

# Chapter 2

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## Evaluation Highlights

- While client training programs generally result in learning, only about half result in substantially improved workplace performance or development capacity.
- Individual learning results are poor predictors of enhanced workplace performance.
- Well-designed training can succeed in both high- and low-capacity contexts.



# Effectiveness of Training

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In this evaluation, training was considered effective when it contributed to the achievement of the development objectives of a project or, in the case of WBI training, to the country assistance strategy. The effectiveness of training was examined along three dimensions:

- **Learning outputs:** Did training result in acquisition of new knowledge and skills relevant to the achievement of development objectives?
- **Workplace behavior outcomes:** Are trainees applying acquired skills in the workplace in a manner likely to contribute to the achievement of broader development goals?
- **Impact on development capacity:** Is there evidence of improved institutions or enhanced organizational performance as a result of training?
- **Medium:** training partially achieved its objectives, but with significant shortcomings; and
- **Poor:** training did not achieve objectives, or there were major shortcomings in the achievement of objectives.

The six-country survey of training participants and the field studies of 29 project-based and 8 WBI training programs were used to construct a rich picture of results in all three of the above dimensions.<sup>1</sup> Evidence on WBI training results was further supplemented by data from the World Bank Institute Evaluation Group (WBIEG), where relevant. Similar self-evaluation data on training results could not be presented for project-financed training because project Implementation Completion Reports rarely report on training outcomes or impact.

Each training program reviewed in the field missions was rated on the basis of the following criteria:

- **Good:** training largely achieved its objectives, with minor or no shortcomings;

Ratings for project-based training were awarded separately for each training program, even where multiple training programs were reviewed within a project. WBI training programs chosen for review were multicourse programs in thematic areas that the WBI had designated as high priority for that country. Ratings represent assessments of the program as a whole or of principal training offerings within the program.

## Learning Outputs

No formal review of learning in project-based training has ever been completed by the Bank and it was impossible to determine from supervision documentation the extent to which the learning goals of most training programs were achieved. In the past, the WBI, for its part, did compile information on learning in some of its training courses. The most recent WBIEG evaluation of learning results was completed in August 2005. Based on pre- and post-test data from 45 client skill-building courses in different subject areas completed in fiscal 2002–03, WBIEG determined that average learning gains were 10.4

percent, with average pretest scores of 42.6 percent correct answers and post-test scores of 53.0 percent. Twenty-two percent of WBI courses reviewed in this study did not result in any statistically significant learning gains.<sup>2</sup>

The field studies of training programs suggested a more positive picture of overall learning gains than did the WBIEG study, although it must be noted that in most cases no testing had been done of participants and, therefore, evaluators had to use less robust evidence of learning. Where test scores or other existing evaluative evidence of learning were not available, interviews with participants and supervisors, or evidence of changed workplace performance in ways related to training received, was used to infer learning.

Most training examined in the field studies resulted in demonstrable learning. The majority of training programs for which it was possible to evaluate learning had good results on this dimension (see figure 2.1). The six-country survey of training participants also suggested that participant learning was high. Of the 45 percent of survey respondents who said that training did not have a significant impact on key work functions, only 8 percent attributed this to failure to gain new knowledge.

In eight project-based and three WBI training programs reviewed in the field mission, it was not possible to rate learning. In some training offerings, the lack of specificity of learning objectives made even qualitative measurement of achievement of objectives impossible. In others, there was no available evidence of learning achievements. The absence of even a basic level of results measurement in Bank-financed training represents a major shortcoming in the Bank results framework.

