

ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING SESSIONS AND FORA IN DSWD

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POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING BUREAU
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WELFARE AND DEVELOPMENT

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Introduction

Learning sessions and fora are structured opportunities to learn new knowledge on matters of social welfare and development and promote advocacy or awareness campaigns. These activities are carried out to promote and educate DSWD personnel on various themes that may be within or outside their scope of work. The conduct of such activities in the department is a regular activity done by different offices which covers different topics and categories. Among the several offices, bureaus and services in the department, three of the offices which regularly conduct learning sessions and fora are the Policy Development and Planning Bureau (PDPB), the Human Resource Development Service (formerly Bureau) HRDS and the Social Welfare Institutional Development Bureau (SWIDB) (formerly Capacity Building Bureau).

The Human Resource Development Service conducts Learning and Development Sessions to provide venue for promoting career development and management programs to DSWD employees and encourage them to participate in various learning and development activities. This includes the conduct of Technical Sharing Sessions (TSS) which provide a venue for officials and employees, who have attended local and foreign trainings/scholarships, to share their newly acquired knowledge, insights, learnings and technologies to their DSWD counter-part employees as part of their re-entry plans. Likewise, HRDS also conduct fora related to promotion of health and overall well-being of DSWD workforce, which is usually synchronized with commemorations of different nationwide and worldwide celebrations, with the goal of raising awareness about different diseases as well as the factors contributing to its control, prevention, diagnoses and immunization.

The Social Welfare Institutional Development Bureau as the Office responsible for enhancing the competencies of staff in performing and achieving its goals was mandated to spearhead the conduct of Social Welfare and Development Forum (SWDF) which aims to inform, consult and coordinate with major stakeholders of social welfare and development programs in the local and national levels. It is a venue for advocacy and social marketing of DSWD policies and programs. Also, in 2016, SWIDB started organizing Knowledge sharing sessions (KSS) which serve as a platform to connect the Bureau with other OBS to tackle training perspectives, learning

interventions and any other topics along these areas which they need to implement effectively in the realm of capacity building initiatives.

The Policy Development and Planning Bureau is one of the key partners of SWIDB in conducting Social Welfare and Development Forum particularly for discussing and presenting new policies or policy issues and concerns as well as for undertaking relevant research studies that can be shared with partner stakeholders and intermediaries. Research fora are conducted so that stakeholders implementing public and private social welfare and development (SWD) and social protection (SP) programs utilize the results of the studies, as well as encourage the academe to conduct studies on SWD and SP. Meanwhile, Policy Forum are conducted to talk about guidelines, issuances, and memoranda relevant to social welfare and development as well as discuss relevant issues in relation to proposed DSWD related legislative agenda.

Unlike other types of technical assistance or capacity building activities, the above-mentioned learning sessions are limited only to discussion of 1-2 topics, conducted in shorter duration and should be cost-effective. Thus, the scope of their objectives is smaller than other full-blown technical assistance or trainings but since these are more accessible and easier to organize, it can benefit more people and with the appropriate design, it could achieve greater impact. These learning sessions serve different purposes; one is to increase the knowledge and/or capacities of personnel and stakeholders, another is to promote awareness on certain topics, also to gather necessary inputs which can be used to further strengthen policies recommendations, and lastly to contribute in the improvement of the knowledge management In the Department.

Part of the steering role of DSWD is to establish organizational processes and structures leading to efficient utilization of resources and effective delivery of programs and services, as such, learning session is one of the processes to ensure achievement of these goals. The Department has been doing learning sessions since the devolution of DSWD basic services to Local Government Units; initially as a form of technical assistance relevant to social welfare and development, to enhance their capabilities in performing given tasks as well as to achieve specific set of goals but eventually, these learning sessions were used for different purposes as mentioned earlier. Given its widespread conduct, there is a need to have a systematic assessment of how these learning

sessions were conducted and how these can be sustained. Assessment of learning sessions in the department is necessary to recognize its contribution in the improvement of knowledge, skills or behavior of the personnel and other stakeholders in the department whether for work-related or personal advantages. Moreover, it will help measure the relevance of objectives and topics, appropriateness of logistics and administration and suitability of the learning process. The assessment may also substantiate if conducting learning sessions is efficiently used by the department and should be continued instead of performing other methods or strategies to achieve desired outputs and outcomes.

Objectives

The assessment of learning sessions / fora in DSWD generally aims to determine the effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of conducting learning sessions within the department. Specifically, this assessment aims to:

1. Examine and assess how learning sessions / fora are being conducted in the department particularly in terms of design and parameters;
2. Review the outputs and outcomes of these learning sessions based on the accomplishments of the concerned offices;
3. Determine the efficiency of conducting learning sessions / fora in terms of participants' evaluation and satisfaction;
4. Determine how the conduct of learning sessions / fora would be better sustained in the Department;
5. Identify areas for improvement and gaps encountered in the implementation and tailor context-specific solutions.

Methodology

The assessment is a mixed method that uses both qualitative and quantitative approaches for data collection and analysis. A Convergent Parallel Design was used In terms of data collection wherein independent strands of quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously; qualitative approach thru interviews of key personnel and stakeholders, and quantitative approach thru surveys for the clients / participants in which statistical methods were applied on the data gathered. While in terms of analysis, a Sequential Exploratory Design was used wherein quantitative results were used to assist in explaining and interpreting the findings of a qualitative study.

The three offices – PDPB, SWIDB and HRDS were purposively selected as they are the Offices with regular conduct of learning sessions or forum. These Offices would best help answer the evaluation questions provided that they have the most experience in the conduct of such activities. The interviewees were selected also thru purposive sampling focusing only on those who have higher knowledge and experience on organizing and implementing learning sessions/forum since the evaluation would want to gather information from individuals who have particular expertise on the subject. The key informant interview attempts not to generalize but to specify the condition under which the activity exists, the actions/processes which pertain to the implementation of each office and the associated outcomes or consequences. Thus, the analysis or processed data for the interviews applies only to these situation or circumstances but not to all implementing offices. Moreover, the survey form was sent only to all those who provided their email addresses during the registration in the actual learning session/forum.

