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## Training Needs Assessment of Cooperatives in Applicable Technical and Vocational Educations in Kermanshah (Iran)

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**Abstract:** The present study was aimed to determine and prioritize the training needs of industrial, agricultural and service cooperatives in technical and vocational educations and the current educational courses for these enterprises. Furthermore, the gap between these two items is evaluated in Kermanshah province (Iran). A discrepancy approach and the Klein's needs assessment model were used. This was a cross-sectional study conducted on 400 individuals who were selected randomly based on cluster sampling procedure from all active cooperatives in the province. The data were collected using a questionnaire. In all three cooperatives, number of respondents attended in high priority educational needs courses in common trainings were very few. In this respect, only 35.4% (few) and 6.1% (very few) of the respondents have respectively passed courses on accounting of cooperatives (basic) and marketing and market management as the first and second needs mentioned in common trainings. In industrial cooperatives the "production management" course has the highest priority among the respondents that 1.1% of them passed this course. Among the agricultural cooperatives, the "management of broiler farms" has the highest priority with 2.6 participation percentage. Comparison of the training needs and participation rate of technical and vocational training courses in agricultural, industrial and service cooperatives in Kermanshah province showed small agreement between these two items; such that the findings indicate a trial and error approach in educational policy decision making.

**Key words:** Training needs assessment, cooperative enterprises, training, technical and vocational trainings, Iran

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### INTRODUCTION

Education is an important tool for human resource development. Companies and organizations spend millions of dollars on training and development of their human capital. However, the question is how much is the effectiveness of education on staff development and how much is it in line with their needs of efficacy? These questions are the basis for judgment of companies and organizations on accuracy and effectiveness of their educational programs (Sherazi *et al.*, 2011). Cheng *et al.* (2001) demonstrated that training is a costly investment and only 10% of all educational costs would lead to positive delivery of education. In other words, only 10% change occurs in staff in the workplace after the training.

Cooperative sector is one of the three major economic sectors in Iran, along with the state and private sectors. A glance at the pathology of Iranian cooperatives

demonstrates that education has been a major challenge for these enterprises. Nejabat-Sabet (1995) concluded that the two main problems of manufacturing cooperatives are lack of professional workforce and poor quality training. In the studies carried out by the Iranian Ministry of Agriculture, Dizavandi *et al.* (2010), Yaghoubi and Ghasemi (2009) and Azkia (1999) demonstrated that poor management of the cooperatives was the key factor leading to their breakup. Azkia (1999) pointed out to not paying enough attention to training and agricultural extension as the underlying causes of rural cooperatives' failure. In addition, he added that the level of technical knowledge of rural cooperative members has not changed since 1962. It is considered poor economic foundation, lack of organizational order and feasible measures, absence of modern technologies, low education level of first-and middle-level managers, and finally education and educational management as the main problems of

cooperatives (Arayesh, 2011). Abbasi and Ghurchian (2009) stated training of graduate cooperatives as one of priorities in development of cooperatives. In a study conducted by Mulayim (2003) on production cooperatives in Turkey, poor education and research was determined as the major challenges and problems of this economic system. UWCC (2006) reported poor training of cooperative members for dealing with modern technologies and getting along with them as the main obstacles for growth of cooperatives. Different studies have shown that need assessment is the first and most fundamental step in implementation of any educational programs. Need assessment is defined as the process of data collection and analysis, through which the needs of individuals, groups, organizations and communities are identified. Alibeigi (1996) defined need assessment as a systematic process for determination of objectives and priorities to be used in planning. In his extensive studies, Edward concluded that almost 21% of the USA economic growth during the period 1929-1952 resulted from advances achieved via improvement of the workforce quality and promotion of technology level; both of which are highly influenced by workforce training (Parhizkar, 2001). Considering the 7-9% contribution of cooperatives in the Iran economy (internet, visited: 5 Feb. 2012) and the goal of the Iran's fifth development plan to achieve 25% contribution of the economy by cooperatives, it is necessary to revise the major and executive policies of cooperatives. Regarding what was mentioned above and also the importance of education and educational need assessment, the current study was performed to organize the educational policies and managerial plans in the cooperation administration of Kermanshah province. Based on the educational calendar of the cooperation administration, educational performance of the organization has been a continuous process since 1992 and it has been delivered through courses, seminars, meetings and workshops. The number of passed courses increased from 1992-2001 and then slightly decreased from 2001 on. Furthermore, during the period 1992-2000, the total training hours the courses held increased and then decreased from 2001 on. As a result of the decrease in the number of courses, duration of the courses decreased. This also comes true for the number of individuals trained; the number of trained individuals increased from 1992 to 2000 and then decreased from 2001 on. In general, reduction in the number of courses led to a decrease in duration of the courses and the number of trained individuals. The goals of the current study are as follows: (1) Identification of the technical and vocational trainings passed by the members of agricultural, industrial and service cooperatives in Kermanshah province (Iran) and (2) identification of the technical and vocational training

