

TRAINING NEEDS OF EXTENSION MANAGERS IN MANAGERIAL SKILLS AND PRACTICES

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Abstract

The need for improving the managerial skills of extension managers has also increased in recent years due to changing scenario in agriculture, economy and communication. Therefore, development of managerial skills should be the focus of extension organizations in the coming years. The first step in improving the managerial competencies of extension managers will be to assess their training needs. This paper describes the findings of the study undertaken in two states of India to assess the training needs of extension managers in managerial skills and practices. A total of one hundred extension managers selected from two states (Tamil Nadu and Rajasthan) through random sampling technique formed the sample of the study..The training needs of extension managers in management competency were assessed based on task analysis..In order to validate as well as supplement the findings of need assessment through task analysis, training need was also assessed based upon self-assessment using a five-point continuum scale. Findings of this study clearly indicate a need for in-service training in the following areas of management: : 'planning', 'leadership', 'communication', 'team building', 'creativity management', 'problem solving & decision-making', 'information management', 'personal effectiveness', 'performance appraisal', 'information management & network techniques', 'stress management', 'time management', and 'evaluation of programs'.

Introduction

It can be stated that the main problem of increasing agricultural production and productivity in developing countries like India is more of a management problem than a technical one. The need for improving the managerial skills of extension managers has also increased in recent years due to changing scenario in agriculture, economy and communication. Extension in the coming years will have to go beyond the role of mere dissemination of technology and get involved in new roles such as technology assessment and refinement, capacity building, establishing coalition among different stake holders, etc. Successful performance of new roles calls for efficient extension professionals with skills of modern management practices. In developing countries like India most of the extension personnel have

very little formal training in management skills. Further, most of the in-service training programs do not pay any attention to their management competencies while improving technical skills have always received greater attention. Therefore, development of managerial skills should be the focus of extension organizations in the coming years. The first step in improving the managerial competencies of extension managers will be to assess their training needs.

Purpose and Objective

This paper describes the findings of the study undertaken in two states of India to assess the training needs of extension managers in managerial skills and practices.

Methods and Data Sources

A total of one hundred extension managers selected from two states (Tamil Nadu and Rajasthan) through random sampling technique formed the sample of the study. Extension managers in this study refer to extension professionals who have managerial responsibility at junior, middle and senior levels. The training needs of extension managers in management competency were assessed based on task analysis, which refers to an analysis of important job tasks performed by extension managers and is based on importance of the task as well as frequency of doing the same. The frequency of task performed was measured on a five-point continuum beginning with “seldom” and followed by “occasional”, “monthly”, “weekly” and “daily”, and had a respective score of 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. Likewise, the level of importance was measured on a five-point continuum starting with “very low” and followed by “low”, “moderate”, “high” and “very high”, and carried a score of 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 respectively. The combined score based on the frequency of task performance and the importance of the job was used to rank order the different task areas. It was assumed that the task, which was performed frequently and considered important by extension personnel, needed training since new developments have taken place in every area of managerial function. In order to validate as well as supplement the findings of need assessment through task analysis, training need was also assessed based upon self-assessment using a five-point continuum scale.

Results

Training Needs of Extension Managers in Managerial Skills and Practices Based on Task Analysis.

The training need was worked out based on task analysis, which consisted of an analysis of frequency of performance of task as well as importance of task, as perceived by the extension personnel. The combined score on the frequency of task performance and the importance of the job was used to rank order the tasks. It was assumed that that the job which was performed frequently and considered as important needed training since new developments have taken place in the area of management functions. The data (Table -1) revealed that and the most important area of training was found to be “management of time”, followed by ‘leadership (team building)’, ‘problem solving and decision making’, ‘supervision’, ‘leadership (motivation)’, ‘creativity management’, ‘directing and coordinating’, ‘planning’, ‘leadership- (communication)’, ‘staffing and human resource development’, ‘information management’ and ‘personal effectiveness’.

Table 1. Training Needs of Extension Managers Based on Task Analysis (n = 100).

