



Relevancy of Agri-Clinic and Agri-Business Center Training Curriculum for Agripreneurs: A Study in Uttar Pradesh

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Communication Skills had the highest relevancy (72.67%) in the Entrepreneurial Development phase, while Problem Solving scored the lowest (54.34%).
- Enterprise Planning was most relevant (78%) in the Enterprise Planning and Resourcing phase, whereas Mobilization of Resources scored the lowest (58.34%).
- Related Case Studies had the highest relevancy (79%) in Entrepreneurial Management, while Cash/Fund Flow was least relevant (55%).
- Exposure Visits (81%) were the most relevant in Entrepreneurial Planning, while Market Survey: Report and Analysis was the least (53.67%).
- Agripreneurs found training methods and content highly relevant, emphasizing critical topics for effective entrepreneurial development programs.

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ABSTRACT

The Agri-Clinic and Agri-Business Center (AC&ABC) program is designed to train rural youth in agricultural skills, enabling them to start their own ventures and support farmers. This study was carried out from March to September 2021, analyzed the relevancy of training courses provided under the scheme by nodal training institutes in enhancing entrepreneurial success. A total of 100 respondents from a nodal training institute in Varanasi participated, and data was gathered using a pre-tested interview schedule following an Ex-Post-Facto research design. Findings revealed that, in the Entrepreneurial Development phase, the relevancy index ranged from 54.34 per cent for “Problem Solving” to 72.67 per cent for “Communication Skills.” In the Enterprise Planning and Resourcing phase, scores varied between 58.34 per cent for “Mobilization of Resources” and 78 per cent for “Enterprise Planning.” For the Entrepreneurial Management phase, the lowest score was 55 per cent for “Cash/Fund Flow,” and the highest was 79 per cent for “Related Case Studies.” In the Entrepreneurial Planning phase, the relevancy index ranged from 53.67 per cent for “Market Survey: Report and Analysis” to 81 per cent for “Exposure Visits.” Key challenges were social stigma (60%), market fluctuations (59%), pricing (40%), and climate (33%). The study recommends refining AC&ABC training with enriched content, digital literacy, strategy, and experiential learning.

INTRODUCTION

In today's economic climate, possessing knowledge of an academic discipline alone is no longer adequate for new graduates. Employers are increasingly looking for candidates with skills that improve their employability, including the ability to retrieve and manage information, communicate and present effectively, plan and solve problems, and engage in social development and interaction. Entrepreneurial education and training help individuals recognize business opportunities, increase self-confidence, and acquire the knowledge and skills needed to take advantage of those opportunities. Agriculture has undergone significant changes over the past few decades (Singh et al., 2022). Traditionally viewed as peasant farming combining livestock and crop production, agriculture was once synonymous with crop cultivation. Most people lived on or near farms and were largely self-sufficient. Today, agriculture is evolving into a technological and market-oriented industry, encompassing agricultural produce, advanced agri-science, and agribusiness (Gandhi, 2014; Gupta et al., 2023; Singh et al., 2023; Singh et al., 2024). Notably, Shukla et al., (2024) and Roy & Ghosh (2022) observe that farmers increasingly prioritize market-related information, realizing that market-oriented agriculture is more profitable than conventional methods. Entrepreneurship now plays a pivotal role in uplifting national agricultural development programs, aiming for self-sufficiency in food production (Darmadji, 2016). The Agri-Clinic and Agricultural Business Center (ACABC) scheme supports entrepreneurship development in agriculture and allied sciences. Since its inception in 2002, the program has facilitated public extension services, spurred agricultural development, and trained unemployed youth, including women, for self-employment (Chahal & Ponnusamy, 2014; Maheswari et al., 2022; Bairwa et al., 2015). Managed by MANAGE, the "Agri-Clinics and Agribusiness Centres (ACABC)" initiative, launched by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare (MoA&FW), selects candidates based on eligibility, qualifications, motivation, and commitment (Afroz et al., 2021; Afroz, 2022). The program's primary objective is to complement public extension efforts by promoting Agriventures and Agri-Clinics led by qualified agricultural professionals (Kumari et al., 2024). ACABC also provides self-employment opportunities for agripreneurs while offering value-added extension consulting services to farmers (Karjagi et al., 2009). Agribusiness activities span pre- and post-harvest processing, storage, shipping, packaging, labeling, innovative agricultural techniques, farm technology, and farm inputs (Bairwa & Kushwaha, 2015). The "agribusiness industry" includes all companies engaged in agriculture, such as those supplying seeds, processing food, or manufacturing machinery (Bairwa et al., 2014). Kumar et al., (2014) add that it also involves entities enhancing the marketability, edibleness, or storability of agricultural products and residues, whether food-related or not. The ACABC scheme offers a subsidy of 44 per cent for women, SC/ST candidates, and individuals from North-Eastern and Hill States, while other groups receive a 36 per cent subsidy (Nidhi et al., 2017). The program includes 45 days of residential training designed to develop entrepreneurship skills and increase participants' chances of becoming successful entrepreneurs (Chandrashekar, 2012; Deshmukh et al., 2023). However, there are limited studies

