

Behavioural and motivational training for Senior Staff in the Portuguese Public Sector

César Madureira

Masters in Organisational Sociology and Doctorate in Management, Researcher for the *Instituto Nacional de Administração* (INA) [National Institute for Administration] (¹), and Professor of Lusiada University

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SUMMARY

The results of this research has highlighted the fact that most public sector bodies in Portugal do not have any formal specification for training requirements, nor do they have training programmes or detailed training evaluation systems. Furthermore, there is no interaction in these areas between the training body and the Departmental Customer or any involvement of the Departmental Customers in the entire training process. In spite of this, senior staff continue to be optimistic about the role of behavioural and motivational training in the everyday realities of administration. However, our results reveal numerous inconsistencies and contradictions and it is clear that, for the time being, no systematic organisation of behavioural and motivational training attended by senior management exists in public sector bodies in Portugal.

This article has been based on a doctoral thesis by the author defended on 22 April 2004 in the Faculty of Economics and Business Studies at Lusiada University in Lisbon and aims to summarise some of the results of the research.

(¹) National Institute for Administration (INA). A Central Body Promoting Training of Managers and Public Sector Employees in the Portuguese Administration. Although there are several training centres for Portuguese public sector employees, the INA is the largest body responsible for professional training in the Portuguese Administration.

Introduction – Problems surrounding the issue and objectives

At the beginning of this century, the public sector was forced to modernise, in response to the needs of a knowledge society and a globalised economy. In the private sector the ability to manage change and complexity was becoming vital to efficiency and, similarly, in the public sector too, professional training was affirming itself as strategic to change, revealing itself as a vital accompaniment to steady and comprehensive modernisation in the public sector, both in technical and behavioural fields (Majchrzak, Davis 1990). However, paradoxically, pyramidal structures within the public sector and the 'bureaucratic and assembly-line mentality of Taylorism' that still prevails, contributed to ensuring that investment in training continued very often to be regarded as a non-quantifiable, non-definable cost, which was therefore to be 'avoided' (Crozier, 1991; Madureira, 1997, 2000).

As far as the subject of professional training in the context of the Portuguese public sector is concerned, a group of authors (see Madureira, 2004) and various studies (Profap, 1994, 1995, 1997) both underline the need for continuous training to be implemented as part of an integrated process that incorporates all the stages of the training programme. They also point to the absence of any concerted training programme within the public sector. This apparent absence of any systematic planning was what led us to define the central aim of our study, namely to try and identify the gaps that exist in the management of behavioural and motivational training ^(?) for senior staff in the Portuguese public sector.

Our research focused on the above-mentioned group and on recent publications on the subject of 'change in the public sector' based on the premise that it is highly qualified management hierarchies and public-sector employees who are the main agents and drivers of change and modernisation in the Administration (Campos, 2002, Rocha, 1998). This reasoning appeared to us more than sufficient to justify our choice of study. We have thus tried to define and interpret the perception of trainees (senior staff) of behavioural and motivational training in the public sector. To achieve this, we outlined our basic aims and then performed tests which produced results which will be analysed in greater detail later on.

Theoretical framework

In the 1990s, the OECD was already stating that development and training of human resources should be seen as a priority (OECD 1996), and that adaptation of qualifications and skills to permit flexibility in the work-

^(?) In the next chapter a full definition of what is understood by 'behavioural and motivational training' is given.

place should be seen as essential to consolidating reforms in the public sector.

Although this statement is significant, it will not amount to anything more than a declaration of good intentions if we do not clarify the concept of training as we see it today. What sort of training are we referring to? Indeed, we should not confuse the concept of training (as a specific attempt to increase the immediate performance of an employee in a particular job, reinforcing the culture and image of an institution already in existence), with the concept of behavioural and motivational training or change (as part of a process of wider change of the organisational, cultural and behavioural models apparent in people and institutions).

