A Quality Assurance Model for Training Government Teachers and Educational Officers of Educational Service Area Office

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Abstract

This research aimed to construct a suitable quality assurance model for training government teachers and educational officers of the Educational Service Area Offices. The research was separated into 3 phases: phase 1 was to review textbooks and research and to explore some information and opinions from people working at the Educational Service Area Offices around the country, phase 2 was to create and improve a quality assurance model for training and training standards, and phase 3 was to assess the model used in 5 training projects. The results of the research showed that the suitable model for quality assurance of the training of government teachers and educational officers of the Educational Service Area Offices consisted of 7 steps as follows: 1) Making Awareness of Quality, 2) Setting Goals & Training Standards, 3) Quality Monitoring, 4) Quality Audit, 5) Quality Assessment, 6) Quality Accreditation, and 7) Reinforcement.
Keywords: training, quality assurance, personnel development, training standards, government teachers and educational officers.

1. Introduction

According to academicians' general views, training was a systematic process or an activity being held with specific purposes. It was arranged to improve new knowledge, skills and good attitude for people in terms of desirable behavioral changes. (Beach, 1985: 193), (Blanchard and Thacker, 2550: 20-21),   (Robert W. Lucas, 1994: 3), (Flippo,1966: 262)

In Thailand, there are 225 units of The Educational Service Area Office. They are state agencies of the Office of the Basic Education Commission in the Ministry of Education. Their roles consist of controlling, supporting, and empowering schools in their areas. Their main responsibility is to develop teachers' and officers' knowledge, skills and attitude. However, their activities were based on organizational missions and global educational changes, therefore, all Educational Service Area Offices had to set training projects for teachers and other persons in their yearly plan because the development of government teachers and educational officers was considered very important as many problems were found to be caused by their staff's lack of awareness of organizational purposes and they were also inactive and non-creative. They were sometimes unfriendly, conflicted between each other, selfish, and corrupted, etc. On the other hand, well-trained employees become more confident in their tasks, which results in fewer mistakes, reduce rework that also reduces the cost associated with time, materials and support activities, improves employee satisfaction and enables the organization to remain competitive. (William Jr, 2008)

Some training projects got additional budgets from The Educational Service Area Offices and other Government offices, such as for teacher training for specific subjects and training of staff as a model for a curriculum trainer. They also included some projects that were required to be completed as per government law, such as the training for new executive positions, the training of newly recruited teachers, and the training for academic promotion. Therefore, it was regarded that the training was a significant process in developing their personnel.

Although the Educational Service Area Offices arranged a number of training projects, these never achieved the goals that were set. There were many factors causing the projects to fail, including lack of experienced organizers, lack of appropriate training facilities and equipment, lack of skilled trainers and little supporting budget, etc. Sometimes the training projects were rushed with a time limitation which affected the successful course completion. These factors caused the projects problems and reduced their quality. That is to say, trainees

did not receive significant knowledge, skills or changed attitudes according to the objectives specified in the project. This resulted in a waste of time and budget.

For solutions, the researcher thought the quality and outputs of the project would improve if the project was concerned with quality assurance, with developing suitable methods and good processes. After completing the training, it was observed that the trainees received new knowledge, skills and desirable attitudes in terms of adjusting their behaviors and working efficiency. This is why the researcher committed the study to develop a method of quality assurance for the training of government teachers and educational officers of the Education Service Area Offices.

2. Conclusion of the Research

This research was an experimental study combining qualitative and quantitative methods. The researcher collected the data from persons involved in the training the Education Service Area Offices arranged all over the country, by interviews with training experts and group discussions.   While the model and research tools were checked by the experts, the researcher committed them to a real situation and evaluated their quality in meeting the training standards. In summary; the created model of training quality assurance was fully able to increase the quality and output of the training and proved that this can be used as the model for quality assurance activities for the Education Service Area Offices. It also can be beneficial for other organizations, i.e. government sector, private sector and local communities to apply in developing their staff.

3. Objectives of the research

i. To create a suitable **quality assurance model for training** government teachers and educational officers of the Educational Service Area Offices.

ii. To develop standards and qualitative indicators for use in training government teachers and educational officers of the Educational Service Area Offices.

4. Scope of the research

4.1 Content

The research aimed to develop and verify a **model for quality assurance of the training** of government teachers and educational officers. According to the study, the Educational Service Area Offices worked as the main operational organizer, and it had supplementary tools consisting of training standards for government teachers and educational officers and the manual of quality assurance. Both of these tools were used together to prove the method quality.

