

Re-skilling and up-skilling: role of training intervention for a better future

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Abstract

Organizations across the world have realized the importance of re-skilling to cope with the cutting edge competition and sustainability. It can only be possible once the gap is identified in terms of competency standard of the employees. Re-skilling can be broadly classified as knowledge, skillful adaptability to changing technology and overall improvement of one's competency in order to make one eligible to get new jobs. Learning is context dependent and practice-based learning is a useful means of creating the correct conditions for knowledge and skills attainment whilst engaging the learner in real business situations. Workplace learning intends to promote the individual's competence. It is seen as a way of increasing company competitiveness by developing employees' skills. Learning is context dependent and practice-based learning is a useful means of creating the correct conditions for knowledge and skills attainment whilst engaging the learner in real business situations. Workplace learning intends to promote the individual's competence. It is seen as a way of increasing company competitiveness by developing employees' skills. Lifelong learning also relates to individual employability and describes a person's capacity to both obtain and retain employment. This includes an individual's capacity to adapt to the demands of employment, which requires participating in skills enhancement (Up-skilling) and continuous learning (Reskilling) and showing the right attitude. Business Excellence (BE) Models help in focusing thoughts and actions in a systematic and structured way leading to improved performance. In this study the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) BE model, a framework designed to assist an organization achieve business excellence through continuous improvement in the management and deployment of processes to engender wider use of best practice activities. Training objectives can include enhancing the technical skills of employees but training can also be intended more generally to reinforce a company culture and its core competence, and training should then produce an effect on the corporate brand. So, the role of Training in it can be easily deduced as it focuses on using various methodologies to infuse learning and transforming individual's skill to get up-skilled. The current work gives a modest attempt to explore the role of training intervention. It aims at examining the impact of training intervention on competence building in terms of re-skilling i.e. improvement in knowledge, skill and attitude. Competency building through training is one of the important dimensions of human development that generates a range of positive individual and organizational outcomes such as higher performance, high quality individual and organizational problem-solving, sustainable competitive advantage, higher organizational commitment and enhanced organizational retention. For this purpose primary data has been collected from a representative group of employees of Reliance Communications Limited and students of select business schools across the country have been selected on purposive random sampling basis for the purpose of the study. The paper aims to ascertain that training intervention reskilling the existing employees and up-skilling the students to be employment ready and contribute to the business growth. In the light of findings of the study, suggestions are coined. Thorough knowledge of product features, advantages and benefits, enables the employees to fit the product/services to customer needs and identifying the customer types help to provide right services to them. The training interventions on product and process knowledge have successfully improved i.e., reskilled the competence of the trainees. The improvement of generic, technical and core competency of the employees is a significant aspect of human development achieved through training interventions. The core, generic and technical competencies enable the partnership and resource networking, and execution of strategically aligned process which are indispensable criteria for business excellence. Both employees and students have significantly improved through the interventions. Findings of the study shows the selling skill interventions have improved the trainees' ability to prospect, approach, develop, propose, eliminate doubts and close a sale while effectively managing customer relationships. This improvement of the trainees is a human development perspective contributing to their professional growth. Organizations that could instill such human development can attain business excellence much more easily. While RCom employees showed a greater increase in overall competency building through training, both the employees of RCom and the students who attended the training improved significantly in their selling skills, a competence which is contributes to professional development. Individuals possessing extensive organizational knowledge, skills and abilities and who focus on developing competencies related to their current position (roles and responsibilities) possess higher transferability of competencies in comparison to the rest of the trainees. Continuous learning through training improves competencies. Employability is enhanced where the individual can reflect holistically on learning (Burke and Vankleef, 1996). The EFQM BE model advocates that excellent organizations are created when organizations value their human resource and create a culture of empowerment for a balanced achievement of organizational and personal goals. Thus we can infer that business excellence can be attained through human development dimension by building the competencies through training interventions.

This training programme FAST has successfully built the attitude, knowledge, and skill of the trainees leading to their professional development for business excellence. Further research on performance measurement would support the stance that training interventions build competency that is permanent in nature. The trainees should be administered with the posttest again after an interval of four or six months and the result should be compared with the pretest scores. Besides, their sales performance and revenue generated, would establish the positive relationship between competency building and human development with that of business excellence. The outcomes of the proposed research will be encouraging. The trainees improved their awareness on company's vision, mission and values, and positively associated themselves to the roles and responsibilities of the Feet-on-Street (sales and service executives) besides they also showed a significant improvement in grooming skills on the second day of the two-day training program. The enhanced level of company knowledge of the trainees acknowledges learning by learning based on Durand's competency model that has direct implication on their transferability a human development aspect of competence. This improvement of the trainees is a human development perspective contributing to their professional growth.

