

AN APPRAISAL OF EXTENSION WORK BY PRIVATE SECTOR WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO PLANT PROTECTION: A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Pakistan is a country of villages. Majority of its population lives in rural areas is involved in agriculture, and is the major source of livelihood. Different agencies including National Rural Support Programme (NRSP) are working for the welfare of the farming community. NRSP is striving to enable the farming community to increase the production of agriculture. It is providing trainings to farming community. Training involves the transfer of new technologies, skills, behavior and attitude to develop and maintain the farmers' competencies to perform their assigned role more effectively and efficiently, and to reduce the losses of agriculture production. But how do farmers view the trainings conducted by NRSP is the forehead question which needs to be explored. A sampling frame was constructed by enlisting names of all farmers who has received the training. A sample of 135 respondents was selected by using simple random sampling technique. The data were collected through personal interviews with the help of validated interview schedule. The study results indicate that lectures, demonstration, group discussion and field trip were most commonly used training method. It was also found that overall farmers were satisfied with the trainings organized by the NRSP.

Key Words: Agricultural Training, Evaluation of Training programmes, Satisfaction regarding Training

INTRODUCTION

Pakistan's economy has undergone considerable diversification over the years, but the agriculture sector is still the largest sector of the economy with its present contribution to GDP at 23.3 percent. It accounts for 42.1 percent of the total employed labor force and is the largest source of foreign exchange earnings by serving as the base sector for the country's major industries like textile and sugar. It also contributes to growth by providing raw material as well as being a market for industrial product (Government of Pakistan, 2004). The world has become a global village and is well in to the age of globalization. Similarly, WTO has come into picture. These new concepts may have serious implications for our agriculture because we have to compete world market with free trade both in quantitative and qualitative terms. Our farmers have to produce agricultural commodities of very high quality to meet the international standards set out under WTO agreements. So to make our farmers competent and skilled, they need training. Training is an important tool that involves the transfer of new technologies, skills, behavior and attitude to develop and maintain the farmers' competencies to perform their assigned role more effectively and efficiently. Similarly farmers need training to increase yield per unit area because agricultural technology is constantly changing and farmers need to keep abreast of new technologies. Natural Resource Management (NRM) wing of NRSP has been continuously organizing trainings for the farmers with collaboration of Human Resources Development (HRD) and the Institute of Rural

Management (IRM) of NRSP. No doubt, NRSP has been investing considerable amount of funds, time and energy in conducting training for farmers. A training programme has a better chance of success when its training methods are carefully selected. Anonymous (1993) stated that the training was a key mechanism for developing, strengthening, and upgrading the skills of individuals, thus enhancing our human resources. When people's skills are improved, they produce more, and contribute more to the well being of their families, communities, and countries. Peters (2003) opined that the training was very important priority for the people in a strategic focus to win in a highly competitive era. The objective should be to drive the competitiveness through the training. Farmer Participatory training focuses on transfer of knowledge through discovery learning, facilitated by extension (Vos, 2003). Skill-oriented training support had helped the farmers to increase the yield two times higher than the previous ones, indicating that the farmers' level of knowledge increased considerably after the training (Treewannakul *et al.* 2004; Rudra *et al.* 2004). The human resource development initiatives, mainly the training provided by NRSP to farmers, involved a lot of resources. The present study was, therefore, planned to assess the impact of HRD initiatives of NRSP so that measures could be suggested to streamline such efforts and to put them in the right direction.

METHODOLOGY

The population of the study consisted of all farmers who had received training/s from NRSP in the field of

agriculture, livestock and forestry, and were residing in Rawalpindi region. A sampling frame was constructed by enlisting names of all farmers who has received the training. A sample of 135 respondents was determined by using sample table developed by Fitzgibbon *et al.* (1987) for this purpose. Simple random sampling technique was used for drawing respondents. The data were collected through personal interviews with the help of interview schedule. The data, thus, collected was analyzed by using computer software “statistical package for social sciences” (SPSS).

Training Methodologies used

Training involves capacity building and transfer of technology to strengthen the capabilities of the participants. For this purpose, a trainer should select the most appropriate training method(s) for the content to involve the trainees in the learning process. Respondents were asked regarding training methodologies used during the training programmes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Training is an important tool that involves the transfer of new technologies, skills, behavior and attitude to develop and maintain the farmers’ competencies to perform their assigned role more effectively and efficiently. Similarly farmers need training to increase yield per unit area because agricultural technology is constantly changing and farmers need to keep abreast of new technologies. Respondents were asked to identify the training area as well as the training methodology used by the resource persons. Moreover, they were also asked to narrate their

satisfaction level by using 3 point scale. The information regarding the type of training attended by the respondents is given in Table 1.

Table 1 indicates that majority (i.e., 57.6%) of the respondents received training related to livestock production whereas 25.2 per cent of them attended training in the area of crop production. However, 17.2 per cent attended general training such as bee keeping, sericulture, etc. This implies that NRSP offers training in the area of livestock management and production extensively than in crop production.

