

WBI Evaluation Briefs

REPORTING ON CLIENT AND STAFF LEARNING PROGRAMS

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Annual Review of the Quality of Formal World Bank Staff Learning, FY02

The Challenge

Staff learning is increasingly important in the World Bank and accounts for over 5 percent of the total administrative budget. This past fiscal year (FY02), stakeholder groups received substantial resources (\$68 million) to sponsor the delivery of hundreds of course offerings to Bank staff.¹ Providing individuals with opportunities to acquire knowledge and skills, while ensuring the quality of learning events, continues to be a challenge for the Bank. The focus of this brief is on the latter: that is, how Bank learning programs fared according to training participants.²

World Bank Intervention

The World Bank provides learning opportunities to Bank staff to build knowledge and capacity crucial to the Bank's mission of development and poverty reduction. The learning agenda for Bank Staff is composed of a variety of interrelated and mutually reinforcing programs designed to develop staff's depth of knowledge, skills and strategies in the technical, core business, relational and management domains of the Bank's work.

Underlying Assumptions

The assumptions underlying formal staff learning are as follows:³

- Staff will implement the knowledge and skills acquired from training to enhance "on-the-job" performance.
- Staff will receive the support of managers and peers in implementing their newly acquired knowledge and skills.

- Using their new skills and knowledge, staff will motivate institutional changes, enabling the Bank to better achieve its development objectives and corporate priorities.
- Staff will adopt and promote a culture of "ongoing learning."

Evaluation Method and Instrument

The stakeholders nominated a non-random sample of courses to be evaluated by the WBI Evaluation Group in fiscal year 2002. Although the data were collected for all course participants, this study focuses on the responses of Bank Staff because they are the primary target for the formal staff learning programs.

A standard evaluation form was used to collect self-report data from the 1,387 Bank staff enrolled in 126 courses. Respondents rated the quality of learning programs on eight dimensions. The items measured opinions on the specific aspects of the training courses, as well as more comprehensive attitudes regarding the overall value to participants. The Bank's goal is for 85 percent of participants to rate these items as a four or higher on a five-point response scale, where a five indicates the maximum positive rating and a one is the extreme negative rating. In addition, the survey included two questions permitting benchmarking to American Society of Training Development (ASTD) standards.⁴

Factor analysis revealed a single quality dimension underlying ten various items designed to measure course quality.⁵ Based on this factor score, several regression models were estimated to

1. The staff learning under analysis was provided by Networks, Regions, WBI, Cross-Networks, and other stakeholder groups.

2. For the complete report, please see Fumika Ouchi and Violaine Le Rouzic (2002). "Annual Review of the Quality of Formal World Bank Staff Learning, FY02," Evaluation Group, World Bank Institute, October 2002.

3. Assumptions are based on "The Impact of Formal Training Programs for World Bank Staff, FY2001," WBI Evaluation Brief, February 2002.

4. "The 2001 ASTD Learning Outcome Report" conveys statistics on education and training programs for more than three thousand organizations.

5. The questions include: 1) *To what extent did the training fulfill your learning needs?*; 2) *To what extent did the training achieve its announced objectives?*; 3) *How would you rate the choice of training content or subject matter?*; 4) *How would you rate the logic in the sequence of the content?*; 5) *How would you rate*

assess the effects of individual and course characteristics on participants' ratings of the learning offerings.

Participants and Response Rate

Three thousand and sixteen people participated in the FY02 training courses evaluated by WBIEG using the "Level 1 Evaluation Questionnaire for Formal Training" approved by the Learning Board. Among them, 2,106 responded to the form, for a response rate of 70 percent. One thousand three hundred and eighty-seven respondents indicated that they were World Bank staff.⁶

Evaluation Results

- The majority of evaluated courses were professional and technical.** Specifically, 53 percent were professional and technical, 17 percent concentrated on Bank operations, 16 percent covered behavioral and social skills, 13 percent addressed information and technology and 1 percent dealt with trust funds.
- Respondents represented a variety of Bank groups including all Regions and Networks (Figure 1).** However, 65 percent of respondents worked in Regional Vice Presidential Units, compared to only 42 percent of staff

Bank-wide. Bank staff from the Africa Region were over-represented and those from IFC were underrepresented.

