

EvSum472

INDIAN RAILWAYS: TRAINING PROJECT FOR THE MODERNISATION OF WORKSHOPS

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The Project

From 1984-89 the project financed 20 courses run by British Rail Engineering Limited (BREL) in Derby. The purpose was to give Indian Railway (IR) managers the opportunity to deepen their theoretical and practical understanding of relevant workshop practices. The total cost was some £1.1m for 175 study fellows.

The Evaluation

In order to establish the impact, a sample of returned study fellows were interviewed. Benefits which could be attributed solely to the training of the individual were identified, described and then assessed. The aim was to establish "*clear-cut cases*" where the tangible benefits of the training were either worth significantly more than the unit cost of £7,000 or significantly less than that unit cost.

Overall Conclusion

This project has been *highly successful* in that it has produced benefits far in excess of the training cost. The main benefits were obtained by study fellows observing technology and practices in BREL and British Rail which were new to IR, which they then applied in their job on return to India. Even higher returns, however, were potentially capable of being achieved.

The Main Findings

- *Identification.* IR and the British Council identified a generally sound set of training needs or courses to meet. Specific jobs were not identified but skills and subject areas for training were indicated. There was a general recognition that operational constraints within the IR personnel system meant that it was not always possible to assign individuals to posts which utilised fully the specialised character of the training.
- *Course Design.* Some of the theory and classwork was found not to have been of much relevance and applicability. In any case, some of this work could have been carried out in India at least as effectively and at lower cost. There should have been more focus on the initial objectives. These emphasised the exposure to current practices with new technology.

- *Pre-course.* Early notification to selected candidates of course details, by allowing them time to select relevant topics and to prepare a job study or task with line manager involvement, was found to be highly beneficial.
- It was found to be of particular importance that the *post-course* job enabled the study fellows to apply the result of their training. It was more productive if they knew this prior to leaving India. Training was most productive when the training provided matched both the needs of the subsequent job and those of the individual study fellow.
- *Implementation.* The provision of the training was generally good but more communication and contact visits between the provider (BREL) and the client (IR) would have enabled the courses to be better tailored to needs. More follow-up action could have been taken on the results of the study fellows' post-course evaluation forms and on the recommendations of the joint reviews which identified a number of improvements which could be made to the procedures. The ex-post evaluation has revealed the importance of more active management during the training process by both the client and the provider.
- *Unit Costs and Cost-Effectiveness.* In comparison with other training projects the overall cost per study fellow was very reasonable. The course size was increased from eight to ten to increase cost-effectiveness but could with advantage have been increased further to twelve.

Lessons

- Courses designed to support a particular industry will be more effective if explicit objectives are set. These objectives should specify the particular topics, skills and level of attainment and what the individuals should be able to achieve as a result of the training.
- Designers of courses for high-level technical managers should note that benefits are often greater from practical exposure to different practices than from theoretical classwork and lectures.
- There are advantages in making course details available to the study fellows well before courses. They can then, in suitable cases, produce a job study or task with their line manager. This will also allow them to arrive better prepared.
- In order to maximise the benefits from training projects there should be a procedure to try to ensure that the course matches the training needs both of the individual and the job to which the trainee is to be assigned immediately on return. Otherwise, general operational needs on the study fellows' return may prevent them putting the specific skills learned to immediate use. Such operational needs should always be weighed against the benefit to the organisation and the individual of the very specific technical job related skills being put to use on return to duty.
- Training projects can facilitate an examination of means to improve staff management. In this way evaluation can play a positive part in the institution's

development.

- The methodology of establishing "*clear-cut cases*" of benefits by assessing them in relation to the actual costs, should be used in evaluating training projects to assess impact. This method allows a judgement to be made on effectiveness and also helps draw out the lessons to be learned.