

# **A STUDY ON RETENTION AND APPLICATION OF TRAINING INPUTS INCLUDING JOB SKILLS AND RULES BY EMPLOYEES OF SOUTHERN RAILWAY, TIRUCHIRAPPALLI, TAMIL NADU, INDIA**

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## **Abstract**

Job skills of the trainees are tested on three occasions namely, Pre-training period, Post-training period and in the field. The population of the study has been the total number of employees being trained in the Zonal Railway Training Institute (ZRTI) of Southern Railways (SR) at Tiruchirappalli, India over two years. About 1500 probationers were trained during the study a period of which, about 150 of the probationers were interviewed at three stages of the process. The field results have been obtained approximately six months after the post training. The new methods adopted in training for the front line staff of Indian railways have made the staff to learn and suit themselves to the latest technological advancements. The analysis indicates an impact of training in all three periods. The findings also indicate long term impact on employees in remembering the skills learnt and the tendency to apply such skills when demanded. The training was held in SR training center for each segment in separate centers. In the present context, the training is given to employees across the cadres. When they assemble together in the training centre, there is a feeling among higher cadres that they are not supposed to be treated on par with other lower cadres. This feeling hinders the teaching and learning process

## **Keywords**

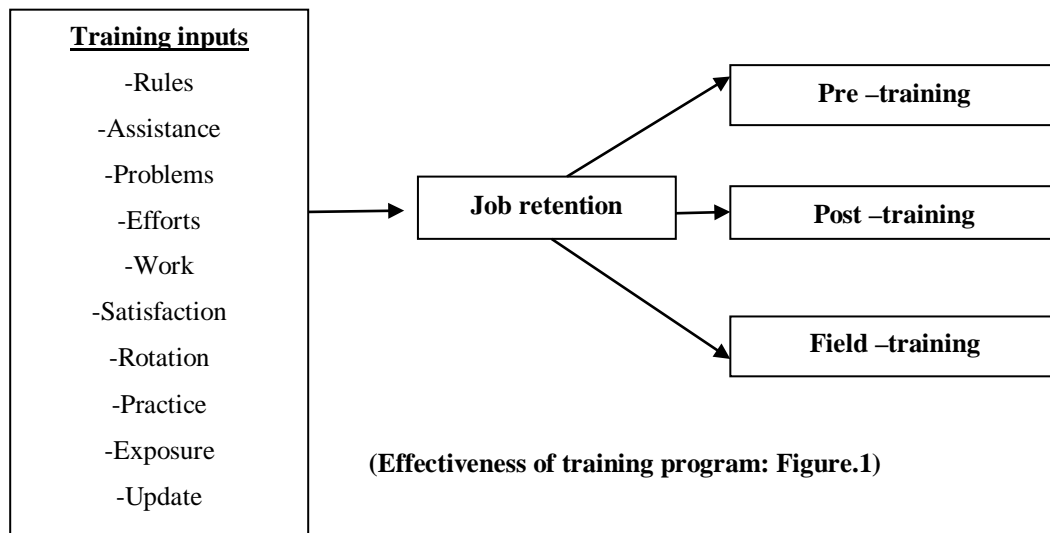
Job Skills, Job Retention, Pre-Training, Post-Training and Field Training

## 1. Introduction

India is the second largest country in terms of human resource endowments. Indian Railways is the leading transportation network operational under a single management that has a work force of nearly 1.4 million employees. Nearly 20 million people or roughly 2 percent of the Indian population travels on Indian railways every day. It is difficult to visualise conglomeration of nearly 6 billion passengers per year attached, dependent and patronised by a single system of transportation. Indian railways also transports more than one third of India's total freight traffic. Thus the role played by the employees of Indian railways in the economic development of the country is very vital. Therefore the main concern should be to harness and exploit the mental and physical capacity of the employees and put it in right direction for achieving organisational objectives.

## 2. Training

A systematic training will help the employees acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes, which are essential to do their jobs. The trainers believed that the employees are not trained effectively, and then the investment made by the organisation in designing and implementing these programs, may not give the desirable results. The training programs are conducted to enhance and increase the programme level of the employee, to develop human resources to meet the current as well as future needs of the organisation, To ensure effective utilization of human resources and to integrate individual goals with the organisational goals, which results in productivity improvement, greater workforce flexibility, savings on materials and capital costs, more motivated workforce and improved quality of the final product or service. Evaluating the effectiveness of training program is an important step as it is carried out to see how well the required job skills and values have been received and applied in the following (figure 1).



