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Training Needs of Agricultural Assistants Working in State Department of Agriculture

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Abstract: ***Training needs for Agricultural Assistants can be defined in terms of gap between job requirement and job performance. The present study deals with the training needs of Agricultural Assistants. Proportionate sampling technique was used to select 110 Agricultural Assistants from Rahuri, Shirarmpur and Nevasatahsils of Ahmed nagar district. The data was collected and analyzed in the form of Training Need Index (TNI) and accordingly ranks were allotted. The result of the finding reveals that Majority (73.64 per cent) of Agricultural Assistants require training to medium extent, followed by 14.55 per cent in high category and only 11.82 per cent in low category of training needs. Also the findings on training areas such as technical aspects, communication skill and human relation aspect, the highest training need index (TNI) observed were in the areas of communication skill and human relation aspect. These are Communication skill (90), Computer and internet (88.67), Administrative procedure (86.33), Extension teaching method and aids (85.33). The areas of technical aspects of the training are as follows, improved agricultural technology (86.67) ,preparation of crop production plan on the basis of agro-climatic conditions (84.24),soil and water conservation technology (80.91), respectively. It was observed that in-service training and total services experience were having positive and significant relationship with the training needs at 0.05 level of probability. While education and age having negative but significant relationship with training needs.***

Keyword: Training needs, Agricultural Assistants, Department of Agriculture

1. Introduction

Imagine the development of world without a good network system of training. Why training is so important? Training is an important process of capacity building of individuals so as to improve his performance in his endeavour. Training need assessment is vital to the training process. Need assessment helps to identify present problems and future challenges to be met through training and development. It is required to find out the needs of individual training on which they should build their professional competencies to carry out the assigned job in their organization. Kharde et al (2014). Training need identification is a tool utilized to identify what educational courses or activities should be provided to employees to improve their work productivity. Here the focus should be placed on needs as opposed to desires of the employees for a constructive outcome (Singh *et al*., 2011). Training in any form is intrinsic to organizational effectiveness and efficiency. Training is important for organizational effectiveness and survival in a world of ever changing technologies. A cursory approach for identifying training needs involves the rating of training needs by the intended beneficiaries. The job training is the type of training given to an individual who is gainfully employed but requires certain knowledge and skills to improve his efficiency (Abhishek*et al.,* 2013).Training needs for extension personnel can be defined in terms of gap between job requirement and job performance (Mishra 1990). The training needs of agricultural school masters can be worked out with the help of Training Need Quotient developed by Sidhu (1973).

The Agricultural Assistants is the grass-root level extension worker in the Agriculture Department. This may be possible that Agriculture Assistant may or may not have perceived their role properly. Moreover, whether they have understanding of their role or otherwise are some of the problems which are of a great importance for proper understanding of the factors responsible for the success of the Agriculture department. If the selected personal characteristics of the Agricultural Assistants association with their training needs are known, it will be guideline for the administrators, for selecting persons having desirable characteristics and also to make proper approach to the farmers for solving their problems and giving guidance. Thus, farmer can make the best use of services of Agricultural Assistants working in the Agriculture Department. The findings of the present study will help to understand the training needs of the Agricultural Assistants. It is expected to provide useful criteria for understanding the problems encountered by the Agricultural Assistants in their training need in the Agriculture Department. Also, the suggestions given by them will provide a platform for solving their problems and for better performance. Keeping this in view, the present study was undertaken to identify the "Training needs of Agricultural Assistants of Agriculture Department"

The Specific objectives of the study are

1) To assess the training needs of Agricultural Assistants.
2) To study the relationship of selected characteristics of Agricultural Assistants and training needs.