4.2 Duration and Target Areas

For this research, a collection of data was carried out during the fiscal year 2008-2009, while the population was sampled using 175 units of the Educational Service Area Offices all over the country.

5. Expected Benefits

The results of the research represented a suitable method for quality assurance of the training of government teachers and educational officers. It also determined the quality training standards for the Educational Service Area Offices and others as per the following:

- To prove a method of quality assurance for the training of government teachers and educational officers was followed using correct academic procedures.

- To specify principles for the training standards of government teachers and educational officers, and which used together with indicators and quality benchmarks are suitable to be used by the Educational Service Area Offices.
- To use a method of quality assurance for the training standards of government teachers and educational officers that can be applied by every Educational Service Area Offices around the country. It can also be applied to educational institutes and other organizations in order to develop their staff's ability and efficiency. This will continuously help to improve the quality of personnel training.
- To use this research of quality assurance as a basis for other research and activities.

6. Research Methodology was divided into 3 phases as follows:

Phase 1: To study relevant principles, theories, and research about personnel training and quality assurance.   To collect current information, problems and opinions about   quality assurance of training for government teachers and educational officers of the Educational Service Area Offices in order to apply knowledge to create a method of quality assurance of training.

Phase 2: To create a suitable model of quality assurance and training standards for government teachers and educational officers as per the following:

- To set a model of quality assurance for training government teachers and educational officers of the Educational Service Area Offices. The model was synthesized through documents, explorations, and interviews in Phase 1. After that, it was used to compile a manual.
- To provide quality standards for training government teachers and educational officers which consisted of qualitative goals, qualitative criteria, qualitative indicators, and a description of qualitative levels of each component.
- To check suitability and possibility of both the model of training quality assurance and the training standards. This activity was run twice; the first time was to arrange a focus group activity to criticize both of them by the group members agreement, and the second time, the researcher presented it to 6 specialists for them to recheck and then adjust.

Phase 3: To try out and assess the quality assurance model for training of government teachers and educational officers of the Educational Service Area Office as per the following:

- To verify the quality assurance model and the training standards, they were used with a form of quality assessment in 5 training projects for government teachers and educational officers of the Educational Service Area Offices in order to check their efficiency. This experiment was divided into 2 sessions: 4 projects in the first session and 1 project in the second session.
- After finishing the study of each project, the researcher had to explore people's opinions about the method of the training quality assurance model in order to assess its efficiency. The researcher selected 5 specific target groups; 1) directors of the Educational Service Area Offices, 2) vice-directors of the Educational Service Area Offices who provided the personnel training, 3) board of the training committee or any appointed persons from the internal quality evaluation, 4) project organizers, and 5) experts or committees from the external quality evaluation. Then the researcher had to analyze outputs from the questionnaire to calculate their percentage, he also considered their content criticism to improve his method.
- To summarize results and write a report of the research.

7. Sample of the Research
The research used an opinion questionnaire and an interview which used 3 sampling groups as per the following:
7.1 Opinion Questionnaire (Phase 1)
Sampling group population used people from 175 units of the Educational Service Area Offices, i.e. directors of the Educational Service Area Offices (112 people), managers of policy and planning group (96 people), trainers (110 people), project organizers (115 people) and trainees (118 people).   They were classified into a group by the method using Krejcie and Morgan's instant table and multi-stage random sampling.
7.2 Opinion interviews (Phase 1)
The target group consisted of 5 specialists who worked on training from different organizations, i.e. the Office of the Basic Education Commission, the Development Institute of Teachers, Educators and Educational Officers, Universities, and the Educational Service Area Offices.
7.3 Opinion Questionnaire for Testing the Efficiency of the Pattern (Phase 3)
Sampling population was specified by 27 people who organized the personnel training from 4 Educational Service Area Offices which were an experiment unit of this research.

8. Research Tools
8.1 Tools for collection of data
It consisted of both 6 questionnaires and 1 interview form.
8.2 Tools for testing the efficiency of the model
It consisted of: 1) the quality assurance model and manual for training government teachers and educational officers 2) the quality standards and indicators for training, and 3) a questionnaire form for assessing suitability of the quality assurance model for training.

9. Data Analysis
- Closed-end questions were used to analyze the data and calculate the percentage (%), the mean (x bar) and the standard deviation (S.D.).
- Opinions and suggestions were used to analyze the content.