- Staff in grade levels GE and higher were more likely to attend professional and technical courses, whereas staff in grades GA-GD participated primarily in behavioral and social skills courses.** Forty-six percent of staff in GA-GD attended behavioral and social skills courses, while 75 percent of staff in GH and higher attended professional and technical courses (Figure 2).
- The majority of participants (nearly 60 percent) selected learning**

Figure 1. Primary Area of Work in World Bank

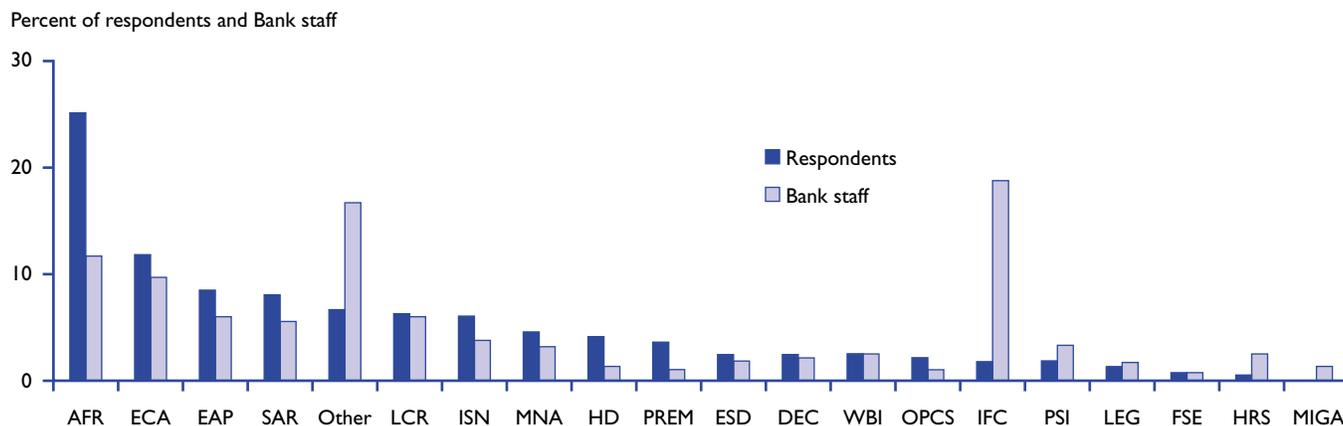
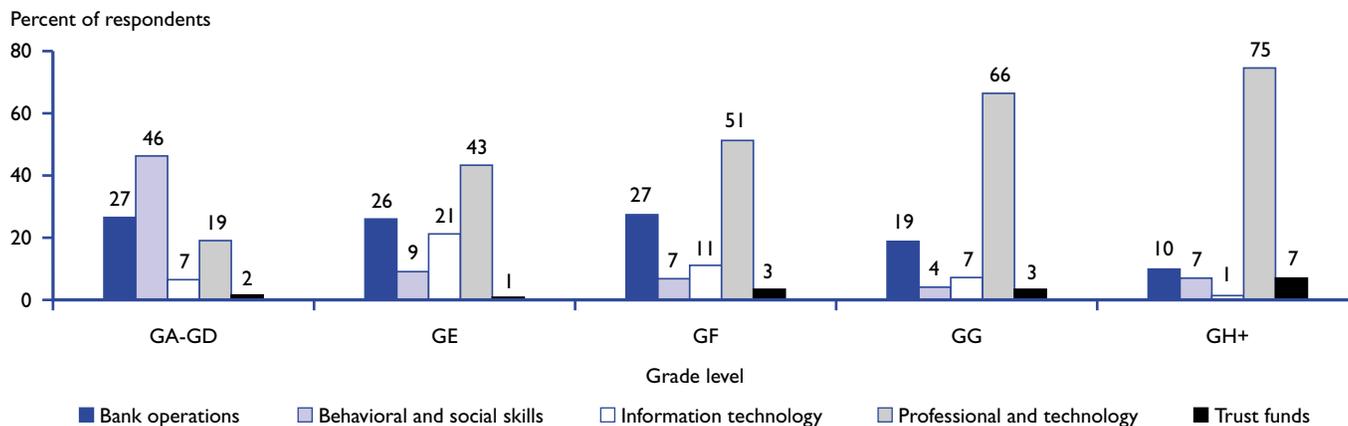


Figure 2. Percent of Staff Enrolled in Different Types of Courses, by Grade-level



the materials used during the training?; 6) How would you rate the overall quality of the training?; 7) How would you rate the overall usefulness of the training?; 8) How would you rate your overall level of satisfaction with the training?; 9) My knowledge/skills increased as a result of this training; and 10) The knowledge/skills gained through this training are directly applicable to my job.