Keywords: Business Excellence; Competence building; Human Development; Reskilling; Training; Training Intervention; Up-skilling;

1. Introduction

Business environment is becoming more global. Technological advancement is now guiding all business transactions. Only those who transform their organizations and adapt themselves to the changing business environment and client needs are the winners in the long run. Companies have recognized the significance of personnel competencies as an asset in contemporary business. Experts believe that knowledge sharing, competency development and training are important issues that contribute to the advantage which separates a business from its competitors. Success depends on abilities and education, giving rise to the need for the continuous development and *updating of skills* (Drucker, 1993; Handy, 1997). Thus, how best to prepare industry ready graduates becomes more challenging for educational institutes too. To achieve this, education must extend outside the classroom into the arena of industry, business and society. These interactions between the multiple stakeholders guide the design of more relevant educational programmes which emphasize skills and competency development in addition to desired acquisition of domain knowledge. This paper commences with a discussion on how employers develop business excellence by re-skilling and up-skilling competencies of stakeholders through training. A modest attempt has been made in this paper to make an analysis of the competency built through training employees of Reliance Communications Limited (RCom) and students of selected business schools across the country. Practice-based learning is examined as a means of instilling the required skills and competencies in students and providing them with practical experience of the realities of managing a business in a changing environment.

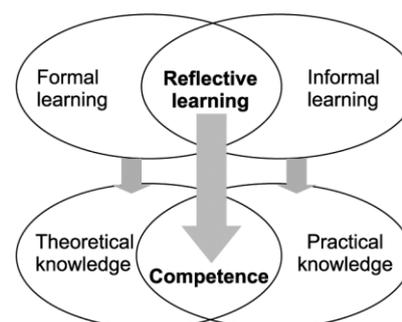
2. Literature review

This paper considers some of the issues that surround the conceptualisation of reskilling and upskilling human capital contribute to business excellence, and that competency can be developed through training. Studies across the world have identified that both individuals and organisations consider human resources as human capital basing on four key attributes i.e., flexibility and adaptability (Waterman et al., 1994); enhancement of individual competencies (Athey and Orth, 1999); development of organisational competencies (Cappelli and Crocker-Hefter, 1996); and individual employability (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996). It is suggested that these attributes in turn generate a range of additional positive individual and organisational outcomes such as higher performance (Sandberg, 2000); high quality individual and organisational problem-solving (Schroder, 1989); enhanced career plans and increased chances of securing fulltime employment (Weick, 1996; Raider and Burt, 1996); sustainable competitive advantage (Winterton and Winterton, 1996; Nordhaug, 1998); higher organisational commitment (Iles et al, 1990); and enhanced organisational retention (Robertson et al, 1991). Learning organisations extend capacity to use learning as a strategic tool to generate knowledge in the form of products, patents, processes and services and to use

technology to capture knowledge (Marsick and Watkins, 1999, p. 208). As a dimension of Intellectual capital, human capital encompasses education, competencies, values, attitudes and experience components.

Competence can be defined as individual ability and an interest and willingness to perform and develop a task at work together with others in a changing organisational context (Ellstrom, 2002a, b). Learning is context dependent and practice-based learning is a useful means of creating the correct conditions for knowledge and skills attainment whilst engaging the learner in real business situations. Workplace learning intends to promote the individual's competence. It is seen as a way of increasing company competitiveness by developing employees' skills.

Fig 1: Reflective Learning and building competence



Source: Svensson et al. (2004)

Lifelong learning also relates to individual employability (Randle et al., 2004) and describes a person's capacity to both obtain and retain employment. This includes an individual's capacity to adapt to the demands of employment, which requires participating in skills enhancement (Up-skilling) and continuous learning (Reskilling) and showing the right attitude (Garsten and Jacobsson, 2004, p. 8). Formal learning thus plays an important role in promoting individual employability and mobility on the labour market (Randle and Svensson, 2002). Svensson et al illustrated that a combination of formal and informal learning can result in reflective learning and that a combination of theoretical and practical knowledge can lead to the development of individual competence (Figure 1). While Formal learning refers to planned and goal-oriented learning that occurs within the boundaries of particular education institutions (schools, colleges, universities, etc.), Informal learning refers to the spontaneous or organized learning that occurs in everyday life or at work – by work rotation, work exchange, field trips, input from supervisors, mentorship support, guidance, etc. Further, practice or the "work" context of the learning should not be restricted to paid employment within an organization, but be stimulated in the educational institution through active collaboration and involvement of industry. Contemporary management problems require that students have the ability to leverage both their experience (know how) and new knowledge

(know what), thereby centralising the relationship between experience and theory. Svensson et al through a ‘three leaf clover’ showed how the workplace system can strengthen its resources by forming a partnership with the education system. The partnership resulted in organising and steering vocational training at a local level that include reflective learning as the basis for competence development. Thus, business schools and corporate come together to provide students with opportunities to interact and learn the corporate practices through several programs like MDPs, seminars, minor projects and summer internships which are reflective modes of competence building.

There is a need for graduates of all subject disciplines, not just business to possess skills and to display a “can do” approach and a strong desire to make a difference to a workplace when seeking employment. Thus, to produce the type of graduate who is adaptable and competent in meeting the diverse and ever changing needs of industry, educational institutions must adopt a more proactive and outward focused approach having more practical industry exposure. Practice-based programmes are ideally placed to operationalise this relationship.