Thus, the study focuses on the challenges in executing the training programs in an effective and efficient way by the Southern Railway training institute.

### **3. Review of literature**

The training programs are in regular agenda in the ZRTI of Southern Railways of India. The training program has undergone many changes over years. The problems in training the employees of a particular context always prevail. Therefore, the aim of this study is to resolve the present day problems, which have been observed by the researcher. Therefore, it is a descriptive study based on the quantitative information collected over the period of study. Several studies have been made in this area erstwhile in the world. Similar studies in Indian context are not much to be reviewed or cited.

#### **3.1. Pre -training**

Dr.J Parasuraman (2014)<sup>1</sup> - Job readiness skills can be bunched into six skill sets they are basic academic skills, corporate skills, technical skills, soft skills, higher order thinking skills and personal qualities. Employability skills are persons basic skills indispensable for competing, attaining and sustaining employment in corporate world, employability skills are teachable skills

Chih , Li and Lee (2008)<sup>2</sup> Training programme is dependent on the following parameters for its success (i) perceived value of leaning programme (ii) attitude to teacher (iii) response to learning conditions (iv) desire to learn: the degree to which trainees really want to Researchers World learn and do well.

Stavrou et al., (2004)<sup>3</sup> The main goal of training is to provide, obtain and improve the necessary skills in order to help organizations achieve their goals and create competitive advantage by adding value to their key resources – i.e. managers.

Tan, Hall and Boyce (2003)<sup>4</sup> Companies are making huge investment on training programmes to prepare them for future needs. The researchers and practitioners have constantly emphasised on the importance of training due to its role and investment.

Oribabor (2000)<sup>5</sup> Training and development aim at developing competencies such as technical, human, conceptual and managerial for the furtherance of individual and organization growth. Isyaku (2000) The process of training and development is a continuous one. It is an avenue to acquire more and new knowledge and develop further the skills and techniques to function effectively.

Noe and Schmit (1986)<sup>6</sup> ventured a study on the impact of training on 60 school educators. The training inputs were related to managerial skills. The variables were expectancies, motive to learn, exploratory behaviour, job

involvement and so on. It was an immediate feedback. The results were that the learning was related with all training characteristics.

Wexley and Baldwin (1986)<sup>7</sup> initiated study among 256 college students who underwent training time management. The variables were related to motivation like goal setting and relapse prevention. It was immediate feedback. The results were significant even after eight weeks' time.

The instructional elements of in-service training sessions that prepare teachers to implement innovations were investigated by Broyles, India and Murray Tillman (1985)<sup>8</sup>

Reber and Wallin (1984)<sup>9</sup> selected 105 Farm machinery underwent training on safety procedures. The motivational variables were tested. The safety behaviours were exhibited after 40 weeks period.

Tubiana and Shakhbar (1982)<sup>10</sup> conducted a study on a sample of 459 Israeli military trainees. They were given training on basic military skills. The variables were related to demographic, ability, motivation and personality. Officer rating of potential had a significant positive relationship to education, language, intelligence and composite of personality.

### **3.2. Post-training**

Bates and Davis (2010)<sup>11</sup> Usefulness of training programme is possible only when the trainee is able to practise the theoretical aspects learned in training programme in actual work environment. They highlighted the use of role playing, cases, simulation, mediated exercises, and computer based learning to provide exposure to a current and relevant body of knowledge and real world situations.

Giangreco, Sebastiano, and Peccei (2009)<sup>12</sup>, The key determinants of overall satisfaction with training (OST) are perceived training efficiency (PTE) and Perceived usefulness of training (PUT).

Huczynzki and Lewis (1980)<sup>13</sup> initiated a study on 48 electronic managers after having three-day network analysis training program. The variables tested were motivation related like attend on own, value of training, prior course discussion. The study was initiated after four months. The results were that about 35% of respondents made some attempt to transfer.

