

Empirical Analysis of Skill Development Programs for Municipality Government Officials

Our paper evaluates an annual skill development program, implemented by Osaka Prefectural Government, for municipality government officials and business assistance personnel. Municipality governments in Osaka have been struggling to promote manufacturing and service industries to increase their employment and income. Osaka Prefectural Government started “Local Business Concierge Seminar” in 2014 so that municipality government officials and business assistance personnel could initiate, implement, and facilitates better programs at their organizations to support local small and medium enterprises (SMEs). The Seminar consists of semi-monthly 18 units of lectures and workshops presented by academics, public officials, librarians, NPO managers, and financial specialists. It has been held annually, accepting about 30 to 50 participants each year.

With approval and recognition by Osaka Prefectural Government, the authors provided questionnaire to the Seminar participants at the first and the last units of the annual Seminar from 2014 through 2016. The questionnaire asks the Seminar participants whether they think they have certain skills related to policies and activities to support local SMEs: experience, passion, cooperative attitude toward other organizations, client orientation, practical knowledge, and connectivity. Comparing the replies from the Seminar participants before and after the Seminar can tell us whether the Seminar improved the skills of the participants at statistically significant level.

The annual questionnaire survey was iterated for three years (2014, 2015, and 2016), giving the authors total replies of approximately 100. Our analysis of variance (ANOVA) shows that the Seminar participants have increased their capacities in the following three areas at statistically significant level: willingness to become a key actor in supporting SMEs (5% level); cooperative attitude toward other organizations (5% level); and experience of obtaining competitive external funds (10% level). These results mean that the Seminar was a partial success in enabling municipality government officials to obtain certain skills. Further research is needed before concluding that the Seminar contributes to Osaka economy, because it is not yet clear whether the Seminar participants started to act effectively whether in transforming their organizations or in providing better services for their clients, that is, SMEs in their regions.