

Independent Academic Research Studies' RESEARCH METHODS TRAINING: EVALUATION

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YOUNG ARAB RESEARCH NETWORK MEETING: CAIRO, JUNE 2009



**A youth-led social policy
and advocacy think tank**



Independent **Academic**
Research Studies

*Empowering young people to influence
policy & practice*

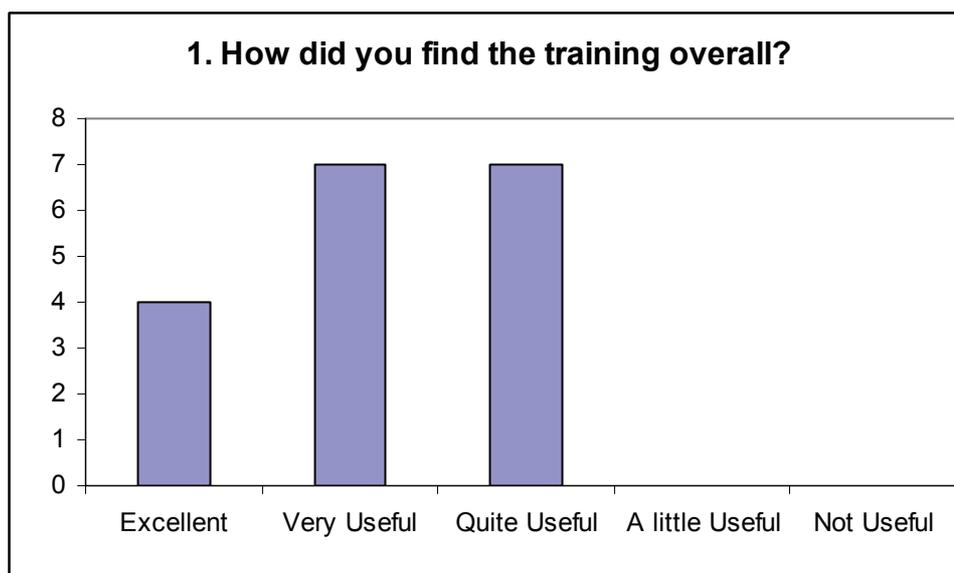
IARS

IARS is a **youth-led social policy think-tank** that was set up in 2001 to empower and give voice to young people so that they can influence policy and democratically engage in society as equal citizens. Through volunteering, youth-led work, training, skills-development programmes and research, young people at IARS aim to improve practices that affect them and as role models participate in society and support their peers and youth-led organisations and groups in creating a tolerant and equal society where young people are respected and valued. IARS is unique in its structure and the only youth-led social policy think-tank in the UK. We believe in the value of the youth-led sector, and provide representation of the issues affecting it.

EVALUATION

The workshop brought together 34 young people and their NGO partners from 8 Arab countries: Egypt, Jordan, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Palestinian Territories and Yemen. They worked alongside representatives from UK partners and independent associates (Centre for Global Governance/London School of Economics, Independent Academic Research and Studies and Independent Public Policy Research).

All 34 young people attended the IARS research methods training programme in Cairo. Of those 34, 18 completed evaluation forms.



2. What did you like the most?

Comments about the delivery and structure of the training:

“Clear instructions”, “summaries of how to carry out research”, “focus on the practical”, “simple steps and guidelines”, “the exercises”, “interview techniques”, “the practical part of it”, “we did lots of practice work”.

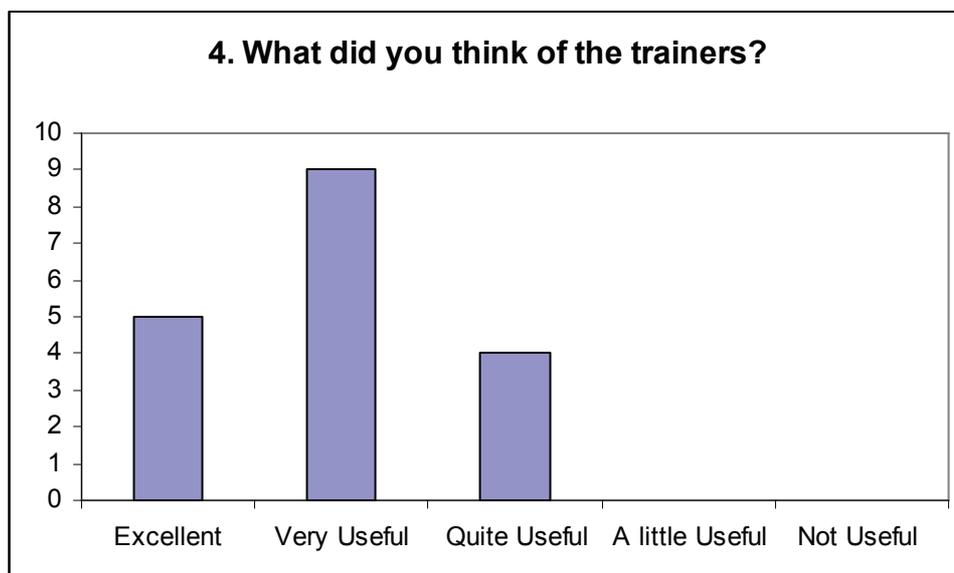
General comments about the IARS model:

“I like your aspirations in making change for the youth”, “empowering young people to dive in the area of research and giving them a voice of their own”, “it motivated me to empower the young people in my country to speak their mind”.

