EVALUATION OF CONTINUED TRAINING AND CONSULTING OF AGRICULTURISTS AND OTHER RURAL RESIDENTS OF LITHUANIA

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The paper focuses on the analysis of peculiarities of continued training and consulting of agriculturists and other rural residents carried out under the Single Programming Document (SPD) financial programme in Lithuania in 2004-2006. With a view to particular methodology of adult education, attention was paid to evaluation of a match between consulting and training services and the educational needs of the farmers. Other aspects of continued training and consulting, such as course quality and intensity, teaching methods and lecturers’ activity, learning barriers and application of knowledge obtained were examined in the survey as well. It was concluded that training topics were in line with learners’ interests and farming type while they promoted traditional ways of farming; although the needs of personal development prevailed over farming effectiveness needs. Indetermination arises in evaluation of the course quality (teachers’ activity) and knowledge application due to an inability to assess such factors or due to some “cultural” peculiarities of the farmers.

Key words: agriculturists and other rural residents; continued training; consulting; learners’ needs; course quality; applicability of knowledge.

JEL Classification: I21, L38

Introduction

Besides the investments into infrastructure and business development, the investments into the development of human potential are provided in the European Union (EU) incentive and action programmes oriented towards the sustainable development of rural areas. Rural Development and Fishery priority of the Single Programming Document (SPD) of the Republic of Lithuania for 2004-2006 has a Training measure which is intended for the professional qualification upgrade of the persons who work in the agricultural sector and are engaged in the activity related to the instruments of rural development; for the development of their skills and abilities to adapt to changing technological and business environment in order to implement successfully other instruments of this priority.

Despite the acknowledgement of the development of continued training possibilities for the agriculturalists and other rural residents as a significant condition of the sustainable rural development, little is known about the problems of the training of agriculturalists and rural residents and development of their competencies. Also there is a lack of empirical researches allowing the assessment of the development of continued training of agriculturalists and other rural residents as well as development of the quality of such training.

Object of the research is continued training and consulting of the agriculturists and other rural residents.

Aim of the research is to examine and evaluate the quality of the training and consulting of agriculturists and other rural residents, as well as to research the fulfilment of their training need.

The paper consists of two parts. In the first part, the theoretical approach on the peculiarities of continued training and consulting of the agriculturists and other rural residents is grounded. In the second part, the empirical data on the quality of teaching and consulting services is explored highlighting the match between services provided and learners’ needs, teaching methods, lecturers’ activity, course organisation and learning barriers, application of acquired knowledge. The research is grounded on the basis of 2004-2006 trainings which were carried out under SPD programme. The theoretical research methods, such as analysis and synthesis, were used while dealing with methodology part, and the qualitative and quantitative social research methods, such as data analysis, questionnaire, and interview were applied in empirical part of the survey.

Peculiarities of the continued training and consulting of the agriculturists and other rural residents

Continued training of farmers, as adult education in total, differs from traditional education in terms of aim, didactic means, duration, and patterns of service delivery. Conceptually new education requirements prevail in

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the modern world: to educate the competent persons able to apply their knowledge in the changing circumstances. New education form – competence based teaching & learning – was developed when the demand to apply knowledge has arisen. Learning modules which are based on competence as well as new principles of content (curriculum) conveyance were developed; individual learning modules (or learning packages) and teaching/learning contracts are being prepared (Linkaitiene, 2007).

Transfer of the priority from the teaching to learning develops new role of the learner: the learner is not only passive “receiver”, but himself/herself looks for the implications during the cognition process. According to Knowles (1980) and Cross (1982), the teacher (androgog) receives a role of the creator of the learning conditions and a role of the learning assistant.

The changed conception of education aim and priorities changed the education conception itself: the idea of lifelong learning becomes an organizational principle of the education system. The main precondition of such attitude is that the learning in the constantly changing world shall be a lifelong process. Therefore the learning/teaching process should first of all develop the skills of information search, and in case of adult teaching, the independent information search should be supported.