needs of cooperatives members in Kermanshah province. Evaluation of the current and desirable educational statuses and determination of the difference of these two statuses was based on the discrepancy need assessment approach.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This was a cross-sectional descriptive study, performed in Kermanshah province (Iran) during 2009-2010. The data were collected using attribute-based survey method. The Klein's (Abbaszadegan and Torkzade, 2002) and beta need assessment models were used in the study. The applicable technical and vocational trainings delivered to develop or improve a certain professional skill (Farshadfar, 2009) were evaluated. A questionnaire was used in the survey to assess educational needs of the cooperatives.

**Study population:** The study population consisted of 1702 cooperatives in industry, agriculture and services. By exclusion of inactive cooperatives, only 923 cooperatives were evaluated in the study. The units of analysis in the study were members of the cooperatives, i.e., the main members, with priority given to the managerial board, Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and inspectors.

**Sample size and sampling method:** In the study, the sample size was calculated according to the Cochran's formula; as follows:

$$n = \frac{t^2 pq}{d^2} \div \left( 1 + \frac{1}{N} (t^2 pq / d^2 - 1) \right)$$

where,  $t$  is the percentage of point distribution equal to 2 for the confidence interval of 95%;  $p$  is the number of individuals in the population having the desirable characteristic,  $q = 1-p$  and  $d$  is the error ( $d = 5\%$ ) and  $N =$  statistical population-258808.

In this regard, the sample size was calculated as 400. Since the study population consisted of 923 active agricultural, industrial and service cooperatives located in Kermanshah province and the calculated sample size was 400, we selected four members from the board of founders of 100 cooperatives.

In this study, proportionate cluster sampling was used. For this purpose, the number of members in the three groups of agricultural, industrial and service cooperatives was calculated and then the sample size for each group was determined proportionate to the group size. The number of selected cooperatives was 48, 22 and

30 for the agricultural, industrial and service cooperatives, respectively. In the following, based on the same method, the contribution of each town of the province was determined according to the number of members from the town in each type of cooperatives. In this regard, the sample size of agricultural, industrial and service cooperative members was calculated as 192, 88 and 120, respectively. Finally, using simple randomized sampling, the number of cooperatives from each town which would be included in the study was determined and the questionnaires were distributed among the members. From the 400 questionnaire distributed, 376 were filled out, returned back and were analyzed for further assessment.

**Preparation of the questionnaire:** The questionnaire was prepared according to the data obtained from the technical and vocational trainings applicable in the province (including those applicable in the cooperation administration and technical and vocational training organization). Furthermore, we considered the recommendations provided by of education counselors of cooperation administration, project supervisor and sociologists. Firstly, the list of technical and vocational trainings provided by the technical and vocational training organization of the province was prepared and then integrated into the list of courses applicable by the cooperation administration. Since separate lists on the agriculture, industry and service sector were required, adopting the recommendations of educational counselors of the cooperation administration of Kermanshah province, the courses were categorized as follows: (1) common courses for the three sectors, which included 74 applicable courses, (2) agricultural courses, containing 33 applicable training courses (3) industrial courses, consisted of 23 applicable training courses and (4) industrial-agricultural including seven applicable training courses. The classification was used in the final version of the questionnaire. Furthermore, the items on the services cooperatives were included in the common courses. The questionnaire was initiated with contextual and demographic variables including age, sex, education level, type of the cooperative, position in the cooperative and history of membership, courses passed (in the cooperation administration or other organizations) and the relationship between the field of activity and the courses attended. Needs assessment questionnaire was designed in two sections; for each course, the first part consists of Yes/No items like “have you passed the course?” and the second section was “how much do you need to attend the course?” Respondents answered the item on a five-point Likert scale. The scale was rated as follows; way too much (first-degree priority), too much (second-degree priority),

moderate (third-degree priority), a little (fourth-degree priority) and very little (fifth-degree priority).