2. Methodology

The present research study was carried out in Rahuri, Shrirampur and Newasa which are under the Shrirampur Sub-division of Ahmednagar district in Pune division of Agriculture Department. The population of the study isAgricultural Assistants from the Rahuri, Shrirampur and Newasatahsils of Ahmednagar district under Shrirampur subdivision of Agriculture Department. .Total 110 respondents were proportionately selected that is 44 from Newasa and Rahuritahsilseach and 22 from

Shrirampurtehsil. The interview schedule was prepared in simple language in order to get appropriate and accurate information. The data was collected by interviewing the respondents. Wherever necessary, the information of qualitative nature was converted into quantitative form. Then the collected information was analyzed through statistical package for social science (SSPS). The Karl Pearson's coefficient of correlation (r) was used for computing the relationship between the selected independent and dependent variables. The data on the training needs were collected by assigning on a three point scale as per Likert technique i.e. most needed, somewhat needed and not needed. Scores of 3, 2, and 1 were allotted against the selected training areas and the result won ranked accordingly. Finally the Training Need Index (TNI) was calculated with help of following formula.

$$TNI = \frac{\text{Total score obtained}}{\text{Maximum score obtainable}} \times 100$$

3. Results and Discussion

The data from Table 1 revealed the training needs of Agricultural Assistants in the area of technical aspects in the following order of ranking. Improved Agricultural technology (86.67)-first rank, Preparation of crop production plan on the basis of agro-climatic conditions (84.24)-second rank, Soil and water conservation technology (80.91)-third rank, integrated pest management (78.79) and watershed development technology(78.79) both of them fourth rank, participatory approach (78.48)-sixth rank, Milk production technology management (77.88) seventh rank, livestock anagement (77.27)-eighth rank, Crop production technology (74.55) ninth rank, Handling repairing and maintenance of improved agricultural implements and farm power machinery (74.24) and Maintenance and writing of records (74.24) both of them tenth rank, Management of horticultural crops (73.94) twelve rank, management of vegetable crops (72.42) thirteenth rank, Nursery management (71.82) fourteenth rank, floriculture management(70.30) fifteenth rank and Management of spices and medicinal plants (67.58)- sixteenth rank.

Table 1: Training needs of Agricultural Assistants in the area of technical aspects

Sr.no	Training areas	TNI	Rank
1	Improved agricultural technology	86.67	I
2	Preparation of crop production plan on the basis of agro-climatic conditions	84.24	II
3	Soil and water conservation technology	80.91	III
4	Participatory approach	78.48	VI
5	Management of horticultural crops	73.94	XII
6	management of vegetable crops	72.42	XIII
7	floriculture management	70.30	XV
8	Management of spices and medicinal plants	67.58	XVI
9	Nursery management	71.82	XIV
10	Integrated pest management	78.79	IV
11	Watershed development technology	78.79	IV
12	livestock management	77.27	VIII
13	Milk production technology management	77.88	VII
14	Handling repairing and maintenance of improved agricultural implements and farm power machinery	74.24	X
15	Crop production technology	74.55	IX
16	Maintenance and writing of records	74.24	X

The reforms that are being implemented in education probably might have lead majority of respondents to opt for training need on improved Agricultural technology. Agricultural Assistants may have preferred training needs on preparation of crop production plan on the basis of agro-climatic conditions. This finding is supported with the findings of Sivonarayanaet. al. (2002) Chizari et al (2006) and Patil and Kokate (2011)

Table 2: Training needs of Agricultural Assistants in the area of communication skill and human relation aspects

Sr.no	Training areas	TNI	Rank
1	Communication skill	90.33	I
2	Extension teaching method and aids	85.33	IV
3	Administrative procedure	86.33	III
4	Computer and internet	88.67	II
5	Rural leadership and working with village leader	82.33	VI
6	Moral building and development	81.33	X
7	Communication technology and methodology	81.67	IX
8	Extension management	81.00	XI
9	Concept, procedure and consideration in monitoring an extension programme	82.33	VI
10	Group psychology and techniques in working with group	79.67	XII
11	Organizing meetings, discussion, farmers day, exhibition and tours	83.00	V
12	Preparation and submission of reports	82.33	VI

