

The Role of Short-Term Educational Programs on Educational Managers

Mahboobe Kandi

Dean of Nassibe College, Tehran Iran

Mahboobkandi@yahoo.com

Abstract: Organization managers take human resource training and development as an important approach for introducing organization improvement. Considerable investments have been directed to this area because of the benefits training programs provide to the work environment. Many organizations require their employees to participate in training programs regardless of their official educational background. These organizations provide continuing and various training programs that are based on new knowledge development and professional needs of employees. These programs increase knowledge and professional skills of employees and help organizations to match employee work performance with organizational objectives. Investment on employee training programs is more important in educational institutions because they act as role models for other organizations and institutions making them a major working ground in society for general development and progress. Almost all members of a society spend important parts of their lives in educational institutions. These institutions may influence society members in different ways in later years. Therefore, educational organizations and their performance - influenced by the performance of their human resources - have an important and sensitive social standing compared to other organizations. Learning is a complex process. Human is the most complicated being and education deals with the most complex parts of human being, i.e. their minds and thinking. Education has the important role of contributing to moral development of society by promotion of good values, providing a ground for instituting and distributing justice at different levels, providing assistance in learning professional skills, facilitating the transfer of available knowledge, and creating an environment for knowledge development and advancement. Educational systems have to undertake these difficult tasks in spite of considerable limited resources they have. Obviously, educational systems have to focus their attentions to the attraction and employment of competent and experienced human resources in order to meet their challenge. Educational institutions have to create a system that encourage employees to increase their skills and competence by attending relevant training programs for as long as they remain in the system. Training programs enable them to obtain the capabilities required to meet the challenges of their difficult responsibilities.

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The Role of Training in Employee Skill Development

Organizations are operating units that contribute to the growth and development of a society. Every organization undertakes a part of important responsibilities in a society. In a highly structured society, effective management can introduce the continual growth and development required by these organizations.

Efficient management of organization depends on the performance of the human resources. An organization becomes a dynamic entity when its human resources perform their tasks skillfully and with competence.

Many evidences prove that organizations can improve their effectiveness by investing in employee training programs. William James showed in a study that employees utilized only 20 to 30 percent of their capabilities to achieve company objectives. However, employee contribution increased to 90 percent after introduction of training programs.

A 3-year study in Singapore showed that 17 percent of commercial and industrial companies faced bankruptcy. The percent of bankruptcy was less than 1 percent in companies that offered employee training programs¹.

In another study conducted in the United States, Welch discovered that a 10 percent increase in training programs offered to farmers produced 3 to 5 percent increase in productivity. In comparison, using fertilizer or agricultural machineries produced only 1 to 2 percent increase in farm productivity².

After extensive studies, Edward Denison concluded that quality improvement in work performance and technology advancement accounted for about 21 percent of US economic growth during 1921 to 1957. Educational system had very high influence on both factors³.

Research conducted in educational institutions showed the positive effect training programs have on employee performance. Shabestari studied and

evaluated two groups of trained and untrained middle school managers. The result demonstrated that trained managers showed higher aptitude and performance in conducting their responsibilities. They paid higher respect to personal interactions in the work environment. They also showed higher skills in preparing, maintaining, and applying educational and work equipment and tools in the work environment⁴.

Other studies have shown that trained managers have better performance in organizing and motivating human resources⁵. They had better problem solving abilities, had better understanding of the shortcoming, and provided better environment for creativity⁶. These managers had higher self-confidence and job satisfaction. They valued their employees and welcomed changes and innovations⁷.

Employee training programs are so important to organizations that some scholars called it the main core of management. It means that absence of employee training programs may weaken and endanger management practices in an organization⁸. Employee training programs are a part of human resource management - a management system whose objective is to direct unlimited potential abilities of employees toward organizational development and progress⁹.

The objective of this research was to study the role of short-term training programs on knowledge and performance of school managers. This study also examines the difference in effectiveness of different methods in conducting short-term educational programs.

Problem definition

Organizational management is defined as attempts to direct human and financial resources toward the achievement of defined objectives (J. Rotswick, 1974). In order to accomplish this task, a manager should create an effective environment for those who work in organizational groups toward achievement of shared objectives (R. Duttel, 1972)¹⁰.