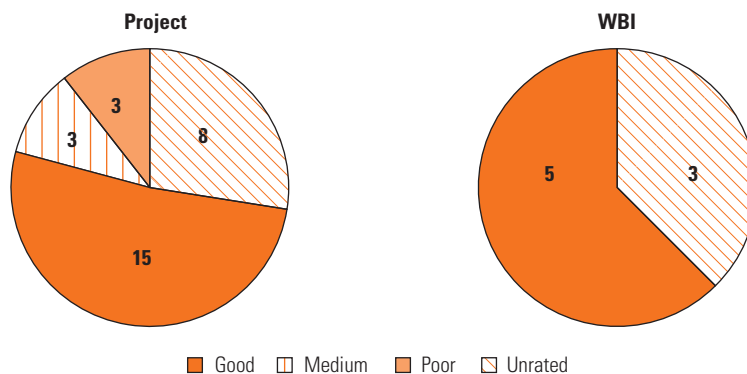
### Workplace Performance Outcomes

As noted in chapter 1, learning is a necessary but insufficient condition for training that contributes to country development capacity. Trainees must also be able to successfully apply acquired knowledge and skills in the workplace. On this more demanding criterion, results were substantially lower than for learning outputs. The six-country survey of training participants indicated that 50 percent of WBI respondents, compared with 60 percent of project respondents, reported that training resulted in substantial positive changes to key functions of their work.<sup>3</sup> A further 42 percent of WBI respondents and 30 percent of project respondents reported small changes to key work functions or changes to secondary work functions. When probed, however, less than one-sixth of these respondents were able to give any examples of how

*Training generally results in learning gains.*

*The absence of even basic results measurement in much Bank-financed training is a major shortcoming.*

**Figure 2.1: Most Training Examined in Field Studies Resulted in Learning Gains**



Source: Based on field study findings.

Note: The number shown within each pie-chart section indicates the number of training programs reviewed with that section's rating.

their work had changed.<sup>4</sup> Country statistics ranged from a low of 37 percent of WBI respondents in Mexico who stated that training had a substantial positive impact on key work functions to a high of 90 percent of project respondents in Nigeria. Approximately 75 percent of project respondents in all countries, when probed with regard to how their work had changed, were able to give at least general examples. Figure 2.2 and box 2.1 present survey data and comments from interviewed participants about the impact of training on their work.

These findings on workplace outcomes of training correspond with data gathered by WBIEG in surveys of training participants administered 8 to 24 months after course completion. WBIEG surveys of course participants completed in fiscal 2001–05 found that, on average, 55 percent of participants, when asked to rate on a scale of 1–7 (1 being the minimum) the extent to which they use WBI-acquired skills and knowledge, rated WBI courses at 5 or higher.<sup>5</sup>

Fourteen out of 22 project-based training programs and one out of three WBI programs in

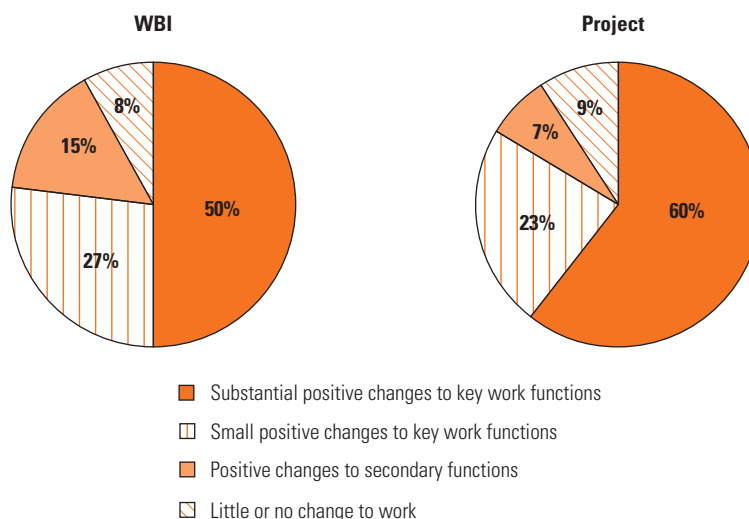
the field reviews that IEG rated were rated “good” on workplace outcomes. Another four project-based programs were rated “medium,” indicating that while the training did accomplish some positive changes, there was significant room for improvement. In the remaining five WBI programs reviewed and seven project-based training programs, training outcomes could not be measured, either due to lack of data or because it was too early in the program to reach definitive conclusions about training results.

### Impact on Development Capacity

As discussed in chapter 1, building sustainable client capacity to achieve development goals generally requires a multipronged approach that addresses resource, incentive, and human capacity constraints in a strategic manner. As a result, it is difficult to disentangle the impact of training from the impact of other interventions that enable the achievement of capacity-building goals. The field studies made determinations of impact through in-depth interviews with participants, their supervisors, government policy makers, and

*Bank-financed training results in substantial workplace performance outcomes about half of the time.*

**Figure 2.2: About Half of Trainees Reported Substantial Positive Changes to Work Performance**



Source: IEG six-country survey of training participants.