Assessment and priority setting of the educational needs and technical and vocational courses passed by the members of cooperatives.

**Method 1:** In the book “Rural community and its needs,” Rafiepour (1995) proposed a method for priority setting of the needs. To tackle this problem, he adopted the following method: (1) dividing the number of individuals who expressed a need by the degree of importance they assigned to the need (2) the result of all divisions were added and the sum would present the importance of the need and (3) the needs would be ranked according to the sum of scores. Higher scores indicate higher priority of the need (the scores given in Table 3 were obtained by this method).

**Method 2:** The mean score of needs were obtained by the Friedman test in SPSS software (Ghiasvand, 2008). The two methods were simultaneously employed to determine the score and rank of priority of each need.

Since need assessment process in the current study was based upon the discrepancy approach and evaluates the gap between the current and desirable statuses, we provided the priority of trainings passed by cooperative members (current status) along with the expressed educational priorities (desirable status). This would give the reader a better understanding of the differences and gaps between the needs. Moreover, the needs which were given higher priority by the participants were compared with the courses passed by them.

## RESULTS

According to the data obtained in the study, the mean age of respondents was 36.94 ( $\pm 8.93$ ) years and 77.9% of them were male. With regard to the educational level of the cooperative members, 11.4, 17.8, 40.7, 12.5, 14.4 and 2.4% of the members had education level of primary school, secondary school, high school diploma, A.A., B.Sc. and M.Sc., respectively. Considering the position of the member in the cooperative, 24.7, 59.1 and 14.1% of the respondents were CEO, members of the board of founders and inspectors, respectively. Membership duration ranged from 1-27 years, with the mean value of 6 years. The highest frequency for membership duration was 5 years (15.2%). Trainings held by the Cooperation Administration and passed by cooperative members were as follows: justification sessions for the board of founders ( $n = 47$ , 12.4%), basic accounting (4; 1.1%), getting familiar for the responsibilities for managers ( $n = 5$ , 1.3%), getting

familiar for the responsibilities for inspectors (n = 1, 0.3%), getting familiar with the rules of cooperatives (n = 2; 0.5%), entrepreneurship (n = 1, 0.3%), directors' training (n = 1, 0.3%), ICDL (n = 3, 0.8%), financial affairs (n = 33, 8.7%), health in facilities (n = 3, 0.8%), management and leadership (n = 5, 1.3%), poultry feed ration formulation (n = 4, 1.1%), honey beekeeping (n = 3, 0.8%), greenhouse plant production (n = 1, 0.3%) and principles of pasture management (n = 3, 0.8%). Trainings held by other organizations and passed by cooperative members included: accounting (n = 3, 0.8%), industrial management (n = 5, 1.3%), computer applications (n = 8, 2.1), commerce (n = 2, 0.5%), auto parts (n = 2, 0.5%), getting familiar with the labor law (n = 1, 0.3%), general health (n = 9, 2.4%), principles of pasture management (n = 5, 1.3%), gardening (n = 2, 0.5%), poultry improvement (n = 13, 3.4%) and carpet design (n = 4, 1.1%). The respondents considered the courses to be related to their field of activity to a great extent. The mean score of this item was 4.06 (very) ( $\pm 0.8103$ ).

Regarding what was mentioned above and also the importance of education and educational need assessment, the current study was performed to organize the educational policies and managerial plans in the Cooperation Administration of Kermanshah province.