Management responsibilities are indicative of their important role in group and organizational activities. Management is that part of organization that is responsible in providing motivation and order to different parts of an organization. Managers, as organizational leaders, have difficult and important tasks that require special skills and knowledge. That is the reason why managers need continued training to increase their professional skills required for their jobs.

Management in educational organizations is even more important and faces more problems. Objectives, responsibilities, and expectations in educational organizations are more complicated and ambiguous compared to other organizations.

Educational management is among few responsibilities that face a full range of potential

conflicts. School manager may be required to accept two or more inconsistent and conflicting roles. They have to work with many stakeholders having different expectations. This situation presents stress and conflict to managers¹¹ making most of them feel that their responsibilities are ambiguous and not well defined. Consequently, educational managers may feel that they lack adequate training for their complicated jobs¹².

Educational organizations are structurally ad hoc and, therefore, unstable. This condition is especially evident in the most important responsibilities of managers, namely control and evaluation, where educational managers do not have specific and valid criteria.

Harold (1960) reported that after half a century of research and study on work evaluation of teachers and trainers, there is still no measurable and valid benchmark. There is also no agreed criterion for evaluation of teacher effectiveness. School managers and teachers have spent more than half a century on finding ways to evaluate teachers' performance with no avail (Radford, 1963).¹³

In spite of existence of certain behavioral objective in educational organizations, especially at schools, it is impossible to assume that school success is limited to achieving these objectives. That is the reason why expectations exceed these limited objectives beyond the educational system and practitioners.

Unlimited expectations and their generality, which result from the complexities and scope of educational activities, have produced no agreement in the definition of "good" school, superintendent, teacher, and student - the definitions, which are required for educational managers to perform their tasks.

These are evidences of the complexities that are inherent in educational managers' job responsibilities proving the need for further training to acquire occupational and professional skills. Some scholars take educational management as a professional occupation, where managers have to receive training and acquire the required skills (Abbas Zadegan (1989), Pardakhtchi (1995), and Fani).^{14,15,16}

Apart from knowledge and ability in technical and human aspects of work, educational managers and leaders should be able to perform their educational and leadership responsibilities in a general social, cultural, political, and economic setting (Alagheh Band, 1994).¹⁷

Educational managers face some complicated responsibilities that only a professional manager can resolve (Nateli, 1996). Only professional managers are able to play key roles in creating an environment suitable for social, scientific, and technological development in today's world.¹⁸

Training is one of the most effective undertakings for preparing educational managers to perform the defined responsibilities. Managers with professional

qualifications are better able to manage educational institutions that face constantly increasing expectations and needs.

Short-term trainings are effective programs that may be suitable for a large number of school managers with diverse background because of the flexibility they offer. Proper utilization of training programs will be instrumental in professional development of educational managers to prepare them for performing their complicated tasks.

Training programs are designed to meet immediate and short-term needs of participants. These programs may improve the current situation by their immediate outcome. Expansion of training programs still faces many uncertainties. Removal of these uncertainties may lead to better decision making. No information is yet available on the effectiveness of short-term (or long-term) training programs offered in different forms.

Not enough attention has been paid to evaluate the effectiveness of short-term training programs (or training programs in general). Past studies were ambiguous because they were conducted using descriptive and after event approaches. Consequently, decision making on selecting an educational approach might not be based on solid evidences of their effectiveness.

This study was conducted with the objective to clarify some of the existing issues. This study and similar other ones may provide a suitable ground to justify offering more employee training programs specially in educational institutions where training needs are more extensive.

Study Question

Would participatory, semi-participatory, non-participatory short-term training programs increase professional knowledge and performance of educational managers?

Are there any differences in the effectiveness of these three types of training program?

Research Methodology

Statistical population of this study was managers of public elementary schools in Tehran. A study group consisting of 104 managers and 520 teachers was selected from four educational districts in Tehran by using multistage cluster sampling method.

Experimentation design for this study was "pre-test, post-test and control group". In this method, the selected individuals were grouped into a study group and a control group. The study group attended an experimental training program after taking a pre-test. The control group, however, did not go through the experimental training program, i.e. they were not exposed to the same variable.