10. Results
The results of the research showed as follow.

1)   The appropriate knowledge for developing quality assurance model for training public teachers and educational officers of Educational Service Area Office included Systems theory, Result-Based Management, Controlling principles, Reinforcement, Awareness, Quality control, Quality assurance, Quality assurance for education, PDCA & SDCA circles, Training's quality control, Knowledge in training, Training's standard for early public officers by OCSC Thailand, and that from related researches.

2)   The appropriate quality assurance model for training government teachers and educational officers of the Educational Service Area Offices consists of 7 steps as per the following:

Step 1: Making Awareness of Quality
The first step is to motivate the training project organizers and participants to think about the quality of the training as their priority by using result-based management.

Step 2: Setting Goals & Training Standards
The second step is to set achievement goals of training and training quality standards which conform to training needs of the Secondary Educational Service Area Offices and training policies of the Basic Education Commission Office. In fact, the Secondary Educational Service Area Offices can set training quality standards themselves or select from the existing standards which conform to their needs.

Step 3: Quality Monitoring
This step is to achieve the expected quality training by using the required standard criteria, and entire control, assigning the right person to arrange the training, appointment of a project board and inspectors, and practical working schedule etc.

Step 4: Quality Audit
This step is to monitor whether or not the organizers followed the training standards or the project outlines. The quality audit consisted of 2 dimensions: the organizer themselves and committees or knowledgeable people not involved in the project. The auditing results were used to improve the perfect next step.

Step 5: Quality Assessment
This step is to summarize the comparison between the results of the real performance and the quality standards of each indicator in the manual representing levels of the whole project and each component. The quality assessment can be evaluated anytime; however it is suggested carrying this out at least 3 times: pre-training, on-training, and post-training. In a case of the organizers and the project board wanting to assess themselves, it is called "internal assessment". In the case of using assessment committees or other knowledgeable people, it is called "the external assessment".

Step 6: Quality Accreditation
This step is to accredit the assessed results and confirm that the project meets the standard qualified to a satisfactory level.

Step 7: Reinforcement:
After the results meet the standard required, the last step is to arrange a special event for the staff who worked well, and to give them honor by giving praise, a certificate or an award, etc. This was an alternative to encourage them to develop the training project for government teachers and educational officers in the future.

3)   The appropriate quality standards for training government teachers and educational officers of Educational Service Area Office consisted of principles, objectives, quality training targets, requirements, and core standards divided into 3 groups : Input factors, Process factors and Output factors. There were 22 sub-standards which consisted of 48 indicators and 5-level quality criterions in each item.

Group 1: Input factors (I)
Training input standards consists of 10 sub-standards as follow.
I 1. Standards of training policy and planning
I 2. Standards of training information system
I 3. Standards of training project
I 4. Standards of training project organizer
I 5. Standards of training courses
I 6. Standards of trainees
I 7. Standards of places for training
I 8. Standards of trainers
I 9. Standards of training aids
I 10. Standards of training documents

Group 2: Process factors (P)
Training process standard consists of 11 sub-standards as follow.
P 1. Standards of roles of the Educational Service Area Office administrator in training
P 2. Standards of supporting resources for training

P 3. Standards of planning for training
P 4. Standards of roles of training project organizers
P 5. Standards of training courses improvement
P 6. Standards of roles of trainees
P 7. Standards of service and organizing for trainers
P 8. Standards of using aids and documents for training
P 9. Standards of learning methods in training
P 10. Standards of service in training
P 11. Standards of training evaluation

Group 3: Output factors (O)
Training output standards consists of 11 sub-standards as follow.
O 1. Standards of trainees passed training course
O 2. Standards of training project achievement

4) All training projects, implemented with the quality assurance model and the quality training standard for training government teachers and educational officers of Educational Service Area Office, were evaluated at high quality level and accredited by the Educational Service Area Offices.

11. Discussion

The quality assurance model for training government teachers and educational officers of the Educational Service Area Offices, developed by the researcher, is derived from quality assurance principles that consists of "Quality Control" "Quality Internal Audit" and "Quality External Assessment" (Banjong 2003). However, there are many theories and principles concern with quality assurance, for example, Result-based management : RBM, Risk Management, Systems theory, Educational quality assurance, Quality circle, Motivation theory, and Reinforcement etc.

