Author's response to reviews

Title: Training evaluation: a case study of training Iranian health managers

Authors:

Maye Omar (m.a.omar@leeds.ac.uk)
Nancy Gerein (n.g@leeds.ac.uk)
Ehsanullah Tarin (tarine@sud.emro.who.int)
Christopher Butcher (C.W.Butcher@adm.leeds.ac.uk)
Stephen Pearson (S.C.Pearson@leeds.ac.uk)
Gholamreza Heidari (gr_heidari@yahoo.com)

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Janet Clevenstine, Managing Editor
Human Resources for Health online journal

Dear Janet Clevenstine,

Training evaluation: a case study of training Iranian health managers
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With reference to the above manuscript, we have now carried out the essential revisions suggested by two reviewers as explained below:

1st reviewer suggested:
Minor essential revisions: There are in the text some abbreviations that the reader may have difficulties to understand. For instance, chapter one of the background IT; in page 6 through page 9 there are MOH&ME, NPMC and so forth. One can not assume that every reader knows these abbreviations.

In response to a reviewer's comment, we have spelled out one of the acronyms, i.e. NPMC in the first instance and replaced the two institutional acronyms, i.e. MOH&ME and NCIHD with their full titles.

2nd reviewers suggested the following discretionary revisions:

Comment 1) The article is aiming on analysing a model of good practice for evaluating individual capacity building through short courses. As individual capacity building seems not to be most successful if it is linked with institutional capacity building, I recommend to include one paragraph in the discussion part on this topic.
In response response:

1) In the discussion section under the heading for ‘Capacity building for management, training and evaluation, we have the following two paragraphs:

a) As building the capacity of individuals alone has proved unsuccessful in many situations [29], the project involved aspects of institutional capacity building. This enabled the Ministry of Health and Medical Education to obtain ideas for improving capacity building through other methods besides training.

b) Testing and adaptation of innovations with visible successes create favourable conditions for institutional capacity building [1]. As strong and effective leadership for change from top management is an important success factor for institutional capacity building [1], data were produced for both the NPMC and the Ministry of Health and Medical Education which could justify funding future courses, including the need for advanced courses.

Comment 2) The authors mention in the conclusion part, that teachers should prepare local case studies for a better linking of theory and practice. I can agree in principal - but we could also discuss, that learners - according to Bloom’s taxonomy of learning outcomes - should be able to reflect on "external" examples and transfer their experience with such case studies to their specific work environment. Of course such an approach would have to be stated in the learning objectives. One could reflect in the conclusions also about such an approach.

In response to this comment, we have re-written parts of the second paragraph of conclusion section, and now reads as follows.

“Each course needs to prepare clear information about whom the course is aimed at, what the pre-requisites are (academic or experience), and what the course will enable graduates to do, so that managers can select appropriate participants. In order to ensure a balance between theory and practice, trainers should collect local case studies and information and develop locally oriented learning materials to illustrate theory. However, trainers also need to make explicit in the learning objectives that participants need to draw their learning not only from their country’s specific situation but from other, external situations and apply what they have learned into situations in the work place [30].”

Comment 3) The result, that students did not value online learning and twinning of institutes is a very important result, it is contrary to the favoured approaches of many bilateral and international agencies and institutions. Therefore I would go a bit deeper in the discussion of this result.

In response to the comment, we added a new paragraph in at the end of ‘Training methods and content’ in the discussion section.

“It is surprising that participants did not value on-line learning and twinning of institutions which are favoured by some international agencies and institutions [28]. Among possible reasons for not showing interest in on-line learning could be that it requires good information technology and internet connectivity which
are often not available in remote parts of the country. Experience also shows that in health planning and management training, participants learn from interacting with peers and sharing of experience, which is more challenging with on-line learning. As information from respondents was gathered by using a self-administered questionnaire, some could have had difficulty in understanding the term ‘twinning of institutions’ for two reasons. First, English is not the respondents’ first language, and second, they may not have had experience of twinning with another international institution, as Iran has remained relatively isolated internationally for a long time. “

With the above revisions, I would say we have now addressed all the reviewers’ comments on the manuscript.

Yours faithfully

DR MAYE OMAR
Senior Lecturer in Health Organization and Management