6. The remaining respondents included: short-term temporaries, consultants, individuals who do not work for the World Bank and those who did not indicate affiliation.

programs primarily to enhance their “performance in a current or planned assignment.” Other main motivators were “professional interest and growth” (34 percent) and “networking” (4 percent). Only 37 percent of respondents reported taking a course because it was included in their Development Action Plan (DAP).

5. The overall quality of formal learning events exceeds the Bank’s benchmark. More than 85 percent of respondents evaluated the overall quality (88 percent) and usefulness (86 percent) of the learning offerings positively. Moreover, the surveys indicate that the courses not only achieved their announced objectives, but also delivered high quality content in a logical order (Figure 3).

6. Courses met industry standards for increasing knowledge and skills and for being directly applicable to participants’ jobs. On a five-point scale, Bank staff’s self-assessments of how much they learned averaged 4.27 for knowledge/skills and 4.15 for training utility. These results are comparable with average scores (4.21 for both items) reported in ASTD surveys across 3000 institutions.

7. Courses in behavioral and social skills were more successful than professional and technical courses in enhancing trainees’ perceived knowledge and skills in areas relevant to their jobs. Figures 4 and 5 depict self-reported ratings of improvements in knowledge and skills as well as respondents’ opinions of how applicable such expertise is to their Bank duties.

8. Several participant characteristics were correlated with course quality

Figure 3. Percent of Respondents Rating Courses 4 or 5 on Various Dimensions

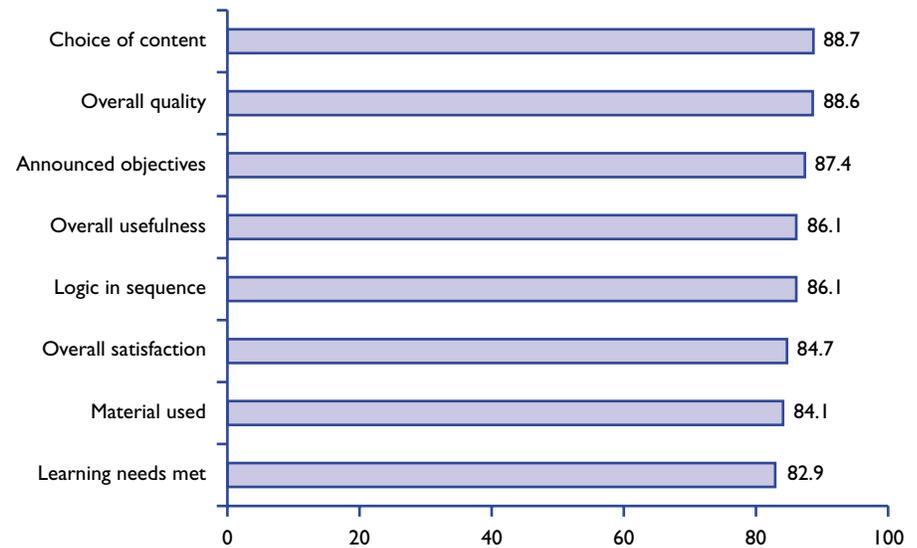


Figure 4. Participants’ Ratings of Knowledge/Skill Increased, by Course Content

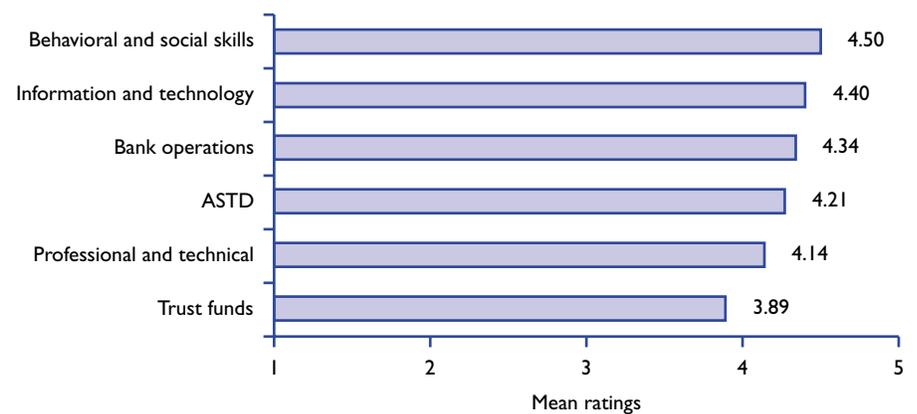
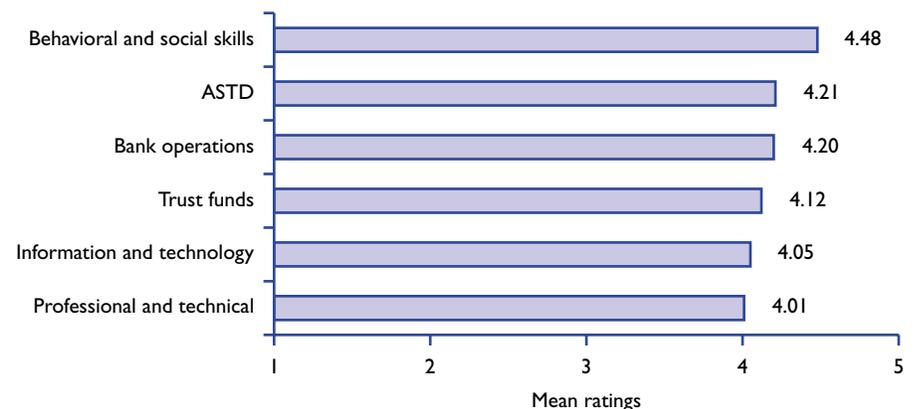


