

WBI Evaluation Briefs

REPORTING ON CLIENT AND STAFF LEARNING AND CAPACITY ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMS

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Annual Review of World Bank Staff Learning FY03

The Challenge

The context of the World Bank's operational work has evolved over the past years, to reflect the latest thinking on the international development agenda. Consequently, Bank staff must update and improve their knowledge, skills, and tools to meet the Bank's changing business needs. To be a continuous learning organization, the World Bank must constantly seek ways to both improve and scale up its staff learning programs, and to align them with the Bank's mission.

World Bank Intervention

The World Bank launched a comprehensive review of staff learning in June, 2001, to respond to the need for developing a "complementary set of knowledge, skills, and behaviors that go beyond narrowly defined technical expertise."¹ With the establishment of the Learning Board in FY01, a new framework of staff learning was implemented to ensure the quality of Bank learning programs.² In FY02, gradual changes in the learning program were initiated, and during FY03, the Bank delivered nearly three thousand learning events (N=2,882) for its staff, with the total learning expenditures amounting to \$69 million.¹ These events were delivered using a variety of learning modes, including traditional classroom courses, distance learning, e-learning, "action learning," and informal brown-bag lunches.³

Underlying Assumptions

The underlying assumptions of staff learning are:

- Staff participate in high quality learning events.
- Staff use acquired knowledge and skills to improve their on-the-job performance.

- Staff's behavioral changes lead to overall institutional changes in the Bank.

Evaluation Methods and Instruments

The World Bank Institute Evaluation Group (IEG) has been given the mandate by the Learning Board to evaluate staff learning and carries out this mandate using a variety of evaluation methods, including participants' self-assessments of a random sample of learning activities.

Sample. In FY03, IEG evaluated a random sample of 242 courses, representing about ten percent of all staff learning, and nearly 50 percent of unique activities offered.⁴ To minimize a potential selection bias from the self-nomination method used in FY02, courses were randomly selected from those meeting the following four criteria:

- Courses were registered as formal learning events (i.e. no brown bags) in the Bank Learning Catalogue two weeks prior to their starting dates.
- Bank staff comprised at least half of the attendees in a course.
- Course delivery mode was either face-to-face or distance learning.
- Courses were not previously evaluated by IEG in FY03.

Instruments. Participants evaluated the quality of the course content, design and delivery, and materials on a scale of one (low) to five (high). They also rated the course on its overall quality, usefulness and relevance to the World Bank's mission. Finally, they rated the course on the extent to which it met their learning needs, improved their knowledge and skills, and was applicable to their jobs. A second instrument, the activity questionnaire, was completed by the

1. World Bank Learning Board, "Building Staff Capacity for Development: Update on the Staff Learning Program - FY03." June, 2003.

2. The Learning Board comprises representatives of 25 major learning providers in the Bank, including the Regions, Strategic Learning Centers and other Vice-Presidential Units of the World Bank.

3. Action learning was defined by the Learning Board in FY04 as "a process of learning and reflection that happens with the support of a group or peers working together with real business problems with the intention of accomplishing tasks while enhancing the learning of the group at the same time." This definition was not available at the beginning of FY03. The FY03 IEG activity questionnaire defined action learning as using a nontraditional approach (e.g. small group activities); this is now referred to as "interactive learning."

4. There were 514 unique events registered in the learning catalog as workshops, clinics, or courses under "event type."

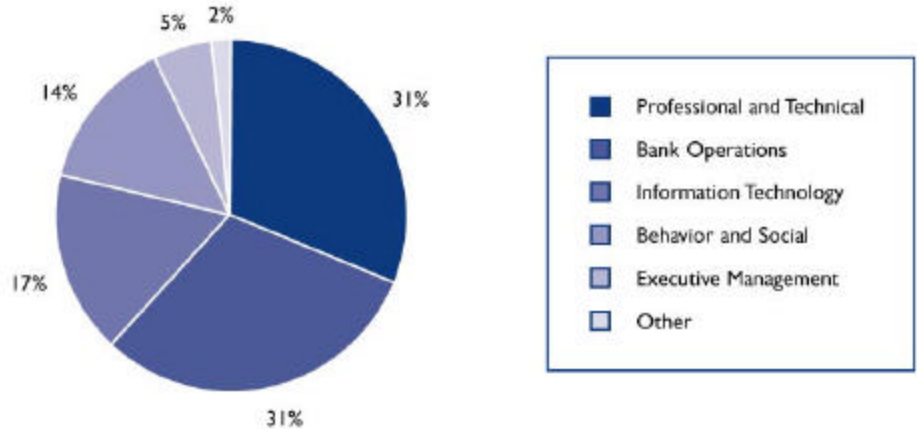
course administrator, and asked factual questions regarding features of the course.

