

“THEIR SATISFACTION IS CRITICAL”, MEASURING LEVEL OF SATISFACTION AMONG FIELD TRAINEE URBAN PLANNING STUDENTS OF FACULTY OF ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN, KING ABDULAZIZ UNIVERSITY, JEDDAH, KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

Jamal Qadah

Department of Urban and Regional Planning, Faculty of Environmental Design , King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Abstract

Work based learning is highly critical for urban planning students. Specially the field training equips planning students with necessary skills required in job market. Field training supplements the traditional classroom based learning, indeed. A survey of 52 students with BSc Urban and Regional Planning students at Faculty of Environmental Design, King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, divulges that trainees are overall satisfied with the skills acquired from the field training however the training unit needs to go case by case and offer remedial support to the trainees who have shown their neutrality or less satisfaction with some of the field training components such as report writing among others.

Key words: *Work based learning, field training, urban and regional planning.*

Introduction :- Work based learning is integral in several specialised fields such as law, medical, engineering, management and finance, hence graduate programmes and institutions constantly attempts to make such type of learning effective by investing significant efforts and resources into harmony of academic studies and field training (Freestone, Williams, Thompson, & Trembath,2007). Garrick & Kirkpatrick (1998) found work based learning into three forms namely: independent projects, individual seminars, and field training (fulltime).

As far as spatial planning and designing students are concerned, the *field training* shapes up their impending role as a practitioner of ethical decision-making in a certain condition (Wolf-Powers,2013), it also offers students with an abundant opportunity to communicate with real world clients recommended by several scholars (Hoch,1994; Innes,1995). The real benefit of field training is to be instrumental in enabling fresh graduates with the necessary skills for the job market to perform well in the real setup (Jackson,2015).

Skills and competencies from field training :- Guzzetta , & Bollens (2003) recognised four essential technical skills and competencies for planning and design students, namely: technical skills, quantitative skills, communication, and understanding public needs; while the latter two could be attained inside the campus a field training is obligatory for the formers. Field training cultivates some supplementary competencies among trainees including leadership, organizational development, and sophisticated policy analysis which is usually hard to learn inside traditional classrooms.

Prospective role of urban planners :- Howe (1980) proposed a typology on the future role of urban planners-the politician, the technician, and the hybrid(Table 1). In fact, a prior knowledge of the anticipated roles of urban planners can make carrier choices easier for the learners and prevent them from any professional dilemmas that they might face in future (Steele,2009). A survey results from Osawa, and Seltzer (1999) prompts that planners should learn skills to work properly with colleagues, work with common people, and to appreciate the needs of people, and clients.

Table-1 Prospective role of urban planners

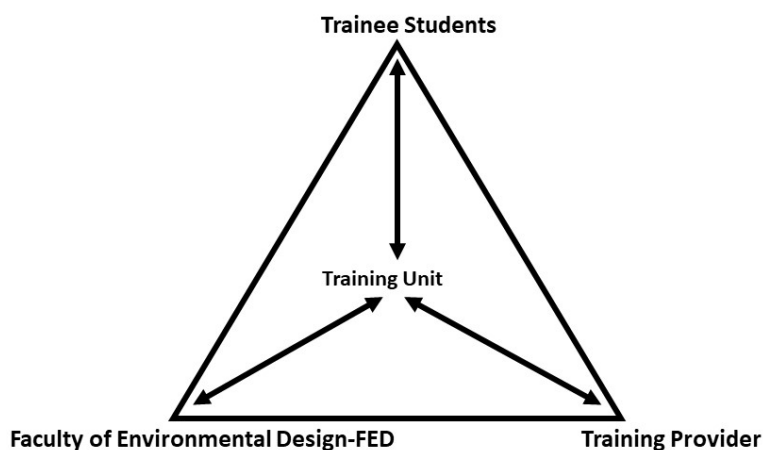
<i>Roles</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Politician, Technician, and Hybrid	Howe,1980
Network Managers and Metagovernors	Sehested,2009

Urban planners and report writing skills :- In his survey of American planners Kuhel (1992) observed that writing reports are the most repeated and cherished task for the professionals practicing in the field of planning. In some sectors like municipalities and government ministries, all the planners remain engaged in writing reports all the time.

Study Objective :- Quality assurance for work-based learning is a longstanding educational concern (Martin, 1998; Orrell, 2004).Therefore, the key objective of the study was to evaluate level of satisfaction among the B.Sc.-Urban and Regional Planning students at the Faculty of Environmental Design-FED,King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, over the field training and to carry forward recommendations for improvement if any.