The following activities were crucial in the conduct of the study:

Review of Documents

All existing policies or guidelines on the conduct of learning sessions / fora were reviewed and served as reference in developing the framework of the study. Other related documents such activity proposals, program designs and documentation reports were also studied. Results of the activity evaluation forms, if available, were also reviewed and assessed.

Pretesting of Data Gathering Tools

The key informant interview guide questionnaires and survey form were pre-tested prior to the finalization and the conduct of the data collection activities. The assigned data gathering team pre-tested the KII guide questionnaire to PDPB-PRD personnel. Moreover, the survey tool was pre-tested to 5 PDPB participants of the conducted learning sessions.

Conduct of Key Informant Interviews (KII)

Structured interviews of the following key personnel were conducted for the study:

- Division Chief of concerned offices – Supervisor of concerned divisions/sections/units from the three Offices were interviewed. The interview focused on determining the desired outputs and outcomes of these learning sessions / fora;
- Secretariat team – staff who are in charge of organizing and conducting the learning session / forum were interviewed. The interview focused on knowing how these activities were planned, organized and conducted as well as identify gaps in the implementation of the activity. Design and parameters of the conducted activities were also covered by the interview.

Administration of Satisfaction Survey

The survey form was cascaded thru Google form, sent to all attendees who indicated their email addresses in the attendance/registration sheets of the conducted learning sessions/fora. A total population of 165 attendees were provided with the survey form and a total of 30 responses were gathered. The survey gauged the efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the activity from the clients' perspective.

Scope and Limitations

The assessment was performed at the Central Office covering the different types of learning sessions/fora organized particularly by PDPB, SWIDB and HRDS only. This included, technical sharing sessions, Policy and Research Forum, Health and Wellness Promotion, Commemoration of National/International Celebrations and Knowledge Sharing Sessions. All forum / learning sessions conducted from June 2015 to June 2018 with available documentation report shall be included in the review and assessment regardless of the topic of the session/fora.

For the key informant interview, two divisions from HRDS and one division each for PDPB and SWIDB were included in the study. For the HRDS, technical sharing sessions were handled by the Learning and Development Division while Health and Wellness Promotion and Commemoration of National/International Celebrations are handled by the Human Resource Welfare Division. Furthermore, for SWIDB, Knowledge Sharing Sessions were managed by the Capacity Building Division while for PDPB, Policy and Research Forum are managed by the Policy and Research Division.

For the survey, only those learning sessions/forum with available attendance/registration sheets were initially included and from the names on the attendance/registration sheets, only those with valid email addresses were provided with the survey via Google Forms. Sending the survey online was the selected method since it is the most reliable way of communicating with the attendees; personnel may have transferred to other OBS and/or resigned from the Department since the time that they attended the learning session/forum, especially on those conducted in 2015 and 2016. Moreover, it is the most efficient way to distribute the survey forms and to collect responses.

Results Framework

The study used the framework below as the basis for the assessment of the learning session / forum, focusing on evaluating its efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability. In evaluating the efficiency of the conducted learning sessions, the study looked at the input, activity and output levels which would include review of policies and guidelines, and examination of documentation

reports and approved activity proposals as well as identifying the facilitating and hindering factors. Moreover, effectiveness and sustainability were assessed by looking at the output and outcome level which would deal more with the satisfaction of the participants and end-results of the learning sessions.



Figure 1: Theory of Change

This framework was based on the activity objectives of the learning sessions as mentioned in the activity proposals and existing guidelines such as DSWD MC No. 11 s. of 2008 which defines the objectives of SWD Forum and DSWD AO No. 17 s. of 2011 which defines the knowledge management framework. Moreover, it also reflects the content of AO 20 s. 2004 or the Omnibus Policies and Guidelines on the Management of DSWD Capability Building Efforts, which cites the activity evaluation as a systematic process of collecting data that measure the effectiveness and efficiency of the program by looking at the four evaluation schemes – reaction, learning, behavioral and results level, which is consistent to the Kirkpatrick model which would be used in the analysis of some parts of the study.

Findings and Analysis

Relevance

Determination of target participant

More often, general invites are used for the learning sessions while only few are targeted, and given that leveling off expectations are not usually conducted in the learning sessions, it would affect how the participants would receive the value of the activity.

Forum or learning sessions conducted by HRDS are usually open for all employees and are sent thru general memo invite cascaded via official email. Participants are usually from Central Office or nearby Field Offices such as Field Office NCR, IV-MIMAROPA, and IV-CALABARZON. Since these are general invites, turnout would depend on the needs and interest of the employees to the topics that would be presented. The HRDS also targets a minimum of 30 participants for their forum or learning sessions; wherein confirmation of attendance would be done thru email, submission of confirmation slip or phone call. Usually, for the general invites, confirmed number of attendees would be guaranteed on the same date of the activity.

On the other hand, knowledge sharing sessions and research and policy forum have targeted audience. Since knowledge sharing sessions of SWIDB are needs-based, Cap Build focals are their target participants; those staff who works on Cap Build proposals in their respective Bureaus. Moreover, for policy and research forum, those invited are the sectoral focals and organizations concerned such as NGOs, LGUs, academe, NGAs and CSOs who are involved in the implementation of related programs for the topic/policy issue or concerned in the research study conducted.

Among the survey respondents, 80% (24) attended the learning session/forum since they were asked to represent the Office given that the topic is related to their current work assignments while only 20% (6) attended due to personal interest on the topic.

