

“HOW TO IMPROVE A FIVE-DAY COURSE IN FACILITATING CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING TO MAXIMIZE IMPACT”

An Executive Summary of J. Vehar’s 1994 Master’s Project
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Special points of interest:

- The course was delivered by the International Center for Studies in Creativity, on March, 1994.
- The researcher selected 6 participants
- He interviewed them and transcribed the recording.
- The interviews were the main source of data
- The transcripts were analyzed, highlighted and clustered by themes.
- The researcher arrived to 4 main conclusions

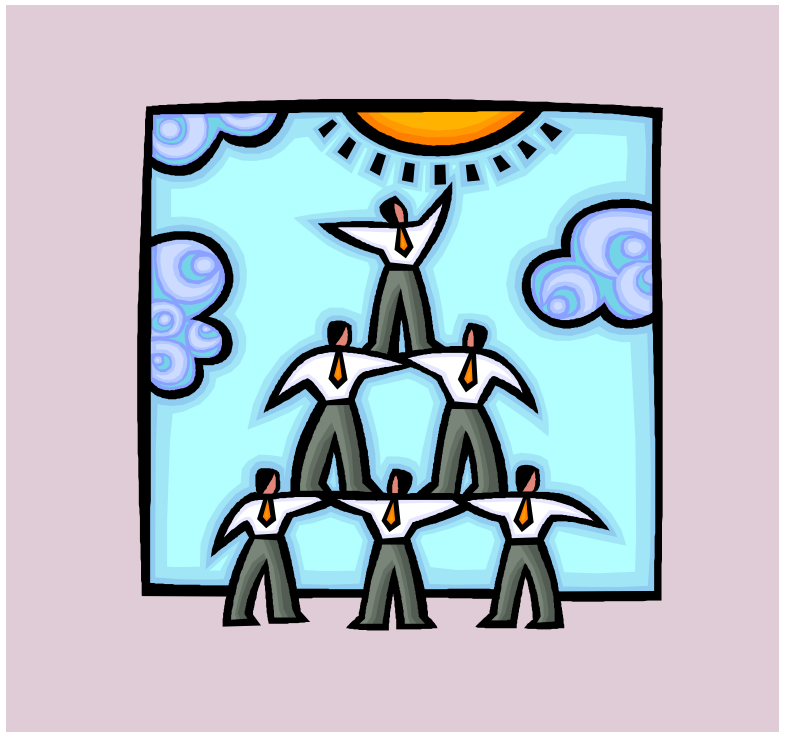
ABSTRACT

Studies have shown that training programs are effective in teaching creative problem solving. But, there is less information about the impact of these programs to determine ways to further improve whose effectiveness.

This Masters project focused on studying a “Five Day Course in Facilitating Creative Problem Solving”. Based

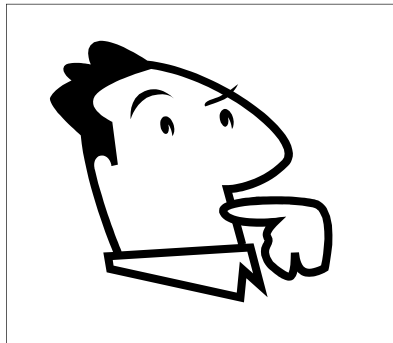
upon follow up interviews with program participants, the project provides information to improve design and delivery of the

program . It was also designed to help participants’ learning and application of course content.



INTRODUCTION

There is a need to evaluate training programs and their impact on the participants after



How to improve design and delivery of the Course and how to extend the learning?

the training has been delivered. This is done in order to refine and improve current and future training programs. Jonathan Vehar, identified this gap in the research. He evaluated the impact of a training program in Creative Problem Solving (CPS) to determine ways to improve its effectiveness. The

program, a Five-Day Course in Facilitating CPS, was designed by the International Center for Studies in Creativity. It was offered to a wide range of participants in April and August of 1994. Qualitative interviews were conducted with participants from the April program approximately three months following the course.

“The main purpose of the study was to determine how the participants were able to integrate and apply the content of the course in their organizations and how to improve the course for future participants”

(Vehar, 1994, p. 19)

PURPOSE

“The main purpose of the study was to determine how the participants were able to integrate and apply the content of the course in their organizations as well as how to improve the course for future

participants” (Vehar, 1994, p.19). In order to collect the information, Vehar interviewed the participants three months after the course. He examined the following: a)

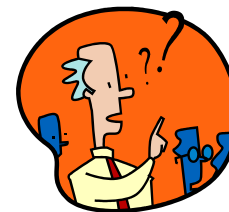
participant's reactions; and b) key learnings and suggestions on how to improve future programs. The interviews were used as the main source of data for this study.