Komacki, Henzemann, and Lawson (1980)<sup>14</sup> dealt with 55 vehicle maintenance personnel. The training period was about one-hour on safety. The variables tested were motivation related ones. The observation took place after 40 weeks. The safety behaviour was exhibited.

Ryman and Biersner (1975)<sup>15</sup> found that successful graduation had a significant positive relationship with training motivation, leadership, and conformity and was negatively related to training concerns across 3 training programs.

This was done with 584 military personnel after having technical training on diving and underwater skills. This was done immediately after training.

Smith and Downs (1975)<sup>16</sup> took up 236 ship building apprentices, who underwent a training program on variety of ship building skills. The variables tested were related to ability in ship building skills. Trainability assessments were successful in predicting performance after three months period in the skill for which they were designed. They were less successful after a 12 month period and no single assessment predicted performance for all skills.

### **3.3. Field –training**

Karthik R (2012)<sup>17</sup> Training objectives tell the trainee that what is expected out of him at the end of the training program. Training objectives are of great significance from a number of stakeholder perspectives; Trainer, trainee, designer, evaluator.

Kalaiselvan and Naachimuthu (2011)<sup>18</sup> Training cost and business benefits are drawn on X and Y axis respectively. Four quadrants were identified to highlight (i) strategic (Lower training cost and higher business benefits), (ii) Payback (Higher training cost and higher business benefits) (iii) Think (Lower training cost and lower business benefits) (iv) Drop (Higher training cost and higher business benefits).

## **4. Learning and development**

Development also is a lifelong process that takes a person to higher stages in life. Hence the learning and development are inexorably intervened. Training is meant to bring about desirable change in the attitude and the behaviour of the trainees through systematic intervention. It is done through either learning through concrete experiences or abstract thinking or observation and reflection or experimentation

Do the training programs facilitate these things in the development of an employee? It is the basic question posed in this study. This has been done through a sample survey initiated after six months from the date of training.

## **5. Objectives**

The objectives of the paper are

- a) To identify the short and long term memory retention of training skills of the respondents trained in the ZRTI of Southern Railways, a public sector undertaking,
- b) To evaluate the learnt skill application; and
- c) To suggest, if possible, the ways to restructure the training programme in future.

## **6. Design of the study**

About 1500 personnel have been trained during the period between 2016 and 2017. The trainees were personnel from various levels across the organisational hierarchy of Southern Railways. Therefore, the type of the sampling technique used in the data collection was stratified random method. The respondents were mainly Station Masters, Ticket Booking Clerks (both current & advance booking) and Ticket Checking staff. These three groups were given training separately and the selection of samples also became easy. The Station Masters work round the clock in the railway station and perform the duty of receiving and sending trains. The trains need to be run with utmost safety as it involves human lives. The Booking Clerks both current and advanced booking are involved in printing and supply of the journey tickets across the counter to various types of passengers duly applying rules learn during the training. On the other hand, the Ticket checking staff check and collect the tickets from the passengers both on the platform and on board in the running train. All the three groups mentioned above form the category of a frontline workforce of the Indian railways who should compulsorily learn, retain and update rules and regulations then and there.

They were selected at random from each group in equal numbers. The groups have also further been divided on the basis of qualification the trainees, income level, gender and Marital Status. The sample size was determined as 135, which would constitute approximate 10 per cent of the total respondents under study. This has been justified in the context of time limitation of training period and the lapse of six months period soon after training.

Data Collection was done with structured questionnaire. These questionnaires were administered on three occasions. The respondents were tested before being inducted into the training program. They were again evaluated soon after the training was over. The third stage, an important one, was initiated in the field after six months from the date of training. Prior knowledge, knowledge acquired after training and the retention of the knowledge after a period were the focus areas of the research. This paper aims at understanding their retention power of training input after six months.

The hypotheses are based on

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant association between Gender/Income/Category of the respondents and the variable retention.

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant association between Age of the respondents and the variable Update.

H<sub>03</sub>: There is no significant association between Qualification of the respondents and the variable exposure.

## **7. Tools for analysis**

Demographic factors were analysed with simple comparison of data collected. However the training factors and its impact on the trainees were tested with non-parametric statistical tool like chi-square tests with accepted significance level and also were tested to know whether there existed internal inconsistency in stages.