Although the subject of training in the behavioural field has been discussed in depth, particularly in Anglo-Saxon literature, the term 'behavioural and motivational training' has not been used very much. It is therefore important to state that what we mean by behavioural and motivational training is everything that relates to the subject of organisational behaviour (Madureira, 2004). Amongst these areas of study, we shall highlight the issues of organisational change management, leadership, organisational culture, team management, conflict resolution and negotiation techniques, communication methods, institutional power and motivation (Robbins, 1998).

However, in order to slot the issue of behavioural and motivational training into the context of a specific organisation, we needed to build up a more detailed picture of it. It is, therefore, relevant to point out that in the case of the Portuguese public sector, the average age is quite high (over 45 years old) and academic qualifications tend to be low. It also tends to have old-fashioned organisational models with bureaucratic procedures and centralised decision making. This is not an environment therefore that would appear to be conducive to behavioural change and consequent training (Madureira, 2004; Rocha, 2001; Pessoa De Amorim, 1997). In a context such as this, we can see that training, specifically behavioural and motivational training (where measurement of results is more subjective), and its management, might often be viewed as one of the less important issues concerning management in the Portuguese administration.

Basic premises

Premise 1 – In view of the above, our first premise is based on the principle that behavioural and motivational training is not clearly defined, organised or decentralised in the Portuguese public sector. We believe that in the majority of cases there is no 'change in conduct as a result of training', or any coherence between the behaviour encouraged by the training programme and the actual requirements of the employees in the workplace. Nor is there any awareness or active participation by the students in specifying the requirements and training programmes for their departments or

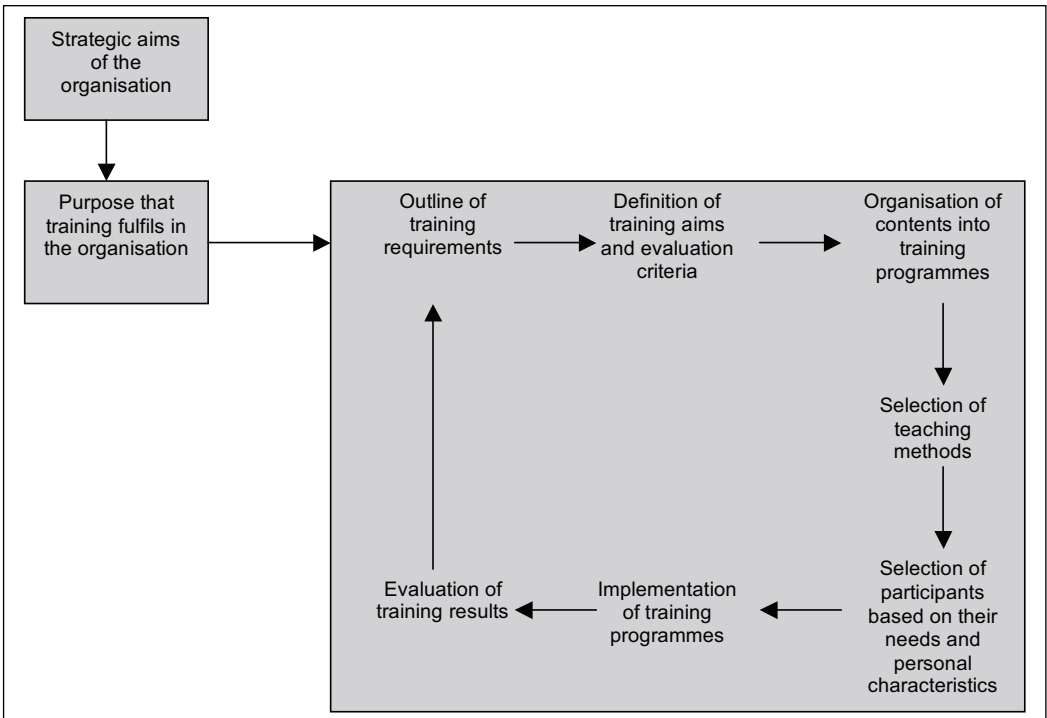
any uniformity in the criteria used as a basis for selecting those employees who attend training courses.