QUESTIONS

The following questions guided the study:

- “1) How to improve design and delivery of the Five-Day Course in Facilitating CPS in order to increase the impact of the program?
- 2) Once trained, what are the needs of

participants in order to continue to learn and use CPS?” (p. 22) The study focused on adults from different professional backgrounds; evaluation of training programs



The questions led the project

using flexible and updated models of CPS; and the level of application of the program content found by the participants in their home organizations.

PERTINENT LITERATURE

In order to provide a context for the study, Vehar reviewed the literature that addresses the issue of impact and evaluation of training, levels of evaluation and

examples of previous impact research. He included studies conducted at the Center for Studies in Creativity.



Literature review-evaluation of creativity training

METHODOLOGY

The study used a qualitative approach to get feedback from participants regarding

ways on how to improve the training program. The research focused primarily on the impact of the training program (1994).

The participants in the training came from an array of backgrounds including six US. states and six foreign countries. Of the 47 participants, six individuals were selected for the study. These six came from the United States, with an evenly divided gender split. Participants ranged in age from mid-thirties to early fifties. All were college educated with one-third having earned Masters' degrees. One-third of the interviewees worked in education and the remainder came from business (Vehar, 1994).

The researcher played three different roles. These roles helped him to socially interact with the participants. By doing so he was better able to understand their contexts:

- 1) as a *participant* in the activities of the program as a table facilitator,
- 2) as an *observer*, once the participants knew the existence and function of the research and
- 3) as the *researcher* where subjects were interacting with him in the interviews.



Six participants for diverse backgrounds

Vehar used a

The participants in the training came from an array of backgrounds including six US. states and six foreign countries.

Executive Summary

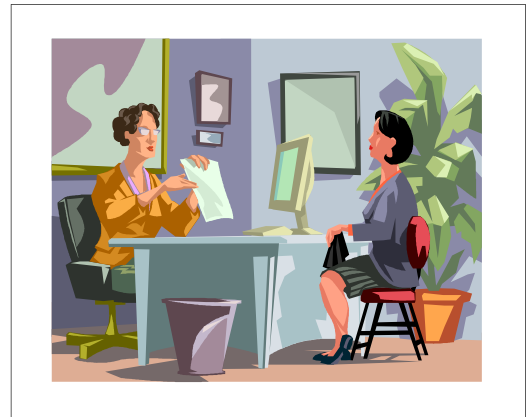
qualitative approach in this study in order to obtain participant feedback. Data were then analyzed using qualitative analysis techniques. The researcher interviewed six participants, from different backgrounds. The interviews were the main source of data, however additional information –questionnaires to evaluate each day- were obtained from all participants.

The author defined criteria for selecting the six participants as the following:

- 1) background in business and education
- 2) good and bad experience in application of the content (CPS) after the program
- 3) experience and no experience with CPS and groups

The Five-Day Course in Facilitating Creative Problem Solving held at the Center for Studies in Creativity, in April 1994. Two months after the program, the 47 course participants received a questionnaire seeking for initial feedback regarding their experience and application content delivered in the program. The main goal of this questionnaire was to determine which participants would be able to participate in further research.

Based on the criteria, the researcher selected the six participants. Each interview lasted approximately 30-40 minutes and was conducted the week of July 25, 1994. Vehear tape-recorded and transcribed all interviews. Then he analyzed, highlighted and clustered the techniques using qualitative analysis techniques. He labeled and clustered each theme and then compared against one other in order to find what thoughts were or were not shared between the participants. Finally he reviewed and selected the themes that met the study main questions were.



Each interview was recorded and analyzed

REFERENCE

Vehear reported four main conclusions from the analysis of the interviews:

“ 1) The program is extremely strong in terms of presentation and content, 2) there are some minor changes that should be considered in order to improve the course, 3) there is a need for some process-oriented products to help increase the scope of applicability and 4) there is a participant-driven need for follow-up programs and services” (Vehear, 1994, p. 81).

The author also pointed out that additional studies can and should be conducted on this particular program of creativity training as well as others. He provides, as a possible direction “exploratory research to determine what are the unexpected outcomes that creativity produces and for what else training in creativity is useful in addition to creating and implementing new and useful options for people” (1994, p. 92)

REFERENCE

Vehear, J. R. (1994) *An impact study to improve a 5-day course in facilitating Creative Problem Solving*. Unpublished master's thesis, State University of New York, College at Buffalo, Buffalo, New York.