

Evaluation of delivery technique of an oral presentation of the Extension Officers of the Department of Export Agriculture

Farmer training is a mandate of the field officers of the Department of Export Agriculture (DEA), and confined mainly to oral presentations. The study was aimed at identifying weaknesses in the delivery style of the oral communication techniques of the officers. The study was conducted at the In-Service Training Center in Matale to evaluate 11 senior field officers from Galle and Nuwara Eliya districts of the DEA on 30th April 2002. The officers were asked to select a topic of their own, prepare and make a presentation of 10 minutes to an audience of 15 personnel of their fellow-officers. A panel of judges comprising of the training officers evaluated their performances. In addition, the presentations were video recorded and replayed to view for both presenters and judges. The criteria evaluated were: presentation was not reading of a prewritten speech; presenter was prepared; did not speak too fast or too slow; used appropriate eye contact; used appropriate body language; easy to hear and understand; affect was appropriate; used pitch-variation and used a variety of styles. A rating was given from 1-5 continuum from very poor, poor, average, good and very good to each criterion and for each presenter. The scores were pooled from respective judges and the mean ratings were obtained for the respective presenter and the each criterion. For each character above 50% of the maximum possible score was considered satisfactory. Thus, for 11 presenters maximum value calculated to be 55 and hence 27.5 was the benchmark.

The characters eye contact and pitch-variation obtained 23 marks each and those on body language and styles got 26 and 27 marks respectively below the mean level indicating an unsatisfactory situation. The maximum possible score obtainable by an individual presenter is 45 against the 50% cut-off point of 22.5. It is remarkable that all the officers were successful in obtaining scores of above average. However, three of them received 23 marks. The others were in the range of 24-35. All the presenters were in a position to deliver an appropriate message to be understandable to an audience. It was found that during their service, knowledge on subject matter has developed. However, training programs were not given to upgrade the officers' communication skills. Therefore, it is appropriate to train the field officers at the initial stage of their service to make them effective presenters.