Nevertheless, we are working on the premise that there is insufficient scheduling of the various training phases (specifically between the needs analysis and the phases following this). We also tried to find out which of the *systematic training models* presented by Cruz (1988) or by Chiavenato (1987), and shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2 respectively, could be tested.

By applying these models to the realities of the Administration in Portugal, we have attempted to find out whether there is a training programme in the Portuguese Administration which could be linked to the models outlined by the aforementioned authors and whether this at least includes steps such as the establishment of aims, needs analysis, planning, training implementation and evaluation.

Premise 2 – In the second premise it is suggested that in the Portuguese public sector, training management is conditioned by corporate/institutional arguments and also by the cultural context. In this case, the models proposed by Scott and Meyer (1991) and by Moore and Ishak (1989) point clearly to the existence of corporate constraints (model one) and cultural

Figure 1: Chart showing general organisation of training activities



Source: CRUZ, J.P. (1998), *Formação Profissional em Portugal – Do Levantamento das necessidades à avaliação* [Professional training in Portugal – From needs identification to evaluation], Lisboa, Edições Sílabo, p.31.

and meta-cultural ones (model two), which exert a huge influence over training management in an administrative context ⁽³⁾.

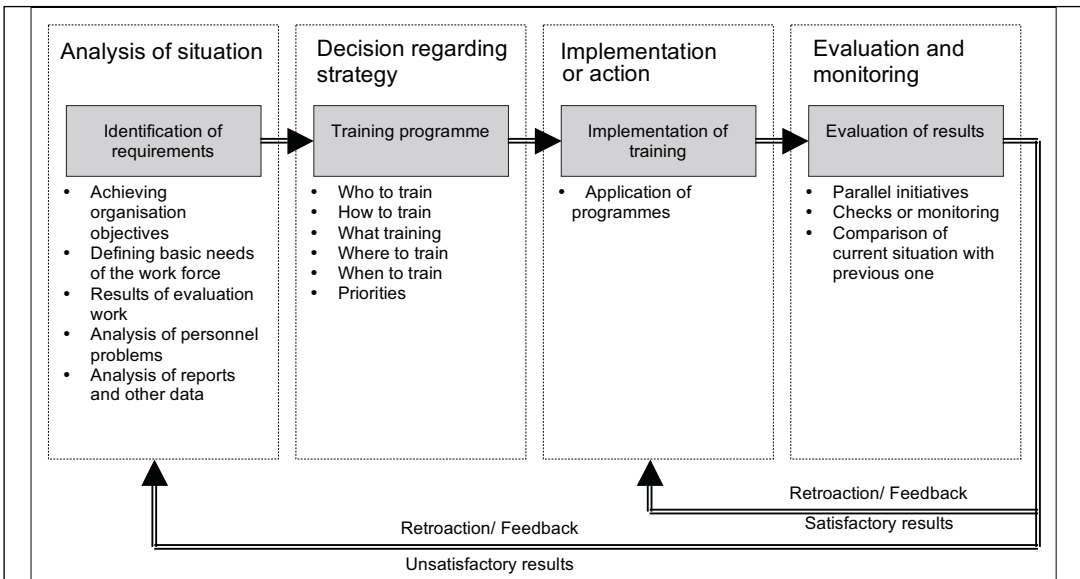
Premise 3: Of the training system models already referred to under point one, it appears particularly relevant to pay careful attention to the issue of 'training evaluation'. Authors such as Le Boterf (1992) and Kirkpatrick (1997) believe that the concept of evaluation should be split up. Kirkpatrick highlights significant differences between the various levels of evaluation (with the first being the most superficial and the last being the most in-depth):

- level of reaction,
- level of learning,
- level of behavioural modification,
- level of influence on organisational outcomes.

Indeed, it is only through evaluation and, in particular, through continuous assessment over a period of time, that *feed-back* adjusted to the results of training can be built up, looking at both the effect on those trained and their objective impact on the organisation itself.

Taking these premises as a basis, our third point supports the idea that the evaluation of senior staff training in the administrative context is carried out superficially, exclusively by the training organisation (in this case

Figure 2: Stages in the training programme



Source: adapted from Chiavenato, Idalberto (1985), *Recursos Humanos – Edição Compacta*, Atlas, São Paulo, p. 291 [Human Resources – Compact Edition].