The selection of participants is essential in attaining the activity objectives since the participants' responses would determine how invested they will be in learning the topic; a positive reaction does not ensure learning but an unfavorable one definitely makes it less likely that the participant

will pay attention to the learning session. If the right audience would be targeted, it would be easier to achieve the objectives since their engagement and interest on the topic is already leveled-off while sustainability aspect would also be easier to provide because they are already invested in the topic.

Topic selection

Different approaches are being used by the different Offices in selecting the topic, and although participants believe that these topics are timely and relevant, it would still be more efficient to have a needs-based manner of topic selection.

In conducting any learning session / forum, the first requirement is the selection of the topics that would be discussed in the activity. This process would require review and management of all available inputs including budgetary requirements, available references and polices/guidelines. All other requirements and preparations would follow upon finalization or approval of the topics.

In general, it can be inferred that there is no overall policy that would provide a systematic way of selecting the topics; offices conducting learning sessions would usually decide the possible topics on their own using the existing policies or documents as reference. But despite this, survey results conducted for this assessment showed that 83% of the participants think that the topics presented were timely and relevant.

For HRDS, topics for technical sharing sessions would only be limited to previous scholarships and training attended by DSWD personnel and would then be prioritized based on the relevance of the topics to the needs of the employees. Meanwhile, forum for commemorations of celebrations would be based on the themes communicated by the concerned organizers or agencies. Forum on health and wellness promotion would then be in line with commemorations or would include topics that are timely and relevant to the current realities such as mental health, drug prevention and tobacco control.

For SWIDB, the series of knowledge sharing sessions were needs-based; done as a result of their review on the submission of proposals from the OBS, the SWIDB observed that there was a need to capacitate the Capacity Building focals in preparing and designing Cap Build activities.

For the research forum of PDPB, topics are selected based on the theme identified from the available researches and studies conducted both by DSWD and partner intermediaries. While for policy forum, in lieu of the policy agenda, topics are from the ideas and suggestions of the staff or the Management considering the demands and necessities of the Department as well as other guidelines, issuances, memoranda relevant to social welfare and development (SWD).

Memorandum Circular (MC) 11 series of 2008 or the Guidelines on the Conduct of SWD Forum states that SWD Forum would include any activity that provides a venue for discussion on matters of social welfare and development, which include policy issues and concerns, research studies, SWD Legislations, technical sharing, issues and trends on national development plans and international commitments and orientation on national projects of the DSWD. The TSS of HRDS and PDPB's research and policy forum follow the categories for possible agenda as stated in the said Memorandum Circular. Also, the current topic selection criteria for health and wellness promotion would follow the citation in the Memorandum Circular (MC) 13 series of 2013, stating that part of the preventive care is educating personnel about preventive health care thru seminars or forum on topics of choice.

Efficiency

Existence/familiarity with existing procedures and policies

Overall, concerned OBS are familiar and submissive to the existing policies although these do not provide a detailed guide or procedure relative to conduct of learning sessions.

In terms of conducting forum related to welfare of employees, issuances of oversight agencies particularly CSC and the recently approved AO 20 s. 2018 or EMPOWER guidelines are being used as reference by HRDS. Moreover they also use, MC 35 s. 2005 or the Guidelines for Specialized

Training/Course to support their conduct of Technical Sharing Sessions as a venue for re-echoing of learning during the attended specialized training/course.

Meanwhile, the MC 11 s. 2008 or SWD forum guidelines sets the minimum standards for the effective conduct of the forum, ensure attainment of its objectives and harmonize the conduct of similar activities of the Department. Policy forum was also separated from SWD Forum as stated in AO 13 s. 2015 which mentions the conduct of policy forum as one of the strategies to facilitate the development of policy outputs. These guidelines are being used by the PDPB and SWIDB relative to their conduct of policy and research forum.

Although there are these policies and guideline which the OBS refer to relative to their conduct of learning sessions, overarching guidelines to harmonize all these similar activities and more detailed procedures on the conduct of these activities did not exist, thus the OBS work separately and efforts were not complementary. Most of the policies mentioned above does not provide a systematic procedure for the conduct of learning sessions, instead it only cites the importance and validity of conduct of learning sessions. On the other hand, the SWD forum guidelines contains institutional arrangements and other processes involved in the conduct of SWD forum but changes in the roles and responsibilities of the concerned Offices may have already changed over time, aside from the fact that SWD forums were not regularly conducted at the Central Office in the past years.

Selection of resource person

Although there is no systematic way for selection of Resource Persons that was established, the OBS concerned were successful in selecting RPs that are experts and/or the most appropriate person for the discussion of the topic.

For technical sharing sessions of HRDS, the pool of resource persons would include all those who have availed of foreign / local scholarships and specialized trainings within the Department. Even if the TSS is part of the scholars' obligation to re-echo their experiences and learnings, the HRDS still have a process of selecting the target resource person; most recent scholars are prioritized then initial consultation with them would follow. Only those who expressed their willingness to be

the Resource Person would be selected, oftentimes, they also look for alternate Resource Person in case of sudden changes. Moreover, RPs for the conducted knowledge sharing sessions were SWIDB internal staff, and were chosen based on experience, competency, and familiarity on the topic. But there are plans of having external RPs, either author of a certain practice or developer of an innovation, for the succeeding KSS.

For forum commemorating world/nationwide celebrations as well as forum on health and well ness promotion, the HRDS would contact the lead organization and ask for referral to possible Resource Persons. Likewise, for policy forum, RPs would be selected based on credibility and expertise relative to the topic while for research forum, RP should have direct involvement in the conduct of the study; either from the sector involved, existing partner or program implementer.

The existing policies do not set any criteria in selection of Resource Person but for policy and research forum, since RPs are usually hired, terms of reference is made as basis for selection. For other types of learning session, there is no systematic process to asses if the RPs are really experts and/or the appropriate people to discuss the topic. Usually, after the conduct of the activity, the evaluation/feedback forms would assess the proficiency of the resource person. And upon reviewing the results of the evaluation forms, most RPs were rated as Very Satisfactory in terms of mastery of subject matter, delivery and presentation. Likewise, respondents of the survey provided an average score of 3.76 in terms of RPs using the most appropriate way to showcase the topic which would then indicate their level of expertise on the subject matter.