The technical and vocational training courses common among agricultural, industrial and service cooperatives Using Yes/No, the respondents indicated the courses they passed. The fifteen most frequent courses among the common courses are presented in Table 1. The most frequent training courses of cooperative members in common training course were: Cooperatives accounting (preliminary) (35.3), check related

laws (15.7), custom regulations (15.7) and principles of marketing (12.3) (Table 1).

**Training courses held for the industrial cooperatives:**

According to the respondents, the highest attended courses were: (1) introduction to dyes and their combination in the carpet industry (it was mentioned as a need with high priority in Table 1), (2) the art of carpet weaving, (3) weaving artistic carpets and (4) production of hand-woven kilims and marketing for them (Table 2). It should be noted that the lowest attended courses were production of artistic materials (matting goods), production of clay goods, carpet design, flower making art, production of artistic materials (needlework) and making statues with shells.

**Training courses held for the agricultural cooperatives:**

Most frequently participated courses for members of agricultural cooperatives were principles of poultry feeding, common diseases among human and animals (zoonosis), poultry feed ration formulation, poultry health and improvement, management of laying-hen farms and application of statistical software in analysis of Furthermore, none of the respondents attended courses such as feeding of farmed fish, principles of feeding of Coldwater fish, breeding of aquatic organisms, evaluation of aquatic organism reservoir and catching fish and other aquatic organisms. These were the least participated courses (the courses were not mentioned in Table 3).

**Common training courses held for the agricultural and industrial cooperatives:**

Among the participants, 1.4% attended the courses on electronic purchase and sale and principles of food storage. This was the highest

Table 1: The technical and vocational training courses common between agricultural, industrial, and service cooperatives

Order of priority	Need	Yes		No		Sum	Undeclared	Total
		No.	%	No.	%			
1	Cooperatives accounting (preliminary)	133	35.3	241	64.1	99.5	2	100
2	Check-related laws	59	15.7	315	83.8	99.5	2	100
3	Custom regulations	59	15.7	315	83.8	99.5	2	100
4	Principles of marketing	46	12.3	328	87.2	99.5	2	100
5	Word processing to computer aided	43	11.4	331	88.1	99.5	2	100
6	Accounting for cooperatives (UPDATE)	42	11.2	331	88.0	99.2	4	100
7	Employing computer	39	10.4	335	89.1	99.5	2	100
8	Spreadsheet (Excel)	37	9.8	337	89.7	99.5	2	100
9	Information and communication	35	9.3	339	90.2	99.5	2	100
10	Storage	32	8.5	342	91.0	99.5	2	100
11	Data base	31	8.2	343	91.3	99.5	2	100
12	The effects of aggregation	31	8.2	343	91.3	99.5	2	100
13	Financial accounting	30	8	344	91.5	99.5	2	100
14	Set up small enterprises	30	8	344	91.5	99	2	100
15	Power point presentation	28	7.4	346	92.1	99.5	2	100

**Table 2: Training courses held for the industrial cooperatives**

Order of priority	Need	Yes		No		Sum	Undeclared	Total
		No.	%	No.	%			
1	Introduction to dyes and their combination in the carpet industry	10	11.3	77	87.5	98.8	1	100
2	The art of carpet weaving	9	10.2	78	88.6	98.8	1	100
3	Weaving artistic carpets	7	7.9	80	90.9	98.8	1	100
4	Woven kilims	7	7.9	80	90.9	98.8	1	100
5	Industrial marketing	7	7.9	80	90.9	98.8	1	100
6	Fans of sewing	6	6.8	81	92.0	98.8	1	100
7	Shoemaker teaching weaving	4	4.4	83	94.2	98.8	1	100
8	Marketing	4	4.4	83	94.2	98.8	1	100
9	Production management in industrial cooperatives	4	4.4	83	94.2	98.8	1	100
10	Industry	4	4.4	83	94.2	98.8	1	100
11	International marketing and market strategies	3	3.3	84	95.3	98.8	1	100
12	Economic evaluation of projects	2	2.2	85	96.4	98.6	1	100
13	New product development (NPD)	2	2.2	85	96.4	98.6	1	100
14	Failure analysis and its effects	2	2.2	85	96.4	98.6	1	100
15	Development of quality performance	2	2.2	85	96.4	98.6	1	100