⁽³⁾ Moore and Ishak define 'meta-culture' as the extended cultural environment (in this case the Administration) and 'culture' as representing the organisational culture of a particular Department.

the INA), with no interaction between it and the departmental training customer.

Having outlined the basic points, we then tested them and presented the results together with a discussion of the results in section 5.

Methodology

Based on our propositions, a questionnaire was drawn up and sent to all senior staff attending training courses in the field of behavioural and motivational training at the INA between 1996 and 2001. This took place during a period when the country was governed by the same political party⁽⁴⁾ and we were curious to find out whether, during these six years, the ruling party had left a 'political imprint' for change upon management training. Once the replies to the questionnaires had been received, the results were described and presented along with a discussion/analysis of them.

Universe and Sample

Universe

The universe used for our study consisted of 1 342 individuals (senior management, from all corners of the Portuguese public sector, who had attended behavioural training courses in the senior staff Training Division of the INA between 1996 and 2001). The purpose of selecting this universe was to enable us to gather the opinions and perception of the trainees regarding behavioural and motivational training received over a considerable period of time (six years).

Sample

The sampling process took the form of sending questionnaires to all the members of the universe by post (the sample group were sent questionnaires by registered post), with the final sample based on the number of trainees who replied to the questionnaires mentioned earlier. With regard to the universe, of the 1 342 trainees to whom questionnaires were sent during the month of April 2002, we received replies from 212, or, in other words, 15.8 % of respondents.

Around 70 % of the sample were between 30 and 50 years of age, and 62.1 % of them were women.

⁽⁴⁾ Government formed by the Socialist Party (PS)

Presentation and analysis of the results

The role of behavioural training in the public sector

The results showed that a majority of those surveyed (66.8 % of the sample), agreed with the premise that *behavioural and motivational training courses introduce new ideas, which are capable of being incorporated into the public sector context and/or which are in tune within the mood for change within it*. The perception of public sector employees regarding this issue was not what we had initially expected and indicated a belief that behavioural and motivational training initiatives were likely to introduce *new ideas, but not always with any possibility of practical application*. This view held by the respondents alerted us to the fact that, in an environment in which public sector employees⁽⁵⁾ and the workings of the public sector are discredited, there was apparently a strong desire to regain their status and professional self-esteem. The belief that behavioural and motivational training could provide the impetus for change, had its supporters amongst a group of skilled public-sector employees (senior staff) who aspired to being able to work within a modern organisation in which they would be respected professionally. Perhaps it was this sort of aspiration which led respondents to be so categorical in their appreciation of the possibility of putting the ideas communicated in the training into practice.

The results even point towards *a match between the attitudes and conduct learned through the training initiatives and the actual needs of the work place*. Around 92 % of respondents said that the match was exact or at least on target. However, this could again be a case of respondents feeling constrained by 'a corporate sentiment' that things should go as well as possible. In these situations, it is perhaps difficult for anyone filling in a survey to express an opinion that does not reflect how they would like things to be.

According to 73 % of the trainees, in our public sector departments *there is a perfect link or a very strong match between tasks carried out and tasks formally listed as part of the job description of public sector employees*. If the situation is as they say, any training needs analysis would have to be based on reliable information supplied by a solid *job description*, that would presumably permit a proper specification to be drawn up that would list any actual shortcomings and would be likely to produce proper training programmes that suited the identified needs. However, the information supplied by respondents would seem to be at odds with data gathered from previous studies (see Profap, 1994, 1995, 1997) which reveals a tenden-

⁽⁵⁾ This lack of credibility is widespread. There is a reference to the situation in Portugal in Corte-Real, I.; Koen, N.; Kelly, M.; Petiteville, F. (1999), *Les administrations en mouvement – Les réformes de modernisation administrative dans quatre pays: Portugal, Pays Bas, Irlande et France*, Maastricht, EIPA. [The public sector in flux – administrative reforms and modernisation in four countries: Portugal, Netherlands, Ireland and France].

cy on the part of training bodies to use 'general theoretical frameworks' instead of carefully identifying actual training needs.

