

Chapter IX. THE FOLLOW UP SEMINARS

Introduction

This chapter deals with the follow up seminars - i.e. the 2nd phase of the training. In these seminars, the trainers selected at the end of the Training Programme, lectured to a group of women from various villages and Mahila Mandals. The latter are designated 'learners'.

Selection and Training of Trainers

Out of the 22 participants who attended the Training Programme, five were selected for the role of trainers for the Follow Up Seminars. The selection was based on the following :

- (a) Performance and interest shown during the Training Programme.
- (b) Assessment by the researcher of their motivation and willingness to act as trainers.
- (c) CDPO's recommendations.

It is to be noted that the Training Programme did not cover Methods of Instructions as it was beyond the scope of the subjects chosen. The selected trainers, therefore, had to be briefed on the following points.

- (a) How to prepare lecture notes and deliver a lecture.
- (b) How to use training aids.
- (c) How to catch and hold the attention of the class.

The briefing was done at Khed. After the first meeting, the trainers were asked to prepare a lecture on the topics allotted to them and a practice session was arranged.

The first attempt was very poor and only one trainer had prepared some kind of lecture notes. The following additional points were also brought out :

- (a) Avoid speaking on irrelevant topics or go at a tangent.

/ (b) Illustrate

- (b) Illustrate the talk by giving examples.
- (c) Adhere to the time frame.
- (d) Encourage the class to ask questions.

Generally, the motivation for the above two sessions was poor and some pressure had to be applied through the CDPO. The trainers asked the researcher for direct help in preparing the training notes and this was done. Each trainer started with a lecture of fifteen minutes duration and gradually extending to the full forty-five minutes. When it was felt that the trainers were ready, the next step - i.e. arranging Follow Up Seminars was taken .

Planning the Follow Up Seminars

The first step was to give wide publicity to the scheme. The mukhyasevikas in their respective areas, and the researcher visited numerous villages and explained the proposals to the women - particularly the office bearers of the Mahila Mandals. They were told of the subjects that would be covered and how the trainers had been coached at the Pune Training Programme.

Volunteers were then called for participating in the Follow Up Seminars. It will be recalled that the selection of participants had presented many problems and ultimately the CDPO had to detail Mukhyasevikas and AWWs. No such problems were encountered in the case of the learners. The selection was based more on the enthusiasm of the women than on any rigid educational qualifications or ability to communicate.

It was decided that to begin with 10 Follow Up Seminars would be held and the following programme was issued :

- (a) At Khed on 20 - 22 August, 1988.
- (b) At Chakan on 23 - 25 August, 1988.
- (c) At Mahalunge on 26 -30 August 1988.
- (d) At Kudus on 8 - 10 September, 1988.
- (e) At Wada on 20 - 23 September, 1988.

/ (f) At

- (f) At Shirolī on 23-25 September, 1988.
- (g) At Dehne on 7 - 9 October, 1988.
- (h) At Pait on 15 - 17 October, 1988.
- (i) At Amboli on 21 - 23 October, 1988.
- (j) At Shigve on 25 - 27 October, 1988.
- (k) At two other places to be decided later but in the month of November, 1988.

The last item was if for any reason one of the first eight seminars could not be held. It was also visualised that after eight seminars the methodology and subject content would be reviewed. In any case, the association of the researcher with the Academy would end with the fourth seminar.

As things turned out, only four seminars were held - at Khed, Chakan, Mahalunge and Alandi. The last mentioned location was not in the original list. After these four seminars the entire programme was shelved by the Academy for some reason or the other, but of-course, it did not affect the researcher as far as this thesis was concerned.

Conduct of the Follow Up Seminars

The time schedule for the Follow Up Seminar was from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. with a break of half an hour in between. A late start was necessary to enable the women to finish their more important household chores and come after an early lunch or bring a packed lunch with them. An early finish was necessary to enable the women to return to their homes before it became too dark or late. Thus 5½ hours a day for three days i.e. 16½ hours were available for the seminar. Taking time out for registration, opening and closing ceremonies (1), it was felt that 13 to 14 hours of actual instruction time would be available.

In actual fact, not more than 3½ to 4 hours were available each day. The number of women present sharp at 11 a.m. was so small that one had to perforce wait till at least a dozen women had assembled otherwise things would have to be repeated. In the

afternoon the learners were not very attentive and always had an eye on the clock. Many slipped out before 5 p.m. and many others skipped the afternoon session altogether.