**Table 3: Training courses held for the agricultural cooperatives**

Order of priority	Need	Yes		No		Sum	Undeclared	Total
		No.	%	No.	%			
1	Principles of poultry feeding	24	12.5	131	68.2	80.70	37	100
2	Common diseases among human and animals (zoonosis)	23	12.0	131	68.2	80.20	38	100
3	Poultry feed ration formulation	21	10.9	134	69.7	80.06	37	100
4	Poultry health and improvement	20	10.4	133	69.2	79.60	39	100
5	Management of laying-hen farms	20	10.4	134	69.7	80.01	38	100
6	Application of statistical software in analysis of agricultural plans	19	9.8	135	70.3	80.01	38	100
7	Feeding on honey bee	16	8.3	138	71.8	80.01	48	100
8	Management of agricultural units	14	7.2	140	72.9	80.01	38	100
9	Basics of beekeeping	12	6.2	142	73.9	80.01	39	100
10	Solutions to improve productivity in manufacturing plants	10	5.2	144	75.0	80.02	39	100
11	Broiler units management	10	5.2	144	75.0	80.02	38	100
12	Herb farm	7	3.6	147	76.5	80.10	38	100
13	Discharge management and aeration pond	5	2.6	149	77.6	80.02	38	100
14	Introduction to mushroom cultivation	3	1.5	151	68.2	80.10	38	100
15	Green space design	3	0.8	131	68.2	80.70	224	100

**Table 4: Common training courses held for the agricultural and industrial cooperatives**

Order of priority	Need	Yes		No		Sum	Undeclared	Total
		No.	%	No.	%			
1	Electronic purchase and sale	4	1.40	218	77.8	79.2	58	100
2	Principles of food storage	4	1.40	217	77.5	78.9	59	100
3	Function of the world trade organization	3	1.07	219	78.2	79.9	58	100
4	Techniques of production and sale prediction	3	1.07	219	78.2	79.9	58	100
5	Foreign orders and purchase management	2	0.70	151	60.4	61.1	127	100
6	The role of packaging for exporting products	1	0.30	221	78.9	79.2	154	100
7	Electronic sales	1	0.30	221	78.9	79.2	154	100

percentage of participation for this group of courses. The lowest percentage of participation belonged to the course Cooperatives accounting (preliminary) (35.3), check related laws (15.7), custom regulations (15.7) and principles of marketing (12.3) (Table 1).

**Common training courses held for the agricultural and industrial cooperatives:** Among the participants, 1.4% attended the courses on electronic purchase and sale and principles of food storage. This was the highest percentage of participation for this group

of courses. The lowest percentage of participation belonged to the course on the role of packaging for exporting products and electronic purchase and sale (Table 4).

**Priority setting of technical and vocational training needs common among agricultural, industrial and services cooperatives:** Table 6 gives the courses according to the priority. The participants were asked to score the need for each of the courses and then the courses were ranked on the basis of the mean scores. In

**Table 5: Prioritization of technical and vocational training needs common among agricultural, industrial and services cooperatives**

Order of priority	Need	Average need	Obtained score
1	Accounting of cooperatives (basic course)	2.97	162.8
2	Marketing and market management	2.61	146.7
3	Accounting of cooperatives (complementary course)	2.60	146.6
4	Getting familiar with banking rules	2.47	137.7
5	Advertisement management	2.39	136.9
6	Financial management	2.38	136.0
7	Creative management	2.37	134.3
8	Market studies and research	2.35	134.2
9	Creativity in business	2.30	133.6
10	Check-related laws	2.22	132.6
11	Computer accounting	2.20	131.8
12	Business techniques	2.19	130.3
13	Financial accounting	2.18	130.1
14	Techniques and principles of negotiation	2.07	128.2
15	Cooperative education and entrepreneurship	2.01	125.7