Effectiveness

Nature of sessions/methodologies used

The methodology used for each learning session is greatly dependent on the decision of the Resource Person, activity objectives and the amount of time allotted for the activity. Usually, the activity would be mostly lecture/discussion with optional mini structured learning exercises or workshops and an open forum.

The objective of technical sharing sessions is for the participants to gain theories and/or practical lessons from the experience of scholars/grantees of foreign and local courses/trainings/seminars which they may apply for their tasks/responsibilities in the Department. Fora related to health and wellness is part of the holistic preventive care that is provided to the employees for the improvement of their overall well-being and thus the aim is to increase awareness and promote positive change. Likewise, the intention of policy and research forum aside from dissemination of new information on social welfare and development is to gather inputs and comments from organizations or individuals and other stakeholders who are involved or who specialize on the concerned topics. Unlike the other types of learning sessions/forum, knowledge sharing sessions are more focused on capacity building and thus, leveling of participants' expectations is a crucial part of the activity design to recognize the needs of the participants. While for the other types of learning sessions/forum, evaluation of the activity is more crucial to gauge the overall satisfaction of the participants.

In terms of activity design / methodology, it would be dependent on the preference of the Resource Person, but usually for almost all learning sessions/fora, the activity would follow the minimum / standard design which is mostly lecture/discussion with optional mini structured learning exercises or workshops. This design is preferred by the RPs given the limited time allotment of 1-2 hours. The survey results validate the lack of time allotment for the learning session/forum to be conducive for the participants to gain awareness, knowledge or capacity with only 3.41 average score on satisfaction. The existence or appropriateness of learning exercises during the learning session/forum also got a relative lower average score of 3.45. Nonetheless, 70% still agreed that the methodology used would be the most appropriate way to discuss the topic and 73% thinks that the opportunity to discuss the topic appropriately was maximized.

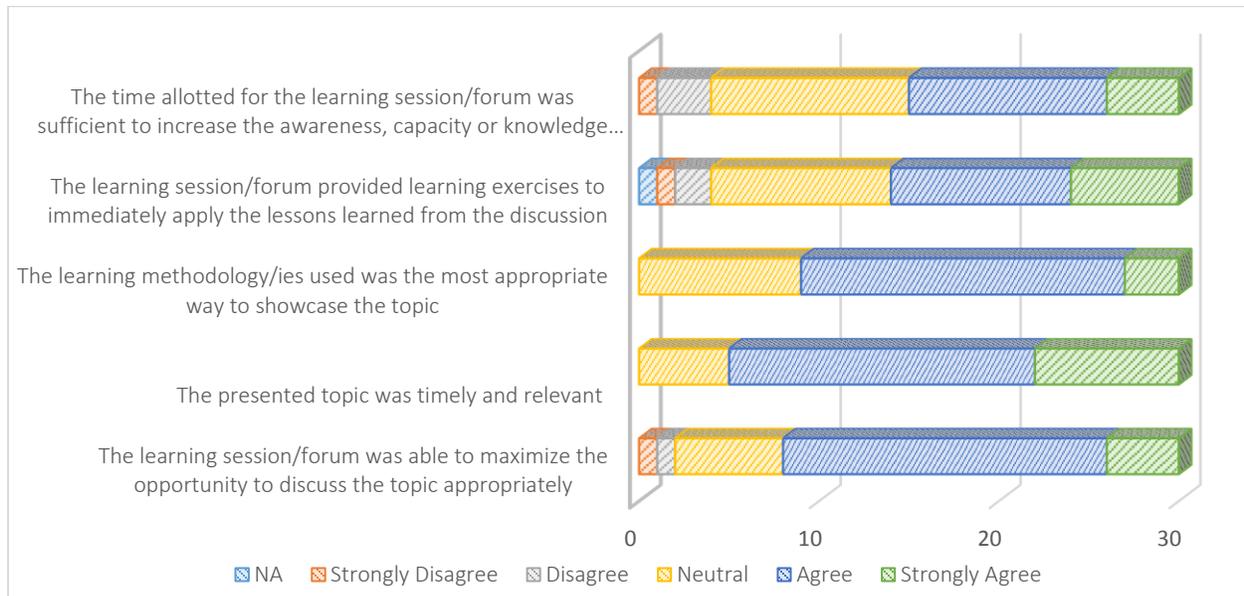


Figure 2: Satisfaction - Nature of sessions/methodologies used

Moreover, for policy and research forum, since it is conducted longer than other types of learning sessions/fora, having an open forum is necessary after the presentation of the research/policy paper since this would be the time to gather necessary inputs for the enhancement of the paper. In addition to the open forum, panel reactors with wide areas of specialization are invited during research forum to provide additional inputs on the topic.

In designing for knowledge sharing sessions, the organizers follow a certain procedure wherein they would answer the 4Ws And 1H question as a team and make use of an activity matrix to lay down the sequence and subtopics in the allotted time frame (half day) putting more emphasis on knowledge and skills upgrading.

Given these, it would imply that knowledge sharing sessions have higher level of objectives than the rest of the types of learning sessions/forum. Using the Kirkpatrick Model, the KSS would aim to achieve a positive impact on the Departments' performance and thus measures how the participants became more efficient in their roles and responsibilities which would then contribute in the organization's highest-level results. Meanwhile the technical sharing sessions and fora on commemorations and health and wellness would only aim to provide new skills / knowledge /

attitudes at the individual level. For policy and research forum, although it aims to achieve higher outcomes for the Department in terms of promoting evidence-based decision making, the actual activity would only be limited in providing new knowledge to the attendees and gathering necessary inputs for onward reference. Thus, we would only gauge the degree to which participants acquired the intended knowledge, skills, attitude, confidence and commitment based on their participation in the learning session.

