

## Project Management Training Effectiveness: Learning is a Key

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### Abstract

*Identification of the training effectiveness is essential for assessment of the outcome of the training. The objective of the study was to evaluate the effectiveness of Project Management training courses of National Academy for Planning and Development (NAPD). Kirkpatrick's (1996) levels of training evaluation model particularly learning. This study used an epistemological research design. The study followed quantitative approach comprising of quantitative technique. Data were collected from primary and secondary sources. To collect data, purposive sampling technique was used. The population of this study was associated with the four core courses of NAPD of five different years those are being a part of the training system as trainees. Data processing and analysis incorporating descriptive analysis were done using SPSS 22 and MS excel software. The measurement and structural model were analyzed to validate the hypotheses using the latest analytical methods available in Smart PLS 3.0. The study found that the trainees provided positive response about the training arrangements and management of NAPD, they have gained sufficient knowledge about the different modules of the Project Management training courses, the trainees developed the capacity to demonstrate the improved job behavior in their respective workplaces and they could apply the gained knowledge appropriately in the workplaces and most of them utilized the specific knowledge of Project Management in different phases of development projects. It can be conferred that Project Management training courses organized by NAPD are considered to be effective.*

**Keywords:** Project Management, Training, Effectiveness, Learning

### INTRODUCTION

Capacity development of the human resource is a prime concern for all types of organizations for their overall development. Training is the vital instrument for human resource capacity development. This study is concerned about the need and effectiveness of such initiative. Earlier studies also identify and illustrate the need for training in the workplace. Morina (2021) illustrates that the training is a deliberate process that modifies one's attitude, knowledge, or behavior through learning experiences in order to attain effective performance in a particular task or set of related activities and its goal is to help the individual grow in their skills and meet the organization's needs for employees now and in the future. Umar et al. (2020) depicted that, collective performance is necessary for public organizations that want to offer the community great services. Islam & Hosen (2021) illustrates that government investment is very high in the training sector of the civil servant and training is one of the main catalysts which make them human capital and workforce. They further identified that it is preferable to provide civil servants the proper training because they are regarded as the government's main agent for service delivery and social coordination. Kabir et al. (2020) stated that training

enables employees to carry out their duties as effectively as possible. They further illustrated that it is essential to provide training for employees to advance their abilities and prepare them for demanding positions. Vinesh (2014) outlined that training can translate information and knowledge into practice that is important in order to enhance organizational productivity and performance. According to Dixit (2017) the main three barriers are the lack of knowledge, skill and expertise for completion of a construction project. Chen et al. (2012) illustrated that the efficacy of a project team that can contribute their talents, knowledge, and skills toward finishing the project is crucial to the project's success. This study is concerned about the efficacy of the NAPD organized training courses on Project Management whether those courses met the desired objectives. However, there are versatile findings about the significance of training effectiveness can be found in the earlier literature. Rahman (2016) illustrates that learning measures what the participants' learned during the training event. Kirkpatrick (1959) outlined that the amount of knowledge that participants learn as a result of the training is referred to as learning. Quite a few reasons were outlined by Mavin et al. (2010) why learning and expansion activities of organizations should be evaluated, including: to intensify the significance of an assessment process when employees are being trained in new programs (Russ-Eft & Preskill, 2008), to help to choose the personnel who should take part in the training programs (Mann, 1996), to assist the organization in finding better and more effective ways to reach the desired goals other than just through development interventions such as job aids and formal education (Simpson, 2002). Mann (1996) states that having effective data of evaluation will produce favorable legal effects because the job connection of training programs can be demonstrated by organizations, if required. Rao & Kumar (2017) outlined that learning and improved job performances are the benefits of training which should be found out by training evaluation. They added that effectiveness benefits the organization by determining the causes of participants' learning and not learning. It is known that the socioeconomic development of developing nations like Bangladesh depends on the effective completion of projects. Various development projects are being implemented directly by all governmental, semi-governmental, and autonomous organizations. For a developing economy like Bangladesh, effective management and plan implementation are essential. Project management is a significant area of concern for Bangladesh because of this. In Bangladesh, it has been noted that many development projects were left unfinished or abandoned, and many of them experienced time and budget overruns. Project management skills can be attained through appropriate training which is a prerequisite for the successful completion of development projects.