Reliance Communications limited was considered in our study where in a group of students from selected business schools across the country were engaged for their Summer Internship Project (SIP). The students were engaged in marketing and customer service operations and were given responsibilities similar to that of the RCom employees. NIS Sparta the training division of RCom, designs and conducts training programmes for RCom’s sales executives. The programme FAST – FOS Acquisition Skills Training Programme, designed for Feet-on-Street (FOS) i.e., marketing executives was administered to a group of employees and the SIP students. In this study the level of competence built through training intervention of both groups was compared.

- Developing competencies in Individuals through training

A McKinsey survey reveals executives increasingly see investing in retraining and up-skilling existing workers as an urgent business priority—and they also believe that this is an issue where corporations, not governments, must take the lead. Training helps to reinforce and reshape the psychological contract between employees and management at a time when the global competition has brought new anxieties and reduced feelings of job security (O’Byrne and Pick, 1995; Kippenberger, 1996; Roehling, 1997). Training generally leads to increased employee satisfaction and facilitates the updating of skills that will provide benefits to customers and increase competitiveness (Hughey and Mussnag, 1997; Burden and Proctor, 2000) while increasing the employees’ commitment to the organisation (Bushardt and Fretwell, 1994). Training is often used as a motivator of employees, proper training leads to job satisfaction and well-trained employees are less likely to leave the organisation (Loveday, 1996; Mulder, 2001) and it should also influence the image building of the company. In the current climate whereby the notion of a job for life is in decline, employability through training can be the new form of job security (Bagshaw, 1997). Conversely a lack of training leads to demotivation in the workforce (Bent et al., 1999). An organisation where career development is seen as a priority is one where a committed culture is developed. Training indirectly provides a sense of belonging (O’Byrne and Pick, 1995). Training objectives can include enhancing the technical skills of employees but training can also be intended more generally to reinforce a company culture and its core competence, and training should then produce an effect on the corporate brand. Reliance Communication Lim-

ited is developing the competencies of its next generation managers and leaders through continuous learning and training activities. Besides training its employees, RCom entertains 6-8 weeks summer internship programs for business school students. During this period the students undergo the competence building training interventions and improve their employability skills.

- Business Excellence and the EFQM BE Model

Business Excellence is the achievement of significant results through application of outstanding practices in managing the organisation, which are based on a set of fundamental concepts and values. A combination of several such practices put in a framework forms a Business Excellence (BE) Model. BE Models help in focusing thoughts and actions in a systematic and structured way leading to improved performance. These models have been developed and continue to evolve through extensive study of the practices and values of the world’s highest performing organisations. Business Excellence Models like Malcolm Baldrige, European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM), Balanced Scorecard and the Business Excellence models from Singapore, Canada, Japan and Australia to name a few are internationally recognized as both providing a framework to assist the adoption of business excellence principles and an effective way of measuring how thoroughly this adoption has been incorporated. There has been an increasing trend for organisations to apply these models and integrate the principles and practice with their day-to-day operations thereby achieving the benefits the models bring. The EFQM BE model is a framework designed to assist an organization achieve business excellence through continuous improvement in the management and deployment of processes to engender wider use of best practice activities. The model considers relative performance by an organization in the areas of enabling activities and observed results. It uses five ‘enabling’ criteria (Leadership; People; Policy and strategy; Partnerships and Resources; and Processes) and four ‘results’ criteria (Performance; Customers; People; and Society). Each of these criteria has a high level meaning that is best understood by a RADAR logic (RADAR - Results, Approach, Deploy, Assess and Review) which explains the essential foundation of achieving sustainable excellence for any organization. Excellent organisations have leaders who shape the future and make it happen, acting as role models for its values and ethics. They embed within their culture an ethical mindset, clear values and the highest standards of organisational behaviour, all of which enable them to strive for economic, social and ecological sustainability. These organizations generate increased value and levels of performance through continual and systematic innovation by harnessing the creativity of their stakeholders. Customers are their primary reason for being and they strive to innovate and create value for them by understanding and anticipating their needs and expectations. Such organisations are managed through structured and strategically aligned processes using fact-based decision making to create balanced and sustained results. Excellent organisations value their people and create a culture of empowerment for the balanced achievement of organisational and personal goals. These organizations seek, develop and maintain trusting relationships with various partners like customers, society, key suppliers, educational bodies or Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) to ensure mutual success. This enables them not only to meet their mission and progress towards their vision through planning and achieving a balanced set of results that meet both the short and long term needs of their stakeholders but also exceed them. With this premise that business excellence is attained through human development we move ahead with the study in context that the competence required for business excellence can be reskilled and upskilled through training.