Common challenges encountered

The different types of learning sessions/forum experiences different challenges in terms of resources, processes and results. The following were the common challenges encountered in the conduct of the learning sessions:

- Securing the availability of the venue. This happens since all the learning sessions/forum are conducted with the Central Office premises and the Department have very limited number of conference rooms that could accommodate the target number of at least 30 participants.
- Availability of the Resource Person on the secured available date of the venue. Health and wellness forum does not have a budget for payment of RPs and even for tokens/giveaways and thus relies on pro-bono work of the desired RP. KSS and TSS, on the other hand, would not require payment since RPs are internal to the Department, however due to the workload and busy schedule, availability of possible RPs is difficult to secure. For policy and research forum, although there is budget for payment of Resource Speakers and panel of reactors, there is a challenge in securing a common date when all the desired speakers, reactors and primary guests, including Execom and Mancom members, would be available.
- Securing the target population is also a challenge particularly for technical sharing sessions and health and wellness forum. Since they provide general invites for participants, attendance would be non-compulsory, also, given the nature of these learning sessions which focuses more on the individual level, personal preference is a major consideration. For knowledge sharing sessions, although the participants are targeted, they would have

challenges in ensuring that the participants would stay the whole session, participants would usually go in and out of the venue since these are conducted with DSWD premises and participants can be called right away by their Offices to perform their usual work.

- The timely conduct of research and policy forum is sometimes hindered by the changes in the Management directives. This usually happens since the topics showcased on these forum are dependent on the priorities of the Management and the Department. Thus, if there would be changes in the indicative plans, delays on the conduct may happen, in addition to the procurement issues that could also affect the timeliness of conduct.
- The activity design and methodology are also affected by factors such as the limited agenda/topics for discussion, limited time allotted for the actual activity and the limited number of staff that facilitates the conduct of these activities. Respondents of the survey provided an average score of 3.41 in terms of sufficiency of the time allotted for the learning session to increase the awareness, capacity or knowledge of the participants. This has relatively lower average score than the other survey indicators. On the other hand, despite the lack of staff, respondents were still satisfied in terms of logistical requirements with an average score of 3.72.

Evaluation and feedbacking

Evaluation and feedback system for the learning sessions are still weak but can be further improved given that there are existing mechanisms which could be enhanced using proper tools and guidelines.

Activity evaluation and feedback are usually gathered thru the evaluation forms answered by the attendees at the end of the learning session / forum however this form is standard and not tailored-fit to the activity design and objectives. Moreover, as experienced by the organizers, participants are usually kind and generous in providing evaluation and feedback on this form, thus they really cannot fully gauge the clients' satisfaction. On the other hand, there is no available tool to measure the attainment of higher objectives, but there are ongoing efforts for HRDS to develop a client satisfaction survey that would fit the kind of learning sessions/forum that they conduct.

Other than the evaluation form, other sources of feedback and evaluation of the success of the activity are from the personal expression of participants, their insights and comments during the discussion, the overall dynamics or turnout of open forum conducted and requests for additional references by participants would also imply appreciation and understanding of the topic/s, which could then be associated to achievement of objectives.

Moreover, since attendance to most of the learning sessions is voluntary, submission of feedback reports or cascading from attendees is not strictly implemented. The survey results showed that an average score of 3.07 was provided by the respondents when asked if they were able to cascade the acquired knowledge/skills to their colleagues. While an average score of 3.41 was provided by the respondents when asked if they submitted feedback reports with corresponding inputs and recommendations after attending the learning session. Thus, if there were substantial comments or inputs from the submitted feedback reports, it would seldom reach the intended Office or organizers of the activity.

Activity documentation

Documentation reports of conducted learning sessions serve different purposes and there is no standard format or design for such, although relevant information is cascaded to concerned individuals and Offices as needed.

Each learning session / forum produces documentation report primarily because it would be used for liquidation purposes, however there is no standard or required format that is being implemented. Good practices and challenges encountered could be contained in the documentation report but currently, there is no standard mechanism to capture all necessary information in a systematic manner.

For learning sessions/forum conducted by HRDS and SWIDB, documentation reports are usually for their internal consumption only; for information and reference of those involved in organizing the said activities. While, for learning sessions/forum conducted by PDPB, documentation report with recommended actions is submitted to the Management for perusal. Inputs from the report

are used for policy recommendations and reform. Moreover, the report is usually disseminated to concerned OBS for inputs and appropriate action.

Impact

Client Satisfaction

In general, the participants of the learning sessions were satisfied on the conduct of the activity and found the acquired knowledge/skills as significant. However, the lack of monitoring and follow-up activities affected the retention of acquired knowledge / skills on the attendees.

In terms of attainment of the activity objectives, generally, the attendees of the learning sessions/forum were satisfied. Although the expectations of the participants were not usually gathered prior to the discussion of the topic, their expectations were still met after the activity. Participants gained awareness on the topic, understood the concept and acquired new knowledge/skills from the learning sessions or forum. Moreover, based on the presented activity objectives, participants confirmed that these were achieved at the end of the activity.