Scientific literature (Robinson, 1995; Simons, 1999) pays a lot of attention to the adult learning motivation. According to Janulienë, Veršinskienë (2003), the efficiency of adult teaching first of all depends on the motivation to learn. The motive directs a person toward particular activity, coordinates his/her actions. One of the motivation sources is needs and demands. Robinson (1995) indicates five areas of adult learning aims (Table 1) by summarising the variety of adult learners’ needs and aims.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Aim</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal development</td>
<td>Person’s elevation allowing his/her development and adaptation to the environment. This is a learning integrating the new knowledge with already acquired knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal and social development</td>
<td>Double aim: personal development and social maturation (the learners want not only their own development, but also seek to enhance their relations with social environment: at work and in other groups).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational efficiency</td>
<td>Learning to prepare the programmes which allow seeking the improvement of organization activity through the “development of human resources”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligence training</td>
<td>Learning when new knowledge and abilities are sought (it is valued for itself and is considered as “a neutral moral, social and civic aspect”).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social transformation</td>
<td>Learning to cause the radical social change through the adult teaching (the purpose is to make changes in the social system and to transform such system).</td>
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Not only the meeting of demands and motivation are significant for the efficient adult learning, but also the factors of “knowledge assessment, updating and application in practice” are equally significant (Janulienë, Veršinskienë, 2003). Especially it is important for the farmers and other rural residents whose learning needs are mostly presupposed by the possibility to apply knowledge in practice.

Different barriers for the adult learning are caused by the anti-motivation factors which may be divided into three groups (Janulienë, Veršinskienë, 2003):

- academic, i.e. maladjustment to teaching timetables, to high level of complexity, shortage of literature;
- coordination, i.e. lack of time, lack of financial possibilities, arrangements related to job;
- personal, i.e. distrust, lack of interest, motivation, family barriers.

Consulting is an activity which is congenerous with teaching. It goes through following stages: from information conveyance (teaching) in the early consulting to assistance, and then, to an independent professional activity performed by the consultants – professionals with specialized training and experience in the late stage of farming business development (Kubr, 1986; Markham, 1997).

Summing-up theoretical review of M. Kubr (1986), C. Markham (1997), it is possible to define general conception of consulting as follows: willful transfer of information in order to help farmers as well as members of rural community organizations and local activity groups, and other rural residents to develop strong attitude and make good decisions on the more beneficial activity expansion and desirable expansion trends as well as on solution of relevant problems.

Consulting and teaching are similar because of the immaterial activity where knowledge is collected and conveyed. The main common feature of teaching and consulting is provision of knowledge. Teaching uses consulting as one of the methods in order to achieve the goal of its activity. Consultant uses the methods of information collection, processing, analysis and delivery in his/her activity, and such methods are used by the congenerous activities such as teaching and researching. So, both
the teaching and consulting are the methods of influencing our understanding by providing of organized and structural set of experience. Hence the initiators of adult education and consulting as well as institutions which provide teaching and consulting services should be interested in the attitude of agriculturists and other rural residents to learning, learning needs, aims, barriers, establishment of conditions and possibilities to learn.

Research methods

The empiric research was carried out in 2007 in order to assess the quality and intensity of teaching and consulting services which are provided for agriculturists and other rural residents as well as how these services meet the needs of the learners. The courses for agriculturists and other rural residents conducted under SPD 4.7 instrument “Teaching” in 2004 – 2006 were analyzed and evaluated. The qualitative and quantitative social research methods (data analysis, questionnaire, and interview) were applied.

Respondents were selected randomly. 122 respondents participated in the survey: 54 female (44 percent of all respondents) and 68 male (56 percent). The largest age group of respondents was of those between 41 and 50 (32 percent); slightly smaller group was between 51 and 60 (28 percent); 22 percent of all respondents were of the age between 26 and 40; 12 percent were respondents up to 25 year; and 5 percent were those over 60.

The data acquired through questionnaire were supplemented by interview and formalized (Content) data basis. The comments of the chat participants in webs www.bendruomenes.lt; www.leaderplius.lt and www.vvg.lt (in total over 50 comments were analyzed) were the subject-matter of the Content analysis. Key words were the following: teaching, teaching for farmers, adult teaching, and vocational training. Some comments by the participants of courses were selected from the newspapers Ūkininko patarėjas and Valstiečių laikraštis, magazines Žemės ūkis and Mano ūkis, and these comments were analyzed.

Research data were processed by applying SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences); the common descriptive statistic methods (mean rank (M), standard deviation (Sd)) were applied. The $\chi^2$ statistics is applied for determination of the group differences. Level of significance $p < 0.05; p < 0.01; p < 0.001$ was used.