**Table 6: Prioritization of technical and vocational training needs in industrial cooperatives**

Order of priority	Need	Average need	Obtained score
1	Management of industrial cooperatives	2.36	122.6
2	Financial marketing of economic plans	2.26	117.2
3	Introduction to dyes and their combination in the carpet industry	2.25	115.6
4	Industrial accounting	2.24	115.5
5	Industrial Marketing	2.20	115.3
6	Artistic carpet weaving	2.17	113.9
7	Development of novel products	2.16	112.4
8	Seven tools for quality control in industries	2.15	109.9
9	Failure analysis	2.10	109.6
10	Quality performance development	2.08	108.9
11	Artistic production	2.02	107.3
12	Designing marketing strategies	1.85	104.2
13	Art of carpet design	1.89	102.4
14	Pearl weaving	1.88	102.3
15	Elsewhere	1.86	102.0

this regard, from among 74 courses, 15 educational courses with the highest ranks that meet the common educational needs of the cooperatives are presented in Table 5. Accounting of cooperatives (basic course), marketing and market management and accounting of cooperatives (complementary course), getting familiar with banking rules and advertisement management were determined as the first five common educational needs for technical and vocational trainings.

**Priority setting of technical and vocational training needs in industrial cooperatives:** The highest scores were obtained by management of industrial cooperatives, financial marketing of economic plans, introduction to dyes and their combination in the carpet industry, industrial accounting, industrial marketing, artistic carpet weaving, development of novel products, seven tools for quality control in industries, failure analysis, quality performance development, artistic production and designing marketing strategies (Table 6).

**Priority setting of technical and vocational training needs in agricultural cooperatives:** The fifteen major

needs of these cooperatives were as follows: management of broiler farms (mean score 2.249), management of agricultural farms (2.348), management of animal husbandry farms (2.261), management of laying-hen farms (2.224), getting familiar with sources and principles of irrigation (2.218), software applications in economic plans (2.197), marketing of agricultural products (2.122), feeding of honeybee (2.076), cultivation of medicinal plants (2.059), improving the effectiveness of fishery cooperatives (2.019), improvement of greenhouse plants (1.997), principles of poultry feeding (1.957), feeding of farmed fish (1.930), principles of hydroponic plantation (1.920) and principles of shrimp breeding (1.900) (Table 7).

**Priority setting of technical and vocational training needs common among industrial and agricultural cooperatives:** In this regard, the first seven needs with the highest priority were foreign order and purchase management (122.8), the role of packaging for exporting products (119.3), electronic sale (113.8), techniques of production and sale prediction (107.4), electronic purchase and sale (100.4),

**Table 7: Prioritization of technical and vocational training needs in agricultural cooperatives**

Order of priority	Need	Average need	Obtained score
1	Management of broiler farms	2.34	141.3
2	Management of agricultural farms	2.29	132.0
3	Management of animal husbandry farms	2.26	129.5
4	Management of laying-hen farms	2.22	128.6
5	Getting familiar with sources and principles of irrigation	2.21	128.2
6	Software applications in economic plans	2.19	127.2
7	Marketing of agricultural products	2.12	126.5
8	Feeding of honeybee	2.07	122.2
9	Cultivation of medicinal plants	2.05	120.8
10	Improving the effectiveness of fishery cooperatives	2.01	114.7
11	Improvement of greenhouse plants	1.99	114.3
12	Principles of poultry feeding	1.95	112.7
13	Feeding of farmed fish	1.93	107.8
14	Principles of hydroponic plantation	1.92	107.2
15	Principles of shrimp breeding	1.90	106.7

**Table 8: Prioritization of technical and vocational training needs common among industrial and agricultural cooperatives.**

Order of priority	Need	Average need	Obtained score
1	Foreign orders and purchase management	2.22	122.8
2	Role of packaging for exporting products	2.12	119.3
3	Electronic sales	2.10	113.8
4	Techniques of production and sale prediction	2.06	107.4
5	Electronic purchase and sale	1.83	100.4
6	Principles of food storage	1.81	93.8
7	Function of the world trade organization	1.63	88.0

principles of food storage (93.8) and the function of the world trade organization (88.0). Currently, only the first four needs are considered as the needs of this sector (Table 8).

### DISCUSSION

Most important finding of this study can be mentioned unbalance between current and desired status of the training needs in all sectors. The main findings of this study was obtained disregard of management training for members of cooperatives and the neglect of training in dealing with new technologies.