Table 1: Relationship between training, skill development and excellence

Training Intervention	Skill Development	EFQM Excellence Criteria
<p>Company Knowledge Intervention: To understand and orient towards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vision, Mission and Values of Reliance Communications Limited - Legacy, Integrity and Brand Value - Personal grooming and Impression management <p>To instill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - responsibility towards task - excel in task and attitude 	<p>Transferability Transferability is the portable or organisation specific an individual's competencies are.</p>	<p>Leadership, Policy & Strategy: <i>Leading with Vision, Inspiration & Integrity</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Excellent organisations have leaders who shape the future and make it happen, acting as role models for its values and ethics.
<p>Product knowledge Intervention: To understand and learn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the customer needs and cater the right product - the customer type and build rapport - the service provided by RCom - the product suppliers and their competence - the product make, range, 	<p>Generic competencies This includes a range of competency enhancement, networking, and impression management.</p> <p>Technical excellence Individuals require to master one area / activity for remaining employable.</p>	<p>Partnerships and Resources: <i>Building Partnerships</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Excellent organisations seek, develop and maintain trusting relationships with various partners to ensure mutual success. These partnerships may be formed with customers, society, key suppliers, educational bodies or NGOs.
<p>Process knowledge Intervention: To learn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the sales promotions and its execution - the customer subscription process - the service activities and delivery 	<p>Rareness & Inimitability Core competencies that is valuable and rare and difficult to develop. Core competencies developed internally for competitors to imitate.</p>	<p>Processes: <i>Managing by Processes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Excellent organisations are managed through structured and strategically aligned processes using fact-based decision making to create balanced and sustained results.

<p>Selling Skills knowledge intervention: To learn and develop:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - pre call preparatory skill - prospecting - techniques of COLD & HOT Calling - Need identification, FABing, Eliminating doubts and closing a call - Complaint handling skills - Customer relationship management 	<p>Professional growth and Continuous learning Professional development activities and post-experience education programmes, Project learning and planned job experience. Greater levels of citizenship behaviour by volunteering for more responsibility and increasing their employability.</p>	<p>People : Succeeding through People</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Excellent organisations value their people and create a culture of empowerment for the balanced achievement of organisational and personal goals.
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Developing a competency structure is an important step towards building an organisation with its management capable of coping rapid changes. The next step is to design training interventions that develop common competencies. Action-learning based programmes are experience-based training programmes that offer a more meaningful result than other training and development avenues. The design of the action-learning format accommodates the competencies needed for the present and future. Linking competencies to probable scenarios is a first step in developing action-learning. Table-1 illustrates how the training design was aligned with the necessary competencies for skill development contributing to excellence. The EFQM BE model' Nine criteria approach is considered to understand and utilize the underpinning soft skills behind the model, through a training program and observe the level of competence enhanced amongst the trainees. Transferability of competencies is an important characteristic of an individual's human capital. Transferability is defined as how portable or organisation specific an individual's competencies are (Baker and Aldrich, 1996; Bird, 1996). Individuals who possess highly transferable competencies are not organizationally bound, but are marketable and possess the potential to be used in many organisations. Sullivan et al. (1998) suggest that such individuals are characterised by adaptability to changing work environments, they have "self-designing careers" in that they can re-organise their competencies to fit the needs of the organisation. The training programme selected for the study was FAST - FOS Acquisition Skill Training, a competence reskilling/up-skilling intervention designed by NIS Sparta Limited and administered to the employees of Reliance Communication' Sales Force and groups of summer interns from various B-schools.

3. Objective of the study

The current study aims at understanding and affirming the effectiveness of competence building through training interventions for excellence in performance and a promising future. The study also attempts to make a comparison between the degree of competence built through training intervention of the employees of RCom and a group of students from various B-School of India.

4. Research Framework

The study has been divided into four parts. First part deals with sources of data; second part is on the sample selection; third part explains the method of data collection; and the last part makes an expression on the method of data analysis.

- **The Sources of Data:** Data has been collected from both the secondary and primary sources. The literature review, theoretical backdrop, and company profile have been collected from secondary sources; for which various text books, journals, magazines and the websites have been studied. Primary source refers to the data which is collected from the sales service executives and SIP students through a structured questionnaire before and after training intervention and necessary tests to examine the developments.
- **The Sample:** Sufficient care has been taken to select the sample of respondents. The sample covers 37 customer service executives of RCom and 37 SIP students. For this purpose, a purposive random sampling is used to select the respondents. Data have been collected through structured questionnaire before and after the training. The filled-up questionnaires were scrutinised thoroughly and used for the purposes of the study.
- **Method of Data Collection:** Data from the primary source i.e., 64 trainees has been collected through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire contained items pertaining to the subject matter under study. It aimed at studying the extent to which knowledge is gained, skill and competency enhanced by the respondents. The questionnaire is divided into two parts. Part I- of the questionnaire is intended to collect information about the background of the respondents such as age, gender, educational qualification, designation, years of experience, and is named as identification. Part II – of the questionnaire contains statements about the FAST - FOS Acquisition Skills Training programme in the form of subject questions. It consists of 18 questions. Each question is a statement followed by a five point scale. A response of ‘strongly agree’ indicates a rating of five; ‘agree’ indicates a rating of four; ‘neutral’ indicates a rating of three; ‘disagree’ indicates a rating of two and ‘strongly disagree’ indicates a rating of one.

