoush Farsimadan

Roles of Each Part and Outputs



Functional Review (how present system works)

Training Needs Assessment

Performance Measurement methods

11. The role of certification, accreditation and assessment

11. Be careful about certification!

The terms of reference of a recent project of mine invited us to set up an accreditation process for training centres and trainers. I felt strongly that this was a mistake – I put it as follows -

“Public servants throughout Europe have been under increasing pressure in the last few decades. More is expected of them – and their training has, as a consequence, been given great importance. Training systems have become much more sophisticated – and are resourced accordingly. What were the factors in other countries at a similar stage of development as those in the Balkans which gave the impetus to change and improvement? Did formal accreditation played in these countries in the development of civil service training systems? This is a critical question – which leads us to make the distinction between “drivers of change”¹⁷ and “certification”. The latter is a check on quality which, of course, can act as an incentive for the improvement of quality for trainers and training centres. Historically, however, it has come into play only after the drive for improvement has reached a critical point – and when experienced trainers exist to act as credible certifiers. It has rarely (if ever) been a driver of change. Indeed it can, paradoxically, stifle the conditions for improvement!”

NISPAcee has an important working group which, for some years, has been sharing experience on such issues – and some of papers presented at this forum are worth consulting¹⁸. And it has now introduced a European system of peer accreditation¹⁹.

11.2 and of being overcomplex

There are too many complicated assessment systems around which, as a result, are rarely used. My position on assessment can be summarised in four short assertions –

- assessment is important
- people are reluctant to practise it
- without clear written standards and procedures it cannot be done
- but they should be kept simple!

Most workshops will issue a brief questionnaire at the end of the workshop which asks participants such things as –

- were their (generally undefined) expectations were met?
- How useful they found specific sessions or trainers?

That is useful feedback (although participants are often too generous) – but it does not help us assess the contribution the course made to the workplace. It is level one of the four-level model for evaluating training programmes which Donald Kirkpatrick developed in 1959 which is outlined in the table. This is still is the most widely used approach to training evaluation in the corporate, government, and academic worlds.

Box 1; Kirkpatrick 4-level model of training evaluation

Level 1 Reaction: Did participants like it?

Level 2 Learning: Did they learn?

Level 3 Application: Did they apply the new skills or knowledge on the job?

Level 4 Results: Did the change in behaviour positively affect the organization?

¹⁷ See useful paper from OECD governance network – [Lessons learned from use of power and drivers of change analyses in development cooperation](http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/24/2/37957900.pdf) - www.oecd.org/dataoecd/24/2/37957900.pdf

¹⁸ At www.nispa.sk/portal/homepage.php See, for example, “Quality Assurance of public administration programmes in Poland” by W Mikulowski (2002)

¹⁹ “EAPAA peer review accreditation and its potential to strengthen PA education: the case of CEE countries” by Juraj Nemec in *Post-Communist Public Administration: restoring professionalism and accountability* - Proceedings of 14th NISPAcee Annual Conference ed Coombes and Vass (NISPAcee). He has updated that in the latest book from NISPAcee

Kirkpatrick's model provides a conceptual framework to assist in determining what data should be collected for evaluation purposes. This data collection and evaluation process must be planned as part of the design and development segment of lesson preparation. Otherwise, it is possible to miss an opportunity to collect data which is needed for the evaluation process. The Kirkpatrick approach is therefore a challenging one and not easy to use in its entirety – as table 7 demonstrates

Table 7; Four Levels of Evaluation of Training based on Donald L. Kirkpatrick's Evaluation Framework

level	evaluation type what is measured	evaluation description and characteristics	examples of evaluation tools and methods	Practicability
1	Reaction	reaction evaluation is how the delegates felt about the training or learning experience	eg., feedback forms also verbal reaction, post-training surveys or questionnaires	quick and very easy to obtain not expensive to gather or to analyse
2	Learning	learning evaluation is the measurement of the increase in knowledge - before and after	typically assessments or tests before and after the training interview or observation can also be used	relatively simple to set up; clear-cut for quantifiable skills less easy for complex learning
3	Behaviour	behaviour evaluation is the extent of applied learning back on the job -	observation and interview over time are required to assess change, relevance of change, and sustainability of change	measurement of behaviour change typically requires cooperation and skill of line-managers
4	results	results evaluation is the effect on the business or environment by the trainee	measures are already in place via normal management systems and reporting - the challenge is to identify the trainee's contribution	unrealistic to expect results without extensive training programme of all staff