### Box 2.1: How Work Changed Following Training

The following participant statements are from surveys of course participants:

“My approach to work changed after the course. I better understand the various procedures to be followed to set up a partnership.” (*Public Private Partnership in Infrastructure, Burkina Faso*)

“I am able to better organize and mobilize human resources of my service around specific objectives; I can better manage the medical team.” (*Health Workers Policies and Practices, Burkina Faso*)

“I developed a better general view of corruption and how the federal government fights to eradicate it. It gave me the tools necessary to solve issues of corruption and the culture of filing complaints on behalf of the citizens. I perform audits for the federal public services with the training.” (*WBI Open and Participatory Government, Mexico*)

“We improved the assignment delivery time by up to 15 percent. We are better organized in the business and offer better service to the client. We are able to detect where we are failing.” (*National Competitiveness in Mexico Industry and Government Dialogue*)

“I noted an improvement in my diagnosis methods following this training course and techniques which are based on the scientific method. [I acquired] new knowledge [allowing] easier identification of certain species.” (*Comprehensive Fight Against Crop Diseases, Tunisia*)

“The knowledge from the training course helped me to write new business plan for our municipal government. We introduced a new system for the preparation and registration of documents and we use computers more than before” (*Community-to-Community Learning Visits, Azerbaijan*)

Source: IEG six-country survey of training participants.

Bank staff in order to better understand how training affected capacity to achieve development objectives. On this basis, it was possible to make evaluative assessments in 18 project-based and 3 WBI training programs. In the remaining training programs, the difficulty of attributing impact to training or the lack of evidence on impact made such assessments impossible.

In 10 project-based training programs, training could be linked to significant impact leading to a “good” rating. In another three cases, training offerings led to some positive impacts, resulting in a “medium” rating, and in five cases, impact was rated as “poor.” Examples of project-based training with good impact ratings include the Procurement Reform Project in Bangladesh, which adequately prepared a large number of public sector officials to use new procurement procedures, and helped build support for the transition to a more transparent procurement regime. In Burkina Faso, training for community groups empowered them to plan, implement, and evaluate their own development plans as part of the Rural Development program. In Mexico, 125 savings and credit institutions have been, or are about to become, legally accredited, a result attributable in part to

the training of these institutions’ staffs in banking functions. In Tunisia, training of exporters enhanced their knowledge of export markets and thereby contributed to an increase in Tunisian exports.

For five WBI programs there was not enough information available to rate their impacts. This is related to the lack of information gathered by the WBI on the capacity of participants’ organizations or institutions, either prior to or following training programs (discussed in chapters 3 and 4). In only one of the WBI training programs reviewed was it possible to establish enhanced development capacity. In Bangladesh, the WBI’s partnership with the central bank led to the creation of a Policy Analysis Unit, which is now producing high-quality analytical material. This program is linked to the Enterprise Growth and Bank Modernization project in Bangladesh and benefits from both project and other donor financing.

Two WBI offerings and five project-based training programs received poor ratings for impact. In one case, the Burkina Faso Basic Education project, a midterm review of the project determined that teaching quality had actually

dropped during the project, a fact that was attributed to the decision to replace the standard, two-year, preservice teacher-training course with a one-year preservice course and supplementary in-service teacher training. In-service training was not a good substitute for preservice training because courses were poorly targeted to teacher needs, and teacher attendance was low due to resource and incentive constraints.

### Attributing Training Results

The above review of training efficacy demonstrates that, while most project-based and WBI training reviewed resulted in learning, training only resulted in substantial workplace performance outcomes about half of the time. In other words, individual learning is a poor predictor of impact. While most training participants may gain new skills or knowledge in Bank-financed training courses, many cannot or do not use this learning after returning to the workplace.

Transfer of learning outcomes to the workplace is affected by both the design of the training itself and by the context in which it takes place. The following chapters analyze the reasons for insufficient transfer of learning to the workplace and comment on the key drivers of successful training. Chapter 3 examines how training design affects the likelihood of learning transfer. Chapter 4 explores how the training context affects the contribution of training to the achievement of organizational and development goals.