Figure 5. Participants’ Assessments of the Extent Learning was Directly Applicable to Job, by Course Content



ratings. Staff who work in the *Network Anchors* and other Bank offices⁷ rated courses more positively than staff who work primarily for Regions. On average, staff in *grades GA-GD* rated courses more positively than did staff in grades GE and above. Learning that was agreed upon in *participants' DAPs* was rated more favorably.

9. Several course characteristics were also associated with overall respondent ratings. *Longer courses* were evaluated more positively than shorter courses. Learning offerings mostly designed and/or delivered by *external organizations* were rated more favorably than courses designed and/or delivered by the World Bank. Respondents evaluated training that took place in *headquarters* more positively than they rated courses offered in field offices, or in off-site locations in Washington, D.C. According to open-ended responses by participants who attended some of the most highly rated courses, the features that “worked best” were *participatory approaches* that resulted in substantial class discussion, *practical examples and materials*, and *knowledgeable instructors* who maintained an *engaging* manner.

10. Numerous course characteristics were not associated with perceived quality. Neither *class size*, *course maturity* (training offered repeatedly), nor *grade-level diversity* among participants, were related to perceptions of course quality. Further, it made no difference whether courses were delivered via *Distance Learning* or as part of a *Learning Week*.

11. Course content and stakeholder sponsorship were related to perceived overall course quality.

- Courses focusing on *Bank operations*, *behavioral and social skills*, and *information and technology* received more positive evaluations than courses that concentrated on *professional and technical* skills.
- Overall, learning offerings sponsored by ACS, AFR, DEC, FPS, ISN and WBISD elicited considerably more favorable ratings than courses sponsored by other groups.

Implications

This study demonstrates that respondents who participated in these learning programs considered them to be useful and of high quality. Further information gleaned from the surveys suggests that courses could be improved through greater use of outsourcing and increased instructional time. While these findings are useful

for the design of future learning programs, it is important to note that the generalizability of the findings are constrained to the data collected and are thus not necessarily applicable to courses sponsored by several of the stakeholder groups for which the Evaluation Group was unable to obtain data during this cycle. Overall, based on this analysis, the report recommends that:

- Standard Learning Board Level-1 Evaluations should be required for a subset of training offerings across all Staff Learning Courses and Regions. This would provide a more representative sample, and consequently, more generalizable results.
- The Learning Board should take into consideration the specific implications of the study regarding the perceived quality of lengthier courses and learning programs that were mostly designed and/or delivered by external providers.
- Specific attention will need to be paid to improving the quality and relevance of professional and technical courses.

About WBI

The World Bank Institute (WBI) works to build the capacity of its client countries for poverty reduction and sustainable development. It supports the World Bank's learning and knowledge agenda by delivering learning programs, providing policy services, facilitating action programs, supporting networks of professionals, and creating and managing initiatives for knowledge sharing.

The WBI Evaluation Group (WBIEG) works with the Institute's program leaders and with sector managers Bank-wide to prepare, process, and report evaluation results for staff, client, and joint learning events. WBIEG also offers distance learning and face-to-face training in program evaluation. WBIEG Evaluation Briefs report on the evaluation results, lessons learned, and impact of the Institute's major offerings.

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7. DEC, HRS, LEG, WBI, IFC, and other Bank offices except Regional VP Units and Networks.