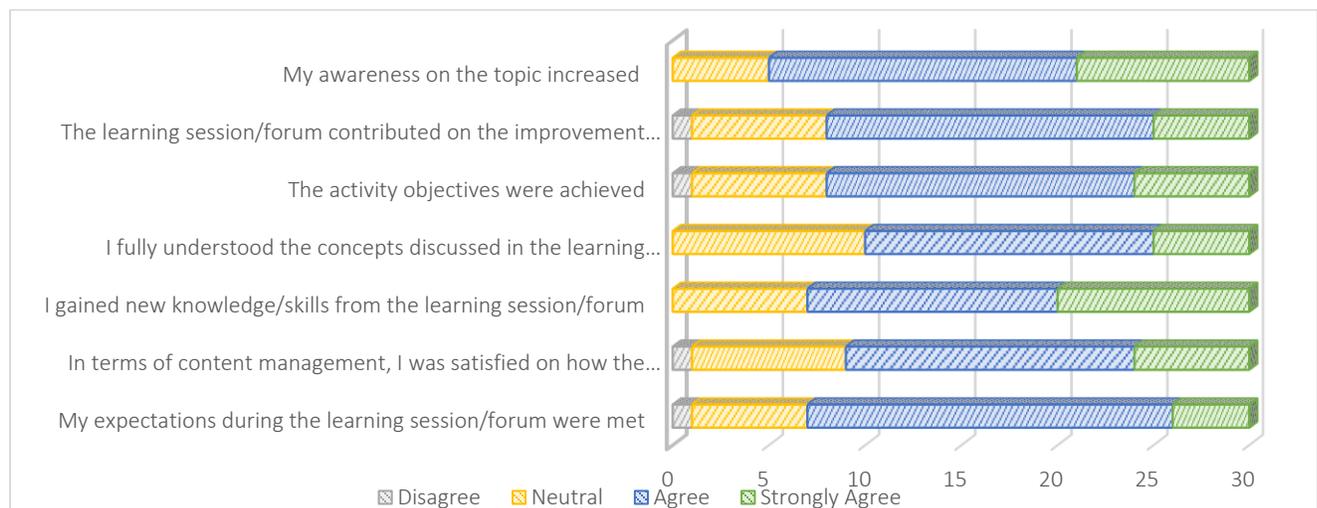


Figure 3: Satisfaction - Attainment of Objectives

However, the indicators on sustainability aspect are relatively lower compared to effectiveness and efficiency indicators. As mentioned earlier in the report, the lack of follow-up activities

affected the retention of acquired knowledge / skills on the attendees. Moreover, despite the fact that most of the attendees were representative of their whole Office, cascading to colleagues were not evident, thus the acquired knowledge/skills and appreciation of the activity would only be limited at the individual level. Other indicators such as submission of feedback report (3.41), direct application of acquired knowledge/skills for personal/work use (3.55), and urge to further broaden the knowledge/skills (3.66) also have relatively lower average scores.

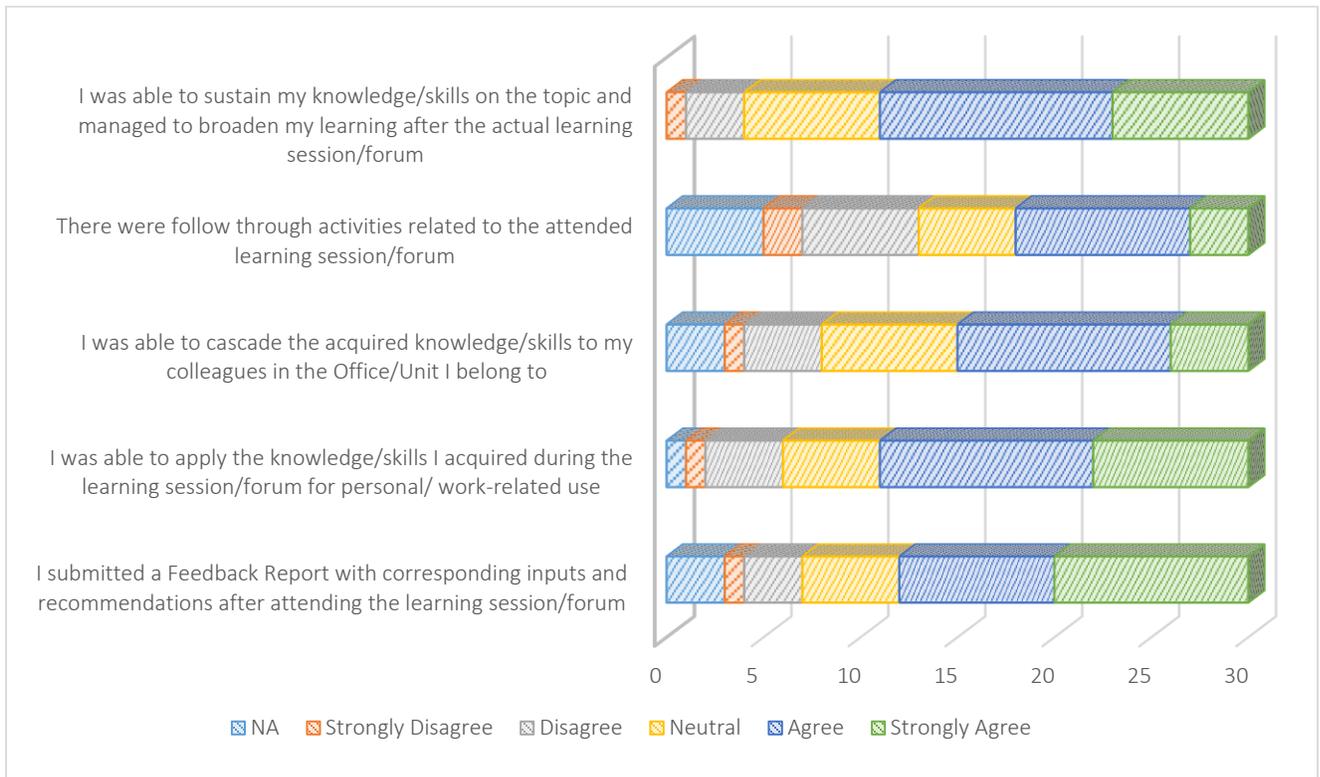


Figure 4: Satisfaction – Sustainability

Overall, in terms of content and logistics, the participants were satisfied on how the learning sessions/forum were conducted. Their satisfaction can also be reflected on their assessment of their level of knowledge before and after they attended the learning session/forum. With the attendance to the activity, participants have either increased or at least retained the same level of knowledge about the topic. But it can be observed the increase is only a level higher, which could be limited by the challenges experienced in the conduct of the activity.

