Comparison of Level 1 Findings Across Three Offerings of the Core Course on Economics and Business Journalism

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In the first four months of calendar year 1999, the World Bank Institute Knowledge and Products (WBIKP) Division offered three renditions of its Core Course on Economics and Business Journalism. Participants were print and broadcast journalists. The objectives of the courses were to improve participants' understanding of key economic concepts and to equip them with practical strategies for covering economic, business and development issues. The course contents for each offering were similar, with relevant national or regional emphasis added. All courses were organized and led by task manager Timothy Carrington of WBIKP.

The first course was held in Bogor, Indonesia from February 21-25, 1999, with twenty Indonesian journalists participating. The second offering was held in Islamabad, Pakistan from March 1-4, 1999, with 13 participants from Pakistan. The third offering took place in Bamako, Mali from April 19-23, 1999, with a total of 31 participants from Francophone Africa (Mali, Senegal, Niger, Guinea, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Benin, Togo and Burkina Faso).

WBIKP and the WBI Evaluation Unit conducted Level 1 (participant reaction) evaluations of the courses. At their conclusions, each participant was asked to complete a participants' feedback questionnaire. Questionnaires used for the courses in Indonesia and Pakistan were identical with one exception. That is, the questionnaire for the Indonesia course asked two additional questions. Both questionnaires included two sections. The first section asked participants to rate their satisfaction with the course content and delivery. A 5-point Likert type scale that ranged from 1 (minimum/lowest) to 5 (maximum/highest) was used for each question. The second section asked the respondents to rate the quantity or intensity of various aspects of their respective courses. For this second section, respondents were to rate the quantity or intensity as either "insufficient," "somewhat insufficient," "adequate," "somewhat excessive," or "excessive." "Adequate" was the optimal response in this second section. The Mali questionnaire had only one section. It asked 14 questions on the extent to which respondents were satisfied with the course content and delivery. The same 5-point Likert type scale was used. Two questions from the questionnaire for the course in Mali matched the questions on the questionnaires used for the courses in Indonesia and Pakistan, but the other 12 questions were different.

Response rates to the questionnaire were high for all three courses: 19 of 20 (95%) participants in Indonesia; all 13 of the participants in Pakistan; 26 of 31 (84%) participants in Mali. Following is a summary of the evaluation findings.

- A key indicator of course performance is the question that asks participants to rate the overall usefulness of the course. On this indicator results were high, particularly from Pakistani participants. Overall usefulness of the course received a mean score of 4.62 out of 5.0 (N=13) from participants in the Pakistan course. In addition, 92.3% of participants in the Pakistan course gave either a score of "4" or "5" to the question of usefulness. No respondents in the Pakistan course rated the usefulness with a score of "1" or "2." The participants in the Indonesia course gave a mean score of 3.53 (N=19). In a similar question the participants in Mali were asked to rate the extent to which the course was a worthwhile use of their time. They responded with a
Ensuring that the content of the course is appropriate to the audience is a key element of a course's success. All three sets of course participants found the course content highly relevant to their work. On the question of relevance of the activity to participants' current work or functions the mean scores were as follows: Pakistan course, 4.58 (N=12); Indonesia course, 4.42 (N=19); and Mali course, 4.35 (N=26). In addition, participants in the Pakistan and Indonesia courses were asked to rate the relevance of the course to their future (work/functions). Again, participants rated this highly. The Pakistan course participants gave this item a mean score of 4.69 (N=13) and the Indonesia course participants gave it a mean of 4.26 (N=19). Participants in Mali were not asked this last question.

The lowest marks received respectively for both the Indonesia and Pakistan courses involved the question of the extent to which participants acquired information that was new to them. Participants in Indonesia gave this a mean score of 3.16 (N=19) and participants in Pakistan gave it a mean score of 3.38 (N=13). Yet when asked about the usefulness of the information that they acquired, the mean scores were higher. Indonesian participants gave a mean score of 3.53 (N=19). Meanwhile, Pakistani participants gave a mean score of 4.77 (N=19), the highest mean score from that questionnaire. Even though participants from the two courses felt that they had acquired a slightly-above average amount of information that was new to them, the scores for this second question indicate that they nevertheless found this information to be useful and above or much-above average.

Overall ratings for the Mali course's performance in different areas were above average. Given that the scale's theoretical mid-point is 3.0, the mean for all items was above that point. Scores ranged from a low of 3.32 (extent to which you could produce a thorough, analytical article or broadcast on your country's fiscal policy, including reasons for some major changes in the government budget, N=25) to a high of 4.35 (extent to which the course has been relevant to your work, N=26).

For almost every question asking participants in the Pakistan and Indonesia courses to rate the quantity or intensity of various aspects of the courses, the vast majority of responses were "adequate" (the optimal response). In particular, the Pakistan course participants gave very high marks on this section in that only one question had 50% "adequate" ratings and the other nine questions had 67% to 100% of responses marked as "adequate." The question that received the lowest percentage of "adequate" responses in both courses involved the depth of treatment of the issues. For the Pakistan course, six of 12 (50%) responses were "adequate," five of twelve (41.6%) were "somewhat insufficient" and one of 12 (8.3%) was "excessive." In addition, five Pakistani participants noted in written comments that they would have liked more specialized or focused training on economic or financial issues. In the Indonesia course, seven of 19 participants (36.8%) thought the depth was "adequate," another seven of 19 (36.8%) thought that depth was "somewhat insufficient," and five of 19 (26.3%) found the depth "somewhat excessive." Participant dissatisfaction with the depth of treatment is not necessarily a poor reflection on the course and may be attributed to other factors. Some reasons for dissatisfaction could be participant desire for less or more focus, a course that is too long or short, or varying levels of participant knowledge or experience with course content. For future courses, organizers might consider offering a formal "needs-assessment" or test to participants before or at the start of the course. This type of tool would gauge participant needs and desires, allowing course organizers to adjust the course accordingly.