



In-Tray Exercise - Introduction

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this in-tray exercise is to help you and your tutors assess your development, in respect to the Evaluation of Training. Following completion of this workshop and the project, we hope you will carry out a variety of EoT activities that are relevant to your organisation, your status within it, and your plans for continuing professional development.

In-tray exercises place you in the situation of having to make decisions about issues concerning EoT. You'll make these decisions based on:

- Your experiences in the Indian public services.
- Your understanding and experiences of working as a trainer.
- Your knowledge of the concepts and practices of EoT.
- Your instincts, both personal and professionally, when required to make a decision.
- Your knowledge of the possibility of successful completion.

In making these decisions you'll carry out a simulated task typical of one's that you might encounter within EoT. The intention of each in-tray item is to give you a situation where you'll have to:

- Study the information presented to you in the in-tray.
- Identify key issues that require your attention.
- Draw conclusions about the situation.
- Make decisions about actions you propose taking.
- Justify your decisions.

Note that these tasks are '*productive*', which means that there is no correct answer, or response to these in-tray items. You will read, comprehend, evaluate and decide appropriate action based the factors listed above. Changing the interpretation of these factors may lead to different conclusions and proposed actions. And all the variations could be plausible and 'correct' - given the circumstances and context in which the decisions are being made.

In-tray exercises, such as this one, can be used to create a basis for learning and evaluation. For example, you could be *assessed* on your understanding - in this case of EoT, also your competence to make decisions. Another approach, and the one we intend to use, is to create a basis for discussion. Each in-tray item carries an implied '*high-order*' question - to which there's no clear-cut answer. You'll make yours, as will other participants - each likely to be different and thus creating an excellent basis for discussion. You may find yourself having to justify your decisions - finding that other participants have drawn different conclusions from the same in-tray item. Who is 'correct'? The answer nobody.

Participants and tutors will have different experiences and perceptions of a particular situation depicted by an in-tray item. Each item carries with it cultural issues that influence decision-making, and the action participants' propose taking. All could present a plausible answers to justify their decision - much the same as we encounter in our normal working life. The difference here is that we can discuss issues and decisions openly, because we haven't actually done anything and are therefore not responsible and accountable for them in a real situation. However, having made a decision, we can compare our response to those of other participants. By doing so we can learn from others, faced with the same situation - why did they make different decisions? Why is their perception of the situation different to yours? What are the consequences of taking action, based on their decision, rather than yours?

BRIEFING

In-tray exercises require a context within which they can be used. Ideally, it shouldn't be the real situation, because people may feel inhibited from exchanging candid points of view. Nevertheless, in-tray items should simulate a real, although imagined situation. We are attempting to predict typical situations you may encounter when involved with EoT. To do this we'll use the StipTrain case study, details of which you've already been given. Here, the situation is:

1. You are a senior member of staff with StipTrain - a *StipTrainer*.
2. You report to StipTrain's CEO.
3. You have a specific functional responsibility for EoT.
4. You are expected to make decisions about the accompanying in-tray items.
5. You will have to justify your decisions, in contrast to different decisions made by others.

To maintain anonymity, the partner organisations with whom you have to deal are referred to by a letter of the alphabet, although each is accompanied by a brief description. For simplicity we have used a standard format for the in-tray items, rather than letter-headed paper, memorandums or e-mails. You are therefore dealing with incoming correspondence from some of the following sources:

CEO, StipTrain, who is your boss.

- 'A' This is a large NGO involved in rural development. Although they employ some instructors, these are used for specialist areas, such as bio-gas, sanitation, hand-pump maintenance and hygiene education projects. 'A' relies on StipTrain for trainer and supervisory training. They also seek professional assistance for policy, strategic issues, TNA and project submissions.
- 'B' This is a cooperative of small NGO's involved in education, training and development for small-scale farmers. 'B' provides local advice to farmers through a network of community advisors on subjects such as; use of chemical and organic controls; soils and nutrients. 'B' also helps these NGO's carry out market research to enable farmers to develop appropriate cash crops and other income generation schemes. 'B' has well-developed links with CAPART (the government agency funding Indian NGO's) UNICEF and UNDP.
- 'C' This is a network of vocational training centres run by a charitable institution partially funded by the state government. These training centres run a variety of vocational courses for young people from scheduled classes. The intention is to help these people obtain meaningful paid employment. Although 'C' runs a wide range of vocational courses, it does not have a professional training infrastructure and relies on StipTrain for advice and resource support.
- 'D' This is a newly formed NGO with a clear mandate to develop women's participation in rural projects. The NGO has strong links with academic institutions and obtains funds from international aid agencies. At present the NGO has no training expertise and uses StipTrain to organise training activities on its behalf.
- 'E' This is a government-related organisation responsible for administering the allocation of resources to NGO's and other para-statal. Typically, 'E' encourages StipTrain's partner organisations to initiate training and development projects and bid for funds from donor agencies. A recent change required by donor agencies is for 'E' to monitor the process and outcomes for each project.