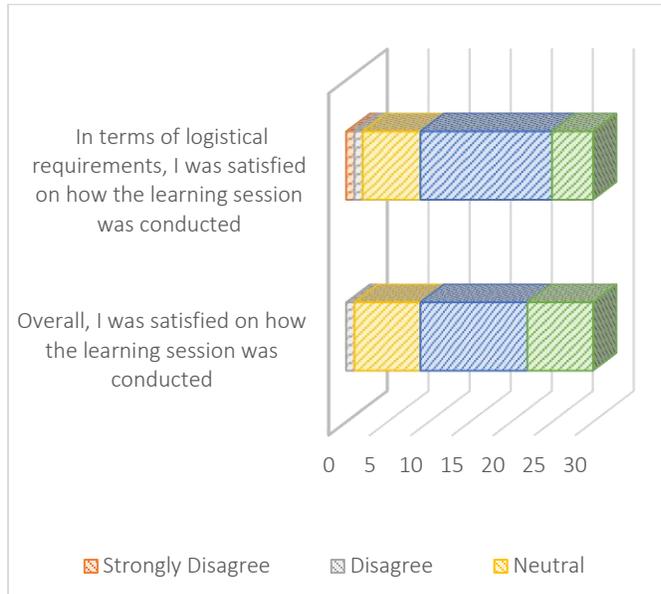


Figure 5: Overall Satisfaction

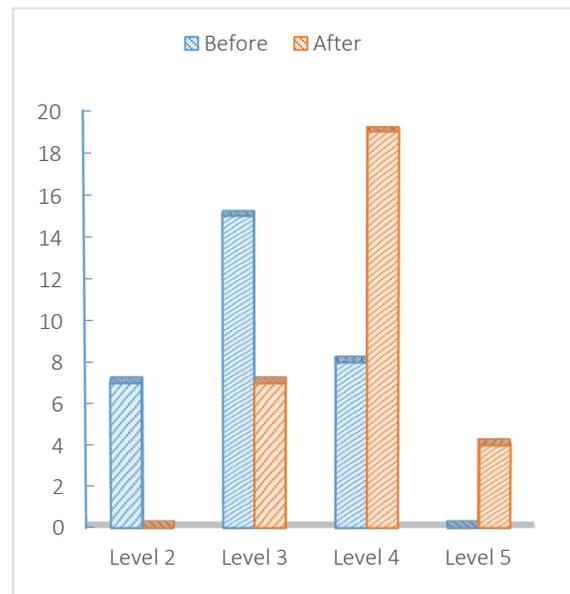


Figure 6: Level of Knowledge about the topic

Moreover, for learning sessions/forum which aim to inform, increase awareness and promote, these objectives are directly achieved after the actual conduct of the activity and thus satisfaction on the part of the organizers would easily be realized. Also, the requests from employees to conduct future learning sessions also satisfy the organizers; implying that the audience, thru the learning session/forum realizes what intervention would they need aside from the clamor to organize clubs/groups related to certain topics. However, given the challenge on reaching the target number of participants per session/forum, there could be room for enhancements on the method of inviting the participants. Likewise, for research and policy forum, proponent offices are satisfied since participants get to be updated on SWD and good practices as well as helps widen knowledge on research concepts, expand contacts and foster partnership for further studies on SWD programs.

Sustainability

Monitoring of participants/follow-up activities

The existence of monitoring and follow-up activities is not yet in place which would also imply that learning sessions are still not intended to achieve higher objectives. Sustaining the conduct of learning sessions should entail having a system for monitoring of participants and follow-up activities.

After the conduct of the learning session/forum, follow-up activities or monitoring of further outcomes are usually not part of the activity objectives, especially for HRDS-initiated learning sessions. Due to lack of human resources for this concern, the involved Offices could not focus on monitoring, aside from the fact that there is no available tool or mechanism yet for such. Currently, monitoring is focused more on the effectiveness of the actual conduct of each session. Moreover, there are particular topics that would require follow-up activities; those topics related to roles of existing committees within DSWD such as tobacco and drug related concerns.

For SWIDB-initiated learning sessions, formal training or capacity building activities would serve as their follow through activities. While monitoring activities would include observations or assessment on the improvement based on the proposals submitted by the different OBSUs who attended in the activity.

For research and policy forum, follow thru on recommended actions to be taken by the concerned Offices is conducted as necessary. However, for policy forum, the monitoring should actually be done at the management level; to assess if they would be using the inputs provided during the forum for policy reforms/enhancements. Previous outputs would also be reviewed if the agenda item/issue is to be discussed again to another session/forum.

Since there is no system yet in place to monitor the participants after the learning session, we can infer that learning sessions do not intend to capture higher outcomes on its participants; which could be measured in terms of their change in behavior. Presently, the focus of learning sessions is to have ways to measure what the participant thought of the learning session they received or if they found it useful. While if we will be focusing on higher objectives, we would intend to analyze

the final results of the learning session including outcomes that are good for the Department and good for the employees and which demonstrates a good return on investment.

Conclusion

Efficiency of Learning Sessions / Forum

Looking into the quality of the conducted learning sessions/forum in terms of the available resources, it was evident that there were inconsistencies and challenges in the efficient implementation of the activities. These inconsistencies and challenges are actually manageable since these are dependent only on the resources and processes that support the conduct of the activities. The limitations in the resources; in terms of budget, venue, resource persons, schedule and references, are reflected on the quality of the learning session/forum and its attainment of objectives. It was also evident that although there are lots of learning sessions/forum conducted in the Department, there was no harmonization in the conduct of such activities, thus the result is limited only at the individual level and would not have an effect on the overall organizational performance.