## 8. Analysis and interpretation

One of the basic tests is that, whether the training transfer enables employees to apply the skills learnt in training on the job or not. The training ability imparted throughout and when the training program helps the workers to effectively and quickly apply them in their day to day work. The thrust space of this study is to grasp whether or not the employees are ready to retain training inputs and apply whenever the learned input needed for apply. The transfer of coaching skills not solely helps the self development of the worker however additionally in transfer of training to alternative employees likewise. One side of the analysis is demographic character and another side in this analysis various variables applied even after six months from the date of training.

Table 1

Attitudinal Scale of Employees of Southern Railway after Training Programs

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	Total
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Rules	12 (8.89)	31 (22.96)	28 (20.74)	49 (36.30)	15 (11.11)	135 (100)
Assistance	10 (7.41)	56 (41.48)	24 (17.78)	37 (27.41)	8 (5.93)	135 (100)
Problems	12 (8.89)	82 (60.74)	32 (23.70)	6 (4.44)	3 (2.22)	135 (100)
Efforts	4 (2.96)	64 (47.41)	39 (28.89)	25 (18.52)	3 (2.22)	135 (100)
Work	11 (8.15)	82 (60.74)	27 (20.00)	13 (9.63)	2 (1.48)	135 (100)
Satisfaction	11 (8.15)	74 (54.81)	19 (14.07)	26 (19.26)	5 (3.70)	135 (100)
Retention	14 (10.37)	73 (54.07)	34 (25.19)	10 (7.41)	4 (2.96)	135 (100)
Rotation	8 (5.93)	79 (58.52)	23 (17.04)	17 (12.59)	8 (5.93)	135 (100)
Practice	14 (10.37)	75 (55.56)	28 (20.74)	11 (8.15)	7 (5.19)	135 (100)
Exposure	31 (22.96)	50 (37.04)	27 (20.00)	22 (16.30)	5 (3.70)	135 (100)
Update	26 (19.26)	70 (51.85)	24 (17.78)	14 (10.37)	1 (0.74)	135 (100)

Source: Primary Data

Note: Figures in parenthesis is in percentage

Table 2

Chi-square Tests on Demographic Characteristics against Rule, Assistance, Problem, Efforts, Work and Satisfaction

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Rules	Assistance	Problems	Efforts	Work	Satisfaction
Age	0.64 <sup>1</sup>	0.84	0.91	0.50	0.25	0.38
Gender	0.67	0.07	0.19	0.05	0.35	0.46
Marital	0.92	0.29	1.00	0.38	0.21	0.09
Qualification	0.13	0.16	0.72	0.57	0.02	0.03
Income	0.32	0.03	0.93	0.29	0.01	0.02
Category	0.28	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.00

Source: Primary data

### **8.1. Rules**

Table 2 (column 1) consists of the results of chi-square test with 5% significance level. The comparative analysis revealed that about 30% (Table 1; column 1 & 2) of respondents were able to recall the rules they learnt during the training season irrespective of their age, gender, marital status, qualification, income and category of trade even after six months. Therefore, it was proposed to administer non-parametric test, the chi-square test, to know whether there exists any internal inconsistency in data under analysis. For example, when age is taken into account, irrespective of age groups, whether the answer is in favour of the results of comparative analysis or not. The results of the test proved that there is no difference in their answers. Therefore, it is concluded that the rule content of the training program has been well taken by the trainees.

### **8.2. Independent handling of work**

The trainees were evaluated in the context of handling the assigned work independently without getting assistance from the superiors or from other subordinates (Table 2; column 2). The comparative analysis revealed that about 64% trainees handled the work independently with learnt input of the training. Table 2 (column 2) consists of result with 5% level of significance. Apart from income and the category of trade, other variables proved to be in favour of independent handling of work. The lower income groups and category 1 and 2 namely (ticket booking clerks both current & advance) were depending on the superiors or subordinates to do the work. Both hypotheses were rejected at 5% significance level.

### **8.3. Handling complex issues**

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<sup>1</sup> Significance at 5% level i.e. if the value in the cells is less than 0.05, the true hypothesis is rejected and if it is higher than 0.05, the true hypothesis is accepted.



