An Assessment on Training Needs of Members of Rural Council in Isfahan, Lorestan and Hamedan provinces of Iran

Reza Movahedi, Ahmad Yaghoubi & Mohammad Chizari

ABSTRACT

As the manifestation of people’s will for taking over their own destiny, development of popular participation and councils has been emphasized overwhelmingly in the Constitution (people participation office, 2002). The “councils” has been, thus, recognized in the constitution as a major body responsible for making decision on national development. Strengthening rural and urban councils along with improving their capabilities are considered as important matter in this regard. In this study we attempt to assess training needs of the councils’ members and then we will prioritize educational subjects needed by them in order to help planners and policy makers that work in Extension Services on Ministry of Agriculture. Some of the subjects that are analyzed in this study include planning and consolatory management, monitoring and controlling plans and projects, encouraging popular participation, rural development, agricultural activities, and local affairs of councils, administrative correspondences and social relationships. Extension organizations interested in conducting internal need assessments may consider using an action learning and research process (Havercamp, Christiansen and Mitchell, 2003). This study has conducted in three provinces in Iran named Hamden, Isfahan and Lorestan. Members of the rural councils in these provinces were 10356 so that 304 numbers of them have been randomly selected. The research design for this study was a descriptive survey method. The results of this study showed that personal teaching in class is the most effective method for the members of rural councils. The management and planning subject, as an educational need for the councils, was assessed greater than medium. Correlation between respondent’s age and training needs showed that there is no relation between those two items and thus individuals with different ages have almost identical training needs. According to the findings, training needs of the members to administrative and planning issues of the councils have been ranked greater than average, with no significant difference at the 5% level. Learning the methods for planning, monitoring and evaluating rural projects, and running of local and non-governmental organizations, are among the issues that have been ranked greater than medium by the members as training needs. According to decentralization policy for managing countrywide issues, establishment of a specific council in both urban and rural areas has been delivered a high priority in national policies. For encouraging people participation with rapid achievement of social, economical, developmental and cultural programs, special attention must be allocated to the councils. It is hoped that the grass-root institution, as a symbolic of social programs, can play important role in stimulating voluntarily participation by People for accessing to community development. Iran’s Ministry of Agriculture and Extension Service can use the result of this study to understand better the role of people participation or cooperatives as an important tool for agricultural development.