## **METHODS**

The study was exploratory in nature and followed quantitative approach comprising of questionnaire survey method. To carry out the study, both primary and secondary data were gathered. The primary data was gathered by a questionnaire survey. Reports, books, journals, articles, newspaper reports, course contents, related documents and websites etc. were used as secondary sources of data. The study was mainly correlational in nature as the relevant data were collected and variables were analyzed according to the conceptual framework. Simultaneously due to the fact that data were gathered at a particular point in time, the study was cross-sectional in nature. With the use of FGD, a pilot study involving 15 participants was carried out for questionnaire preparation comprising trainees of Project Management training course of NAPD who represent govt. organization and implement development projects, academicians and training consultants conferring to Churchill (1979) who identified that the seventh step of

questionnaire development process is the pretesting the questionnaire and revision if necessary. Even though the questionnaire was ultimately given out over the phone or through the mail, most authors recommend conducting the initial round of pretests by personal interview. For identifying sample size of the pretest, Zaltman & Burger (1975) recommend that sample to be small and Ferber & Verdoorn (1962) suggest that a sample of 12 is satisfactory. All of the questionnaire's items were subjected to participants' feedback during the FGD. Final questionnaire was developed based on the result of the pilot study. This study specifically examined the NAPD's Project Management training courses' efficacy using Kirkpatrick's training evaluation model. Ali & Mawa (2019) identified that considerably the most well-known model for assessing and analyzing training outcomes is the Kirkpatrick Model (1998). The study area was predetermined. Major institutions those represent the trainees constitute around 497 known population/respondents were included in the sampling frame. From them, a representative sample was surveyed. Traditionally, offices of government organizations are spread around Bangladesh. So respondent's permission from their authority, geographical distance and suitability of the researcher was considerable issue as well. It was ensured that both male and female participants were included in the sample. The researcher collected data in 2018 with the help of designated and trained data collectors. Over 497 respondents were selected to send the questionnaire used in the cross-sectional survey associated with the four Project Management training courses of NAPD who took part in the training system as trainees. The researcher used a modified version of Dillman's comprehensive design test method to increase response rates. The researcher believes that the given distinctive social and cultural setting of Bangladesh, the data collection methodology is unique (Dubey et al., 2019). An effective response rate of 40.77% was achieved after two waves of data collection, which yielded 389 complete and usable responses. The researcher compared the data gathered in two waves to look for any signs of non-response bias. Two waves were compared using the t-test: early waves are intended for early respondents, and late waves are intended for those who required a reminder or more time to answer to the survey.

**RESULTS**

**Table 1: Demographic profile of the respondents**

Variables	Population characteristics	Trainee	
		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	179	86.06
	Female	29	13.94
Education	Bachelors	95	45.67
	Masters	112	53.85
	PhD	1	0.48
	Diploma	0	0.00
Experiences	Below 5 Yrs.	5	2.40
	5-10 Yrs.	81	38.94
	11-15 Yrs.	50	24.04
	Above 15 Yrs.	72	34.62
	Nil	-	-
Total	-	208	100

It can be illustrated from table that the gender distribution of the trainees' respondents illustrates that among the trainees, representations of the males (86%) are much higher than the females (14%). So it can be depicted that more male participants are being

trained in Project Management training than the females. In respect of educational qualification of the respondents the most of them hold the master's degree (53.85%), a small portion (0.48%) of them hold the doctorate degree. When NAPD seeks nomination for Project Management Courses to different organizations the minimum qualifications required for the trainees are masters or graduates with two years of working experience. So it can be conferred from the distribution that it matches the requirement. In respect of the experience level of the respondents, it can be identified from the distribution that senior and mid-level officers (35% and 39%) are coming to training to enrich their project management expertise.

**Table 2: Learning of the trainees from the training**

Perspectives of Kirkpatrick's Model	Modules	Strongly Agree n(%)	Agree n(%)	Indifferent n(%)	Disagree n(%)	Strongly Disagree n(%)
Trainees' Learning (LNN)	Acquired a thorough comprehension on the content conceptual and administrative framework of Planning (LNN1)	49(23.6)	134(64.4)	18(8.7)	7(3.4)	0(0.0)
	Clearly grasped the content on Project Formulation and Financing of Project (LNN2)	46(22.1)	126(60.6)	26(12.5)	10(4.8)	0(0.0)
	Developed the concepts on the content techniques of Project Appraisal (LNN3)	44(21.2)	134(64.4)	20(9.6)	10(4.8)	0(0.0)
	Accumulated knowledge on the content Project Implementation (LNN4)	55(26.4)	128(61.5)	13(6.3)	11(5.3)	1(0.5)
	Attained knowledge on the content Project Monitoring and evaluation (LNN5)	51(24.5)	128(61.5)	24(11.5)	5(2.4)	0(0.0)
	Gathered new knowledge from this course (LNN6)	93(44.7)	101(48.6)	12(5.8)	2(1.0)	0(0.0)