3. What was the least helpful and what should we do differently in future?

There relatively few comments in this section. Most comments focused on the need to make some sections of the training more engaging:

“More practice”, “more practical elements to complement the theoretical side”, “the theoretical side needed to be more engaging”, “more applications, less theoretical”, “use videos for demonstration”, “ask us to feedback more to make sure we are clear”.



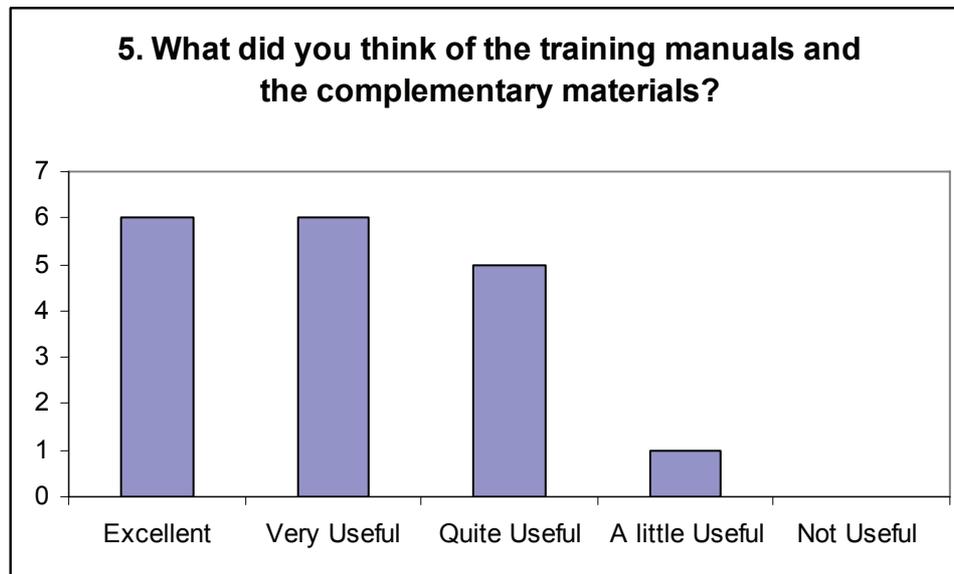
Comments were mostly positive:

“being interactive and responding very well to our questions”, “the trainers were friendly and well informed. They acted based on our reaction and changed the plan to engage us more”, “good to give the floor for

discussion”, “they were ready to answer questions”, “the way they managed to organise this programme was delightful”.

Some of the comments were focused on engagement:

“not very active”, “need more catchy info”, “materials should include case studies and practice exercises”



Most of the respondents appreciated the simplicity of the training materials:

“clear and helpful”, “very detailed”, “simple and easy to understand”, “useful and interesting”.

7. Other comments

“it would be useful to have a diagram of the research processes”, “looking forward to attending further trainings”, “due to the language difference it would be good to use more visual aids”, “it was interesting to know about IARS and their methods”

REFLECTIONS

Overall, the training seems to have been successful in providing an introduction to qualitative research methods in a simple and plain manner that was palatable to young people of different skills and abilities.

It was clear from the evaluation forms that the young people appreciated the exemplification of how the theory of research methods applies in practice. Most felt particularly engaged when carrying out the practical training exercises. In contrast, some of the young people felt disengaged and less stimulated during those sections of the training that concentrated on research theory.

Further, it was an observation from the training that the group enjoyed group discussions and working in teams to further develop their understanding of how to carry out research in practice.

All of the young people were satisfied with the delivery of the training. They preferred the sections that were more informal and less rigidly structured. However, some found that they would have preferred to have more visual aids to help the learning process. This can perhaps be linked to the language barriers that some of the young people faced when trying to work in English during the training sessions.

It is recommended that future training focuses on practical exercises rather than theoretical development of models and concepts. The latter is easily accessible through university courses and other channels. It is also recommended that as the network develops and the project on identity takes shape, young researchers are provided with easily accessible tools and a network through which they can pose questions. It is important that the training is followed up with ongoing support while carrying out the research. It is anticipated that the researchers will have questions on methodology, sampling, data analysis and presentation. These questions will need to be addressed as accurately as possible and by using accessible language.

To maintain a youth led approach to the project and the network's identity, it is highly recommended that the young researchers are supported to take the lead. Any product that results from this endeavour should be their own. To this end, design, project development, production and evaluation need to remain youth led. It is still unclear what youth led evaluation mechanisms have been established both for the identity project and the setting up of the network.

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