5.2. Research Hypothesis

The following hypotheses are taken for the purpose of the study:

- H1:* Training interventions improve knowledge and result in reflective learning.

- H2:* Employees show better performance by reflective learning mode than students.
- H3:* Reflective learning results in competency building leading to human development.
- H4:* Human development contributes to business excellence.

5. Data Analysis and interpretation

5.1. Reliability and Validity

The validity and reliability analysis have been made to make accurate measurement. It helps to make research free from systematic and variable error. **Cronbach α (alpha)** is a coefficient of reliability. It is commonly used as a measure of the internal consistency or reliability of the instrument used for research. An analysis of the items using Cronbach Alpha, which measures the homogeneity of the items, shows that all the items belong to the same cluster and dropping any item would not improve that particular cluster. It, therefore, implies that all the items are good items, there by validating this questionnaire. The details are presented in Table-2.

Table 2: Sensitivity of Cronbach Alpha to the exclusion of an item

Training Evaluation	Respondents	Case Processing Summary		Reliability Statistics	
		Valid N (%)	Excluded N (%)	No. of items	Cronbach Alpha
Pre Training	Employees	37 (94.9)	2 (5.1)	22	0.792
	Students	37 (61.7)	23 (38.3)	22	0.708
Post Training	Employees	37 (90.2)	4 (9.8)	22	0.807
	Students	37 (100)	0 (0)	22	0.955

After reviewing Part 1 of the analysis it can be concluded that the items used in the questionnaire are internally consistent as the Cronbach Alpha for all the variables are more than 0.7, which indicates that each item is quite significant for the purpose of the study. At the same time, all the items are good items as the Cronbach Alpha for each item is more than 0.7 thereby validating the questionnaire. There is no need to drop any item out of the total variables.

- **Sample Characteristics:**

The FAST – FOS Acquisition Skills Training programme was designed to improve the competency of the field force referred as Feet-on-Street (FOS) by RCom. Some of them also operate from the Reliance Web World - the Exclusive Sales and Service outlets.

Table-3 provides the demographic details of the respondents.

Table 3: Demographic Characteristics of the Sample Respondents

Respondents	Gender					Educational qualification					Work Experience				
	Male		Female		Total	Undergraduate		Graduate		Total	< 2 years		> 2 years		Total
	No.	%	No.	%		No.	%	No.	%		No.	%	No.	%	
R Com employees (37)	36	97	1	3	100	26	70	11	30	100	29	78	8	22	100
Students (37)	27	73	10	27	100	0	0	37	100	100	37	100	0	0	100
Total	63		11		74	26		48		74	66		8		74

The programme was attended by 74 trainees, 37 of whom, were RCom employees and 37 were students from selected B-Schools of India. Training was imparted to them in separate batches. Of the 37 employees 36 were male and one was a female FOS. Only 30 percent of the FOSs were graduates and the rest were undergraduates. Out of the 37 RCom employee respondents, twenty two percent had more than two years of work experience while a majority i.e., 78 percent had less than two years of work experience.

A group of 37 students from selected B-Schools of India were also administered with the same training program – FAST, who were undergoing their SIP with RCom. All were graduates and had completed their first year of Post Graduate Diploma in Business Management programme. None of them had prior work experience. There were 10 female students among the trainees.

- **Trainee performance in Pre & Post Training Tests**

The questionnaire was divided into four parts i.e., Company knowledge, Product knowledge, Processes knowledge and Selling skills knowledge corresponding to the four areas of training intervention. The mean score of each variable was computed for both pretest and posttest (Table-4). The posttest values reveal a significant improvement in knowledge levels impacted by reflective learning through the training program. Both employees and students have improved upon their knowledge levels in the four intervention modules. The four modules correspond to the compe-

tencies for human development that contribute to business excellence. All the trainees have made a considerable improvement having understood the objectives of the training interventions. The interactions of the trainees with the trainer and co-participants have impacted on their learning and resulted in a significant improvement. The findings thus support the first hypothesis H1 – “Training interventions improve Knowledge and result in reflective learning.”