Learning assessment, which measures training efficacy in light of Kirkpatrick's model, is the second level of evaluation. By considering the trainees' perceptions of the curriculum's contents, the knowledge acquisition level is evaluated at this level. Table 14 illustrates what the trainees learned during the NAPD organized project management training courses. This section elaborates on the trainees' grasp of the various course modules, which is tested by documenting their feedback. From the data, it can be concluded that most trainees said they had learned enough from the different modules (LNN1 88%, LNN2 82.7%, LNN3 85.6%, LNN4 87.9%, LNN5 86%) of the training course and gathered new knowledge (LNN6 93.3%) from the training. There are disagreements among some of the trainees about these aspects (LNN1 12%, LNN2 17.3%, LNN3 14.4%, LNN4 12.1%, LNN5 14%, and LNN6 6.7%). They were unable to comprehend the ideas clearly. Therefore, NAPD must update the course content and structure for the trainees to better understand the ideas covered in the project management training programs.

**Table 3: Trainees’ responses about most preferred to least preferred training methods**

Trainees’ Responses about most preferred to least preferred training methods							
	Training Methods (RTN8)	Rank Order					
		Rank-1	Rank-2	Rank-3	Rank-4	Rank-5	Rank-6
1	Lecture	83	37	33	28	6	13
2	Case Study	42	43	55	35	15	3
3	Role Play	3	11	24	43	61	23
4	Simulation	2	8	19	21	45	66
5	Field Visit	23	41	41	36	19	18
6	Group Work	51	61	33	30	16	8

Table 3 illustrates the trainees’ preference on the training methods (RTN8). The trainees identified different methods suitable for training. Methods are ranked in accordance to their preference. These are arranged as most preferred method to least preferred method according to their responses from rank1 to rank6. The survey unambiguously indicates that the trainees preferred training methods according to ranking are: Lecture (83), Group Work (61), Case Study (55), Role Play (43, 61) and Simulation (66). So the trainees preferred combination of lecture and participatory methods in the NAPD’s project management training programs.

**Table 4: Ranking for most to least important factor to consider in selection of Project Management training**

S/ N	Factors	Rank Order							
		Rank-1	Rank-2	Rank-3	Rank-4	Rank-5	Rank-6	Rank-7	Rank-8
1	Duration of Training (RTN5)	32	11	20	37	46	27	8	1
2	Training Material (RTN6)	30	46	47	37	18	10	4	0
3	Cost of Training (RTN7)	9	8	12	24	30	47	34	5
4	Trainer (RTN2)	28	37	44	48	18	7	3	0
5	Training Methods (RTN8)	47	64	37	20	17	5	1	0
6	Curriculum	53	31	31	22	22	30	4	1
7	Location (RTN9)	8	11	13	14	19	31	64	3
8	Other	6	3	2	1	1	3	15	20

Table 4 outlines the importance of the factors to be considered by the trainees for selecting and enrolling in the training programs for project management. The participants selected the factors according to the importance. They identified the factors according to their importance from rank-1 to rank-8. So we can conclude that factors to be considered for the selection and enrollment in the Project Management training course can be graded as: training curriculum (53), training methods (RTN8) (64), training material (RTN6) (47), trainer (RTN2) (48), duration of training (RTN5) (46), cost of training (RTN7) (47), location (RTN9) (64) and other factors (20) like nomination, food support, skill, multi sectorial reasons and personal interest. It is evident from the analysis that the training quality is an important criterion for trainees’ enrollment in any training course.