Methods. A meta-analysis of these 242 course evaluations comprises the annual review of staff learning discussed in this Brief.⁵ The meta-analysis examined which course features were associated with higher participant ratings on four quality dimensions: relevance to the Bank's mission, overall quality and usefulness, applicability to participants' job, and perceived increase in knowledge and skills. In order to assess the validity of the models used, additional analyses were conducted to determine whether courses rated highly by participants could be characterized by features predicted by the models. The meta-analysis examined four different models:⁶ (a) determinants of relevance to the Bank's mission, (b) determinants of activity value, defined as a composite of quality and usefulness ratings, (c) determinants of perceived increase in knowledge and skills, and (d) determinants of applicability to job.

Participants and Response Rates

Of the 4,982 participants in the 242 courses evaluated in FY03, a total of 3,326 participants completed the questionnaire, yielding a response rate of 67 percent. For the 240 courses with fewer than 100 participants, the response rate was 78 percent, which was higher than the response rate of 70 percent reported in FY02.⁷ Eighty-seven percent of respondents were World Bank staff, while the remaining 13 percent were

Figure 1. Share of evaluated courses, by major content categories, WBI staff learning, FY03



from client countries who participated in joint staff and client courses. Among the Bank staff, the largest groups represented were GF (24 percent) and GA-GD (23 percent) grade levels, similar to the pattern in FY02 (31 percent representing GA-GD and 25 percent GF levels).⁸ A majority of respondents participated in training to "enhance their job performance" (56 percent), while other participants took the training for their "professional interests and growth" (35 percent). Very few took courses to "network and share information" (5 percent).

Of the courses evaluated in FY03, three-quarters were designed and delivered by the World Bank (76 percent and 77 percent, respectively), and the remaining courses were designed and delivered by external consultants. More than half of the courses used a conventional lecture format as the primary mode of instruction (60 percent), as opposed to interactive learning, and had been delivered at least twice previously (53 percent). The length of training ranged from one to ten days, with the

average duration being 2 days. Courses could be broadly grouped into: *Professional and Technical, Bank Operations, Behavioral and Social, Information Technology, Executive Management and Trust Funds*, with about 60 percent of all offerings falling equally into the first two categories (Figure 1).

Evaluation Results

1. Overall, participants viewed staff learning positively.

- Respondents' mean ratings on various aspects of quality were above 4.0 on a five-point scale (Figure 2). The applicability of the learning event to participants' jobs (4.14) and perceptions of increases in knowledge and skills (4.23) were statistically the same as the two benchmarks established by the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD). Respondents assessed both the quality and usefulness of the Bank learning events positively (both 4.26), and these scores were comparable to those reported in FY02.⁹

5. Chard, C.L. and D. J. Arango, "Annual Review of World Bank Staff Learning FY03," WBI Evaluation Studies, No. EG04-74, December, 2003.

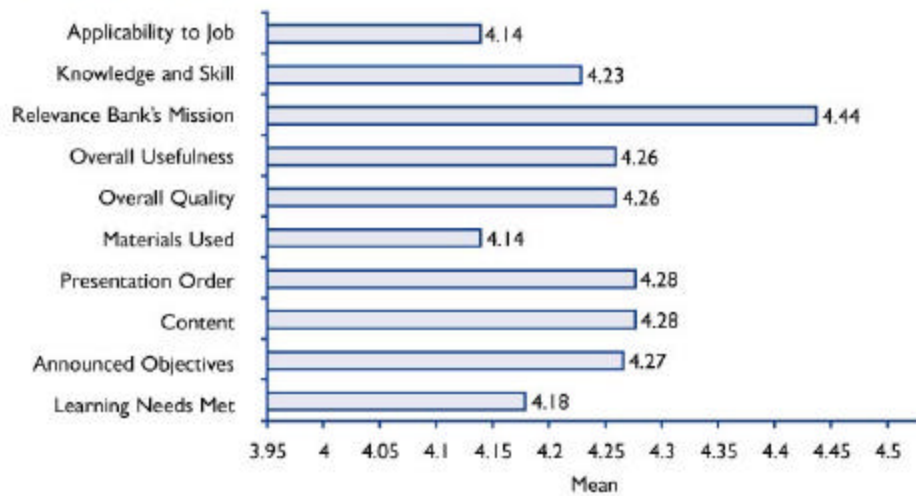
6. In these models, the course intake characteristics of the participants are statistically controlled.