Although there are existing policies and guidelines that support the conduct of these learning sessions/forum, these were not sufficient to provide a standard process and requirements in conducting the activities which results to the inconsistencies and challenges. Having a framework for the conduct of all types of learning sessions/forum would simplify the processes of determining the topic, resource person, target participants, and appropriate activity design. The framework would also ensure that the resources would be available, secured and maximized to attain higher outcomes.

Effectiveness of Learning Sessions / Forum

One of the best known models for analyzing and evaluating the results of educational programs is the Kirkpatrick model, as shown below:



Figure 7: Kirkpatrick Model

It takes into account any style of educational program, both informal and formal, to determine aptitude based on four levels criteria. Level 1 – Reaction, measures how participants react to the training, Level 2 – Learning, analyzes if they truly understood the activity, Level 3 – Behavior looks at if participants are utilizing what they learned, and Level 4 – Results, determines if the material had a positive impact on the organization.

Looking at this model and how the learning sessions/forum in the Department is being conducted, it could be assessed that the capacity of these activities is limited in attaining level 1 & 2 criteria only. Success indicators of the conducted learning sessions/forum focus more on the satisfaction of the participants on the actual activity, measured thru the evaluation forms and feedback of participants. While existence and results of learning exercises and workshops during the activity could measure the understanding of the participants to the topic. The absence or lack of monitoring and follow through activities for the participants in line with the topic would hinder in achieving or measuring the criteria for Levels 3 & 4.

Moreover, the current level of objectives of the learning sessions/forum are constantly achieved by the different Offices despite the hindering factors. The concerned Offices have succeeded in maximizing the available resources, but if the Department would want to achieve higher levels of effectiveness, the framework for conduct of learning sessions/forum would be the key to have a clear direction and accountability.

Sustainability of Learning Sessions / Forum

There is a need to sustain the conduct of learning sessions/forum given that they serve different purposes which could contribute in the improvement of the organizational performance if provided efficiently and effectively. However, there are loopholes in the guidelines and processes which should be enhanced. Harmonization of all the learning sessions/forum is essential to improve the process of conducting learning sessions/forum. Moreover, improvements requiring additional budgetary requirements should be secured and funded since we would be wasting resources if we would always settle for the minimum standard in providing learning sessions/forum; spending the resources more efficiently would lead to higher outcomes.

Recommendations

Policy / Guidelines

An overarching policy for all learning sessions should be crafted capturing the following factors to help attain higher objectives:

1. Business process maps of OBS should be established and competency models should be developed. Learning sessions/forum should be needs-based thus information on the key result areas of the different Offices and competency of each employee would identify what intervention is needed by the employees in order to deliver their roles and responsibilities. This could be the initial step in needs assessment and would also help identify the concerned Office for the different SWD concerns.
2. Development of a framework for the conduct of learning sessions/forum. The framework should showcase the hierarchy of objectives for the conduct of the learning session/forum. With this framework, the logical way of attaining the objective would be clear, thus, prior to the conduct of the activity, the expected outputs and appropriate design would be easier to identify.
3. Harmonize efforts to maximize the resources. There should be an oversight office for the conduct of all learning sessions/forum while other Offices will ensure proper coordination

to the designated Office. Given the limited resources for such activities, harmonizing the topics would lead to more efficient use of the resources. Redundant topics would be prevented and focus on priority topics would be provided.

4. Core group of specialists (CGS) within the Department should be utilized. Resource Persons for most of the conducted learning sessions/forum are from external Offices, which pose challenges in securing their availability as well as in ensuring provision of honoraria or tokens for them. If a core group of specialists within the Department would be formed, they can be the primary option for the conduct of such activities. Moreover, thru this, we are also maximizing and utilizing the benefits of the provided capacity building training to our employees who are part of the CGS.
5. Criteria for selection of topics and resource persons should be clear. Although the topic and resource person would vary depending on the learning session, the minimum process and criteria should be set to ensure that the topics would be needs-based and the RPs are really experts from the field concerned. Setting at least the minimum requirements in topic and RP selection would also strengthen the quality of the learning session.
6. Regular monitoring and evaluation of the conduct of the learning sessions should be secured. All learning sessions should undergo an evaluation covering the four levels of learning evaluation. A standard evaluation tool and instructions for data collection and analysis can also be made.

Other Recommendations

For the OBS conducting learning sessions:

1. Ensure that there would be other interventions/activities aside from the learning session/forum. Since the increase in the level of knowledge is minimal and the level of objective is mostly within output level only, this would help attain higher outcomes for the activity, not only benefitting the individual level but it could contribute for organizational advantages. One-on-one coaching and mentoring activities could also be considered as

part of feedbacking or roll-out to colleagues of the attendees. Bigger capacity building activities can also be explored as follow-thru activities especially for TSS and KSS.

2. Maximize use of technology. This initiative could be in several forms, one way is to video record the actual conduct of learning session / forum so it can be shared to all OBS/FOs. Another is to facilitate video conference of the Resource Person to help minimize the cost of travel and other expenses or to help ensure the availability of the RP.
3. Continuous collaboration and communication with other OBS. For instance, OBS should regularly communicate with each other on policy issues and not just during the policy forum. Also, knowledge/skills from knowledge sharing sessions could be relayed thru technical assistance with other OBS.

For Social Marketing Services:

4. Production of Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials. This would help engage the target audience and reach wider scope for dissemination of information / awareness. Moreover, it must be ensured that IEC materials would be cascaded strategically for more efficient use; utilization of online platforms for sharing can also be maximized. Knowledge management caravans can also be explored as part of wider information dissemination activities. Journals can also be produced as IEC materials, which would contain the highlights of the learning sessions/forum and good practices.

For the DSWD Management:

5. Champions from Execom or Mancom level. For advocacy forum, this would also help engage more people into the program while for research and policy forum, this would aid in ensuring that the outputs of the forum would be utilized for a more evidence-based decision making in the Department.

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