Rafiepour (1995) used this proposed method for rural need assessment in Iran. Using this method, thoughts and opinions of respondents were structured and mistakes and hesitates were reduced. Also by this method prioritizing of expressed needs of persons was possible.

With regard to the relationship between the courses passed and field of activity of the cooperative members and the effect of trainings on improvement of knowledge level, the results are in agreement with the findings of Nejabat-Sabet (1995) study. In the two mentioned studies, 64.7% of the participants considered improvement of knowledge level, skill and better occupational communication as the main reasons for participating in the training courses. Furthermore, for researchers, attending professional courses was essential to strengthen their theoretical and technical knowledge.

The ideal and optimized relationship between the need priorities (desirable status) and passed courses (current status) can be defined as a numerical correspondence between the two statuses. For instance, if a need is ranked 3 in the list of priorities, it is also ranked 3 among the courses passed. In the current study, the course of cooperative accounting (basic) ranked 1st in both lists of need assessment priorities of common training courses and the common courses passed. For other needs, the list of needs and courses passed did not match. Regarding the common training course, comparison of the needs with the courses passed demonstrates that among the courses passed only four were among the needs. The four courses included basic and complementary accounting, financial accounting and getting familiar with the check related laws. This indicates inconsistency between the current educational status and the educational priorities. Furthermore, according to the data provided in Table 2 and 6, 59% of the respondents considered basic accounting course as an educational need, while only 35.4% of them have passed the course. The discrepancy between the current and desirable statuses for the course with a corresponding rank among the needs and courses passed show that there is a discrepancy between these two statuses even for the course with the highest level of match. The data on the courses held by the Cooperation Administration and other organizations indicate that educational programmers and managers have identified the need for this course



empirically, not on the basis of organized studies. Comparison of the courses passed and the educational priorities in the industrial cooperatives shows that from the 15 most frequently passed courses (Table 3), ten courses were considered as the educational priorities by the participants (Table 7). In the first look, it seems desirable; however, comparison of the desirable and current statuses produces different results. For instance, production management in industrial cooperatives was considered as the first educational priority by the respondents (Table 7) and it was passed only by 1.1% of the respondents. This indicates a gap between the courses passed and the educational needs, which itself causes the need for the respondents. Evaluation of the economic plans, as the second priority of educational needs (45.06%), was passed only by 0.5% of the participants. Similar results were obtained for all educational needs by comparison of the data presented in Table 4 and 8. This confirms the gap between the needs and the courses held. Comparison of the courses held by the cooperation administration and other organizations with the priorities of educational needs demonstrates that industrial accounting was the only course held by the cooperation administration in the industrial sector and only 3 respondents (0.8%) participated in the course. The course is ranked four among educational needs (Table 7). The share of the industrial sector from the courses held by other organization was more desirable 1.3 and 1.1% of participants attended the industrial management and carpet design courses, respectively. These courses were respectively ranked 1st and 13th among the educational needs (Table 7). Comparison of the technical and vocational training courses held by the cooperation administration with those of other organizations showed that industrial management was the only course common among them (Table 3). The results obtained from the industrial training courses held in the University of Wisconsin Center for Cooperatives (UWCC, 2006) indicate that poor training of cooperative members for dealing with new technologies and adapting to them is one of the major obstacles for development of cooperatives. In this regard, among the course passed in the center, training courses such as making use of new technologies such as software analysis, computer applications and electronic sale were absent (Table 4).

By comparing the items of Table 4 and 8, it is found that there are six common items between the courses held and the need priorities in agricultural cooperatives. Training course on management of broiler farms was ranked as the first in the list of agricultural educational needs (48.98%), while only 5.2% of the participants attended the course. The second educational priority was