Training intervention modules	Mean Score					
	Employees			Students		
	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Improvement	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Improvement
Company Knowledge Intervention	1.22	4.82	3.60	1.34	4.37	3.03
Product Knowledge Intervention	1.19	4.72	3.53	1.13	4.27	3.14
Process Knowledge Intervention	1.26	4.76	3.50	1.14	4.42	3.28
Selling Skills Intervention	1.14	4.76	3.62	1.20	4.56	3.36
Total Mean Score	1.20	4.77	3.57	1.20	4.41	3.21

The mean score values reveal that the overall improvement on all factors was better in case of the employees (3.57) than that of the students (3.21). Of the four interventions the employees showed significant improvements in selling skills and company knowledge. This indicates an occurrence of remarkable improvement of human development in the professional growth and transferability aspects. However, the improvements observed in product and process knowledge are also marginally significant in case of the employees. The employee trainees appear to possess a greater realization of their roles and responsibilities. They also have positive affiliation towards the company’ vision, mission and values. This may be interpreted that employees are better in reflective learning than the students. The student trainees have more theoretical understanding of the concepts of company integrity, culture and brand value but do not possess much belongingness towards the company. Thus, their improvements are considerably low in comparison to the employee trainees. Therefore, it can be considered that the study also supports the second hypothesis H2 – “Employees show better performance by reflective learning mode than students,”

Though the employee trainees showed major improvement in their competence on selling skills, there is significant improvement in all areas of intervention. Improvement in selling skill enables professional growth of an individual. Increase in company knowledge elevates the belongingness towards the company and makes the individual more responsible towards his job. An increase in product and process knowledge develops the generic and specific competencies of the individual resulting in better performance. An

improvement in all the four interventions can thus be regarded as human development that enhances the employability of an individual. While the overall competency building of students in all the four areas of intervention is less compared to employees, the students also showed a significant improvement in the professional development through reflective learning. Such human development outcome would raise their chance of better employability. It may be inferred from the above findings that “*Reflective learning results in competency building leading to Human development,*” which is the third hypothesis H3.

• Assessment of the Model

The statistical results of the regression model are presented in table-5. It illustrates the R², F and P values. The values of R² must be higher than 0.5 in-order-to prove the results to be satisfactory (Chin, 2004; Luque, 2000). In this instance as is demonstrated in the table-5, the values of R² for both employees and students are higher than the conventional value for each case.

The table-5 also reveal that the ‘P’ value of all the four interventions are quite significant at 1% level and their corresponding ‘F’ value supports the model. R² value indicates how the explanatory variables explain the dependent variables. The above pre and post R² values reveal that there is quite a significant improvement of the explanatory variables and all the post R² values have improved with respect to pre R² values. After being trained the level of competence relating to the knowledge of company, product, processes and selling skills of both employees and students has a significant improvement.

Parameters		Pre - Test			Post - Test		
		R ² Square (Pre)	F - Value	P - value	R ² Square (Post)	F - Value	P - value
Company Knowledge Intervention	Employees	0.62	12.55	0.00**	0.87	51.98	0.00**
	Students	0.81	33.45	0.00*	0.88	57.98	0.00*
Product Knowledge Intervention	Employees	0.35	4.13	0.00*	0.77	26.40	0.01*
	Students	0.88	54.94	0.00*	0.91	78.18	0.00*
Process Knowledge Intervention	Employees	0.70	24.99	0.00*	0.74	31.07	0.00*
	Students	0.70	24.78	0.00*	0.84	54.75	0.00*
Selling Skill Intervention	Employees	0.70	9.41	0.00*	0.85	22.54	0.00*
	Students	0.75	11.70	0.00*	0.92	45.92	0.00*

**Significant at 1 % level*

To study the competency built on company knowledge was imparted which included four independent variables. Applying the regression model to the Interventions and their respective variables, the model reveals that all four independent variables influence the dependent variable i.e., - Company knowledge by 87 percent in case of employees and by 88 percent in case of students, which is a good indicator. The probability values (p-value) of 1st

and 2nd variable i.e., an understanding of the Reliance legacy and the brand value, and an awareness of the company’s vision mission and values, are more significant at 1 percent level in the pretest of employees. In the post test for the employees the 3rd variable i.e., FOS role and their key responsibility areas was found to be more significant. In case of students (table-6) all independent variables influenced the dependent variable and were quite significant. The desire to be employable was more evident from their

interest shown in independent variables 3 and 4 i.e., roles and responsibilities and grooming for business requirement respectively.

Table 6: Regression Model of Pre & Post Test of Employees

Parameters	Pre – Test				Post – Test			
	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value
Company Knowledge Intervention	-0.35	0.16	-2.18	0.04	2.00	0.83	2.40	0.02
	0.96	0.11	8.69	0.00**	0.16	0.11	1.51	0.14
	0.19	0.07	2.60	0.01*	0.19	0.07	2.49	0.02*
	0.04	0.10	0.42	0.68	0.32	0.09	3.64	0.00**
	0.12	0.06	2.07	0.05	-0.05	0.12	-0.43	0.67
Product Knowledge Intervention	-0.63	0.21	-2.95	0.01	2.60	0.71	3.64	0.00
	0.38	0.12	3.18	0.00**	0.03	0.07	0.41	0.68
	0.33	0.12	2.71	0.01*	0.25	0.09	2.86	0.01*
	0.34	0.10	3.31	0.00**	0.06	0.08	0.71	0.48
	0.51	0.10	5.13	0.00**	0.16	0.07	2.18	0.04*
Process Knowledge Intervention	0.01	0.15	0.10	0.92	0.41	0.67	0.61	0.55
	-0.03	0.16	-0.21	0.84	0.22	0.09	2.38	0.02*
	0.31	0.05	6.01	0.00**	0.50	0.09	5.40	0.00**
	0.66	0.16	4.01	0.00**	0.21	0.11	1.99	0.05*
Selling Skill Intervention	-0.37	0.15	-2.53	0.02	0.68	0.75	0.91	0.37
	0.19	0.07	2.64	0.01*	0.09	0.12	0.76	0.45
	0.18	0.09	2.14	0.04*	-0.03	0.11	-0.23	0.82
	0.19	0.09	2.21	0.04*	0.45	0.13	3.39	0.00**
	0.02	0.08	0.22	0.83	0.31	0.12	2.65	0.01*
	0.24	0.08	3.03	0.01*	-0.08	0.11	-0.68	0.50
	0.17	0.09	1.88	0.07	-0.11	0.10	-1.10	0.28
	0.32	0.10	3.21	0.00**	0.23	0.09	2.45	0.02*