evaluating the training programs under the ACABC scheme. Thus, assessing the adequacy and relevance of these training courses, provided by the nodal training institutes, became a key focus to analyze their effectiveness in enhancing enterprise success rates.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study conducted in 2021 focused on Sree Maa Guru Gramodhyog Sansthan, an NGO based in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh. This organization trained more than 5,500 graduates, of whom around 3,800 went on to establish agriventures. Out of 3,800 agripreneurs, a total of 100 Agri Clinic founders were chosen randomly, with the simple criterion that they were operating their Agri Clinics successfully for the last three years and ex- post-facto research design was used for the study. All the respondents who were selected had undergone training at the designated training institute, Sree Maa Guru Gramodhyog Sansthan, and subsequently started their own businesses after completing the training (<https://smggs.org/>). To assess the trainees' perception of the relevance of the training program content, the course materials from various training programs were systematically gathered and analyzed. These materials were collected as secondary data from different training institutes across Uttar Pradesh. The objective was to assess how relevant the trainees found the topics covered in these training programmes. To achieve this, data were collected from respondents using a structured questionnaire that measured their responses on a three-point continuum. The three response categories included "More Relevant," "Relevant," and "Not Relevant," with numerical values assigned to each category: 3 for More Relevant, 2 for Relevant, and 1 for Not Relevant. This scoring system allowed for a quantitative analysis of the trainees' perceptions. Each respondent evaluated the relevancy of multiple training content items, and their scores across all items were summed to compute their total score. The study focused on all 33 curriculum topics of ACABC, covering a wide range of subjects relevant to the training programmes. Since each topic could receive a maximum score of 3, the highest possible total score for a respondent was 99 (It's because of the maximum score of each topic is 3 and total number of topics are 33). By aggregating individual scores, the study aimed to provide a clear understanding of how trainees perceived the relevancy of the training programme content. The data analysis helped identify which topics were considered most relevant, moderately relevant, or less relevant by the trainees, offering valuable insights for improving future training programmes. The relevancy index was measured using the formula as given below:

$$\text{Relevancy Index} = \frac{\text{Total score obtained}}{\text{Maximum possible score}} \times 100$$

RESULTS

Among the established ventures, 46 per cent are engaged in animal husbandry, including dairy, fisheries, poultry, and goat farming, while 20 per cent focus on crop production and nurseries. It also identified key challenges faced by these entrepreneurs, such as social stigma related to self-employment (60.00%), market fluctuations (59.00%), pricing difficulties (40.00%), and unpredictable climatic conditions (33.00%). The effectiveness of

any training program depends largely on the relevance of its curriculum to the trainees. This study aimed to assess the impact of training provided at the Agri-clinics and Agri-business Centres (ACABC) in Varanasi by analyzing feedback from participating agripreneurs. The training curriculum was structured into four distinct phases, namely the entrepreneurial development phase, enterprise planning & resourcing phase, entrepreneurial management phase, and entrepreneurial planning phase—each addressing specific aspects of agribusiness and entrepreneurship. The Relevancy Index derived from this study provided valuable insights into the topics that agripreneurs found most practical and beneficial.

Entrepreneurial development phase

The Relevancy Index for various topics in the Entrepreneurial Development phase highlights the perceived usefulness of each topic among the trainees (Table 1). Communication Skills emerged as the most relevant, with the highest Relevancy Index of 72.67 per cent, emphasizing its importance in effectively delivering messages, reducing communication gaps, and leading ventures. Farmer Relationship Management followed closely with a Relevancy Index of 70.34 per cent, underscoring its role in fostering strong customer

relationships and enhancing enterprise performance. Networking with Farmers and Farmer Groups (62.67%) and Entrepreneurial Characteristics of an Agripreneur (62%) were also considered moderately relevant, indicating their significance in building professional networks and understanding entrepreneurial traits. Topics like Presentation Skills (58.67%) and Personality Enhancement (57.67%) scored lower but still demonstrated a moderate level of relevance in improving the agripreneurs' confidence and personal development. Problem Solving, with the lowest Relevancy Index of 54.34 per cent, was perceived as less practical, possibly due to its broad scope and limited immediate application in real-life scenarios.