With regard to the issue of *whether or not most departments carry out a training needs analysis and a training programme*, involving the participation of trainees in behavioural and motivational training initiatives, the results show that most of the respondents (around 80 %) observe that right from the start, public sector departments do not carry out any (behavioural) training needs analysis, and also state that there is no training programme in those Departments where they are working. These results clearly contradict other data provided as respondents claimed that there was a match between behaviour learned and the actual needs of the job. It would be difficult for what is learned and what is needed to match, without first carrying out a formal analysis of those gaps which need to be filled or what behaviour should be changed. Based on these results, we can state that the organisational training models proposed by Cruz (1988) or by Chiavenato (1987) are not being complied with, in the majority of cases, in the Portuguese public sector, and that in reality it is not feasible to talk about the existence of a training programme within the public sector.

Despite the above, there are other approaches that supply alternative arguments to an understanding of the issue. According to these, although most of the Departments do not have either a suitable needs analysis or a proper training programme, their public-sector employees still attend training courses and it is possible that we are dealing with a self-organisation phenomenon. Indeed, since these organisations function openly, within an environment of change, they can easily become dissipative structures. This is what Fonseca (2002) implies, when the author warns that the emergence of a dissipative structure cannot be deduced from assumptions or previously established conditions. According to this line of thought, these organisations have great potential for things to happen because of their precariousness. In other words, even in the absence of any training needs analysis or training planning, public sector employees carry on training themselves in a relatively self-organised manner, finding solutions for any constraints upon them.

Moreover, with regard to the analysis issue, it has been shown that in most cases in which Departments use informal methods for training needs analysis, there is less likelihood of a behavioural and motivational training programme being put in place for the Department, but, conversely, if the situation is the opposite, the opposite is true. The use of formal methods of analysis makes it more likely that there will be a training programme in the Department (55 % of those surveyed who stated that they worked in departments that used formal methods for training needs analysis said that there was a training programme, whereas 70 % of those who said that their departments only used informal analysis methods stated that there was no training programme). It would therefore appear to hold true that if there is no formal structure for all stages of the training programme (with emphasis on the identification of needs, without which the whole programme would

go wrong), substantiated in integrated institutional documentation, akin to a 'training programme', it would appear to be impossible to foster training programmes to match current needs, and even less so to make extrapolations regarding future ones. This reasoning does not conflict with what was stated previously which implied that structures were unpredictable. However, although on the one hand it appears appropriate that organisations should have a system for identifying training needs to allow us to provide suitable training, on the other we are aware that the assumptions which we use as a basis for making this decision are ephemeral (from the point of view of their time limits) and cannot offer permanent change. These points of view must be taken into account when we talk about the training programme.

The absence of *uniform criteria for attending behavioural and motivational training initiatives by trainees* was another of the points confirmed by the data. It was also revealed that the main criterion listed by respondents was the 'need to update knowledge' (44.2 %) rather than the 'need to prepare for future change' (23.3 %), as might be expected bearing in mind that the specific issue of behavioural and motivational training is being discussed. Although it would not appear wrong to have a number of different criteria, there should be a logic presiding over the definition of these criteria and aims. In this case, the apparent absence of a way to define any criteria for behavioural training seems to stem from wider issues relating to the way in which training is perceived within the public sector. The fact that 'self-motivation on the part of employees' (86.5 % of those surveyed) seems to be decisive in attendance of training initiatives, to the detriment of other factors (such as the formal identification of needs, harmonisation between the trainee's opinions and that of their managers, etc.), was also revealed by the results. This issue supports the view that we are looking at processes that are self-organised.