Evaluation of the quality of teaching and consulting services, match of these services and learners’ needs

About 72 percent of the respondents took part in the courses which were provided for the farmers in 2004 – 2006. Participation in the courses ranked from 1 time (min) to 20 times (max) – 2.3 percent of respondents indicated in both occasions. On the average one respondent took part in more than one course (1.75 courses).

Learning needs. Data of the empiric research show (fig. 1) that the needs of personal development prevailed during the process of agriculturists and rural residents training in 2004-2006.

It means that the needs are the following: seeking for new knowledge, vocational development; slightly less expressed communication need and possibility to make a getaway from the daily routine.

Though these needs prevail in the answers of the survey which involved questionnaire, but only few comments were found in the press and web chats where the personal and social advantages of learning were expressed: “The lists with the invitation to sign in for the training are held at ward, library and school for those who want to take part. Of course, both youths and adults will be willing to test their creative abilities. It is a perfect way to make a getaway from the daily routine, to inspire the creative potential and to convey his/ her experience” (Tavorienė, 2005). This not only shows the learners’ wish to develop, but also the striving to improve his/ her relations with social environment at work and in other groups. According to one visitor of the web www.bendruomenes.lt, „not only the acquired knowledge at the classes is important, but also what the lecturers added by themselves. Maybe its deviation from the theme, but the society is lacking the communication literacy. Therefore
it would be beneficial to prepare the course of society basics about what still does not exist but toward where we are moving. Let’s leave it at the philosophical level, but it is everlasting problem. The words of the character of Tschechow’s piece “Uncle Vanya” really struck my mind: “Why the philosophical mind in Russia expands so slowly?” And he answers himself: “Long distances”. Similar trainings reduce distance between Vilnius and countryside. We learn to use the same concepts and to understand each other”.

Needs of social transformation - i.e. necessity to meet current requirement of farming, ES standards and strengthening of farm competitiveness – are significant. Newspaper Ūkininko patarėjas states the following about 2004-2006 training under SPD 4.7: „Every learner must get information about the most advanced agricultural technologies and modern machinery. We want to forward the implementation of agricultural innovations in order to improve the culture of agriculture and harvest and to reduce costs“ (Ragošis, 2006). Especially that the newest knowledge and continued learning is basically intended for the enhancement of possibilities to use other available means and “improvement of vocational skills and competences” of agricultural and forestry people (Pilvelienė, 2007).

These types of needs indicate the willingness to make changes in the social environment, to transform it and to strive for the improvement of own farm activity.

Groups of the surveyed respondents differ by sex, age and education. For example, the need for new knowledge and vocational development is emphasized by respondents of 41-50 years (26.6 percent), 26-40 years (30.4 percent) and up to 25 years (19 percent) and those with higher (35.4 percent) and further education (30.4 percent). Senior farmers (33 percent of 41 – 50 and 51-60 years old) and those with further education (32.7 percent) more frequently indicated, that learning also meets the need for communication. The learning needs “to meet the requirements of modern farming” as well as “to strengthen competitiveness” are more characteristic for farmers of the age group 41-50 years (accordingly 26.9 and 38.2 percent) and those with higher and further education. These learning motives (“to strengthen competitiveness” - $\chi^2=14.074$, p<0.01; and “to meet the requirements of modern farming” - $\chi^2=14.074$, p<0.01) statistically distinguish the answers of male and female: more men (72.7 and 64.2 percent accordingly) than women (27.3 and 35.8 percent) guide this learning motive when entering the training.

It may be said that the farmers’ training motives vary, and the range of learning needs depend more on the sex than other features.

Except for the sources of knowledge and information which are necessary for the development of farm, it was determined that agriculturists look for information in the closest environment: learn from their own experience, look for information in press, TV, internet, and ask for advice (Table 2). The most popular among the consulting institutions is Lithuanian Agricultural Advisory Service; educational and training institutions (universities, colleges, etc.) as well as LR Chamber of Agriculture are less popular. When looking for the knowledge and information necessary for their activity, the agriculturists rarely use the services of agricultural organizations and municipality administrations. The companies providing services for the agricultural sector were also mentioned as the sources of information and knowledge.

