Core Course: Building Knowledge and Expertise in Infrastructure Finance

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(Notation: The World Bank Institute was formerly called the Economic Development Institute (EDI), as reflected in some text)

The Economic Development Institute (EDI) of the World Bank sponsored a core course on Building Knowledge and Expertise in Infrastructure Finance in Istanbul, Turkey from December 15-19, 1997. The five-day program was designed to provide mid- to senior-level officials, executives and financiers engaged in the area of infrastructure development in developing countries with knowledge and techniques of infrastructure project financing. The course covered such key issues as private sector participation, international financing opportunities, project selection, contract design, and risk mitigation. Sixty-four participants attended this course from the public and private sectors. The course was evaluated by the EDI Evaluation Unit. An end-of-course questionnaire was used, which consisted of two sections. The first section asked participants to rate the extent to which the course met its performance objectives. Questions included whether the course provided new concepts and high-priority issues for participants, whether reading and other course materials were appropriate, and the degree to which participants felt usefulness about the course content. The second section asked the level of participants knowledge about topics covered in the course, before and after completing the course, based on self-assessment. A 6-point Likert type scale that ranged from 1 = minimum to 6 = maximum was used to rate participants response for each question. Following are some of the major evaluation findings:

- On overall course performance, participants generally gave positive responses. Participants responded that the presentations they received in the course were useful for their current work, and that trainers communicated with participants well in addressing their messages. Participants’ mean score for these indicators were 4.5 out of 6.0.

- About 62 percent of participants also indicated that readings and other supporting materials provided during the course fulfilled or exceeded their expectations and the course held the participants interest. One question asked if the course was a worthwhile use of their time. The mean score for this question was 4.6.

- Results highlighted one possible weakness on the level of coverage. Participants felt that the course topics were not treated sufficiently in depth given the limited length of session. Participants gave this indicator a mean score of 3.9 rating, the lowest rating of the course performance indicators.
Lower mean scores were also observed in the two issues on the course coverage. One area was whether the course had focused on high priority issues and the other was whether participants had learned about suitable policies that they had not considered before. The mean ratings for these questions were both in the lower range of 4.0. The results suggest that course designers may need to put more emphasis on identifying priority issues of need to participants and types of policies to be covered by the future course.

Pre-course mean scores on the participants' knowledge about course topics were generally in the 2.9 - 3.7 range out of 6.0. This measure can serve as an indicator of how much participants felt they knew about a topic upon entering the course. It attempts to assess the level of information after the course was completed. On all topics covered in the course, post-course learning questions indicated that participants felt they learned much more after attending the course, increasing their mean scores to the 4.4 - 4.8 range.

Pre/post self-assessment of how much participants learned showed large increases on some key topics. Participants responded that they gained knowledge on contract design and contractual arrangements as well as ability to develop a contract. The mean scores on these items increased from around 2.9 to the mid 4.0 range. On the topic on strategies for risk mitigation, mean score rose from 3.3 to 4.8, which was the highest post-course mean observed.

Other evaluation sources also show favorable results on the selection of the course topics. The course received positive feedback on the course content from several government officials after the completion of the course.

There are some limitations to the evaluation. First, the information obtained from pre-/post-assessment should be interpreted with caution. It reflects the degree to which participants believed they understood the topics, but does not measure how much they actually learned. Secondly, the use of the 6-point measurement scale can be misleading since the scale neglects the mid point and can force respondents to choose either higher or lower score than their actual ratings. Thirdly, more detailed information on participants' level of work experience such as the specific number of years in the particular field would help to assess whether the course was attended by the participants with the appropriate level of technical knowledge.