If this is the case, the results confirm that the INA (the Central Body Promoting Training), is the body to which employees most frequently refer for attendance of behavioural and motivational training initiatives (of those surveyed only 14 % said that they had already attended behavioural and motivational training initiatives organised by other training centres). According to 71.3 % of respondents, in most public sector departments, there are no training centres, leading us to suspect that centres offering training are too centralised. Excessive concentration of responsibilities for training (when the groups of trainees come from sectors as different as economic affairs, finance, employment, defence, justice, health, agriculture and fishing, etc.), in an organisation such as the INA, which in spite of having a portfolio of external trainers, has a small number of permanent staff, appears inadvisable to us. The Institute could set up training models and develop strategic initiatives aimed at decentralising training initiatives (particularly in view of the specific nature of some of them) and could also encourage development of each Department's own training needs analysis and evaluation tools (although these could be based on global training guidelines for public sector training initiatives).

Management of motivational and behavioural training by public institutions: is this technically suitable or is there institutional domination?

Within the public sector, the adoption of a more rigorous approach in the management of behavioural and motivational training is made more difficult by the imposition of an institutional perspective, where tradition, rules and old ways impose themselves upon rational thought. This premise is submitted as a basis for supporting the argument of Scott and Meyer (1991) which states that institutional processes (which in the case of the public sector are bureaucratic), are instruments for disseminating organisational beliefs and values according to which professional training should be something which people want to do and agree to. According to this view of institutions, professional networks can show that they encourage and foster change and organisational innovation, without this necessarily changing the philosophy or commitments of the organisation. This view finds support in the model of Moore and Ishak (1989), according to whom the management of training is always conditioned by a wider metaculture (in the current case the culture of administration), and by the culture of each Department in particular.

Taking these premises as a basis, and with the aim of looking at using behavioural and motivational training by senior management, we focused on identifying the *management styles adopted by the Portuguese public sector*. According to the trainees, the predominant training style in the Portuguese public sector is 'democratic' (39.9 %), followed very closely by a 'participatory style' (38 %). These results contradict the premise which implied that the style of management prevailing in the Portuguese public sector would be 'bureaucratic'. Indeed, only 15.4 % of trainees said that this was the predominant management style. An explanation for these results could be the fact that the respondents were senior staff, many of whom carry out management or coordination roles.

Perhaps this points to excessive optimism amongst respondents about the management style practised as it would be difficult to admit that the Departments in which they work are subject to a 'bureaucratic' style of management (see Crozier, 1963).

With regard to sharing with colleagues behaviour learned during the training initiatives, 75.7 % of trainees said that this happened, which would suggest minimal resistance on the part of the Departments to the new suggestions introduced by the departmental employees from the courses attended. A very similar percentage of respondents even said that the Departments did not object to the new behaviour learned in training, stating that there was a process known as *organisational learning* (on this matter see Sisternas, 1999), which involved the adoption of new group attitudes within the organisation without focusing on individual behaviour. In this context, it is worth remembering that although resistance to change can be lessened, it is normally associated with organisational change

processes (Lewin, 1965; Kanter et al, 1992). The results we found might lead us to think that this is a case of the exception proving the rule. However, the respondents came from very different bodies within the public sector, so it does not seem to be a satisfactory explanation. It would be a huge coincidence if our sample contained everyone in the public sector who actively wants change. Rather, we think this is, once again, a case of public-sector employees having a 'corporate sentiment' where encouragement to participate pro-actively in change is a real factor. However, since, as we have seen, many respondents have high-level jobs, they are part of the organisational reality to be changed. Perhaps because they are aware of this, they choose to highlight the 'involvement' of the different management levels, to give the impression that the change is being embraced. Only in this way can *status* and privilege be preserved, whilst continuing to utter the politically-correct slogan of 'shared change' (see Campos, 2002; Araújo, 1999; Rocha, 1998).

Definition and the lack of it in the evaluation of behavioural and motivational training within the context of the public sector.

With regard to the section on training evaluation *the main evaluation carried out focuses simply on 'trainee reactions'* (51 % of respondents). This has an entirely plausible explanation as can be seen by reading the 'Kirkpatrick evaluation model' which states that 'level of reaction' is what is most easy to measure, although it may provide the least number of clues (Kirkpatrick, 1996).