7. Ouchi, F. and V. Le Rouzic, "Annual Review of the Quality of Formal World Bank Staff Learning, FY02," WBI Evaluation Studies, No. EG03-56, October, 2002.

8. The distribution of respondents by grade level in FY03 was: 32 percent in grade GA-GD, 11 percent in GE, 24 percent in GF, 18 percent in GG and 7 percent in GH or higher levels. The remaining 16 percent were short-term temporary staff, consultants, and others.

9. The mean ratings were statistically the same in FY02 on training applicability to job (4.15), increased knowledge and skills (4.27), the overall training quality (4.28), and usefulness (4.27).

Figure 2. Respondents' mean ratings of activities (1 = low; 5 = high)



2. Some course features were associated with higher participant ratings.

- **Course Topic.** Learning events focused on *Bank Operations, Behavioral and Social, and Executive Management* received significantly higher ratings on their **relevance to the Bank's mission**, in comparison to events on *Information and Technology and Professional Technical*.
- **Interactive Learning.** Participants who took courses that used interactive learning as the primary training approach were significantly more likely to view what they learned as **directly applicable to their jobs**.¹⁰
- **Pedagogical Quality.** Courses with higher average participant assessments of the quality of the course content, the order in which the subjects were presented, and the materials used during the course, were also rated significantly higher in terms of overall **quality and usefulness** of the training. Participants in courses rated

highly on pedagogical quality were also more likely to report increases in their **knowledge and skills**.

- **Class Size.** Courses with fewer participants received **higher ratings on perceived increases in knowledge and skills** as compared with courses with more participants.¹¹
- **Duration.** Participants in longer courses reported **higher perceived increases in knowledge and skills**, as compared with participants in shorter courses.¹²
- **Course Maturity.** Courses that had been offered for at least the third time received higher ratings on **relevance and overall quality and usefulness**, in comparison with new courses.¹³

3. Participant motivation was associated with higher ratings of courses.

- **Job Motivation.** Participants who reported that enhancing their job performance was their primary

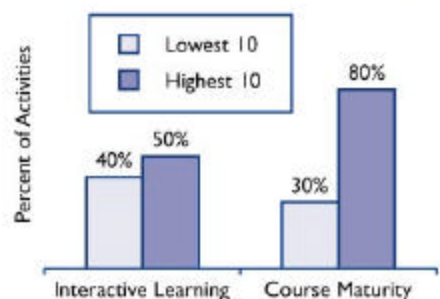
motivation for participating in the training were more likely to rate the training as **applicable to their job**.

- **Formal Learning Plans.** Participants who had registered their training in their Learning Plans were more likely to rate the training as **applicable to their job** and to report increases in their **knowledge and skills** upon completion of their training.

4. Some course and participant features were unrelated to higher participant ratings.

- **Bank vs. External Design.** Externally designed courses did not differ significantly from internally designed activities in terms of **relevance to the Bank's mission**.
- **Class Size.** Class size was not related to participant ratings on overall value ratings (**training quality and usefulness**).
- **Grade Level.** There were no significant differences between ACS staff and non-ACS staff in **perceived increases in knowledge and skills or perceived applicability to jobs**.

Figure 3. Frequency of interactive learning and course maturity among the 10 highest quality and 10 lowest quality courses, WB staff learning, FY03



10. However, the effect of interactive learning is no longer significant when the model controls for interactions with course topic.

11. The effect of class size is significant even when controlling for interactions with course topic.

12. The effect of course duration remains statistically significant even while controlling for interactions with course topic.