Table 2. Opinion of the respondents on the sources of information and knowledge necessary for the development of farm or organization (N 122)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information source</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Self experience</td>
<td>60.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Lithuanian Agricultural Advisory Service</td>
<td>57.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Media (press, radio, TV, etc.)</td>
<td>41.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Advises from others</td>
<td>32.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Internet</td>
<td>30.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Education and training institutions (universities, colleges, institutes)</td>
<td>30.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Lithuanian Chamber of Agriculture</td>
<td>27.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Ministry of Agriculture/ Centre of the Programme “Leader” and Methodology of Farmer Training</td>
<td>22.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Private institutions of training and consulting</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Agricultural organizations (confederation, association, union, etc.)</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Municipal administrations</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Other</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evaluation of teaching themes. Most of the training classes in 2004-2006 were organized on different themes related to stockbreeding, plant growing and environmental protection. The classes on the rural business organizing, management and other social themes received the least attention. Respondents were asked to evaluate the relevance of themes of the teaching programmes in 5 grade scale. Data of Table 3 indicate that the best evaluations are given to the courses which were organized most extensively.
Table 3. Evaluation of the themes of the classes delivered to the Lithuanian farmers and other rural residents in 2004-2006 (N = 88)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes of teaching programmes</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>Sd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Stockbreeding, aviculture, veterinary</td>
<td>4.92</td>
<td>0.280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Animal wellbeing, hygiene, sanitary standards, quality requirements for agriculture and food</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>0.338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Plant growing</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>0.681</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Environmental protection and ecologic farming</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>0.619</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Business management, economics, accounting</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>0.634</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Alternative activities (rural tourism, crafts, growing of herbs, spices and mushrooms, incubation of snails, brandlings and furry animals)</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>1.221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. IT trainings</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>1.327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Forestry and forestry basics, harmonious and stable work in private forests</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>1.419</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Horticulture</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>1.283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Cooperation and establishment of cooperatives</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>1.567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Water engineering, requirements for the maintenance and operation of shaft and artesian wells, waste-water treatment</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>1.567</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These themes are related to the main farming types indicated by the respondents of the research. This only confirms the assumption that collection and deepening of knowledge related to the traditional agriculture is the most important thing for the Lithuanian farmers.

It should be noticed that persons with higher, further and specialized secondary education refused to take part at trainings due to the lack of relevant training themes. It proves that agriculturists and other rural residents choose the training themes purposefully.

**Evaluation of teaching methods.** According to the research respondents (Fig. 2), the most beneficial teaching is that in groups where participants solve together with other farmers the common tasks (M = 4.76; Sd = 0.43). According to the rural residents “excursion to the professional beekeeper was the best workshop for the beekeepers of the district” (Adomaitis, 2006). It is important for the farmers to share the experience because they understand each other’s concerns, success and failures better, besides to ask the farmer a relevant question is much easier than to ask a consultant or lector “from the city”.

Beneficial were also: “field days” (M = 4.67; Sd = 0.6), one day workshops (M = 4.35; Sd = 0.8), short-term (2-3 days) intensive courses (M = 4.32; Sd = 0.67), educational radio and TV broadcasts (M = 4.25 Sd = 0.99), long-term courses (M = 4.0; Sd = 0.93). Distance learning was indicated as having the least benefit (M = 3.80; Sd = 1.01).

No statistical significant difference was found on evaluation of methods. However, some tendencies can be stressed on this issue. Respondents of the age groups 26-40 and 51-60 with the higher and further education appreciate intensive 2-3 days seminars and “field days”. TV and radio broadcasts are beneficial for the respondents of the age group 51-60, with the higher education. It should be noticed that distance learning is more appreciated among the respondents with higher and further education.

**Evaluation of the lectors activity.** The surveyed respondents evaluated the work of lectors during the trainings in 2004-2006 quite well (evaluations in 5 grade scale) (Fig. 3).
Stimulation of the participants creativity and initiative
Ability of consultants/lectors to illustrate the theoretical knowledge with the practical examples
Clearness of practical tasks
Ability of the consultants/lectors to convey the knowledge clearly and consistently
Mastery of the consultants/lectors in the field of delivered theme
Ability of the consultants/lectors to stimulate interest into the content of the theme
Cooperation and consulting by the consultants/lectors off the workshops (individual contacts, etc.)
Application of visual-technical teaching means (board, posters, models, video and audio means, etc.)
Communication culture of the consultants/lectors
Punctuality and odeness of the consultants/lectors

Fig. 3. Evaluation of the pedagogical work of lecturers at the trainings provided to agriculturists and other rural residents in 2004-2006 (N88)

Data provided in the figure No.3 indicate that participants of the trainings rank higher (evaluation “good”) personal characteristics of the lecturers, communication culture and ability to use the technical means in the process of teaching, and more critically (evaluation “satisfactory”) they rank the pedagogical abilities to convey knowledge clearly, to stimulate the creativity of participants, to define clearly the practical tasks.

