Some thoughts on EDUCATION, TRAINING & COACHING

There are three terms – EDUCATION, TRAINING & COACHING. They are often confused to mean the same/similar things. Actually, there is subtle, but very important, distinction.

**Education** means transfer of knowledge.
**Training** means transfer of skills.
**Coaching** relates to ‘harnessing of skills to achieve defined objectives’.

There are some subjects, which are learnt **solely through education** - history, geography, philosophy etc.

There are other subjects, where the learning is **ALWAYS INCOMPLETE with education alone**. All such subjects need **training**. Examples:
- We can't learn swimming only through correspondence course
- We can't learn to play any game by classroom education alone - cricket, football, lawn tennis.
- We can't learn to play musical instruments, or learn classical music, by lectures alone.
- We can't become good welders, electricians, and carpenters through web education only.

One needs education on these subjects, but one can master them only through training & relentless practice. The more we practice, the higher the skill. That is why, the world's best tennis players, athletes, boxers, weight lifters continue to practice relentlessly.

Similarly, all team games - cricket, football, volleyball - are best learnt by professional training & continued practice.
But, why do trained people (even professional sportspeople) use personal coaches? Why do even the words’ best sports teams continue to engage highly paid coaches? Why can’t they just train on their own? In Indian classical music, there is the ‘guru-shishya’ parampara. Just as there always has been its’ equivalent, in martial arts. Obviously, because there is some ‘value-addition’! And this value-addition goes beyond ‘education’ & ‘training’! ‘Coaching’ seems to delve in the arena beyond basic skills; perhaps it has to do with ‘harnessing of skills to achieve defined objectives’.

The ‘objectives’ will determine the added aspects.
In case of individuals, the added aspects may involve
- Fine-tuning of skills,
- Mental/ psychological conditioning,
- Objective focused preparation,
- Opponent focused preparation.
In case of teams, the added aspects may involve
- Team building,
- Strategy & tactics formulation,
- Balancing of different skills for team effectiveness.

In the context of Kaizen®/ Lean/ Quality/ Operational Excellence tools - education is necessary, but NOT sufficient. Knowledge alone does not enable effective implementation. Hence, these tools are
- Best practiced in real-life situations (on the job),
- Best learnt under experienced practitioners.

We also know that random application of the tools from these toolboxes at random locations within an organization, does not lead to genuine improvement impacting the customer or the organizational KPIs. The improvement activities need to be orchestrated intelligently to yield desirable KPI benefits.

That brings us to ‘harnessing these kaizen/ Lean/ OE skills to achieve organizational objectives’. When we are doing that, we are essentially ‘Managing Change’. Most corporate executives are not equipped to manage change, because they may not have acquired the corresponding ‘education’ in business schools; or the corresponding ‘training’ in their previous careers. In any case, even if they have had that training, it is most unlikely that they have enough practice! How many change management initiatives an average executive can go through in a career span? That is where the role of the ‘sensei’ (coach/ consultant) comes in. And that is the core capability – that of a COACH - a consulting organization in Operational Excellence must bring to the table to make its’ clients successful.

- Vinod Grover
Mission Dantotsu September 2012

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Kaizen Story: Five Guardians

Once a village had been threatened by frequent bandit attacks for many years. Their approach to the governor was not much successful. Finally the village head decided to call upon the “Five Guardians” who were notorious for their courageous fight against bandits. Further they also trained the villagers to defend themselves against any future attacks. They charged a hefty fee for their service.

The next attack of the bandits towards the village was a real shocking for them to face the tough five guardians. With heavy loss, the bandits retreated with fear. Then it was the time for the Five Guardians to follow up the bandits and killed everyone. They also rescued the girls taken by the bandits from the village. The villagers received them with warm greetings.

Next, it was their turn to train up the village. But once they train up they have to leave the village as agreed. The best food, best wine & most beautiful girls from the village tempted the wanderers to settle down in the village. So they decided to make an offer to the villagers in waiving their fee for settling down. So the guardians settled in the village by marrying their daughters. They also learned farming for their survival.

But the guardians were not interested in training up the villagers, because they felt that once they train the villagers fully they lose their importance. The villagers were also not interested in learning the defense believing the guardians were there to protect them. Years passed by and the villagers did not learn the warfare in spite of reminiscence by the village head. Instead the villagers considered his words as a nuisance until his death. The village was in peace until the guardians lasted.

One day, a cloud of dust was steadily approaching the village; soon it turned into bandits who were rushing for attacking. Then the villagers without the guardians could only run for their lives.

Moral of the story:

- Never stop learning
- Be honest for the customers who pay
- Listen to the leaders
- Create leaders for tomorrow
- Leaders are fallible, hence leadership has to be collective and pervasive

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