The two groups were compared by analyzing the differences in scores and calculating average score for each group.

If the difference in the performances of two groups in pre-test was not significant, but the difference in performances of two groups in post-test was significant, and if the random sampling was done correctly, then, we would conclude that the study group (experimental group) had benefited from the training programs.

To determine if there were differences among the three different training methods, the study sample was grouped into four groups, namely group 1, group 2, group 3, and control group.

Random Sampling	Pre-test	Training program	Post-test
R	P		P
R	P	T ₁	P
R	P	T ₂	P
R	P	T ₃	P

Data for this study was collected using two tools:

(a) Four-choice knowledge test, which evaluated manager's knowledge about leader responsibilities and educational management based on the training program content; and

(b) Likert scale, which assessed school manager's performance as evaluated by teachers with the emphasis on their responsibilities as educational leaders.

Reliability and validity of these tools were determined, calculated, and confirmed by using Cronbach Alpha Test and Point Biserial Correlation Coefficient.

To find answers to the research questions, the collected data was analyzed using one-way Analysis of Variance. Because of the differences in performance of four-group managers, further analysis was conducted using F-ratio and, whenever necessary, Tukey's Pursuit Test.

Definition of Key Terms

- Short-term Training Program: for this study was equivalent to a 2-unit university course (24 hours).

- Participatory Training Program: In this type of training program, participants attended the training program where instructor presented the course content to them.

- Semi-Participatory Training Program: In this form of training, instructor presented the main concepts during half of the training period (17 hours). Participants were required to complete the rest of the material and do exercises and assignments as instructed by program administrator.

- **Non-Participatory Training Program:** In this form of training, participants receive the required training without attending classes. Participants in this training program were required to answer 9 sets of questions prepared based on the course material. Managers who attended this training program had this opportunity to present their questions to the course instructor and receive answers by corresponding.

- **Training Program Content.** Due to lack of relevant references, course material was prepared by using references related to leadership and education management. The material presented to participants included management and its definition, educational management concepts, objectives, and significance, educational management skills, school council, as well as education participation, motivation, and supervision. The course material presented in the training program was good for a 2-unit course.

- **Manager knowledge and performance.** The levels of manager knowledge and performance were measured by administering pre-test and post-test and analyzing the test results using the statistical tools.

Study Findings

The following list provides the results obtained from pre-test and post-test conducted with the focus on the research questions:

a) Would offering on-the-job short-term training courses in any of the three types of training format contribute to advancement of manager's knowledge base? Table 1 shows the differences in scores obtained in pre-test and post-test using analysis of variance.

Table 1. Analysis of Variance of managers' knowledge base in pre-test and post-test.

Source of Changes	Sum of Squares	Degree of Freedom	Average Square	F	P
Among Groups	SSA=99 4.34	K-1=2	MSA=3 31.45	60.71	A<0.01= 4.13
Within Groups	SSW=32 7.6	Nt-K=60	MSA=5. 46		
Total	SSt=132 1.94	Nt-1=63			

Because calculated F-ratio was higher than F-ratio in the table at 0.01 level (4/13), the hypothesis that all groups have similar knowledge base and, therefore, different training programs have similar effectiveness is rejected. With 99% confidence, there were significant differences in the effectiveness of different types of training programs.

As there were significance differences in the effectiveness of different training course, Tukey's HSD was performed to determine which group had the highest significance.

Table 2. Result of Tukey's HSD test on four groups

Groups	Mean	Control 1.56	Participatory 11.76	Semi-Participatory 9.4	Non-Participatory 5.25
Control	1.56		10.2	7.84	3.69
Participatory	11.76			2.36	6.51
Semi-Participatory	9.4				4.15
Non-Participatory	5.25				

Result of HSD test showed that the numbers obtained for three study groups and control group are higher than the 1% critical level. Consequently, there is a significance difference at 0.01 level between averages of the control groups and three study groups.

It is possible to conclude that the training programs have increased knowledge base among all study groups. The increase in knowledge base in the group that attended participatory program was higher than the group that attended semi-participatory program. Respectively, the increase in knowledge base in the group that attended semi-participatory program was higher than the group that attended non-participatory program.

b) Would conducting on-the-job short-term training program in any of the three types of course offering improve educational managers' performance?