<u>Areas of training</u>	Frequency of performance@	Level of importance@	Total training need score*	Rank
Planning	2.34	2.99	5.33	IX
Leadership(communication)	2.07	2.81	4.88	X
Leadership (team building)	5.85	3.53	6.46	II
Leadership (motivation)	2.82	3.34	6.16	V
Staffing and HRD	1.95	2.50	4.46	XI
Supervision	2.85	3.44	6.29	IV
Creativity management	2.65	3.41	6.07	VI
Problem solving and decision making	2.80	3.55	6.36	III
Information management	2.63	3.31	6.00	VII
Time management	3.73	3.55	7.28	I
Personal effectiveness	1.95	2.38	4.33	XII
Directing and coordinating	2.55	3.13	5.68	VIII

@ Maximum possible score=5,minimun=1, *Maximum possible score=10,minimum=1

The analysis of data also revealed different sub-areas of training under each major above major area, which can be seen, from the data in Tables 2 to 7.

Table 2. Training Needs Under the Area Of Management Of Time.

<u>Areas of training</u>	Frequency of performance@	Level of importance@	Total training need score*	Rank
Planning every day schedule of activities	3.38	3.22	6.66	II
Prioritization of activities	4.08	3.89	7.97	I

@ Maximum possible score=5,minimun=1,*Maximum possible score=10,minimum=1

According to the data in Table 2, 'prioritization of activities' was given the first rank followed by 'planning every day schedule of activities' under the area of time management.

Table 3. Training Needs Under the Area Of Leadership (Team Building).

Areas of training	Frequency of performance@	Level of importance@	Total training need score*	Rank
Inculcating the spirit of team work	3.13	3.61	6.74	I
Appreciating and rewarding team work	2.72	3.48	6.18	II

@ Maximum possible score=5,minimun=1,*Maximum possible score=10,minimum=1

It is evident from Table 3 that 'Inculcating the spirit of team work' and 'appreciating and rewarding teamwork' emerged as the important areas under leadership (team building).

Regarding the areas under problem solving and decision-Making the two main sub areas were ‘solving problems in implementation of programmes’ and ‘participatory decision making’.(Table.4).

Table 4. Training Needs Under the Area Of Problem Solving And Decision Making.

Areas of training	Frequency of performance@	Level of importance@	Total training need score*	Rank
Solving problems in implementation of programmes	2.94	3.60	6.54	I
Participatory decision making	2.67	3.51	6.18	II

@ Maximum possible score=5,minimun=1,*Maximum possible score=10,minimum=1

Table 5. Training Needs Under The Area Of Supervision.

Areas of training	Frequency of performance@	Level of importance@	Total training need score*	Rank
Monitoring progress through field visit	3.38	3.84	7.22	I
Follow up action for programme implementation	2.80	3.52	6.32	III
Impact analysis of programme and finding out progress and problems	2.24	2.84	5.08	IV
Evaluation of work of subordinates	2.98	3.57	6.55	II

@ Maximum possible score=5,minimun=1,*Maximum possible score=10,minimum=1

The two most critical sub areas of supervision were found to be ‘monitoring progress through field visit’ and ‘evaluation of work of subordinates’ (Table 5).

Table 6. Training Needs Under The Area Of Leadership (Motivation).

Areas of training	Frequency of performance@	Level of importance@	Total training need score*	Rank
Having trust and confidence on subordinates	3.85	3.65	7.50	I
Providing opportunities for free and fair discussion	3.50	3.96	7.46	II
Praising subordinates for good work	2.91	3.60	6.51	III
Providing inspiration	2.80	3.51	6.31	IV

@ Maximum possible score=5,minimun=1,*Maximum possible score=10,minimum=1

The crucial training need sub areas identified under leadership (motivation) were ‘having trust and confidence or subordinates’ and ‘providing opportunities for free and fair discussion’ as is evident from Table 6.

Table 7. Training Needs Under the Area Of Creativity Management.

Areas of training	Frequency of performance@	Level of importance@	Total training need score*	Rank
Inviting creative ideas from subordinates	2.67	3.56	6.23	I
Searching for innovative ideas to improve performance	2.64	3.27	5.91	II

@ Maximum possible score=5, minimum=1, *Maximum possible score=10, minimum=1

The data in Table 7 reveal that ‘inviting creative ideas from subordinates’ and ‘searching for innovative ideas to improve performance’ were the two main training needs under creativity management.

Training needs based on self-assessment of extension managers

In order to validate as well as supplement the results of training need assessment through task analysis the study also investigated the training requirements based on self-assessment. The extension managers were asked to indicate the extent of training need against different areas in which they needed improvement. The results (Table-8) revealed that the most important areas of training as per the assessment of extension personnel were: 1. Modern methods of performance appraisal, 2. Planning techniques, 3. Information processing and retrieval, 4. Creative problem solving, 5. Leadership- (Group process & styles), 6. Evaluation of programmes, 7. Personnel Effectiveness, 8. Communication (Interpersonal), 9. Decision Making, 10. Management of team, 11. Management of time, and 12. Motivation of employees.

