

Impact Assessment of Training Programmes: A case study of MANAGE

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Introduction

The National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management, (MANAGE) is an apex organization under the aegis of Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India. Training being the major mandate of MANAGE, aims to bring change in knowledge, attitude, behavior and skills of the trainees so that job performance in the organization is improved for superior results.

A study was conceived to assess and understand the impact of MANAGE training programmes. It also aimed to have insight into important variables that influence the effectiveness of training programmes and enable the trainer to reorient the training programme suitably dovetailing to the needs of the trainees and the organizations. The specific objectives set out for the study are:

Objectives

1. To find out the usefulness of training programmes in the perception of trainees
2. To understand the impact of training programmes through the trainees' performance in the back-at-work situations.

Before planning for this study, an attempt was made to understand the parameters, which should necessarily be covered for a training impact study. The review of various studies on the subject suggests that the training programme is not to be seen as a package deal in the sense that trainees 'know-it-all' after the training programme is over. It is a continuous process of learning and therefore, imperative for a trainer to understand how the individuals learn. Kolb's Learning Approach provides a useful insight into the concept of learning as it takes place through the cycle of i) Concrete Experience, ii) Reflective Observation, iii) Abstract Conceptualization and iv) Active Experimentation. In order to make the training programme effective, one needs to understand this cyclic process of learning and its application in designing of the training programme (Kolb, 1984).

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The fundamental purpose of training is to help the people develop skills and abilities which when applied at work will enhance their average job performance (Tziner et al, 1991). Transfer of learning in workplace is an important yardstick to determine effectiveness of training. Kirkpatrick (1967) confirmed that transfer of learning to job is one of the key criteria for evaluation of the effectiveness of any training programme. Effective training takes into account not only how best to achieve training goals, but also how best to ensure that trainees can apply learning in the workplace and that training content responds to organizational needs. This necessitates a study of the change in the performance of trainees in their workplace to know the impact of training programmes.

On the methods of evaluation, Bramley (1991) states that focus should be on specific aspects of change such as knowledge, skills, attitude etc. He further states that change achieved is multifaceted and learning affects the whole person, and increase in knowledge or skills will usually result in different attitudes to some aspects of the work. He put forth that effectiveness of training involves a complex analysis. It would imply not only finding out whether the training was well done but also asking whether it was worthwhile for the organization to be sponsoring. This highlights that the assessment of training involves observation of a variety of issues.

Training is an investment and a trainer should be able to measure the results directly in knowledge, skill, attitude, profit, well being of individuals and in financial terms. According to Robinson (1988), many of the training pay-offs of effective training are indirect and in some cases intangible such as increased morale which can have an effect on output and quality performance. At the same time, it is also argued that benefit from investments in training would result in performance only if the trainees apply, generalize and maintain over time what they have learnt in a training programme. According to Dhaka (2008), impact assessment of training can be done based on trainees' characteristics, training design, training delivery and training conditions. The other individual level variables such as motivation, confidence, change in behaviour, coordination, team work, method of instructions, trainers' credibility and resources are regarded as important variables which influence the impact of training.

Expanding the horizon of evaluation of training, Bhatnagar (1987) felt that the central issue in evaluation of training programme is its immediate relevance to the individual's performance leading to the wider context of career planning and manpower planning for multiple effects in relation to agricultural and rural development in a given social setting. He also states that evaluation method for training should be so designed, mixed and used that it fully covers the whole system of training including the trainees, trainers, subject matter or content, physical facilities and instructional material and supplements.

Lead Points

It is reiterated from the review of literature that evaluation of training programmes is necessary to know the impact of training programmes. It also emphasizes the need to study as to i) How the total value of training programmes are related to organizational needs; ii) How trainees' individual characteristics have changed after attending the training programme; iii) Whether trainees are able to apply and use the knowledge and skills that have been learnt during training programmes; and iv) How trainees value training programmes on all parameters. It is also evident from the studies that variables such as motivation, confidence, change in behaviour, coordination, teamwork etc. are critical in measuring the impact of training programmes.

Methodology

The ex-post-facto design was employed to assess and understand the impact of MANAGE training programmes. An open ended questionnaire was designed and used for collecting primary data from the participants who had undergone training programmes organized by MANAGE during 2006-07.

A total of 2994 functionaries from public, private and NGO sectors were trained at MANAGE during the study period. Five percent (150 nos.) of the trainees were mailed the questionnaire, of which, a total of 123 trainees have responded. The remaining 27 trainees have either moved, transferred or retired and hence, data from them could not be collected. A purposive sampling technique was used so that all the States, participants at all levels of hierarchy and all the themes and subjects of training programmes are adequately represented in the sample. A large majority of the respondents (83%) were from State Agriculture Departments and the remaining were from other allied departments and NGOs.

Content analysis, frequency and percentages were used to analyze the patterns and trends of the responses. Firstly, the common variables as identified in the lead points were consolidated from the filled-in questionnaire. Secondly, the responses under each variable were further classified into different categories for the purpose of interpretation. Care was taken to retain the meaning of responses while classifying them into different categories. Finally, the classified categories were coded to work out the frequencies and percentages highlighting the patterns and trends in the study.

Results and Findings

The lead points provided a broad framework for the study and accordingly, the data interpretation gave useful insight about various issues related to MANAGE training programmes.

1. Usefulness of MANAGE Training Programmes

Usefulness of MANAGE training programs was studied with regard to personal development, professional growth, functional usefulness and field application.

The responses such as 'useful' and 'not useful' and 'no response' were identified as common responses for all the categories and given in table 1.

Table 1. Usefulness of MANAGE Training Programmes

Category	Response Percentage			Total
	Useful	Not useful	No Response	
Personal development	89.43	4.88	5.69	100
Professional growth	93.496	3.25	3.25	100
Functional usefulness	89.43	2.44	8.13	100
Field application	83.74	9.76	6.5	100

Majority of the respondents indicated that MANAGE training programs have helped them to develop personality and self-confidence on personal front and increased functional knowledge, skills and field application on the professional front. These findings are similar to that of the ones brought out by the study of Bernardin and Russell (1998). It states that changes in specific knowledge, skills, attitudes or application are brought about by training. The majority of respondents (83.7 per cent) indicated that expectations of trainees were met.

The frequently repeated responses of trainees with regard to personal development, professional growth, functional usefulness and field application are mentioned below:

- Influenced the attitude and provided opportunity for all-round personality development
- Provided useful information in the training which helped in functional performance
- Useful to become a successful trainer
- Created awareness about the current trends in agricultural development in recent times in different parts of the country
- Helped to understand how programs and policies are formulated at higher levels and implemented at the field level
- Achieve higher level of motivation for problem solving

- A well-crafted atmosphere at MANAGE triggered the latent personal abilities and uniqueness
- Gained confidence to work in difficult situations
- Perception has changed to view things in a positive way
- Useful in refreshing the technical knowledge and social skills to deal with people in the field
- Useful to design and conduct training programs for field functionaries and farmers in agricultural departments

The results reinforce that to make the training programmes more useful, the trainer must build space in the design whereby, the above mentioned four issues viz., personal development, professional growth, functional usefulness and field application are addressed adequately. At the same time, the result also indicates that MANAGE should take further measures to strengthen the field application aspects while designing training programmes.

2. Focus on Knowledge, Skills and Attitude

Majority of the respondents stated that training brought changes in Knowledge (98.37 per cent), Skills (88.62 per cent) and Attitude (95.94 per cent) of trainees.

Table 2. Change in Knowledge, Skills and Attitude

Category	Response Percentage			Total
	Yes	No	No Response	
Knowledge	98.37	-	1.63	100
Skills	88.62	4.88	6.50	100
Attitude	95.94	-	4.06	100

However, the skill development during the training programmes may be seen as a grey area. About 11 percent of the respondents either say 'No Skill Development' or have not responded on this subject. As a majority of training programmes in MANAGE are of shorter duration ranging from 5-6 days, skill development does not become the prime purpose of the training programme. Nonetheless the issue of field application and skill development are the areas that need attention of MANAGE faculty while designing the training programmes. The responses in this regard are categorized and presented below in table no.3.

Table 3. Responses regarding change in Knowledge, Skills and Attitude

Sl. No.	Category	Response Percentage
1.	Gained knowledge on different subjects (like agricultural marketing, public-private partnerships, gender and farm management) and changed mind-set on current concepts.	41.59
2.	Developed positive attitude to work in teams	22.12
3.	Acquired managerial skills related to organizing extension programs, presentations, public speaking and field application.	12.39
4.	Improved proficiency in discharging assignments at the field level	9.74
5.	Improved confidence in organizing training programs and dealing with farmers	8.85
6.	Improved problem solving, analytical power and decision-making	3.54
7.	Clarity on field realities and application	1.77

The above results indicate that a majority of the responses can be grouped under improvement in knowledge (42 per cent) followed by change in attitude (22 per cent), acquisition of skills (12 per cent), improved capacity to do work (10 per cent), improved confidence (9 per cent), improved problem solving and analytical skills (3.5 per cent) and clarity about field realities (2 per cent).

3. Training vis-a-vis Performance

Ninety percent of the respondents opined that the training programmes have contributed to their enhanced performance in back-at-work situations. The responses of the trainees on this aspect are enlisted in table 4 below;

Table 4. Responses regarding Performance

Sl. No.	Response Category	Response Percentage
1	Improved problem solving/technical skills at work: able to identify gaps in tasks; able to understand & answer the farmers' problems; improved skills on communication & group extension; linking with farmers, NGOs and entrepreneurs at field level.	22.14
2	Improved performance in training: able to plan, organize and evaluate training programs effectively	18.32
3	Improved execution and implementation of projects: able to involve private players & NGOs in implementing programs	13.74

4	Improved clarity while at work: able to deal with farmers' problems; able to understand different records maintained at farm level; helped to work with other departments	12.21
5	Improved quality of work for preparation of action plans; able to use modern systems to access information; writing skills and research skills	10.69
6	Changed attitude (viz., small & marginal farmers can take part in commodity export; adult learning can happen; able to take the role of a trainer)	6.87
7	Improved confidence in job	6.11
8	No follow-up action done	9.92

It can be seen from the above results that majority of the responses indicate that the learning has contributed to the performance in back-at-work situation in various forms like Improved problem solving and technical skills at work, improved performance in training and execution and implementation of work, clarity of concepts and changed attitude and improved confidence in the job. About 10 per cent of the responses indicate that there was no follow up action taken up after the training programmes, which deserve attention of MANAGE trainers for the future.

4. Behavioural Impact

All the respondents reported a change in their behaviour after attending the training programme at MANAGE. The changes in the behaviour are observed by the respondents in terms of their improved confidence, improved knowledge and skill, improved performance and change in their mindset.

The post training changes as noticed in the trainees' behaviour by their superiors, colleagues and subordinates are also mentioned in the study.

About 85 per cent of the respondents reported a change in their behaviour as observed by the superiors, 87 per cent as observed by their colleagues and 90 per cent as observed by their subordinates.

The major changes as noticed in the behaviour of trainees are grouped under four categories viz., i) work performance, ii) personal attributes, iii) knowledge and skill and iv) attitudes.

The detailed explanation of the changes in behaviour of trainees based on their behavioural disposition and conduct with superiors, colleagues and subordinates is given below.

A. Change noticed by Superiors

The majority of the respondents reported that there was a change noticed by superiors in their work performance (38.39%), personal attributes (20.37%), attitude (16.67%) and knowledge and skills (9.26%). About 15 per cent of the respondents reported no change noticed by their superiors. The explanation of these behavioral dispositions is detailed in table 5 below;

Table 5. Responses regarding Change noticed by Superiors

Sl. No.	Category	Response Percentage
1	Work Performance: Good trainer; important asset for the institute; responsible; good motivator; person with vision; confident and good performer; impressive dealing with stakeholders / farmers; team player and takes initiative	38.39
2	Personal attributes: Trustworthy; accessible; open and frank with professional approach; effective communicator; self confident	20.37
3	Attitude: Loyal and cooperative; respect superiors; and willing to change	16.67
4	Knowledge and skills: Improved level of knowledge and skill; increased commitment and risk taking ability; consulted more often by others	9.26
5	No change	14.81
		100

B. Change noticed by Colleagues

Of the responses received regarding changes as noticed by colleagues, about 40 per cent categorized under personal attributes, 19 per cent under attitude, 13 per cent under work performance, 9 per cent under problem solving and 6 per cent under knowledge and skills. About 13 per cent of respondents reported that no change was observed in their behaviour by colleagues. The detailed explanation of behavioural disposition under each category is given in table 6 below;

Table 6. Responses regarding change noticed by Colleagues

Sl. No.	Category	Response Percentage
1	Personal attributes: Trustworthy; like to share experiences; cooperative and friendly and relationship oriented	39.62
2	Attitude: Positive approach; bold; sympathetic and compassionate; willing to change; assume more responsibility; open and frank	18.87
3	Work Performance: well organized; cooperative and helpful; good at training and planning	13.21
4	Problem solving and learning resource : Dependable; ready to share and accept ideas; open to learn	9.43
5	Knowledge and skills: Increased level of knowledge and skills	5.66
6	No change	13.21
		100

C. Change noticed by Subordinates

From among the responses received for the statement on changes noticed by subordinates, 25 per cent are grouped under work performance followed by attitude (23%), personal attributes (19%) and 17 per cent under learning resources. Only 4 per cent respondents reported that there was a change observed in the knowledge and skill level by subordinates.

Table 7. Responses regarding change noticed by Subordinates

Sl. No.	Category	Response Percentage
1	Work Performance: Good manager; crisis manager; promotes team work; clear cut directions; works effectively; confident in conduct of training	25.23
2	Attitude: positive change towards activities; very cooperative; more flexible and firm; bold and confident; positive towards work; approachable; participatory approach; cooperative	23.40
3	Personal attributes: refined; satisfied; maintain good relations; humble and happy to work with	19.15
4	Learning resource: Good guide and links things better; shares experiences; good guide in dealing farmers' problems; helpful	17.06
5	Knowledge and skills: Knowledge on farmers increased; qualified	4.26
6	No change/no comments	10.64
		100

It is interesting to note that superior officers noticed the changes mostly in the work performance of the trainee whereas colleagues noticed major changes in personal attributes while subordinates noticed changes in work performance closely followed by the attitudes. These results also explain that the perception of superiors, colleagues and subordinates was changed towards trainees after attending MANAGE training programmes. The trainees are expected to perform and behave differently in back-at-work situations after attending training programmes. Indeed, these findings are very encouraging and establish the need for training and its considerable impact on performance.

5. Expectations of the Trainees

Majority of the respondents (80 per cent) expressed that the training programme matched the expectations of participants and the remaining 20 per cent opined a mismatch. This indicates that the trainers are sensitive to the expectations of the participants and accordingly design and conduct the training programs. These respondents also mentioned that the programmes were conducted in a perfect manner, methodology used was excellent and content specific and complete. However, important measures need to be taken to address the issues as raised by 20 per cent of the respondents.

In order to make the training program more effective, the following suggestions were offered by the respondents which need to be built into the training programmes of MANAGE.

- Resource persons from the existing and ongoing projects may be involved to share their success stories
- MANAGE should have follow up contacts with the trainees at least for one year for further support
- The program offered should be location specific
- During group work care needs to be taken to make everyone participate
- Intensive fieldwork with strong purpose needs to be planned
- The participants in the class must be homogenous in terms of experience, age and discipline
- There should be balance between theory and practice
- Training should focus on model projects to draw lessons
- Theory and practice on ICT application should be covered and exemplified
- Duration of training may be increased to two to three weeks

- Training should be conducted at MANAGE headquarters
- Advance information and timely approval and sanction to be made mandatory to help participants attend the training programme
- MANAGE should focus on capacity building of extension functionaries from grass root to high level extension professionals (grass root workers are under represented in MANAGE training programmes)
- Course coordinators should be more strict in attendance throughout the program
- Timings needs to be maintained as scheduled
- Guest speakers need to provide the reading material and notes in advance as to know what is being covered

Conclusions

From the results of the study, it can be observed that MANAGE training programs were found to be useful by a majority of the participants with regard to personal development, professional growth, functional usefulness and field application. With reference to Knowledge, Skills and Attitude of trainees, majority of the respondents stated that training brought changes in them. Learning from the training has contributed to the performance in back-at-work situation. Most of respondents stated that there was change in their behaviour after attending the training program as noticed by their superiors, colleagues and subordinates.

The study brought out an interesting finding about the changes noticed by superiors, colleagues and subordinates in the behavioral disposition of the participants who attended MANAGE training programmes. It would be worthwhile to keep this factor in view by the trainers so that trainees can take back something tangible for back-at-work.

In order to strike a perfect match between the training programme and the expectations of participants, it may be worthwhile to have few resource persons who are implementing projects / programmes. Some follow up exercise with the trainees for 6 months to one year would help trainees to monitor the progress and also to MANAGE to improve the quality of future training programmes.

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