Crises management is one of components of the training program offered by the Zonal School. Complex problems rarely occurred. The trainees agreed that they have encountered complex problems in their jobs during time of six months after training (Table 2; column 3). The comparative analysis revealed that about 68% (Table 1) of the respondents applied the learnt skill when they encountered the complex issues. Internal inconsistency has been tested with chi-square test at 5% significance level. All demographic variables excepting the category of trade with the variable of handling complex issues were proved to be insignificant. The employees belonging to the category 1 and 2 namely (ticket booking clerks both current & advance) did not agree that the training input has helped them in solving the critical issues of their jobs.

#### **8.4. Administrative assistance in applying skills**

It is important that the trained personnel should be given an opportunity to apply their skills whenever the work place of SR it demands (Table 2; column 4). This perspective has also been touched in this study. The railway organisation facilitating job will generally make the training successful. About 70% of the employees irrespective of their demographic characters agreed that they have the management with willingness to help them in applying their learnt skills. The internal inconsistency was also tested with chi-square test at 5% level of inconsistency. The category 1 and 2 of employees namely (ticket booking clerks both current & advance) believed they don't have friendly administrations to apply their skills learnt.

#### **8.5. Ability to correlate theory with actual work in the field**

The training has been conducted generally within the four walls with some extent of creation of prototype model. One of the important components of any successful training program is to make the trainees to apply the learnt skills when he or she encounters the similar occasion (Table 2; Column (5)). About 68% of the respondents were able to correlate the theoretical inputs with real time situations. However, the internal inconsistency was tested at 5% level of significance. Chi-square result revealed that there existed internal inconsistencies in three demographic characteristics of qualification, income and category of trade. Category one and two namely, the current and advanced booking clerks trade agreed that they were not able to correlate the theory and the real-time expertise.

#### **8.6. Satisfaction in handling complex issues independently**

Reinforcement is the reward for any employee when he or she takes a job willingly. The training inputs may be taken either positive or negative reinforcement. About 65% of the respondents agreed that they have been satisfied when they would take up any job relevant to the application of skills learnt. Again, the internal inconsistency was tested with chi-square at 5% significant level (Table 2; Column (6)). Category 1 and 2 namely (ticket booking clerks both current & advance) belonging to qualification, category 1 of Income and category 3 (ticket checking staff) of trade were not satisfied in handling complex issues independently with imparted skills.

Table 3

Chi-Square Tests on Demographic Characters against Retention, Rotation, Practical Training, Exposure and Updating

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Retention	Rotation	Practice	Exposure	Update
Age	0.17 <sup>2</sup>	0.11	0.13	0.98	0.02
Gender	0.00	0.09	0.57	0.84	0.35
Marital status	0.41	0.10	0.79	0.84	0.56
Qualification	0.56	0.50	0.56	0.00	0.41
Income	0.00	0.22	0.19	0.66	0.12
Category	0.00	0.10	0.14	0.18	0.01

Source: Primary Data

### **8.7. Ability in retaining rules and regulations in the memory**

Rules and regulations are generally memorized initially. When they are applied repeatedly, it will be easily remembered. Therefore, this perspective has been incorporated in the study. About 65% of the respondents agreed that they were able to know the rules and regulations by heart. The internal inconsistency was tested again with 5% level of significance (Table 3: column (1)). There existed the inconsistency in three groups like gender, income and category of trade. Male respondents, category 1 and 2 namely (ticket booking clerks both current & advance) under qualification and category 1 namely, current ticket booking clerks of trade disagreed that they were able to retain the rules and regulation in the memory.

### **8.8. Job rotations and retentions of the learned skills**

Southern Railway is one of the biggest public sector undertakings. The employees are generally transferred from one trade to another. Therefore, the training input has been made in such a way that it would suit to any trade and also to contain the needed input for each job. When switching over from one job to another takes place, the employee has to employ the newly learnt skill demanded by the job. This perspective has also been addressed in the study. Majority (63%) believed that the job rotation has helped in retaining the new skills learnt Table 1; column 1 & 2). There existed no inconsistency in their answers (Table 3; column (2)).

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<sup>2</sup> Significance at 5% level i.e. if the value in the cells is less than 0.05, the true hypothesis is rejected and if it is higher than 0.05, the true hypothesis is accepted.