By studying related knowledge, analyzing data from questionnaires and the interviews, focus group meeting, approving by experts, and trying out, the researcher found that the appropriate quality assurance model for training government teachers and educational officers of the Educational Service Area Offices consists of 7 steps ; 1) making awareness of quality, 2) setting goals & training standards 3) quality monitoring   4) quality audit 5) quality assessment 6) quality accreditation and 7) reinforcement. The model was checked by 6 experts and they agree that the model was matched with the research objectives, knowledge in quality assurance, training problems and training needs of the Educational Service Area Offices and was properly in its' components, sequence arrangement, and putting into use. The opinion of experts was in accord with training participants' summarized after trying out the model by 5 training projects. However, the researcher found that the assessment results of each training project after tried out were into different level and also found that no over high quality level in every project. On the other hand, there were some weak points founded as following.

1) Many educational officers knew less and had no awareness in "quality". They had no skill for goal and standards setting and had no participation in this step.

2) Project organizers and participants didn't have more experience in training and someone didn't take responsibility also. That brought about unsuccessful training project and had no improving and solving problems.

3) Some training quality standards and indicators were refused to acknowledge because of no corresponding to training situation and more difficult to assess.

4) There was not enough time for monitoring, assessing and improving the training project, so many executors performed their duty concisely or skipped some steps and got more careless.

5) Some quality level of training standard indicators between internal and external assessment were different, because the assessors were different in understanding and using discretion.

6) There were someone disagreed with the quality level of training projects because of no explanation about assessment results and the project organizers had no chance to explain and give more details to assessors.

11. Suggestions
11.1 General Suggestions

1) To apply the developed method of quality assurance for the training of government teachers and educational officers as per the following:

- To recruit outside evaluators who have actual knowledge and skills about training. In addition, they are to be respected or a member of a quality assurance organization so that the results from the assessment are acceptable to everyone.

- The quality assessment should have summaries that can give the result of the assessment to everyone involved, using the same process as the external assessment used by the educational quality assurance of the Office of National Education Standard and Quality Assessment, in order to inform both the good and bad results of the assessment and also give the opportunity for the project organizers and committees to explain what they have done. Then when the assessors have completed their final conclusion they will then announce the results so that all staff can accept both their strong and weak points and learn how to develop them for the next time.

2) To apply for training criteria

- To develop quality standards for training they should have a public hearing and a blueprint of standard documents, clearly including definitions, qualifications and processes of assessment so that staff can achieve the same standard using the same criteria.
- To apply other various organizations quality assurance standards, the Educational Service Area Office should give the opportunity for everyone from the target groups, such as educational administrators, principals, project organizers, including government teachers and educational officers to provide input and comments to build up knowledge and understanding of the system and to help each other develop their skills before announcing the quality assurance standard.
- The Educational Service Area Office should review the training criteria continuously at least once a year to achieve a higher standard.

11.2 Suggestions for further study

The training quality assurance organizers should:

- Research and expand the quality assurance forms to include other activities of the Educational Service Area Offices and other government offices.
- Research and develop the training standard criteria for staff in the Educational Service Area Offices by using the participation process to standardize the training throughout the country.

12. Application of the Training Quality Assurance Model

The Educational Service Area Offices followed the objectives of the project and used the model of quality assurance for training as per the following:

Step 1 : Making awareness of the quality assurance process

1) Make people aware of the policy of personnel development and also emphasize qualitative output from every activity.

2) Modify various techniques in activities in order to encourage everyone to understand the benefits and importance of education quality assurance, for example, a demonstration, a study trip, a meeting with important people involved in the training process.

3) Ensure everyone understands the theory and methods of quality assurance for the training of government teachers and educational officers.

4) Ensure everyone understands the principles and methods of quality assurance for training of government teachers and educational officers.

Step 2 : Setting Goals & Training Standards

The Educational Service Area Offices should follow the following processes:

1) Set goals for the training quality or the training standards and apply those standards or other existing standards to the project, for example, the training standards from the Office of Civil Commission or from other various researches to meet the required levels of acceptable and satisfactory quality standards.

2) Ensure everyone understands the quality assurance goals or the training standards used in the project through holding meetings or official seminars.

Step 3 : Quality Monitoring

1) Concentrate on personnel training by practicing and understanding a style of writing used in each component in order to clarify the project. Also monitor the project in terms of its accuracy, entirety and its accordance with the Educational Service Area Offices' needs. This will ensure that the project organizer has the necessary skills needed to conduct the training. However if problems are found with the project, it will need to be improved before approval

2) Monitor the person who organizes a project or arranges any activity to ensure they have the knowledge, experience and skills necessary to improve other people's understanding and skills.