11.3 Keeping it simple

Despite the difficulties of measuring the last 2 dimensions, the Kirkpatrick approach does remind us that workshops – and training material – cannot and should not be treated as ends in themselves. Sadly, that is all too often how they are seen. But courses are means to an end. And that end or objective is the more effective implementation of a new policy (eg a different inspection “regime” or set of procedures). So someone needs to check in advance that a course has been designed in a way which is likely to lead to better organisational performance. The Kirkpatrick approach is a model for post-hoc evaluation. We need ex-ante evaluation as well. And Kirkpatrick also misses some dimensions which might be called “proxy” – eg check of use of agreed learning tools. I would suggest that it is realistic for normal training managers – faced as they are with deadlines and small budgets - to assess –

- **Relevance** (is the course material and structure likely to help the individual or organisation perform better?)
- **Participant Learning** (Did the course help the participants develop the understanding or skills the “learning outcomes” said it would?)
- **Training material** (do they reach an agreed standard?)
- **Use of agreed learning tools** (did the trainers do what they said they would?)
- **Participant satisfaction**
- **Performance** (how well did the trainers perform?)
- **Trainer learning** (what did the trainers learn about participant learning needs – and how they could better be met?)
- **Training institutions** (are they managing their staff and resources in a way which achieves results?)

Table two below suggests how each of these might actually measured.

Table 2; an overview of assessment

Factor	Key question	How can it be answered?
1. Course Relevance	is the course material and structure likely to help the individual or organisation perform better?	The context in which the course participant is working is described. Missing knowledge and skills are then defined in a needs assessment; learning outcomes required – and a course structure and materials which allow these outcomes to be achieved.
2. Participant Learning	Did the participants develop the understanding or skills the “learning outcomes” said it would?	Test before and after the course OR Ensure that learning outcomes are presented and agreed at the start of the course; and that feedback forms ask about this
3. Training material	Did the handouts meet the required standard?	Standards are drawn up and used
4. Participant satisfaction	Were their expectations met?	They are asked at the beginning of the course what these are – and then asked about it at the end
5. Trainer Performance	how well did the trainers perform?	Ask participants to rate trainers on an agreed scale. Independent assessment
6. <u>Trainer</u> learning	what did the trainers learn about participant learning needs – and how they could better be met?	Develop a questionnaire for this purpose – and ensure that it is used
7. Use of agreed learning tools	did the trainers do what they said they would?	Guidance notes on use of “active learning” learning are developed – and are used. Trainers required to demonstrate how their course structure and use of learning outcomes will help achieve learning outcomes
8. Training institution	Is it managing its staff and resources in a way which achieves results?	Self-assessment Independent assessment Both require a proforma

These points are further developed in a small paper on assessment methodologies I developed recently – and which contains specimen questionnaires. UNDP and Council of Europe have recently published one of the few papers on this subject²⁰

12. Where does this paper take us?

At this point, a summary of the key points normally appears – on the principle of the good training adage –

- “Tell them what you are going to say (the Executive summary at section one)
- Say it (sections 2-11)
- Summarise what you have said”!

But I’m not ready yet. There is, hopefully, a simpler message contained in all these words. Someone once said – “inside every fat man, there is a thin one struggling to get out”! Your feedback on this paper will help that thin man’s release!

Ronald G Young; 7 November Sofia

²⁰ Approach to Quality Assurance in Training for Local Governance (Council of Europe and UNDP 2006)

Further Reading

Training for Local Government in Central and Eastern Europe by Daniel Serban (Local Government and Public Services Initiative 2002) <http://lgi.osi.hu/publications/2002/113/Serban.pdf>

A very rare, clear statement about principles, practise and pitfalls. One of the few I can recommend.

About Ronald G Young

- 20 years' public administration experience in Scotland as a senior policy-maker; and academic
- Secretary to cabinet of Strathclyde Region 1974-1990 (Europe's largest local authority), he was responsible in for developing and managing an innovative community development strategy to help combat discrimination which has been taken up by the new Scottish government.
- Resident team leader for projects in public administration reform in Central and Eastern Europe since 1991 (eg helped set up Civil Service Commission in Azerbaijan in 2004/5 and was personal adviser to its Chairman 2006-2007).
- Extensive experience of developing effective strategies for the public sector
- Teacher of public management on Degree course for 10 years. Hon Professorship of Presidential Academy of State Construction, Tashkent

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