The findings from Table 2indicated the training needs of Agricultural Assistants in the area of communication and human relations aspects. The ranking of the Communication skill (90) first rank, Computer and internet (88.67)-second rank, Administrative procedure (86.33)-third rank, Extension teaching method and aids (85.33)- fourth rank, Organizing meetings, discussion, farmers day, exhibition and tours(83.00)- fifth ranke, Rural leadership and working with village leader (82.33) and Concept, procedure and consideration in monitoring an extension programme (82.33) and Preparation and submission of reports (82.33)-three of them sixth rank, Participatory research methods (20.7)-sixth rank, Communication technology and methodology (81.67)-ninth rank, Moral building and development (81.33)- tenth rank, Extension management (81.00)- eleventh rank and group psychology and techniques in working with group (79.67)- twelfth rank.

From the data it is observed that there is not much difference in the Training Need Index scores which implies the importance of training needs in the area of communication skill and human relation aspects. The respondents thus seem to acquire training especially in the areas of Communication skill. This finding is in line with the findings of Kotrlik et al. (2000) andCho and Boland (2004).

Table 3: Distribution of Agricultural Assistants by their extent of training needs

Sr. No.	Category	No. of respondents (N = 110)	Percentage
1.	low (up to 75)	13	11.82
2.	Medium (75-79)	81	73.64
3.	High (above 97)	16	14.55
	Total	110	100.00
		Mean = 86.10	S.D. = 10.76

The clubbed data from Table 4 revealed that nearly three fourth proportions of Agricultural Assistants (73.64 per cent) require training to medium extent, followed by 14.55 per cent in high category and only 11.82 per cent in low category of training needs. This shows that majority of Agricultural Assistants require training to the medium extent to update their knowledge. This finding is in line with the findings ofPatil and Kokate (2011), Yadav et al. (2012) and Khardeet. al. (20140)

Table 5: Relationships of selected characteristics of Agriculture Assistants and training needs

Sr. No.	Characteristics	Correlation coefficient (r)
1.	Age	-0.03 NS
2.	Education qualification	-0.23 *
3.	Total services Experience	0.23 *
4.	in- service training	0.20 *

N.S. = Non-significant
* = Significant at 0.05 level of Significance

In case of relationship between the personal and professional character of the respondent Agricultural Assistants with their training needs, it was observed thatin-service training and total services experience were having positive and significant relationship with the training needs at 0.05 level of probability. While education having negative but significant relationship with training needs and age were having negative and non-significant relationship with training needs.This finding is in line with the findings of Yadavet. al, (2012) and Kharde et. al.(2014) Singh et al. (2011), Peak et. al. (2007).

4. Conclusion

The study has pointed out the training needs required by Agricultural Assistants in the areas of technical aspects, communication skill and human relations aspect.The study has revealed that a majority of the respondent Agricultural Assistants had medium level of training needs, which needs a lot of improvement. It is very essential that expected roles must made clear to the Agricultural Assistants for their effective functioning. On the basis of these findings, the Agricultural Assistants should be made practically aware about their role through conducting refreshing training and apprenticeship for them.

The study has revealed that the respondent Agricultural Assistants were performing optimum to more pressurized level of work load. This might be affecting their quality of training. This indicates that there is a need to minimize their work load by filling the vacant posts.

The study revealed that a majority of the sampled Agricultural Assistants had not received need based training in case of technical as well as communication and human relation aspects. It is, therefore, suggested that while organizing future trainings, priorities should be given to the above said areas to improve their work effectiveness.

The visits of the Agricultural Assistants may be arranged to the Agricultural University Campuses and Agricultural Research Stations with the financial support of Agriculture Department to keep them up-to-date about the recent knowledge and technologies. The efforts may be made by the Agriculture Department to provide necessary grants and aids like gum boot, rain coat, torch, telescope etc. at the time of emergencies like heavy rains and flood situation.

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