3) Select training projects needing quality assurance and prioritize them according to their characteristics as per the following:

Firstly, the high budget projects, the risk management projects, or influential projects, etc., and secondly, other significant projects.

4) Appoint and assign persons to each section of the project and also give them a chance to assess the project using the same criteria as the internal assessment process.

5) Search for and appoint knowledgeable people to do the external assessment and also set a committee structure or appoint an independent committee.

6) Follow up the training project to ensure that the input and output followed the processes to meet the quality assurance goals or the training standards.

Step 4 : Quality Audit

Objectives of the quality audit aimed to compare components of completed training and the specified training standards. It was used to improve the quality and rectify any mistakes. In this case, there were 3 relevant groups, i.e. 1) a group of office managers, 2) a group of project organizers and administrative committees, and 3) a group of external assessors. They had responsibility for important activities arranged by the Educational Service Area Offices as per the following:

1) Set a method, a procedure, a responsible person, and the duration for the audit process clearly.

2) Make auditing tools to suit the quality goals specified or the training standards used. The tools were related to indicators of the assessment.

3) Auditing operation needs to be carried out by relevant people as per the following:

- A responsible person should check the contents of the project before submitting it for approval. They should check that the components meet the quality assurance goals and training standards and improve and proceed according to the objectives of the project similar to the processes of the internal assessment.
- Administrators of the Educational Service Area Offices should check the project appropriateness before approval. They need to emphasize that the project meets the criteria of a policy, the needs of human resource development, and other possibilities.
- Administrative committees of the training need to follow the training standards and the quality goals for checking any working procedures and results happening from responsibility of each section similar to the processes of the internal assessment. They need to solve any mistakes together with the project organizers.
- Committees of the external assessment should consist of knowledgeable people or committees of external assessment appointed by the Educational Service Area Offices. They should check qualitative levels of each indicator specified in the criteria or every quality goal to analyze qualitative levels of the projects. Then they need to report to the director of the Educational Service Area Office.

Step 5 : Quality Assessment

Quality assessment is a role and responsibility of the external assessment committee or other knowledgeable people that the Educational Service Areas Offices select and appoint. They are offered to do an assessment and comparison of the real performance and the quality standards of each indicator in the manual. As a result, they could summarize qualitative levels of the whole project. However, if they follow the method the researcher created, it could be summarized in the procedures as per the following:

1) Study all indicators clearly.

2) Classify indicators into groups to audit and assess. It is significantly based on an appropriate duration and the audit process. The groups of auditing indicators are from a group of pre-training, a group of on-training and a group of post-training indicators, for example, the indicators for the training, selection of participants, and data collection of development needs. These are classified into the group of pre-training.

3) Operation of time-fixed audit and assessment are as per the following:

- Duration of Pre-training; it assesses qualitative levels of factor components and significant processes in a preparation period. The components consist of directors, organizers, a training project, a curriculum, a place, a speaker, participants, media, and documents, etc. Sometimes, it is reassessed if the organizer needs to improve and solve mistakes before starting the project.
- Duration of On-training; it assesses qualitative levels of working processes and all activities. These processes and activities consist of facilitation for the speaker and participants, learning activities, a process of passing on the speaker's knowledge, media and document usage, participants' roles, and so on. They are in line with indicators of the training criteria.
- Duration of Post-training; it assesses qualitative levels of output components, a process of the training monitoring, and concluded qualitative levels of the whole project.

Step 6 : Quality Accreditation

It is the responsibility of leaders to motivate the individuals who work for them. (Knowles, 2011)   After receiving the result from the external assessment committee, the administrators of the Educational Service Area Offices need to follow the steps as per the following:

1) Announce the assessed results to all relevant people involved in the project and the administrative committee.
2) Release a statement stating that the project meets the quality assurance for training.

Step 7 : Reinforcement for developing sustainable quality

1) If the result met the required standard, arrange a special event for the staff to give them honor and praise, a certificate or an award, etc.
2) Broadcast the project successfulness through various channels such as publishing in a magazine, announcing on the website, launching the exhibition, or other proper communication in order to promote a good model and to take pride in responsible people.
3) Improve and standardize the criteria of qualitative levels of all components used in the project for every fiscal year.

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A flowchart of the model of quality assurance for training government teachers
and educational officers of the Educational Service Area Offices