Table 8. Training Needs Based Upon Self-Assessment.

S. No.	<u>Areas of Training</u>	<u>Score*</u>	<u>Rank</u>
1.	Modern methods of performance appraisal	3.57	I
2.	Planning-Different planning techniques	3.47	II
3.	Information Management – (Information processing and retrieval)	3.45	III
4.	Creative problem solving	3.29	IV
5.	Leadership (Group process and leadership styles)	3.21	V
6.	Evaluation of programmes	3.19	VI
7.	Personal effectiveness	3.17	VII
8.	Communication (Interpersonal communication)	3.06	VIII
9.	Decision making	3.04	IX
10.	Management of team	3.03	X
11.	Management of time	3.01	XI
12.	Motivation of employees	3.00	XII

* Maximum possible score=5, minimum=1

Table 9. A Comparison Of Training Needs Identified Through Task Analysis And Self-Assessment.

S. No.	TRAINING NEEDS IDENTIFIED THROUGH	
	Task analysis	SELF ASSESSMENT
	Planning	Planning techniques
	Leadership	Leadership (group process and styles)
	Staffing and HRD	---
	Communication	Communication
	Team building	Management of team
	Motivation	---
	Creativity management	Creative problem solving
	Problem solving and Decision making	Decision making
	Information management	Information processing and retrieval
	Time management	---
	Personal effectiveness	Personal effectiveness
	---	Performance appraisal
	---	Evaluation of programmes

A comparison of the training needs identified through task analysis and self-assessment is given in Table 9.. A perusal of the data in Table reveals that the common training areas identified by both task analysis and self-assessment are as follows: Planning ,Leadership, Communication, Team building, Creativity management, Decision-making, Information management, and Personal effectiveness.

The self-assessment has revealed that extension managers wanted training in areas like performance appraisal and evaluation of programmes. The areas like staffing and human resources development, motivation and time management that have been identified by task analysis did not find place under self-assessment. The overall picture of training needs identified shows that self-assessment has validated the results of task analysis.

Conclusions

According to task analysis the most important area of training was found to be “management of time”, followed by ‘leadership (team building)’, ‘problem solving and decision making’, ‘supervision’, ‘leadership (motivation), ‘creativity management’, ‘directing and coordinating’, ‘planning’, ‘leadership- (communication)’, ‘staffing and human resource development’, ‘information management’ and ‘personal effectiveness’.

As per the self-assessment of extension mangers the most important areas of training need were: ‘modern methods of performance appraisal,’ planning techniques’, ‘information processing and retrieval’, ‘creative problem solving’, ‘leadership- (group process & styles), ‘evaluation of programs,’ ‘personnel effectiveness’, communication’, ‘decision making’, ‘management of team,’ ‘ management of time,’ and ‘ motivation of employees.’ A comparison of the training needs identified through task analysis and self-assessment revealed that the common training areas identified by both task analysis and self-assessment are as follows: ‘planning’, ‘leadership’, ‘communication’, ‘team building’, ‘creativity management’, ‘decision-making’, ‘information management’, and ‘personal effectiveness’.

The self-assessment has revealed that extension managers wanted training in areas like performance appraisal and evaluation of programmes. The areas like 'staffing and human resources development', 'motivation' and 'time management' that have been identified by task analysis did not find place under self-assessment. The overall picture of training needs identified shows that self-assessment has validated the results of task analysis.

Findings of this study clearly indicate a need for in-service training in the following areas of management: : 'planning', 'leadership', 'communication', 'team building', 'creativity management', 'problem solving & decision-making', 'information management', 'personal effectiveness', 'performance appraisal', 'information management & network techniques', 'stress management', 'time management', and 'evaluation of programs'.

Educational Importance, Implications and Application

The needs assessment results reported in this study represent a first step towards developing in-service training programs to improve the managerial skills of extension professionals. There is a need for developing training modules on the different areas identified in the study, suiting to the needs of agricultural extension professionals. This task has to be undertaken by the faculty members of agricultural universities in collaboration with the officers of state department of agriculture. The job of developing training modules provides opportunities for international collaboration to make use of expertise of different countries. This will go a long way in addressing specific and critical needs of extension managers in improving their management skills. A state level Management Development Institute has been proposed to address training needs of extension personnel.

References

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