management of agricultural farms (46.96%), while 7.2% of the respondents have attended the course. Management of animal husbandry farms was determined as the third rank of educational need, while it was not present among the 15 top attended passed training courses. Management of laying-hen farms as the fourth educational need (10.4%) and getting familiar with the sources and principles of irrigation as the fifth educational need were not among the 15 most frequently held courses. With regard to the courses held by the cooperation administration, the number of agricultural courses was higher than that of the industrial courses. Principles of pasture management, greenhouse plant production, honey beekeeping and poultry ration formulation were some of the agricultural courses held. It should be noted that none of these courses were among the educational needs as mentioned by the respondents (to be compared with Table 8). The agricultural training courses held by other organizations were principles of pasture management, gardening and poultry improvement, none of which exists in the list of the 15 educational need priorities provided in Table 8. It shows that neither the cooperation administration nor other organizations were successful in identification of real needs of the agricultural cooperative members. However, it is observed that there are some common courses among the courses delivered by the cooperation administration and other organizations some of them are poultry improvement, poultry breeding, beekeeping and poultry ration formulation (to be compared with Table 4).

Comparison of the educational needs and training courses held in the agriculture and industry sectors indicates that foreign order and purchase management was ranked first among the educational needs stated by the respondents (44.42), while only 0.7% of the respondents passed the course. The role of packaging for exporting products was the second rank educational need (42.46%), which was passed by 0.3% of the respondents (compare the items of Tables 4 and 8). These two courses were not held by the cooperation administration and other organizations. In this sector, the training courses deal with the international aspects of businesses and also the virtual educational techniques. These courses had the least participation percentages based on the data obtained from the respondents (Table 5). This is in agreement with the study carried out by the UWCC (2006), indicating the weakness of cooperatives in dealing with new technologies.

Comparison of the ranking of educational needs of all sectors (Table 5, 8) indicates that managerial training courses in different aspects are among the educational needs of the cooperative members. Considering Table 6

and the common training courses, priorities 2, 5, 6 and 7 were managerial educational needs. As provided in Table 6, the first need of the industrial cooperatives is production management. With regard to the agricultural cooperatives, priorities 1, 2, 3 and 4 are managerial educational needs and in the common educational needs for industrial and agricultural cooperatives, management training is the first need (Table 7). This need indicates the poor status of cooperative members in this regard, which deserves more attention. This is also emphasized in the study carried out by Azkia (1999), which considered poor management of the cooperatives as the effective factor in their break up.

### CONCLUSION

According to the results, a significant discrepancy was observed between the technical and vocational courses held for agricultural, industrial and service cooperatives and their educational needs in Kermanshah province. The findings evidently indicate a trial and error approach in educational policy adoption. In few cases such as training of basic accounting course as a common course, the educational need and current status overlapped, while for other topics there was not a considerable harmony between educational needs and the courses held. With regard to the approach of the Ministry of Cooperation to education and development of the educational bill (which was considered in the introduction) declared in 2001 and the time of fulfillment of the study (2009-2010), we expected to achieve more desirable results. However, after eight to nine years of passing the bill, the educational status has not been changed considerably. This is caused by the gap present between the theoretical reality, dependent on the legal measures and organizational guidelines and the executive reality, dealing with execution of the enacted law. The gaps are revealed by realistic approaches. We hope that our study will provide a structure of applicable technical and vocational trainings for members of cooperatives in Iran and also presented a perspective of the educational status of the members, which would be helpful for educational management.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The results obtained from this study give a perspective view of the current status and priority setting of common educational needs and those of the agricultural, industrial and services cooperatives. Therefore, it is suggested that:

- Authorities of the cooperation administration pay attention to the ranks of educational needs stated by the respondents. The order could serve as a basis for educational planning in the cooperation administration and would help the organization in achieving its goals
- Managerial trainings are crucial topics, which deserve more attention in educational planning. In this regard, more attention should be paid to agricultural management
- As it was observed, a major portion of the educational needs relate to common educational courses. It is suggested that the courses be held in regional seminars or workshop. This would facilitate further interaction among cooperation members
- The results showed that the members of cooperatives were more men than women. Today, women are considered to have a considerable potential for development and progress of the community. Furthermore, the nature of cooperatives provides a great potential for expression of the potentials and capability of women. Therefore, special consideration should be given to recruitment of women in cooperatives
- In planning for courses, planner should consider training courses on new technologies such as computer applications and digital technologies related to the field of activity of the cooperatives. According to the results obtained, lack of these courses is evident

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