### **8.9. Compatibility of practical training with theoretical inputs**

The compatibility of practical training along with the theoretical input has been another dimension this study. Therefore, the opinion on compatibility was tested with chi-square test at 5 per cent significant level. About 65 per cent of the respondents opined that there existed compatibility of practical training with theoretical inputs (Table 1). They realized it when they applied the skills learnt through the practical component of the training program (Table 3; column (3)).

### **8.10. Standard of the theory imparted**

Majority (65%) believed that the standard of the training program has been apt and learnable. The Chi-square also proved to be insignificant when it has come to test inconsistency in giving answer to the question (Table 3; column (4)).

### **8.11. Ability in updating the rules learnt**

Majority of the respondents agreed that the rules and regulations learnt through training facilitated updating. The answer given by the respondents belonging to the different categories were tested with chi-square test at 5% level of significance (Table 3: column (5)). Except age groups and category of trade, all other groups agreed that there existed updating in their jobs.

## **9. Findings**

Under the category of skills learnt, the following findings were drawn. The practical training is relevant to the theory training. The standard of theory is too high and difficult to understand. Enough exposure has been given to work across sections but in reality one sticks to a particular section for a longer period of time. The trainees were able to update the rules then and there keeping in memory the basic rules learnt during training.

With respect to application of skill, the following findings were established. There were few insecurities of application of rules while handling the actual work. The employees were able to handle work directly without any assistance from supervisors/colleagues. Efforts taken by the administration to enhance individual's interpretation of skills is not appreciable some extent.

The finding which is recounted to the hypothetical frame work and, it's connected and their alternative hypothesis is accepted to the relevant study. So there is a significant relationship between Gender/Income/Category of the respondents, Age of the respondents, Qualification of the respondents and some of the variable Update. From the above findings concluded that most of the trainees are adolescents and their demographic variables play a major role in this research study.

Under the cognitive section, the following findings have been drawn. The trainees were able to correlate theory with actual work. The respondents derived satisfaction after handling complex issues independently. Under memory segment, they were able to know and apply the rules and regulations by heart. The general opinion of the trained personnel is that the job rotation helps in updation /retention of the learned skills in various centers in SR with particular allotted timings.

## **10. Conclusion**

The new skills imparted through the Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) have been retained and applied even after fairly long-period by the trainees in Southern Railways. Though, the training programs today achieve the results, few segments of employees are not fully reached. The training may be given to each segment in separate centres. Organisational hierarchy has to be set aside when they assemble together to learn something new through training, which is some extent impossible in the context of the study. It has been found when few categories of trainees were indifferent in answering critical questions due to the status in the hierarchy.

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## **Biographies**

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the front line staff of the Indian Railways in their initial, promotional and refresher courses. Has the credit of having trained more than ninety thousand employees of age group ranging from twenty to sixty years. Presently he serves as an Associate Professor teaching the students of management studies in their masters degree. He has produced twenty one entrepreneurs and has guided more than two hundred students in their MBA project work. Is a member of the board of studies in seven colleges and a research adviser and guide for five Ph. D scholars and five M. Phil scholars. An invited speaker and trainer who has the credit of having trained nearly twenty five thousand students and employees belonging to various institutions of higher education, Police department, Indian telephone department, International Airway staff and Metro rail staff.

Dr. Michael David Premkumar, Head, Department of Management Studies and Associate Dean of International Relations of Bishop Heber College, Trichy has a combined industry and teaching experience of 23 Years. His longest tenure in the industry was as Area Sales Manager in Philips India Ltd, India for a period of 6 years. Presently he is the board of studies member in three colleges and doctoral committee member for more than 15 students. He is presently guiding 8 PhD scholars and 5 M. Phil scholars. Has guided more that 200 MBA students in their final year projects and has guided more that 20 M. Phil scholars. He has attended a Faculty Development Programme on Teaching Through Case Methods in Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad and is a certified Entrepreneurship Educator certified by National Entrepreneurship Network, Banagalore and Stanford Technology Ventures, USA, . He has attended many international, National and State level conferences in India and abroad and presented many research papers. Countries visited for academic purpose include France, UK, UAE and Srilanka.