Excluded from this analysis of factors contributing to training success are two variables that were not found to be strongly correlated with training success: the nature of the training provider and the capacity level of the client. As noted in chapter 1, Bank-financed training may be

provided by governments, the WBI, local training institutions, or international training providers. No evidence was found in the field studies to suggest that one type of training provider consistently achieved better training results. Of the 15 training programs reviewed in field studies with satisfactory outcomes, 7 were implemented through the government (in one case with the support of a local training institute), 4 by NGOs, 3 by international consultants (in cooperation with local partners or the WBI), and 1 through an international organization.

Evidence on the impact of country capacity on training was inconclusive. While the six-country survey suggested that training was somewhat more successful in countries with lower Country Policy and Institutional Assessment ratings than in countries with higher ratings, the field studies found a somewhat higher proportion of successful training programs in the higher-capacity

countries of Mexico and Tunisia than in the lower-capacity countries of Bangladesh and Burkina Faso. However, examples of good training results were found in field studies in Bangladesh and Burkina Faso when that training had been well designed, adequately addressing capacity constraints likely to affect workplace implementation of learning. In the case of Bangladesh's Export Diversification Project (table 2.1), examples of good and poor training designs leading to corresponding good and poor outcomes were found in the same project. In this case, varying training success, while partially attributable to the greater complexity of the training goals of one of the programs, was also largely owing to differences in training design and client commitment. Both of these factors will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

*The nature of the training provider was not found to be strongly correlated with training success.*

*Good training outcomes were found in both higher-capacity and lower-capacity countries.*

**Table 2.1: Same Project, Different Training Outcomes**

Two training programs in the Export Diversification Project were reviewed in the Bangladesh Field Study. The first program, involving training for the Bangladesh Tariff Commission, received a poor rating on performance outcomes, and the other, involving computer training for the National Board of Revenue, received a good rating. The differences in the ratings can be partially attributed to the relatively simple nature of the training in the latter project. However, there were also very significant differences in the quality of training design, which were found to have a significant impact on training results. These differences were related to targeting, client commitment, and follow-up support.

Design element	Bangladesh Tariff Commission	National Board of Revenue
Training objectives	To strengthen capacity in the Bangladesh Tariff Commission for trade data and policy analysis, and for international trade cooperation; to provide a technical basis to foster trade liberalization. No performance objectives or indicators of training success specified.	To train National Board of Revenue personnel in the use of customs software, as part of the larger project objective to computerize customs transactions. Simple but adequate performance objectives and key indicators were specified.
Training provider	International consulting firm.	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.
Diagnosis	Poor—Significant institutional weaknesses were not diagnosed and inadequate assessment of capacity needs created a course program that insufficiently targeted job needs.	Good—Training was based on adequate diagnosis of the need for computerization and associated capacity gaps, such as the need for ongoing technical support for software use.
Training-needs assessment	Poor—The training provider did not sufficiently consult the Bangladesh Tariff Commission.	Good—The starting experience levels of participants were known in advance.
Participant selection	Medium—Training was open to persons outside the Bangladesh Tariff Commission, and thus the training was less focused on the commission's needs.	Good—Very wide cross-section of National Board of Revenue personnel were trained to build support for new systems.
Client commitment	Poor—Bangladesh Tariff Commission leadership changed frequently and was not committed to reform.	Good—National Board of Revenue staff coordinated the training.
Pedagogical design	Poor—Training was very theory based. Participants had difficulty relating theory to their work.	Good—Strong use of practical exercises and participatory techniques.
Attention to capacity context	Poor—Uncertainty of length of tenure of the staff. Necessary institutional reforms were not executed before implementation.	Good—United Nations consultants built up in-house capacity to continue training and support for the customs software after project's end.
Follow-up support for trainees	Poor—Insufficient technical assistance to aid implementation of learning.	Good—United Nations consultants provided in-house technical support for two years, and are contracted to give off-site support for software for as long as it is used.

Source: Interviews and Bank documentation on the Bangladesh Export Diversification Project.