*Significant at 1 % level

** Significant at 5% level

To understand the improvements in generic competencies and technical excellence, intervention on product knowledge was imparted which included four independent variables. Applying the regression model to the Interventions and their respective variables, the model reveals that all four independent variables influence the dependent variable - Product knowledge vis-à-vis Technical excellence and Generic competence by 77 percent in case of employees and 91 percent in case of students, which is a good indicator. The probability values (p-value) of 1st, 3rd and 4th variable i.e., customer need identification, customer type and buying behaviour, and tariffs fitting customer affordability were more

significant at 5 percent level while in post test the significance of the 2nd independent variable i.e., product knowledge was more significant. In case of students all independent variables influenced the dependent variables while 1st and 3rd independent variable i.e., customer need identification and customer type were more significant. In the posttest it was found that the 4th independent variable i.e., the proposing the right product to customer’ need was also significant at 1 percent level. The employees have rightly understood the importance of product knowledge and its relevance to customers. This will enable them to sell the right product to the right customer and reduce or eliminate customer dissatisfaction and complaint.

Table 7: Regression Model of Pre & Post Test of Student

Parameters	Pre - Test				Post - Test			
	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value
Company Knowledge Intervention	-0.81	0.23	-3.55	0.00	0.31	0.38	0.82	0.42
	0.66	0.11	6.18	0.00**	0.29	0.10	2.78	0.01*
	0.47	0.09	5.41	0.00**	0.17	0.08	2.17	0.04*
	0.22	0.09	2.42	0.02*	0.29	0.06	4.57	0.00**
	0.33	0.10	3.46	0.00**	0.22	0.07	3.13	0.00**
Product Knowledge Intervention	-0.27	0.16	-1.76	0.09	-0.41	0.44	-0.93	0.36
	0.73	0.10	7.13	0.00**	0.41	0.08	4.97	0.00**
	0.20	0.07	2.80	0.01*	0.02	0.10	0.23	0.82
	0.29	0.08	3.56	0.00**	0.28	0.07	4.27	0.00**
	0.02	0.07	0.34	0.74	0.40	0.07	5.99	0.00**
Process Knowledge Intervention	0.17	0.15	1.12	0.27	0.03	0.42	0.08	0.93
	0.03	0.09	0.40	0.69	0.27	0.06	4.61	0.00**
	0.31	0.08	3.79	0.00**	0.64	0.12	5.48	0.00**

	0.45	0.09	5.10	0.00**		0.10	0.14	0.66	0.51
	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>		<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>
Selling Skill Intervention	-0.49	0.19	-2.53	0.02		-0.53	0.36	-1.47	0.15
	0.17	0.07	2.47	0.02*		-0.30	0.14	-2.19	0.04*
	0.20	0.06	3.51	0.00**		0.11	0.07	1.65	0.11
	0.22	0.05	4.11	0.00**		0.58	0.14	4.10	0.00**
	0.18	0.06	3.01	0.01*		0.39	0.12	3.36	0.00**
	0.11	0.06	1.81	0.08		0.21	0.07	2.79	0.01*
	0.17	0.05	3.18	0.00**		-0.15	0.09	-1.71	0.10
	0.24	0.06	3.87	0.00**		0.27	0.10	2.68	0.01*

*Significant at 1 % level

** Significant at 5% level

To measure the improvements in respondents' ability to practice the company's core competencies i.e., rareness and inimitability, intervention on process knowledge was imparted which included three independent variables. Applying the regression model to the Interventions and their respective variables, the model reveals that all three independent variables influenced the dependent variable – Process knowledge vis-à-vis Rareness and inimitability of processes - a core competence of the company, by 74 percent in case of employees and 84 percent in case of students, which is a good indicator. The probability values (p-value) of 2nd and 3rd variable i.e., Customer Acquisition Form (CAF) documentation process and promotion schemes execution process were more significant at 5 percent level in the pretest while all three independent variables were significant for the employees in the post test scenario. In case of students while the 2nd independent variable remained significant in both pretest and posttest, the 3rd variable was more significant in pretest the 1st variable was more significant in post test. Sales promotions and their execution appear to be easy theoretically. The underlying technicalities are the core competence of a company. The students realized this and improved on their knowledge of promotional scheme design and relevance to the customer decision making. Both employees and students significantly improved on all three independent variables which are relating to the core competencies of the company.