Subject Content

According to the plan the topics covered at the Pune Training Programme and in which the trainers were coached had to be passed on to the learners in the Follow Up Seminars. By and large, the four topics were covered. However, a disturbing factor was that an entirely new topic - prohibition - was introduced by the faculty of the Academy. This ate up into the already insufficient study hours available.

Standard of Instruction

It has already been stated that special pains were taken to teach the trainers how to deliver lectures and put across the information on the topics allotted to them. In spite of this the standard in the first Follow Up Seminar was poor and the researcher and the faculty of the Academy had to do a lot of prompting. The standard improved during the following seminars but by the end of the fourth seminar the standard was not as high as expected and not what the trainers were capable of.

The main defects were the same as have been brought out before in the previous chapter, namely

- (a) Lack of depth in dealing with the subjects.
- (b) Lack of clarity and examples.
- (c) Lack of follow up questions/answers and group discussions.

In the Follow Up Seminars also practical work or home work was not given. Lecture notes or precis were also not issued. Very little attempt was made to find out whether or not the learners had understood what was being taught.

Motivation of Learners

The motivation of learners was low. Dozing was again a very

common feature. A distraction not seen at the Pune Training Programme was seen in the Seminars. A large number of rural women eat 'misri' which is powdered, roasted tobacco. This meant that the women frequently went out of the class to spit - even while the lecture was going on.

The team made the mistake of holding the fourth seminar at Alandi instead of at Kudus as originally fixed. Alandi is a famous place of pilgrimage. The learners were more interested in visiting the temple and paying homage at the samadhi of the poet Saint Dnyaneshwar than attending the lecture.

Administration

The administrative arrangements and the funding done by the Academy were, as usual, satisfactory. At the Alandi Seminar arrangements for an overnight stay were also satisfactorily made.

ASSESSMENT OF THE FOLLOW UP SEMINARS BY THE RESEARCHER

This assessment is based on the researcher's own observation as well as on the detailed discussions she had with both the trainers and the learners. In addition the researcher undertook follow up visits to the villages between one to three months after the Seminars.

The Follow Up Seminar was designed with a specific aim, viz., to pass on the information gained at the Training Programme to the village women so that they could go back to their villages and put into practice what they had learnt as well as 'educate' those women of their respective villages. If this aim was to be achieved it was essential that the trainers make such an impact that the learners would remember what was taught and put it into practice. Unfortunately this impact was lacking.

The researcher asked the trainers what they felt. Their immediate reaction was " I am not satisfied " or " I don't think

/ the women

the women have understood me ". The immediate response of the learners was also lukewarm. At Chakan the researcher was talking to one of the learners - a chairperson of a mahila mandal - at the end of the days session, not more than ten minutes after the lecture had ended. To her utter surprise the researcher found that the lady had forgotten, or nearly so, what had been taught during the day.

If this was the case on the day of the seminar, one can imagine what must have been the position after a passage of time. It will be recalled that one of the topics covered in the Training Programme, and followed up in the Follow Up Seminar was 'Management of Mahila Mandals '. Even two months after the seminar the researcher found during her follow up visit that the registers at the Mahila Mandals were still being maintained in the old way and no improvement was visible. When the reason was asked, two very pertinent replies were received.

- (a) The women stated that they had forgotten what was taught and that they had no material with them which they could refer and take action.
- (b) The women stated quite frankly that it was too much to expect them to start implementing the new methods entirely on their own. Somebody had to keep visiting with them, encourage them and show them the way. This was not done. In fact, the researcher was the only person to undertake follow up visits after the Training Programme and the Seminars. Neither the mukhyasevikas, nor any one from the Academy visited them. (2)

The trainers too were bitter that the scheme was aborted after only four seminars. They said so openly that just when they had started getting the hang of things the seminars were stopped and that they would not like to trust such schemes in the future. They were also sore on another count. As one of them put it " We went around telling everyone how these seminars will be held, of how they will be useful. But now they are no seminars and we are made to look fools when women taunt us about them."

The researcher's conclusion is, quite clearly, and without any doubt, that the Follow Up Seminars failed totally to achieve the aims for which they were designed.

REFERENCES

- (1) These opening and closing ceremonies seem to have become an integral part of any seminar, workshop, or any other programme arranged in rural areas. They do not contribute anything and merely serve to bolster egos and images.
- (2) The lack of follow up visits and maintaining a continuous touch with the rural women who attend seminars appears to be the main reason why even after holding seminars and workshops year after year, the Academy (and others) find that the position of women is as it was.