Enterprise planning and Resourcing Phase

The Relevancy Index for topics in the Enterprise Planning and Resourcing phase indicates the perceived importance of different components in this stage of training. Enterprise Planning was rated as the most relevant topic, achieving the highest Relevancy Index of 78 per cent. This highlights its critical role in guiding decision-making and providing clarity on various aspects of business operations. Experience Sharing by Successful Agripreneurs followed

Table 1. Relevancy Index obtained for various phases

Trait	Total score obtained	Relevancy index (%)
Phase 1: Entrepreneurial Development		
Personality Enhancement	173	57.67
Communication Skills	218	72.67
Presentation Skills	176	58.67
Farmer Relationship management	211	70.34
Networking: Farmers and Farmer groups	188	62.67
Problem solving	163	54.34
Entrepreneurial Characteristics of an Agripreneur	186	62
Phase 2: Enterprise Planning & Resourcing		
Enterprise Planning	234	78
Small Enterprise Management: SWOT Analysis	213	71
How to Run a Small enterprise	200	66.67
Mobilization of resources	175	58.34
Experience Sharing By successful Agripreneurs	226	75.34
Agri Business: opportunities, technologies, Schemes & Value chain	204	68
Phase 3: Entrepreneurial Management		
General Management: Principles & Practices	205	68.34
Human Resource Development	192	64
Project Management	213	71
Agri – business management	202	67.34
Book Keeping	168	56
Cash / Fund Flow	165	55
Basic Computer Skills	177	59
Phase 4: Entrepreneurial planning (Agri specific)		
Type of Organization	202	67.34
Source of information: Enterprise specific	191	63.34
Environment scanning-Market Survey	172	57.34
Resource Analysis and counseling	169	56.34
Exposure visits	243	81
Project Identification By trainees & preparation,	212	70.67
Project Identification presentation and counseling	205	68.34
Market survey: Tools and techniques	166	55.34
Market survey: report and analysis	161	53.67

with a Relevancy Index of 75.34 per cent, underscoring the value of learning from real-life success stories and practical insights shared by experienced professionals. Small Enterprise Management: SWOT Analysis scored 71 per cent, reflecting its importance as a framework for analyzing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, aiding in better decision-making for business growth. Agri-Business Opportunities, Technologies, Schemes, and Value Chain received a Relevancy Index of 68 per cent, indicating its relevance in providing insights into various opportunities and resources available for agribusiness ventures. How to Run a Small Enterprise scored 66.67 per cent, highlighting its usefulness in equipping agripreneurs with practical skills to manage small enterprises efficiently. However, Mobilization of Resources had the lowest Relevancy Index of 58.34 per cent, indicating that despite its importance in resource utilization, challenges at the local level may have limited its perceived relevance among trainees.

Entrepreneurial management phase

The Relevancy Index for topics in the Entrepreneurial Management phase demonstrates varied perceptions of their importance among trainees. Related Case Studies emerged as the most relevant, with the highest Relevancy Index of 79 per cent. This underscores the value of case studies in providing a comprehensive understanding of real-world scenarios, challenges, and solutions. Project Management followed with a Relevancy Index of 71 per cent, highlighting its importance in preparing for project execution and securing financial support such as loans. General Management: Principles & Practices (68.34%) and Agri-Business Management (67.34%) were rated as moderately relevant, emphasizing their role in understanding management practices and agribusiness operations. Legal Aspects – Agri Acts & Orders scored 64.67%, reflecting the necessity for agripreneurs to stay updated with evolving government regulations. Similarly, topics like Human Resource Development (64%) and Internet Practical (64%) were considered moderately relevant, showcasing their importance in skill development and digital competency. Farm Management scored 61.34%, emphasizing its role in organizing farm resources for sustainable and profitable operations. Basic Computer Skills (59%) were considered less relevant, as many agripreneurs operated traditional enterprises with minimal reliance on technology. Bookkeeping (56%) and Cash/Fund Flow (55%) had the lowest Relevancy Index scores, as record-keeping was less prioritized by some agripreneurs who managed small-scale operations or outsourced these tasks to accountants.