Materials and Methods :-A semi-structured questionnaire was deployed to measure the level of satisfaction among learners based on 5-point Likert scale that is prevalent to determine attitudes since long (Ferguson,1941). Rating includes, 1-Highly dissatisfied, 2-Dissatisfied, 3-Neutral, 4-Satisfied, and 5-Highly dissatisfied. A total of 52 samples were collected during the field training of summer 2019 and analysed alter on.

Results and Discussion :-The training unit at theFaculty of Environmental Design-FED, King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia acts as a bridge amid the trainees, training providers, and the faculty (Figure 1).



The organisational setup for field training

Figure-1 The Organisational setup for field training

Satisfaction with training unit :- Satisfaction of the trainees with the training unit was measured on the attendance, clarity of instructions, accessibility of templates, and report writing(Figure 2), as the followings:

Q.1: Have you attended the workshop organized by the training unit

It was noticed that majority of the students participated (96%) in the orientation workshop organised by the training unit.

Q.2: Did you find the instructions of the field training clear and straightforward?

Results of the survey reveals that most of the trainees were either satisfied (21.1%) or highly satisfied (71.2%) with the clarity and simplicity of the instructions given prior to the commencement of the field training.

Q.3: Are the templates used in summer training are easily accessible?

It was found that major part of the trainees was satisfied (13.4%) or highly satisfied (78.8%) with the accessibility of training templates.

Q.4 Do you think you that report writing was easy for you?

As discussed earlier, report writing is a major skill that a planner must practice repeatedly at his workplace. Noted that majority of the trainees reported their satisfaction on the ease of report writing including 26.9% satisfied, and 50% highly satisfied. It is important that 15.3 % trainees shown their neutrality while rest 7.6% were dissatisfied with their report writing skills.

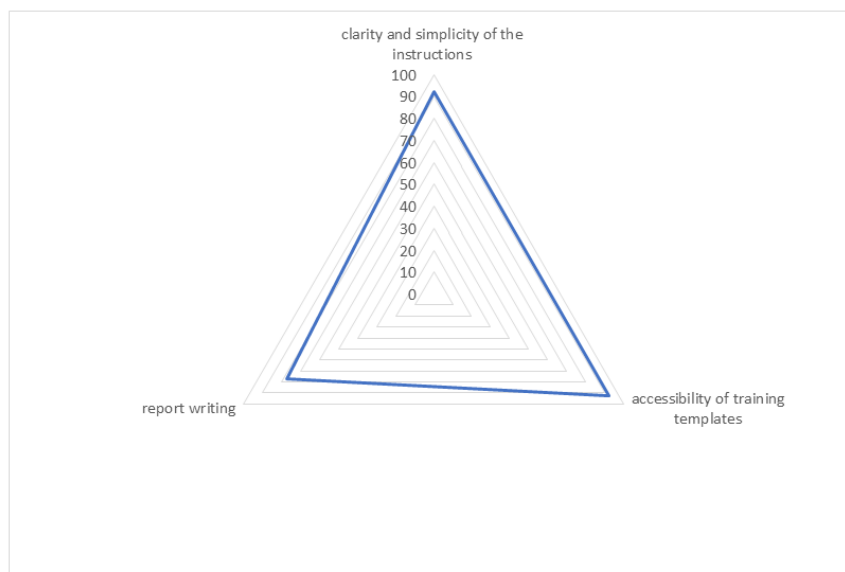


Figure-2 Satisfaction of trainees with the training unit

Training Providers :- The training unit had a clear impression that training providers are the actual implementor of the field training, hence satisfaction on their functions plays a vital role on the success of field training.

Following items were included while measuring the satisfaction of trainees on the functioning of training providers:

- Training plan developed by the training body.
- Cooperation of training supervisor with the student.
- Availability of necessary tools for the training.
- Provision of apt place for the training.
- Accessibility to the training place.
- Overall skill attainment from the workplace.

Q.5: Did you find the training plan for the field training by service provider was clear and straightforward?

The survey tells that most of the trainees were either satisfied (34.6%) or highly satisfied (42.3%) with the clarity and ease of the training plan prepared by the service provider for the field training.

Q.6 Did you find your training supervisor supportive?

Most of the trainees was satisfied (13.4%) or highly satisfied (75%) with the support they received from their supervisors at the workplace during the field training.

Q.7 Did you received necessary tools for the training at your workplace?

Majority of the trainees were either satisfied (30%) or highly satisfied (40%) on the availability of necessary tools for the training at workplace.

Q.8 Did you got a suitable workplace for the field training?

In fact, most of the trainees reported their pleasure on the suitability of the workplace as satisfied (19.2%) and highly satisfied (46.1%). However, a significant number of trainees were silent on the suitability of workplace reported as neutral (25%).