Fig.1 indicates the training methodologies used by NRSP during the training for the farming community. The lecture method turned out to be the most frequently used method as reported by 96.3% of the respondents followed by demonstration (88.1%), Group discussion (61.5%), field trips (51.1%) and practical (36.3%). The use of case studies was reported by only 07.4 % of the respondents. This means that the resource persons for imparting training to the participants mostly used lecture method. It can be concluded from the findings that lecture method, which is unidirectional and passive on the part of learners, is still at top in terms of teaching methods used by NRSP for adult farmers.

Response regarding impact

Respondents were asked their overall impact regarding training. They were asked to indicate their satisfaction level by using 3-point scale. Data concerning these aspects are given in Table 2.

Table 1: Response of the respondents according to the type of training attended by them.

Training Area	Response			
	Yes		No	
	f	%	f	%
A. Crop Production				
Vegetable production	14	10.4	121	89.6
Wheat production	14	10.4	121	89.6
Crop production & protection	6	04.4	129	95.6
B. Livestock				
Livestock management	23	17.0	112	83.0
Livestock specialist	6	04.4	129	95.6
Livestock specialist advanced	3	02.2	132	97.8
Poultry farming	23	17.0	112	83.0
Poultry specialist	23	17.0	112	83.0
C. General				
Bee keeping	7	05.3	128	94.7
Agriculture training (e.g. Sericulture, etc.)	16	11.9	109	88.1

n=135

Fig.1: Distribution of respondents according to training method

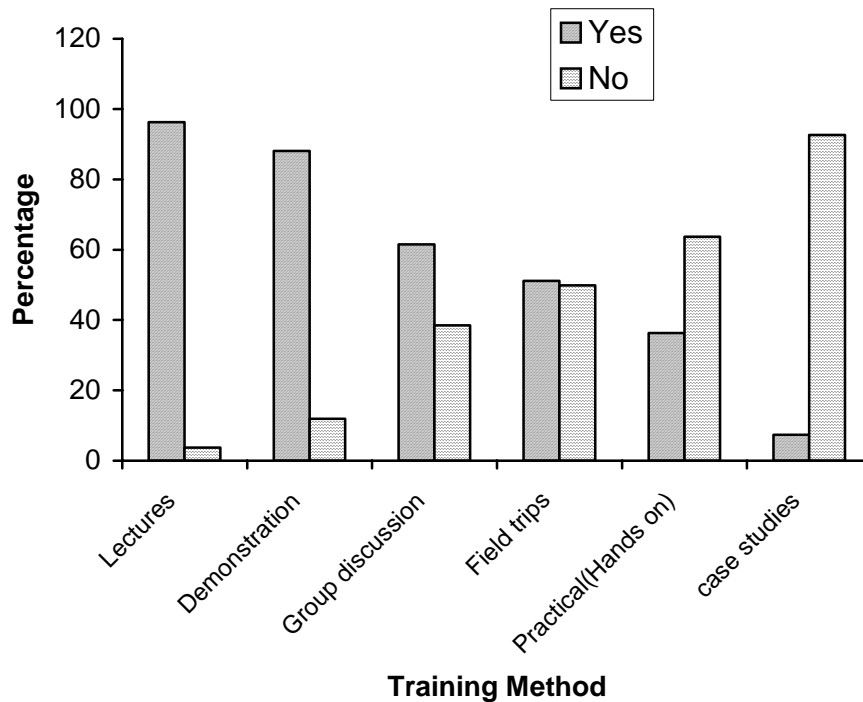


Table 2: Rank order, Mean and standard deviations of the response of the respondents regarding the impact of training

Response	Rank Order	Mean	Std. deviation
Knowledge gained	1	2.63	0.499
Skill gained	2	2.59	0.508
Consultancy service to community fellows	3	2.43	0.554
Increase income/profit	4	2.33	0.501
Improvement in CO status	5	2.32	0.468
Improvement in area system	6	2.28	0.468
Decrease cost of plant protection	7	2.24	0.427
Participation in group action	8	2.23	0.503
Decrease cost of plant production	9	2.21	0.429
Improved livelihood	10	2.16	0.427
Provide employment opportunity	11	1.87	0.510

Scale: 1 = slightly agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = strongly agree, n = 135

Table 2, shows that respondents were satisfied with the training received through NRSP as mean value ranged between 2.13 to 2.63. Moreover, they were more satisfied with the knowledge and skill gained through training and was ranked as no1 and 2 followed by the capacity to offer service to the community fellows with mean vale 2.43. However, the opportunity to get employment after training was at the bottom with mean value 1.87.

CONCLUSION

Most of the trainings provided by NRSP to the farmers were related to livestock production. Majority (96.3%) of the respondents reported that NRSP personnel/resource persons used lecture as a training method. The respondents agreed that such trainings helped them gain knowledge and skills, increased their income, decreased the cost of plant protection. However, perception

regarding the aspect that these trainings provided them employment opportunities was on the lower side.

RECOMMENDATION

Training is one of the most important tools for upgrading and updating farmer's knowledge. Farmers' training programmes need to be strengthened by organizing extensively and vigorously short training courses covering various techniques and skills of agricultural production, protection and farm management. NRSP may need to rethink about the training methodology and to focus on using more participatory training techniques.

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