**DISCUSSION**

Measuring the project management training effectiveness identifies the appropriate training initiative for the improvement of officials' capacity which would cater the requirement of the development projects of the country. Learning, which essentially

determines the trainees' level of knowledge acquisition, is the second level of training evaluation. The data analysis shows that the majority of the participants believed they had learned sufficiently about the various modules of the project management training course. Afsana et al. (2015) found that it is statistically proven that training significantly influences on employee's job performance. Rahman (2016) found that the trainee identified noticeable change in his knowledge level about the banking industry after receiving training. Borate et al. (2014) indicated that the trainees accredited their increased learning level after the training. But a few of trainees have difference of opinion about learning from the course. They were unable to fully comprehend the idea. Therefore, the training's course design needs to be changed so that all participants can benefit from the training equally and comprehensively. Hamiduzzaman (2012) identified that in respect of formulation and completion of a plan the crucial factors are accountability, administrative changes, training initiatives, adequate resource allocation, and public awareness. Begum & Biswas (2010) illustrated that about three fourths of the respondents utilized the gained knowledge, skill and attitude in practical situation either directly or indirectly. The confirmatory factor analysis also has revealed that reaction has a profoundly favorable effect on learning. Further, learning significantly influences behavior in a positive way as well. Similarly, the impact of behavior on result is also very favorable. Borate et al. (2014) discovered that the hypothesis results interpret that there was significant influence on next level which is reaction to learning, learning to behavior and behavior to result. It indicates that the training program provided by NAPD on project management has been proved effective. The outcomes of confirmatory factor analysis have been endorsed by the studied model of this paper. The four stages of the training effectiveness model, which was developed by Kirkpatrick, are sequentially interconnected in such a way that reaction will impact learning, learning will impact behavior, behavior will impact result (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2016). Therefore, the fundamental agenda of the study to assess the training courses on Project Management of National Academy for Planning and Development to assess the programs' effectiveness has successfully accomplished with the Kirkpatrick model. The outcomes also have been endorsed by the previous studies of (Fregonese et al., 2018). It is interestingly noted that reaction has no positive relationship with training effectiveness. Islam & Hosen (2021) identified that course effectiveness is not only dependent on the training content and its delivery. Sahni (2020) found that the training environment has the weakest association with training effectiveness and also iterated that training component had insignificant relation with training effectiveness. She also depicted that the trainees' quick response might not be an accurate reflection of their level of learning. Similarly, learning has no impact on training effectiveness. Quinton et al. (2022) depicted that learning results were not linked to either involvement or attendance. Rahman (2019) explored that training environment has no significant impact on training effectiveness. Rahman (2016) identifies that learning outcome is very little from the perspective of the department. This is because there is an interconnected relationship among the four levels of training evaluation model. Missing one or two elements among them might produce no significant relationship on training effectiveness. The outcomes, it is worthy to mention that, validate and explained the Kirkpatrick model for evaluating training (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2016). If the researchers intend to assess training's effectiveness in the future, they may use the extended Kirkpatrick model proved in this paper. Therefore, this extended version of Kirkpatrick model-reaction to learning, learning to behavior, behavior to result, and result to training effectiveness-can add a new horizon in the training effectiveness evaluation knowledge domain. The success of projects will ultimately be hampered if