Furthermore, as far as the timing of evaluations is concerned, if we look at the responses from respondents about this issue, the evaluation of behavioural and motivational training initiatives is most often carried out at the end (97.3 % of responses). The option of carrying out the evaluation as part of a continuous assessment process over time is almost always disregarded. This is not the right approach and is inadequate but it is the norm for training programmes in the public sector. As can be seen from looking at the model, an evaluation of this type is only likely to see what the 'reactions' and 'learning' of the trainees are like, but cannot ever determine whether there has been any actual 'change of behaviour' or what has been the impact upon 'organisational outcomes'.

The results also showed that, according to 62.5 % of respondents, it is the INA that is the main evaluator of behavioural and motivational training courses that it carries out. Indeed, it is the Institute itself which carries out this evaluation on its own, without involving Client Departments in this stage of the training process. A system such as this seems disproportionately 'onerous' for the INA, but it also reduces the responsibility of the Client Department and puts constraints upon it. In reality, this system encourages a certain 'laziness' in less pro-active Departments, whilst forcing more dynamic Departments to do without evaluations which should be

encouraged and incorporated into that of the training provider. This tendency to *centralise the evaluation carried out by the professional behavioural training bodies* and for Client Departments not to be involved in this process, can also be seen in the evaluation of courses provided outside of the INA (54 % of respondents). It is therefore an issue which is not restricted to a specific training body but which probably permeates the whole public sector.

Conclusions

The principal problems associated with training in the Portuguese public sector continue to be the issues of needs analysis, training evaluation and the lack of intervention by the various organisational protagonists in the training process. Our study attempts to provide added value, firstly by updating the information available, and secondly by analysing the kind of training discussed: behavioural and motivational training.

The results show that most of the Departments still do not use formal analytical methods for identifying behavioural and motivational training needs and do not organise any specific training plan. The criteria for selecting candidates for training are vague, with the preference of the employee taking precedence, at the expense of managing the training as part of an integrated strategy. Because of this, even if you take the view that the employees are organisational actors working within a complex and open structure, who are likely to work out their own forms of self-regulation, it is still difficult to talk about a strategic approach to behavioural and motivational training management. As far as evaluation is concerned, we have seen that this focuses on 'reactions' in particular, and only at the end of the initiative, with no follow-up of the evaluation process. We have also confirmed the existence of a tendency to centralise the evaluation carried out by the bodies responsible for behavioural and motivational training and seen that the client departments are not involved in this process. In this respect, we are looking at a phenomenon which, rather than being intrinsic to a specific body organising the training (in this case the INA), is probably more cultural, permeating throughout the public sector.

This study also highlights the possibility that respondents made their comments because of a feeling of 'corporate sentiment', giving answers more revealing of an ambition, a desire or an instinct for corporate preservation than of what is really happening in their opinion. The fact that the trainees believe that the prevailing management style in the Portuguese public sector is 'democratic' is an example of this. At the end of the survey it is clear only that a professional training programme does not exist within the public sector. There are innumerable vagaries and inconsistencies and perhaps there is also no meaningful awareness regarding the impor-

tance of behavioural and motivational training. It is vital furthermore to point out that the data gathered, and the conclusions drawn from it, are reinforced by the fact that the study was based on a non-random sample in which the people answering the questionnaires (15.8 % of the universe) were more interested and involved in the behavioural and motivational training issue and its consequences. With regard to practical implications and future research which might be undertaken as a result of our study, it should be remembered that excessive centralisation of training management and its evaluation appear to be ample grounds for rethinking in the near future how the INA works with its client departments (that is, the various departments within the Portuguese public sector), to build up an evaluation and management system that is integrated into professional training, with particular reference to behavioural and motivational training.

With regard to training needs analysis and plans (especially behavioural plans), we recommend that these should be formalised in each Department. Although the analysis methods will vary according to the particular features of each Department and the branches of activity, the INA, finding itself unable (otherwise this assumption would not be made) to analyse training needs in all the Departments of the public sector, must work together with them to arrive at a 'common ground' for the analysis, which could be used for all Departments or would at least be capable of adaptation for the various Departments.

Each of the above issues should be the subject of further research to study each of these points and thereby assist in their implementation in the near future.

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