13. However, course maturity was not significant after controlling for interactions with course topic.

5. Highly rated courses shared many common features. Courses that were more highly rated were likely to include interactive learning, to have been offered previously, to be rated highly on course design (content, materials, order), to have fewer participants and longer durations.

- **Interactive Learning Approaches.** Interactive learning approaches were used as part of the instructional method for training in 50 percent of highly rated activities compared with only 40 percent of lower rated activities (Figure 3).
- **Course Maturity.** A higher percentage of courses that had been offered two or more times was observed among highly rated courses (80 percent) than among lower rated courses (30 percent; Figure 3).
- **Pedagogical Quality.** Highly rated courses received more favorable participant ratings on course content, presentation order, and training materials for all content areas (Figure 4).
- **Smaller Class Sizes.** On average, highly rated courses were smaller than lower rated courses for all content areas (26 participants versus 15 participants; Figure 5).

- **Course Duration.** Longer courses were also prevalent among highly rated courses (3.37 days versus 1.25 days). Highly rated courses lasted approximately two days longer (Figure 5).

Implications and Conclusions

Based on the evaluation findings, the study highlighted the following points on staff learning:

- Participants value staff learning overall, and Bank staff learning meets ASTD standards on average.
- Course features affect perceived course effectiveness including: interactive learning, course maturity, pedagogical quality, class size and course duration.
- Participant characteristics that affect perceived course effectiveness are primarily motivational.

Acknowledgement

The evaluation summarized in this brief was conducted with the financial support of the Learning Board of the World Bank.

Figure 4. Average rating of content, order and materials by participants in the 10 highest quality and 10 lowest quality courses, WB staff learning, FY03

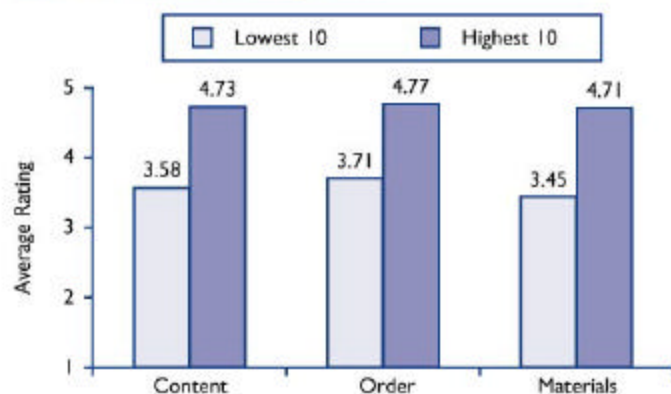
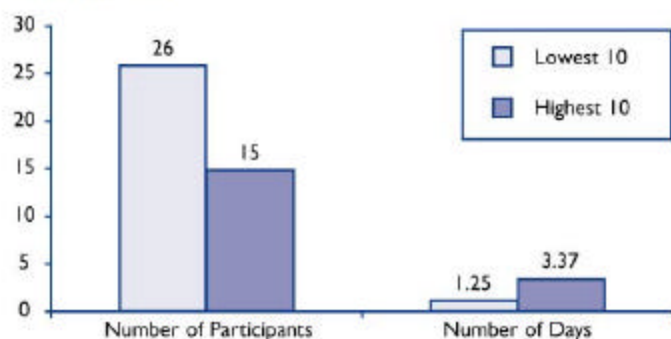


Figure 5. Average class size and course duration for the 10 highest quality and 10 lowest quality courses, WB staff learning, FY03



About WBI

The World Bank Institute (WBI) helps people, institutions, and countries to diagnose problems that keep communities poor, to make informed choices to solve those problems, and to share what they learn with others. Through traditional and distance learning methods, WBI and its partners in many countries deliver knowledge-based options to policy makers, technical experts, business and community leaders, and civil society stakeholders; fostering analytical and networking skills to help them make sound decisions, design effective socioeconomic policies and programs, and unleash the productive potential of their societies.

The Institute Evaluation Group (IEG) works with WBI's Leadership Team and with the Learning Board to design, implement, and report evaluation results for staff, client, and joint learning events. IEG also offers distance learning and face-to-face training in program evaluation. WBI Evaluation Briefs report on the evaluation results, lessons learned, and impact of the Institute's major offerings.

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