training is not implemented since competence and expertise will not be acquired. It is necessary to evaluate whether or not the training organization's learning environment is effective and whether or not any new knowledge or abilities have been acquired. Training evaluation is required in order to investigate the discrepancy between work practices and training. Borate et al. (2014) identified that training effectiveness assessment is conducted to observe how well the goals have been achieved and whether it is the best method to accomplish the goals. Therefore, based on prior researches, this study aims to assess the training courses on Project Management conducted by NAPD by utilizing Kirkpatrick's model among the other recognized model of training evaluation in order to determine their effectiveness. Evaluation of the project management training's efficacy is very much crucial as Rahman & Bach (2015) explored that although every step of the project execution process is followed in Bangladesh, project efficiency is frequently negotiated because of the project managers' lack of experience, knowledge, and abilities. Saifur et al. (2020) illustrated that for effective use of the available various project management tools, project managers must possess the necessary training and expertise in project or construction management. They further emphasized that for sustainable development, organized project management capacity improvement is crucial and contractors, consultants, and clients should consciously implement policies requiring persons to hold project management certifications. This training evaluation is also important to eradicate the problem existing in development projects. Ahmed (2010) depicted that delay in the preparation and approval of projects causes lower speed of project implementation. To solve these issues effective training on Project Management is required. Warui (2013) found that training significantly contribute to improve the performance of Project Management. Ahmed (2010) depicted that the project personnel must have training for proper Annual Development Program implementation. NAPD delivers substantial feedback on the knowledge and abilities of the trainee so that they can contribute in the best possible way in development projects. NAPD has got all the responsibilities in this aspect as NAPD is the pioneer Project Management training organization in the public sector. One of the academy's main objectives is to offer training on project management, procurement management, office management, financial management, human resource management and ICT related courses. Course curriculum of the NAPD's project management training programs include specific contents which are divided in five broad modules as: Module 1: Development Planning Conceptual and Administrative Framework, Module 2: Planning, Formulation and Financing of Projects, Module 3: Project Appraisal, Module 4: Project Implementation, Module 5: Project Monitoring and Evaluation. These five modules include specific contents of business project, products, services and development, people management, project team, stakeholders, user management, role of leadership, management of workforce, effective communication, negotiation, conflict management and contract management. These factors were measured by the learning level of the Kirkpatrick's Model. These specific contents are very much crucial for effective implementation of development projects. These concepts of Project management techniques are likewise useful for development projects of NGOs and private sectors. The effects of this training have an immediate impact on Bangladesh's socioeconomic growth. Thus, in the context of human capital and national growth, NAPD's project management training programs are extremely important. So Project Management training courses are more important and core courses among all other training courses offered by NAPD. Comparatively there is a gap of this kind of study of measuring the effectiveness of Project Management training utilizing Kirkpatrick's model in the local and international level. So this study has got the gentility, uniqueness and novelty in the social context of Bangladesh. Training program

is considered as part and parcel of an organization because it relates to the organization's strategy. Employee performance is positively and objectively affected by training. Project Management proficiency in the organizations is the significant state to accomplish to develop the country economically. As such Project Management training is vital for enhancing employee's project performance. To determine whether training is worthwhile, training effectiveness must be evaluated. The reviews conducted highlighted the importance of training identifying the training effectiveness, importance of project management expertise in the organizations, features of available training evaluation models, utilization of training evaluation model of Kirkpatrick in different organizations and in Bangladesh perspectives, and factors effecting training effectiveness. Various research studies on training effectiveness issues were critically reviewed which provided emphasis on factors effecting training effectiveness. Factors like necessity of Project Management expertise in the organizations, training facility, training management issues, trainer, curriculum, training method, trainee's feedback and training utilization were revealed from the reviews. In Bangladesh continuous training and skill development and measurement of effectiveness is still negligible under the studied area Project Management. There is a general lack of evaluation of training and use of the outcomes of the evaluation. Gap exists in studies concerning training method, Training evaluation for training worthiness, quality of trainer, location, institutional facility, level and coverage of trainees, training material, the need for project management competence, assessing the impact of project management training utilizing Kirkpatrick's model. It was found from the literature reviews that in skill based training Kirkpatrick's model is more appropriate. The study targets to satisfy the gap prevailing in the literatures by evaluating the success of the Project Management training programs in light of the NAPD, which is the pioneer training institute engaged in providing training on Project Management in respect of Bangladesh. Smith (2010) outlined that the case study did not provide data to assess Level-3 and Level-4 return on training investment. He further depicted that the important area for further research would involve measuring outcomes of the project execution phase where project personnel utilize their skills as well as overall project success. Towler & Dipboye (2009) are shocked at the lack of research on the trainer's contribution because according to them the instructor's role is significant. According to an ASTD research report from 2009, significantly fewer participating organizations measured Kirkpatrick's model's third level than it did levels 1 and 2 (54.5% against 91.6% and 80.8%). They further stated that finding information or techniques for measuring trainings which are solely subjective oriented would be an exciting study. Bersin (2006) mentioned that studies found a gap still existing between expected and actual training measurement despite the large body of research during the long history of training measurement and evaluation.

## **CONCLUSION**

In context to the socio-economic development of our country project management training is need worthy for the officers of different organizations for their effective contributions in the development projects. Evaluation of training is essential for determining the training's value and whether it helps to increase productivity. The project management training programs offered by NAPD are regarded as being effective based on the perceptions of the majority of respondents and the four phases of training evaluation framework of Kirkpatrick's (1996). The study found that proper understanding of the training contents was admitted by the trainees in the learning level measurement. It was found that the trainees performed in various project management stages of the

development projects. Major implication of this study is that the study found that some trainees could not conceptualize the issues of project management from the training.

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