To ascertain the professional growth inculcated through training, intervention on selling skill was imparted. Selling skill intervention included seven independent variables. Applying the regression model to the Interventions and their respective variables, the model reveals that all the independent variables influenced the dependent variable – Selling Skill vis-à-vis Professional development by 85 percent in case of employees and 92 percent in case of students, which is a good indicator. The probability values (p-value) of 7th variable i.e., complaint resolution is significant at 5 percent level and the 1st and 5th variable i.e., preparation for a customer call and objection handling were significant at 1 percent in the pretest of the employees. In their post test the independent variable rapport building was found to be more significant at 5 percent level. In case of students the post test results revealed independent variables opening a call and developing the sale were significant at 5 percent level.

Business excellence is possible when its' human resource meet certain standards and produce significant results through application of outstanding practices. Good leadership makes it possible through practice of right culture and integrity across the organization. Training interventions on cultural integrity, brand value, impression management and attitude towards roles and responsibility contribute to human development. The fast training program in the current study successfully brought an improvement in trainees' knowledge level of the organization. Excellent organizations build relationships with business partners through trust and understanding. Such networking ability is desirable for better performance. A thorough knowledge of business partners, customers and their needs, suppliers and their competencies will help build good relations and right networking. Product knowledge intervention successfully improved the trainee competence in recognizing cus-

tomers and product offerings. Business excellence is achieved through structured and strategically aligned processes, which is a core competence of the organization. Process knowledge intervention in the fast program successfully improved the inimitable competence of the trainees. Finally, excellent organizations value their people and create a culture of empowerment for the balanced achievement of organizational and personal goals. Professional growth happens when individuals develop their skills. The fourth module of the training programme successfully developed selling skills. Thus, improvement made in company knowledge, product knowledge, process knowledge and selling skill through training interventions confirm the up-skilling and reskilling in aspects of transferability, generic competencies, core competencies and professional growth. Therefore the training interventions that built the individual competence i.e., human development would contribute to business excellence supporting our hypothesis four h4 – "human development contributes to business excellence."

6. Conclusion

The intervention on FOS Acquisition Skills Training (FAST) administered to the sample comprising a group of RCom' Sales Force and a group of B-School students was very successful in up-skilling the competence level of the trainees. The trainees improved their awareness on company's vision, mission and values, and positively associated themselves to the roles and responsibilities of the Feet-on Street. They also showed a significant improvement in grooming skills on the second day of the two-day training program. The enhanced level of company knowledge of the trainees acknowledges learning by learning (Durand's competency model 1998) that has direct implication on their transferability a human development aspect. It is projected from the study that enhanced company knowledge helps in improving individual performance, encourages good culture and enables the emergence of excellent leadership, essential criteria for Business excellence.

Thorough knowledge of product features, advantages and benefits, enables the employees to fit the product/services to customer needs and identifying the customer types help to provide right services to them. The training interventions on product and process knowledge have successfully improved i.e., reskilled the competence of the trainees. The improvement of generic, technical and core competency of the employees is a significant aspect of human development achieved through training interventions. The core, generic and technical competencies enable the partnership and resource networking, and execution of strategically aligned process which are indispensable criteria for business excellence. Both employees and students have significantly improved through the interventions.

Finally the selling skill interventions have improved the trainees' ability to prospect, approach, develop, propose, eliminate doubts and close a sale while effectively managing customer relationships. This improvement of the trainees is a human development perspective contributing to their professional growth. Organizations that could instill such human development can attain business excellence much more easily. While RCom employees showed a greater increase in overall competency building through training,

both the employees of RCom and the students who attended the training improved significantly in their selling skills, a competence which is contributes to professional development.

Individuals possessing extensive organizational knowledge, skills and abilities and who focus on developing competencies related to their current position (roles and responsibilities) possess higher transferability of competencies in comparison to the rest of the trainees. Continuous learning through training improves competencies. Employability is enhanced where the individual can reflect holistically on learning (Burke and Vankleef, 1996). The EFQM BE model advocates that excellent organizations are created when organizations value their human resource and create a culture of empowerment for a balanced achievement of organizational and personal goals. Thus we can infer that business excellence can be attained through human development dimension by building the competencies through training interventions.

This training programme FAST has successfully built the attitude, knowledge, and skill of the trainees leading to their professional development for business excellence. Further research on performance measurement would support the stance that training interventions build competency that is permanent in nature. The trainees should be administered with the posttest again after an interval of four or six months and the result should be compared with the pretest scores. Besides, their sales performance and revenue generated, would establish the positive relationship between competency building and human development with that of business excellence. The outcomes of the proposed research will be encouraging.

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