Analysis of variance was used on performance differences of the individuals under study to determine the distribution of managers' performance (Table 3).

Table 3. Analysis of Variance on Managers performances in pre-test and post-test

Chance Factor	Sum of Squares	Degree of Freedom	Mean Square	F	P
between Groups	SSA=156.06	K-1=3	MSA=52.02	3.9	a<0.05=2.76
Within Groups	SSW=799.68	Nt-K=60	MSW=13.33		
Total	SSt=955.74	Nt-1=63			

As calculated F-ratio (3.90) is greater than F-ratio indicated in the table at 0.05 degree (2.76), the assumption that groups have similar performances due to equal effectiveness of different program offerings

was rejected. Therefore, with 95% confidence, there were significant differences in effectiveness of different types of program offering. Consequently, Tukey's HSD test was performed to decide which type of program offering had the highest significant difference (Table 4).

Table 4. The result of Tukey's HSD test performed on all four groups.

Groups	Mean	Control 2.90	Participatory 6.78	Semi-Participatory 6.37	Non-Participatory 3.09
Control	2.90		3.88	3.47	0.19
Participatory	6.78			0.41	3.69
Semi-Participatory	6.37				3.28
Non-Participatory	3.09				

Observed HSD at 0.05 level (3.19) showed that all table values, excluding 0.19 and 0.41, were greater than the critical 0.05 point. Therefore, it was possible to conclude that there are significant differences at 0.05 level between mean of the control group and means of participatory and semi-participatory groups. Consequently, the training programs produced performance improvements in managers who attended participatory and semi-participatory courses.

No significant difference was observed between the effectiveness of participatory and semi-participatory course offerings. The information obtained in this study showed that non-participatory course offering produced no significant performance improvement in managers in spite of superficial evidences pointing to the contrary.

Discussions and Conclusions

Study findings showed that short-term training programs would improve professional knowledge and performance of educational managers. Training would prepare educational managers to undertake their demanding responsibilities.

Findings also showed significant differences in effectiveness of different types of short-term training programs. Short-term training programs offered in three forms of participatory, semi-participatory, and non-participatory increased managers' knowledge base on the subject of training. However, the effectiveness of courses varied depending on the degree of classroom sessions. Managers who attended participatory training programs showed the highest degree of knowledge improvement during the course offering.

All three types of course offerings showed significant improvements in knowledge base of participating individuals. Nevertheless, from knowledge point of view, participatory training courses were preferable to semi-participatory courses. Likewise, semi-participatory training courses were preferable to none-participatory courses.

Training programs had varying results on managers' performance. Participatory courses had the highest effect on performance of managers who attended short-term training programs. The improvement was evident in spite of the fact that statistical analysis showed no significant difference between effectiveness of participatory and semi-participatory training programs. Furthermore, statistical analysis showed no significant performance improvement in managers who took non-participatory courses while evidences pointed to the contrary.

This study showed that educational managers' performance improved after providing a certain level of knowledge in the training programs. Non-participatory training programs showed significant increase in knowledge base of managers, however, the increase was less than half of the increase experienced in participatory and semi-participatory training courses.

It is possible that certain selected individuals did not show the necessary enthusiasm to benefit from the training course because of: 1) the lack of the required motivation to attend the short-term training programs, and 2) the failure to timely answer questions and send responses to course supervisor in non-participatory training program.

Study findings showed that short-term training programs might be effective in improving knowledge and performance of school managers when course participants are required to attend classes for at least half of the hours assigned for the course.

This finding, along with previous findings, justifies suitable investment on organizational human resource training programs. Even short-term training programs may produce positive benefits to organizations.

Findings of this study showed that designing short-term training programs on certain subjects and their extensive offerings might provide the means to increase professional competence among school managers to meet the increasing requirements arising from the training needs of educational manager in spite of the limited resources.

Corresponding Author:

Farzaneh Farahanipour

The professor of Valiasr college Tehran,Iran

Tel:+982188067230

Mobile:+989125060265

Mahboobkandi@yahoo.com

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