Entrepreneurial planning phase

The Relevancy Index for topics in the Entrepreneurial Planning phase highlights the varying importance of these components as perceived by the trainees. Exposure Visits stood out as the most relevant topic, with the highest Relevancy Index of 81 per cent, indicating their effectiveness in providing practical insights through real-life interactions and observations of sustainable practices. Project Identification by Trainees and Preparation was also highly valued, with a Relevancy Index of 70.67 per cent, reflecting the importance of structured problem identification and project planning for entrepreneurial success. Project Identification Presentation and

Counseling followed with a score of 68.34 per cent, showcasing its significance in refining and presenting project ideas. The Type of Organization scored 67.34 per cent, emphasizing its role in helping trainees understand various enterprise models and make informed decisions. Source of Information: Enterprise Specific had a Relevancy Index of 63.34 per cent, reflecting its importance in gathering reliable and relevant data for enterprise planning. Topics such as Environment Scanning – Market Survey (57.34%) and Resource Analysis and Counseling (56.34%) were considered moderately relevant, indicating their utility in assessing external factors and resource utilization. However, Market Survey: Tools and Techniques (55.34%) and Market Survey: Report and Analysis (53.67%) had the lowest scores, likely due to the complexity of agricultural marketing and the advanced skills required to conduct and interpret such surveys effectively.

DISCUSSION

Table 1 highlights that during the entrepreneurial development phase, Communication Skills were deemed the most relevant, with a Relevancy Index score of 72.67 per cent. This was followed by Farmer Relationship Management (70.34%). Problem Solving was perceived as less relevant, with the lowest score of 54.34 per cent. The broader nature of problem-solving may have limited its practical applicability, whereas Communication Skills were valued for their role in reducing communication gaps, leading ventures, and creating market impact. While contrast result found by Chandrashekara et al., (2012) in his study entitled “Effectiveness of Training methods in Agri-clinics and Agri-business Centers” in which they revealed that communication had lowest relevancy score index of 61 per cent. Farmer Relationship Management and Networking were also seen as relevant, aiding in building customer relationships and boosting sales. Table shows that in the enterprise planning and resourcing phase, Enterprise Planning scored the highest at 78 per cent, followed by Experience Sharing by Successful Agripreneurs (75.34%) and SWOT Analysis. Mobilization of Resources was considered less relevant, scoring 58.34 per cent. The finding aligns with the result of Timmons & Spinelli (2010) in his study entitled “New venture creation: entrepreneurship for the 21st century” in which they recognized importance of effective planning in entrepreneurial success. Enterprise Planning aids decision-making and provides clarity across business aspects, while experience sharing offered insights into successful strategies. SWOT Analysis was valued as a framework for understanding strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, enhancing decision-making. Topics like managing small enterprises were seen as relevant for improving creativity and resource efficiency. However, resource mobilization was perceived as less effective due to challenges at the local level despite government efforts. Data reveals that in the entrepreneurial management phase, Related Case Studies scored the highest (79%), followed by Project Management (71%). Cash/Fund Flow was considered less relevant, with the lowest score of 55 per cent. Case studies provided a holistic understanding of entrepreneurship, while Project Management aided in loan preparation. Farm Management was relevant for organizing resources and ensuring profitability. Legal aspects, such as agriculture laws, were valued for compliance with changing regulations. Computer skills and bookkeeping were

less relevant, as many agripreneurs had traditional enterprises requiring minimal digital tools or hired accountants for record-keeping and loan proposals. Similar result found by Chandrashekar et al., (2012) in which they observed that 74 per cent perceived topic case study as most relevant. The entrepreneurial planning phase (agri-specific), Exposure Visits had the highest score (81%), followed by Project Identification and Preparation (70.67%). Exposure visits allowed trainees to engage with real-world sustainable practices, while project identification helped focus on challenges and opportunities for success. Topics like enterprise type and information sources were relevant for selecting suitable ventures and gathering enterprise-specific data. Market Survey (Report & Analysis) scored the lowest at 53.67 per cent. Market surveys were less relevant due to the complexities of agricultural marketing, which require specialized skills to navigate dynamic market conditions and contrast result found by Chandrashekar et al., (2012) in which they observed that interview with successful entrepreneurs have relevancy index score 74 per cent.

CONCLUSION

This study evaluates the training curriculum and methods employed by the nodal training institute of Varanasi for entrepreneurial training. The findings indicate that agripreneurs found the training methods effective, with practical exposure in the content perceived as more relevant and useful. However, topics like market studies and linkages scored lower on the relevancy index, highlighting a need for greater focus on market-related aspects crucial for enterprise establishment. The study also emphasizes the need for more enterprise-specific training tailored to agripreneurs' requirements. Overall, the training methods and content were deemed relevant and useful in fostering entrepreneurship among agricultural graduates. The findings suggest that the curriculum effectively develops entrepreneurial qualities but requires updates to address gaps, particularly in market-related training, to further enhance the success of the ACABC scheme.

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