Q.9 Was the training place easily accessible for you?

It was also witnessed that majority of the trainees were either satisfied (26.9%) or highly satisfied (57.6%) with the accessibility of training place.

Q.10 How much was your overall satisfaction regarding skill attainment from the training?

The survey results prompt that many of trainees were either satisfied (40%) or highly satisfied (44%) on the skill attainment from the field training.

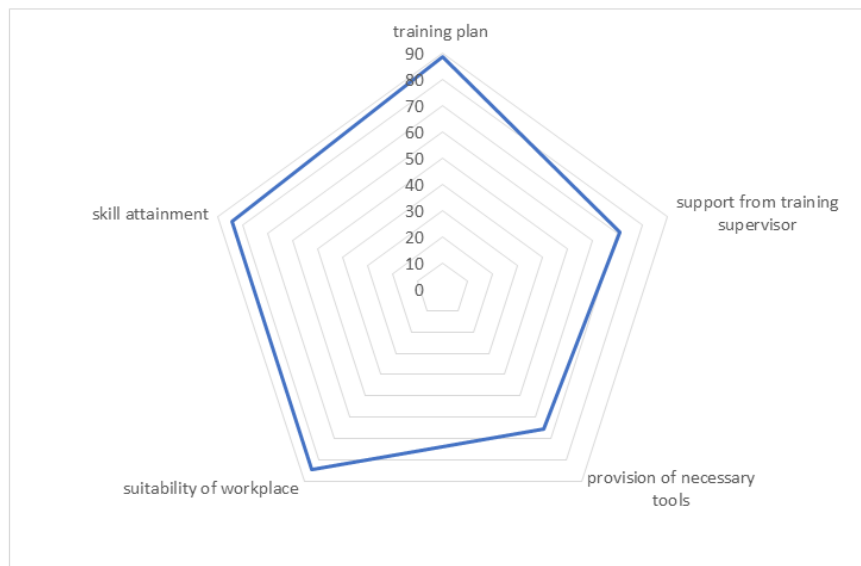


Figure-3 Satisfaction of trainees with the service provider

It was discovered from the above results that the level of satisfaction among trainees is more than 84% for all the questions except the followings:

- Report writing.
- Provision of necessary tools, and
- Support from training supervisors.

Training unit should work in coordination with all stakeholders to maximise the level of satisfaction among the trainees. Unit should formulate a win-win strategy to maximise employability of planning students as the field training is an important instrument that enriches the skills of students from the campus learning. A regular feedback from the trainees is also recommended,

Conclusion :- Field training is not an alternative to classroom based learning however it is important in skill refinement and enhancement for better job opportunities. To maximise the benefits from the field training for urban planning students, the training unit should go case by case and propose sensible remedies for any shortcomings regarding satisfaction among trainees.

References

1. Ferguson, L. W. (1941). A study of the Likert technique of attitude scale construction. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 13(1), 51-57.
2. Freestone, R., Williams, P., Thompson, S., & Trembath a, K. (2007). A quantitative approach to assessment of work-based learning outcomes: an urban planning application. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 26(4), 347-361.
3. Garrick, J., & Kirkpatrick, D. (1998). Workplace-based Learning Degrees: a new business venture, or a new critical business? *Higher Education Research & Development*, 17(2), 171-182.
4. Guzzetta, J. D., & Bollens, S. A. (2003). Urban Planners' Skills and Competencies: Are We Different from Other Professions? Does Context Matter? Do We Evolve? *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 23(1), 96-106.
5. Hoch, C. (1994). *What planners do: Power, politics, and persuasion*. American Planning Association.
6. Howe, E. (1980). Role choices of urban planners. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 46(4), 398-409.
7. Innes, J. E. (1995). Planning theory's emerging paradigm: Communicative action and interactive practice. *Journal of planning education and research*, 14(3), 183-189.
8. Jackson, D. (2015). Employability skill development in work-integrated learning: Barriers and best practice. *Studies in Higher Education*, 40(2), 350-367.
9. Kuehl, P. G. (1992). 1992 job analysis survey: American Institute of Certified Planners. The Institute.
10. Ozawa, C. P., & Seltzer, E. P. (1999). Taking our bearings: Mapping a relationship among planning practice, theory, and education. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 18(3), 257-266.
11. Sehested, K. (2009). Urban planners as network managers and metagovernors. *Planning Theory & Practice*, 10(2), 245-263.

12. Steele, W. (2009). Australian urban planners: hybrid roles and professional dilemmas? *Urban Policy and Research*, 27(2), 189-203.
13. Wolf-Powers, L. (2013). Teaching planners to deal: the pedagogical value of a (simulated) economic development negotiation. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 33(3), 348-362.