Evaluations differ depending on the respondent age and education. Participants of the age groups 26-40 and 51-60, with higher education, evaluate the pedagogical work more critically.

Participants of the internet chats could not only evaluate the work of lecturers but also provide comments. Evaluations of some visitors of the internet websites differed a lot from the evaluations provided by the participants of the survey which involved questionnaires:

“Yet a person can not drive a car if he passes only the theoretical exam. Where is at least one clerk or consultant who had at least five practices in a farm? It is absurd to teach others only after looking around the farm. And they even consider themselves higher than farmers”.

“… isn't it strange to you, that rural leaders will be taught by the urbanites how and what to do? My opinion is that the largest part of those who share the experience should be the people who know rural situation not from the statistical reports. I respect those having scientific degrees, but we should acknowledge that they do not live in rural environment and sometimes simply do not understand the rural specific”.

“Some lecturers are not skilled conductors of the classes; they do not know how to stimulate the interest of the audience and to convey the essential information. They talk about the things which are not relevant; they start from the abc and for the experienced farmers it is not beneficial and interesting.”

The consultants and lecturers acknowledge themselves that training quality is not very good because of the shortage of professional consultants and lecturers. This shortage distorts the quality of classes: “I think that the main problem is shortage of professional consultants and teachers who deliver on the issues of rural development. It distorts the ‘teachers’ market’.

But according to one of the participants of the forum on training: “Therefore we want the establishment of a strong association of rural development specialists which could take baton from us. It is a rush because we still can obtain funding for such teachings and not only teachings”.

Farmers, foresters and other rural residents should express their ideas, needs, suggestions on the themes of trainings and to share their experience more actively. Frequently there is a lack of such initiative “The workshops showed that agriculturists in some districts are especially passive with information provided by various institutions and agricultural companies”.

More complaints were expressed on the training system itself, its transparency and usage of funds: Maybe I am wrong but I think that we, Local Activity Groups became the hostage of dishonest teachers and sponsors disagreements. They disagreed and we suffered. As the sponsors suggested too little remuneration for such hard work as teaching of rural aborigine, the teachers conspired not to submit applications for trainings. And they did so. This proves that teachers conspire and that the biggest money are allocated to Leader+, and we, VVG [Local Activity Groups], are split among the teachers following their agreement, but not the tender. This was very felt when we were looking for the consultants who were needed for the preparation of strategy. Consultants and prices for the consultations were sort of foregone. Disputes are
not good, but conspiracy in this case is even worse. Were we allowed not to employ consultants? No. We were forced to employ them. That's all." (www.vvg.lt).

"It is negative phenomena. But can we help ourselves? I do not know. Probably, no. It is not a fault of Ministry. Ministry receives consultations from the same teachers. As all teachers are on good terms, the Ministry can not listen to them"(www.vvg.lt).

"For already some years Lithuania seeks for the support from various funds. Big amounts are received, but lion's share goes to consultants of various levels, and village communities (the largest part of them) further work only because of their habit to work. The day will come when Lithuania will have to return the “loan” and become the provider of support. Then the other end of the stick will strike: because of the poor administration of support we will make harm to the poor living countryside once more" (http://www.bendruomenes.lt).

But the opinion about the work of consultants/lectors and teachers is not only negative. Those who learn constantly and seek for the best results, i.e. who understand the benefit of development, say, that “…consultations provided by the specialists are beneficial and necessary. We should not imagine that we always know everything. Consultation costs pay dividends. I always ask for advice before, but not after engagement in activity in order to avoid mistakes. Some mistakes can not be corrected. It is important not to be hesitant and to ask the person who knows.” (Valančienė, 2005).

In the summary of evaluations provided by training participants it should be noticed that formal and non-formal opinions differ. In the first case it is more favourable, and in the second case it is less favourable and reveals more and more varied shortcomings of teacher work. It is hard to determine what reasons determine such different evaluation. One of the reasons may be caused by the Lithuanian mentality when the opinion is not expressed openly, but "in round about way".

Evaluation of teaching organization. Participants of 2004-2006 trainings evaluated the organization of services a little over average (4 grades in the scale) (ref. to Figure 4):

![Fig. 4. Evaluation of the training services provided to agriculturists and other rural residents in 2004-2006 (N 88)](image)

It is obvious that material things are evaluated higher: premises, location and other training elements such as breaks. Time for training and consideration of learners expectations show that the pedagogical interaction was not of very high quality.

The aspects of training services organization, except for the possibility to evaluate the lecturers’ work and attention for expectations of learners, were evaluated more favourably by the senior respondents (age groups of 41-50 and 51-60) (p<0.01) and farmers with upper education (specialized secondary – higher education) (p<0.001). Statistically differ the answers of males and females in evaluation of efficiency and intensity of the courses: women thought that the courses were not very efficient (χ²=6.32, p<0.05), while men were dissatisfied with the training intensity (χ²=7.313, p<0.05).

The most optimal place for the trainings, according to respondents, is the specialized training centres (57 percent). Also about one third of the respondents (27 percent) would appreciate learning at the nearest school. The acceptable places for training: community centre (15 percent of respondents), ward culture centres (13 percent). Some (9 percent) would prefer to learn at the farm belonging to their family. Some respondents indicated that the place of trainings is not significant.

Evaluation of teaching barriers. Time shortage and inconvenient time schedule of the trainings (M = 4.5; Sd = 0; ranking in 5 grade scale, where 5 – „very big barrier“) were indicated by the participants of 2004-2006 trainings as the largest barriers. The comments of the visitors of internet web chats show that the trainings were organized in time which was not favourable for the farmers: during spring – autumn campaigns.

Other factors were also indicated as the barriers preventing from participation in training, though the respondents didn’t rate them as obstacles (marked as “low barrier” or “no barrier at all”).
Table 4. Barriers preventing from participation in training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative factors (barriers)</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>Sd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Inconvenient place for training</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Financial reasons</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Low quality of courses</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Provision on the age limits</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Experience of previous learning</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Thinking that it is waste of time both currently and in future</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Fear of opinion by the people round about</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Opinion of the respondents of different age and education, as well as sex differ. Fear related to the age restrictions was expressed by the respondents of age groups 51-60 and over 60 (both groups: 33 percent). The younger (up to 25 and 26-40) respondents complained more on the place of courses (both groups: 50 percent), and respondents of 26-40 and 41-50 (66 and 33 percent accordingly), with higher and further education (66 and 33 percent accordingly) complained more on the training quality. More females (75 percent) bother about financial issues of such trainings than males (35 percent) ($\chi^2 = 10.441$, $p < 0.05$).

The visitors of internet chart rooms expressed the following opinions on the training place and financial issues: “I think that trip to Vilnius can chill even the people who are very interested, as there is no information on the duration of seminars, accommodation in case when seminars are longer than one day, etc” (www.bendruo-menes.lt). “Why the classes of leaders training couldn’t be arranged in villages and little towns? The organizers themselves could invite people to the event. There would be a possibility to understand rural situation” (Taraškevičienė, 2006). Comments of some participants are especially sarcastic: “... we lost the best possible time for training, and now, instead of sowing, we will go to classes, will go bankrupt, and then will leave to the wide Union for the pursuit of happiness - all this is called rural development…” (www.vvg.lt).

There were made efforts to adjust the training time schedule: „... training schedule is adjusted depending on the farmers’ demands: trainings starts in autumn after all campaigns are completed and finish in the early spring.” “Trainings conducted by IT consultants will continue for 3 months: 3-4 days a month will be determined for trainings. How these days will be determined depends on agreement, but they surely will not be in sequence one after another” (www.bendrumenes.lt). But the comments of respondents and chat visitors reveal that the efforts and willingness to meet the teaching possibilities of farmers were not sufficient.

When some respondents said that financial reasons are the barrier to take part in training, the others said that “price of the courses is low considering what quality and how much knowledge they provide”. The farmer from Kupiškis said that a lot of farmers, especially small farmers, did not use the provided training possibilities.

Evaluation of the possibility to apply the acquired knowledge. The surveyed respondents indicated the following areas for application of knowledge: easier organization of works (86 percent of respondents), production quality was improved (69 percent), more production is produced and it is easier to compete with other producers (60 percent each), 62.5 percent of respondents detected the increase of revenue from the farm and 66 percent say that now it is easier to sell production. A little over the half of respondents (55.7 percent) say that the obtained information and knowledge did not influenced the development of the farm (ref. to Figure 5; evaluation in 5 grade scale).

![Fig. 5. Evaluation of the possibility to apply the acquired knowledge (N 88)](image-url)
that the knowledge obtained facilitates the organization of works (77 percent with up to 3 ha; 67 percent with 10-30 ha; 60 percent with 50-100 ha).

Statistically answers differ between male and female respondent groups. More males (62.5 percent) have a notion that the knowledge acquired helped them to compete with other producers ($\chi^2 = 13.356, p<0.05$) and, by thus, to get higher revenue ($\chi^2 = 14.977, p<0.01$). 61.5 percent of females say that the knowledge helped them to organise farm works easier ($\chi^2 = 6.845, p<0.05$).

More exhaustive are comments which are found in publications and char rooms. They talk also about other areas of knowledge application:

“Organization together with school and library implemented some educational projects. Trainings were provided and people of Ūdrija learned to use computer, internet and E-banking. Now a lot of people of Ūdrija do not go to the bank in Alytus, they come to the library and pay for utility services as well as otherwise use bank accounts here."

Farmers participated in the Baltic countries partnership programme funded by Ireland. The ties with World Bank were established. Active farmers of Petroniai received support of 70000 LTL. If they worked separately, they would not receive such a support. They also were advised how to use the financial support efficiently. A company from Great Britain taught the business basics: where to start, how to organize the work, how to promote ideas, and how to concentrate the mind”.

Farmer, who is engaged in plant growing in Kupiškis district, said during the interview that “the acquired knowledge and skills significantly influence the development of his farm substantially: they reduce the operation costs, help to keep the yield, i.e. to protect it from vermin and plants disease, to improve quality of agricultural production, to get information on new technologies which are necessary in order to obtain such production.” This farmer attends various trainings because “it is worth”.

Research also revealed the pessimistic evaluation of agriculturists teaching. “… we organized classes (free of charge) for everyone who wanted to learn, but we were the most popular among the children and adolescents who wanted to play or chat. But how to persuade the countryman who even does not read newspapers that “digital development” is necessary for him/her? Our elder was in library only two times (I have worked here three years); and about usage of computer …forget it! (www.bendruomenes.lt). This once more proves that efficiency of training first of all depends on the demands from the rural residents themselves.

Analysis of such contrasting attitudes allows the assumption that the practical benefit and applicability of knowledge and skills are the factors which are hard to measure. They arise and can be understood only in long-term perspective.

Conclusions

1. Teaching and consulting of agriculturists and other rural residents distinguished itself for the specificity of the aim, didactic means, duration and learning demand. And the organizations and independent consultants providing such services should consider these factors. Consultants who also are lectors shall meet high pedagogical and specialized field knowledge requirements.

2. The following conclusions may be drawn after analysis of trainings and consulting which were arranged in 2004-2006 under SPD in the aspects of teaching structure, quality and meeting of learning needs:

   - personal development need prevails in the scale of agriculturists learning needs as well as a need for social transformation (requirement of farming, strengthening of farm competitiveness) is more important for males than for females;
   - motivation of trainings is reduced by arrangement factor – time for trainings was not chosen duly;
   - teaching themes are related to the farming types prevailing in Lithuania, and by thus the demand of learners were met. Though, traditional agriculture in the country was promoted during the training in 2004-2006, but the agriculturists were little stimulated to acquire new skills in new fields (rural business organising, management, etc.);
   - learning through experience is the method most acceptable for the agriculturists: learning in groups, “field days”, short workshops and intensive classes; while distance learning and long-term courses (studies) are the least beneficiary;
   - work of consultants – lectors is evaluated miscellaneous. Though the formal evaluations are favourable, but the competence and qualification of consultants is a matter of concern;
   - it is still hard to evaluate the practical applicability of the knowledge and skills acquired during courses. About a half of the participants see the practical benefit of such trainings and almost the same number of participants does not see the benefit of trainings. Therefore we think that the more detail research of this area should be performed.

3. The research revealed that training of agriculturists in the country still does not meet all requirements for such kind of the trainings. The trainings would be more efficient if they are differentiated according to the knowledge levels and needs of the learners groups. Organizers of the trainings should stick to the methodology intended for adult teaching, and they should care more about the pedagogical competency of consultants (lectors). However, there are a lot of problematic areas which need the complex efforts of the scientists and practitioners of different fields.
References