

**Enhancing Extension Training Skills:
Lessons from Direct Trainer Skills Course**



In this meeting note, Devesh reflects on his experience in the Direct Trainer Skills course and shares key lessons learned.

CONTEXT

How often do we find ourselves standing in front of a group—farmers, students, or professionals—only to notice disengaged expressions, wandering eyes, or participants passively going through the motions? As educators and extension professionals, we’ve all faced this moment: delivering sessions rich in content but sensing a lack of real engagement or lasting impact.

Recently, I had the opportunity to participate in the Direct Trainer Skills (DTS) course at the Dr. Manmohan Singh Himachal Institute of Public Administration, Shimla (July 21–25, 2025). Over the course of five intensive days, the experience completely reshaped my understanding of what it means to design and deliver effective training.

The Direct Trainer Skills (DTS) course, conducted by the Department of Personnel and Training, Government of India, has been designed to develop instructional and facilitation skills of trainers to create a participatory learning environment. It emphasizes a learner-centred approach, shifting the trainer’s role from a content provider to a facilitator of learning. In today’s dynamic work environments, where continuous improvement and adaptability are essential, the course equips trainers to deliver impactful training that aligns with evolving organizational needs.



*Government of Himachal Pradesh
Dr. Manmohan Singh H.P. Institute of Public Administration Fairlawns, Shimla -12 (MSHIPA)
Training Programme on “Direct Trainer Skills (DTS)” Sponsored by (GoI) DoPT New Delhi
w.e.f. 21.07.2025 to 25.07.2025*



COURSE HIGHLIGHTS

From Content Delivery to Learning Facilitation

The most powerful insight from the course was this: effective training isn't measured by how much content we deliver, but by how deeply learners engage and apply what they learn. It marked a significant shift in mindset—from being a “sage on the stage” to becoming a “guide on the side”.

Like many trainers, I previously believed that a successful session meant covering as much material as possible. But adult learners don't thrive on information overload. They learn best through structured, participatory experiences that relate to their real-world contexts. This realization is already reshaping how I approach both classroom teaching and field-level extension work—making them more learner-centred, reflective, and impactful.

The INDIA Framework: A Roadmap for Training Design

The INDIA Framework, a five-step model for structured training design:

- I – Identify Learning Needs
- N – Narrow down Requirements
- D – Design Interventions
- I – Implement the Program
- A – Assess Outcomes

Many trainers skip needs assessment and jump directly into designing sessions. INDIA emphasizes starting with the learner—not the content. It also underscores the importance of evaluation, going beyond feedback forms to assess whether training has truly translated into knowledge or behaviour change.



A Versatile Training Toolkit

The course introduced four powerful training methods. Each offers unique advantages, and together they form a robust, adaptable toolkit for any trainer.

1. Coaching: Facilitating Skill Mastery

The five-stage coaching approach—Explanation, Demonstration, Imitation, Practice, Assessment—is ideal for teaching practical skills. Often, we stop at explanation and demonstration, expecting learners to internalize skills on their own. But without guided practice and feedback, skill transfer is incomplete.



When teaching technical procedures or software tools, one can deliberately build in time for imitation and practice, helping learners gain confidence and competence.

2. Lecturing—but Better

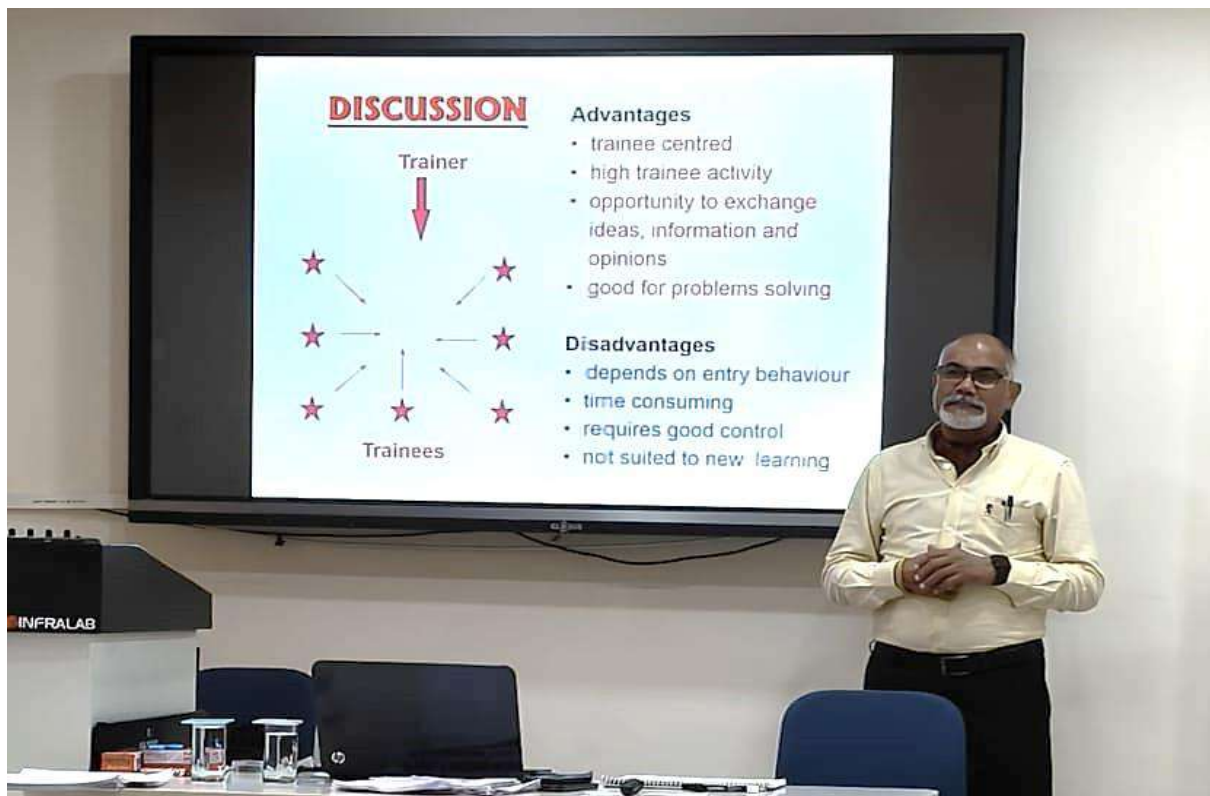
During the course, I learned how to make the lectures more engaging and effective through:

- A clear structure (beginning–middle–summary)
- Prioritization techniques (Could–Should–Must)
- Visual tools (e.g., [spray diagrams](#))
- