

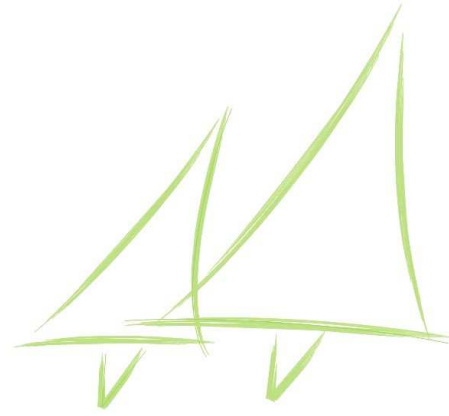
V ENCONTRO DE PESQUISADORES LATINO-AMERICANOS DE COOPERATIVISMO

V ENCUENTRO DE INVESTIGADORES LATINOAMERICANOS DE COOPERATIVISMO

MOVIMENTO COOPERATIVO, TRANSNACIONALIZAÇÃO
E IDENTIDADE COOPERATIVA NA AMÉRICA LATINA

MOVIMIENTO COOPERATIVO, TRANSNACIONALIZACIÓN E IDENTIDAD COOPERATIVA EN AMÉRICA LATINA

COMITÊ DE PESQUISA DA ALIANÇA COOPERATIVA INTERNACIONAL



231 - EVALUATING THE EFFICIENCY OF THE TRAINING PROGRAMS OFFERED TO CO-OPERATIVES IN THE PROVINCE OF ISFAHAN AND IDENTIFYING THE EFFECTIVE FACTORS IN THE PROGRAMS

Eficácia e eficiência da empresa, inovação e experiências
na integração cooperativa

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Abstract

According to the law, 4% of the net profit of Co-Operatives in Iran should be used for training programs. Therefore, from management's point of view, routine evaluation of these training programs and identifying the factors that affect the efficiency of the programs are of great importance. In order to be able to routinely and reasonably evaluate the training programs outlined by the Isfahan Co-Operative Agency, a field study was conducted to build a model. This report, for the first time, is the result of the aforementioned field study and considers the followings:

- Organizational-Management
- Professional-Basic
- Vocational-Skills

The statistical sample population is comprised of all the co-operative members who had access to the provided training programs. Two groups were selected. The first group was called the "Trainees" and the second group who provided the training programs was known as the "Trainers." The required research data was obtained through a survey method combined with in-depth interviews. Of the above- mentioned groups, 62 of them were trainers. From the 4020 individuals trained in various fields, only 697 were selected as a sample through the use of Cochran method. The dependant variable and other independent findings were defined according to the index method. The research results indicate that, in general, the offered training programs were relatively efficient. This efficiency was present in sequence in "Professional-Skilled", "Managerial-Organizational", and finally in the "General-Specialized" training. Also, the research findings indicate that the factors affecting the efficiency of the training programs were "known variables", "subject's content", "stimulating factors", "homogeneity of the trainees", "capabilities of the trainers", and finally the "environmental conditions or facilities." The "Path Analysis" results show that the efficiency of the training programs was dependent on the capabilities of the trainers, homogeneity of the trainees, and the environmental conditions or facilities.

Key-words: training, Cooperative Companies, efficiency, trainer, trainee, Path Analysis

Introduction:

Nobody would deny today the important role education plays in development. Most scholars would regard education as an asset or a community wealth. They hold that the capabilities and skills of the executors and stakeholders of development plans greatly determine a community's success in achieving its development goals, the human element and his level of knowledge being the key factors in this process. This is mainly because achievement of development goals only becomes possible once the stakeholders' knowledge and understanding are enhanced and their potentials are realized in assuming their roles in development plans. In Iran, like in most other countries, human resource development is essentially based on formal education. No doubt, formal schooling alone cannot meet all the needs an individual has in all stages of his life or career. Educational needs merely restricted to the formal education puts serious challenges against national development plans. What can offer an effective compensation for this shortcoming is evidently finding enough space for informal education to help the achievement of development goals. Informal education offered to individuals while on job or in business enhances their productivity and their socio-economic living standards.

Along these lines, the International Co-operative Alliance maintains that education is the cornerstone for cooperative concepts and principles without which no success is ever imaginable such that in the absence of sound knowledge and education, cooperatives are to lose their real essence.

According to the Iranian legislation, cooperatives must pay 4% of their annual profits to the Iranian Government Treasury as levies in return for a variety of

training and courses they offer on cooperative principles and management. Evidently, successful training programs may have considerable impacts on improved planning and management of cooperatives.

Assessment of education is a process that aims at evaluating the effectiveness of the program offered [6]. Feedback from trainees provides valuable information for trainers and planners to lift shortcomings and to improve upon training quality and effectiveness. The process is, hence, of great value in that it represents the close trainee-trainer collaboration, both of whom should regard it as the arena for their interactions and as the motivation for their educational quality. Brightman *et al.* maintain that organized classes, proper presentation of materials, trainees' participation and feeling of success are to be seriously addressed when evaluating the effectiveness of an educational program [1]. Vanvoorhis lists catechism and class discussion, participatory learning, and motivational improvement as evaluation criteria to be employed in peer evaluation [7]. He believes that successful trainers are characterized by their preparation before classes, interest in their subject matter and their students, availability for student questions, understanding and mastery of effective teaching methods, capability to bridge theoretical and practical issues and to fill the gaps between theory and practice by their explanations, readiness and tactfulness to interact with students, sociability, and sound knowledge and competence in their fields of specialty [4]. Harris is of the belief that effective teaching depends on educational objectives calling for academic qualification, skills, behavior, teaching styles, professional development, research, and thinking [3]. In his study, Shelvin concludes that student learning relies much on teachers' lecturing skills, scientific knowledge, and linguistic attractions [5]. The results from Chau's study reveal that learners' motivation plays a pivotal role in their learning and that in small educational spheres where learners maintain closer interactions, they are more satisfied with their education [2].

Research Methodology:

The purpose of the present study is to investigate the factors involved in the effectiveness of the training program offered by the Isfahan Provincial General Directorate for Co-operatives. The trainers and trainees participating in these programs comprised the statistical population. Based on their syllabi, the programs were classified into three general categories of organizational-management, professional-basic, and vocational-skills. No trainer opinions were discarded from the analyses due to their low representation in the statistical population. However, only 60% of the trainers were available for interviews. The trainee population size was computed using the Cochran's formula at a 95% confidence level, an accuracy level of $d=0.03$, and a probability level of 0.5, later corrected via Yeates correction factor. Accordingly, 697 trainees were selected for the purposes of this study from among the 4020 trainees who had received the training offered by the General Directorate. The stratified sampling method and the proper assignment formula were used to determine the trainee sample size. The sampling in each layer is shown in Table (1).

Table 1 The statistical population and sample distribution for each training program as well as trainers and trainees

Training	Statistical population			Sample size		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
organizational-management	418	432	850	72	75	147
professional-basic	1169	151	1320	203	26	229
vocational-skills	545	1305	1850	94	227	321

Data collection was achieved by both survey and retrospective interviews. Since the statistical population comprised both trainers and trainees, two types of questionnaires were constructed which comprised both open-ended and close-ended questions to match the purposes of the study. The questions not only measured the success of the training programs but also the effects of a variety of independent variables involved such as course content, motivational factors, learners' homogeneity, environmental conditions and facilities, timing of the classes, and the trainers' competence. Along these lines, a number of questions were developed for each of the concepts to measure the space under investigation and each concept was measured using affinity analysis procedure. Validity and reliability of the questions were measured using Cronbach's Alpha coefficients and KMO test. The results from these evaluations revealed that the questions enjoyed high values of validity and reliability. The abstract concepts were measured by combining the questions under each affinity category and linear multivariate regression analyses were used to determine the effects of these variables and, accordingly, to evaluate the success of the training programs under question.

Results & Findings:

Initially, the effectiveness of the training programs offered, regarded as the dependent variable, was evaluated from the standpoint of both the trainer and trainee respondents. The results are presented in Table (2).

Table 2 Effectiveness of the training offered as evaluated by trainers and trainees for each training program

effectiveness of the training programs	trainers			trainees		
	organizational-management	professional-basic	vocation-al-skills	organizational-management	professional-basic	vocation-al-skills
High & Very High	9.5	42.1	21.1	58.5	81.6	97.3
Moderate	52.4	42.1	42.1	41.5	18.4	2.7
Little or Very Little	38.1	15.8	36.8	0	0	0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Means comparison test	25.38 ^c	37.08 ^a	28.03 ^b	93.75 ^c	123.42 ^b	146.32 ^a

The results reported in Table (2) indicate that the trainers found the professional-basic, vocational-skills, and organizational-management training

programs more successful in a descending order of success rate. This was also confirmed by the trainee respondents with only slight differences. The trainee respondents, however, put the professional-basic training program higher on the effectiveness scale than others. This slight difference in opinions between trainers and trainees might be due to the fact that trainers found the physical facilities required for their training inadequate.

In the second stage, other dependent variables affecting the effectiveness of the training programs were investigated independently from the viewpoints of the trainer and the trainee respondents. The results are summarized in Table (3) below.

Table 3 Frequency distribution and comparison of means of independent concepts for each of the training programs as evaluated by trainers and trainees

	training programs	trainers				trainees	
		organizational-management	professional-basic	organizational-management	professional-basic	organizational-management	professional-basic
course content	High & Very High	57.2	84.2	89.4	68	52.6	73.2
	Moderate	28.5	15.8	0	30.9	36.8	26.8
	Little or Very Little	14.3	0	10.6	1.1	10.6	0
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
	Means comparison test	26.43 ^b	40.32 ^a	23.64 ^b	119.46 ^a	101.58 ^b	139.15 ^a
the capabilities of the trainers	High & Very High	33.3	64.3	15.8	91.4	81.6	95.5
	Moderate	66.7	39.7	57.9	6.5	10.5	4.5
	Little or Very Little	0	0	26.3	2.1	7.9	0
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
	Means comparison test	24.56 ^b	36.46 ^a	19.66 ^c	90.5 ^b	113.2 ^b	152.51 ^a
The timing of the training programs	High & Very High	81	52.6	73.7	60.6	63.1	83
	Moderate	19	15.8	26.3	32	23.7	13.4
	Little or Very Little	0	31.6	0	6.4	13.2	3.6
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
	Means comparison test	33.95 ^a	23.61 ^b	32 ^a	102.78 ^b	107 ^b	144 ^a
environmental conditions or facilities	High & Very High	69.1	47.4	56.2	52.3	52.7	26.9
	Moderate	25.5	32.4	37.5	22.9	21.1	5.3
	Little or Very Little	5.4	18.4	6.3	4.8	26.2	67.8
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
	Means comparison test	33.69 ^a	30.16 ^a	25.76 ^b	133.34 ^a	104.87 ^c	119.38 ^b
homogeneity of the trainees	High & Very High	66.6	47.4	89.5	56.4	65.2	66.3
	Moderate	19.1	42.1	23.7	41.5	31.6	30.5
	Little or Very Little	14.3	10.5	8.5	2.1	13.2	3.2
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
	Means comparison test	31.02 ^{ab}	23.82 ^b	35.05 ^a	105.43 ^b	108.66 ^b	41.53 ^a
trainee motivation	High & Very High	57.1	84.2	84.2	9.5	89.4	71.4
	Moderate	28.6	15.8	5.3	34.1	7.9	17.9
	Little or Very Little	14.3	0	10.5	56.6	2.7	10.7
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
	Means comparison test	22 ^b	31.66 ^a	37.18 ^a	64.98 ^c	163.11 ^b	157 ^a

The data in Table (3) shows that both trainer and trainee respondents expressed their relatively high satisfaction with the course content. Trainers

evaluated the content of the professional-basic program at higher level than the other programs offered by the Directorate, showing a significant difference at 95% confidence level. The trainee respondents, however, held the reverse opinion in that they ranked the content for the professional-basic training lower than the content of other programs.

The same findings also show that the trainers of the professional-basic program had a higher competence compared with trainers of other programs offered, showing a significant difference at 99% confidence level. This can be ascribed to their higher knowledge reflected in their qualifications and their longer teaching experience. However, the results indicated that the trainers of the vocational-skills program had a lower competence in their field than others. In a few cases, these trainers had a degree even below high school diploma. Despite this gross deficiency, the trainers ranked their trainers as more competent than those in other programs. This difference was significant at 99% confidence level. One might speculate that despite their lower education, the vocational-skills trainers were better at communicating their content to their trainees because they taught what they had been actively involved in as their careers.

The timing of the training programs was also investigated as a factor affecting the effectiveness of the programs. Trainer and trainee respondents were asked about their opinions regarding the timing of the programs in terms of the season, date, and time. According to the results in Table (3), the trainers of the organizational-management and vocational-skills programs were more satisfied with the timing. Most trainers of the organizational-management training program were employees of the General Directorate who taught in their overtime after their regular office hours. This gave them an advantage in choosing their preferred teaching hours. The opinions expressed by the trainees in the vocational-skills program shows that they were the most satisfied with the timing of their classes. This is perhaps due to the agreement between the trainers and the trainees over their class timing that brought the greatest satisfaction for both parties involved as compared with the parties in other programs. The difference was significant at 99% confidence level.

The facilities and conditions of the programs were also investigated as a factor contributing to the effectiveness of the programs. The homogeneity among the trainee groups was considered in terms of their occupation, age, sex, educational background, and its importance from the trainer viewpoint. The data in Table (3) shows that the trainers of the vocational-skills program regarded the homogeneity of the trainees to be very important. The difference of opinions between the trainee and trainer respondents on the different programs was significant at 95% confidence level. Examination of the homogeneity among the trainees participating in the different training programs showed that the trainees attending the vocational-skills program were more homogeneous than those in other programs and the difference was significant at 99% confidence level.

Motivational factors were also investigated as effective in training efficiency. The trainees' and organizers' interest and motivation were investigated from a variety of aspects in order to measure the trainers' motivation for teaching. The

trainees' motivation for participating in the programs was also investigated in terms of such aspects as their obligation to participate, economic considerations in doing so, and their personal interest in learning about their careers. The results from this investigation as summarized in Table (3) shows that the trainers of the vocational-skills training and the professional-basic programs had higher motivation for their work, showing a significant difference at 99% confidence level. Among the trainees, those attending the professional-basic and vocational-skills programs had higher motivation for their participation than others, showing a significant difference at 99% confidence level. One may speculate that the lower motivation observed among the participants in the organizational-management program was due to their compulsory participation in the program.

The multivariate analysis was invoked to determine the effect of each of the independent variables on the dependent one, i.e., the effectiveness of the training programs. All the variables contributing to the success of the training programs were simultaneously introduced into the model and their effects were evaluated using the Regression Enter Method. The results are reported in Table (4).

Table 4 Multivariate regression to identify the factors contributing to the effectiveness of the training programs offered from the trainee and trainer viewpoints

Dependent Variable	effectiveness of the training programs from the trainer viewpoints	effectiveness of the training programs from the trainee viewpoints
Independent Variable		
course content	2.9 ^{***}	1.029 ^{***}
trainee motivation	3.245 ^{***}	1.093 ^{***}
homogeneity of the trainees	3.980 ^{***}	.963 ^{***}
environmental conditions or facilities	3.979 ^{***}	.871 ^{***}
the capabilities of the trainers	5.627 ^{***}	.872 ^{***}
The timing of the training programs	3.277 ^{***}	.594 ^{***}
Constant	2.458 ^{ns}	1.986 ^{ns}
R	.957	.988
R²	.916	.976
F	431.975 ^{***}	297.987 ^{***}

** & *** Significant at 95% & 99%, respectively

The Fischer Test was significant at 99% confidence level and indicates a quite significant relationship between the variables introduced into the model and the dependent variable. The correlation coefficient, R, also indicated a very high correlation between the independent and the dependent variables. The value for R² was also found to be very high, showing that over 90% of the variance in the dependent variable was defined by the independent variables.

Based on these results, the success of the training programs was found to depend greatly on syllabus, trainee motivation, and trainees' homogeneity from the viewpoint of trainers while the trainees found trainer competence, trainees' homogeneity, and facilities and environmental factors to have the greatest role in the success of the programs. Based on these findings, the following recommendations can be made for organizing successful training programs:

- Organizational-management training programs have not been achieving their effectiveness goals; appropriate modifications are, hence, recommended in these programs especially as regards trainer quality. The compulsory nature of these programs is also a factor that leads to low motivation on the part of trainees. A remedy is to allow voluntary participation in these programs as far as possible. It should be mentioned that the motivational factor was effective in the success of the program by a factor of 3.245 and 1.093, respectively, from the trainee and trainer viewpoints.
- To enhance trainer competence in teaching skills, a needs analysis must be performed and relevant trainer training programs are recommended to be organized aiming at introducing trainers to teaching methods and techniques. Trainer competence was found to be effective in program success by factors of 5.627 and 0.872, respectively, from the trainee and trainer viewpoints.
- In cases where trainees are consulted for the timing of the programs, it is better to leave the timing to an agreement between the trainers and trainees as this arrangement will lead to higher satisfaction of both. Our results show that timing is effective in the success of the program by factors of 3.277 and 0.594 from the trainer and trainee viewpoints, respectively.
- Improved environmental and educational conditions can have a considerable effect on the success of the program, especially in the case of the vocational-skills training program. The trainees participating in this program found the conditions to be the third important factor affecting their learning.
- Trainees' homogeneity can prepare the grounds for effective training. This was the second important factor from the trainees' viewpoint.

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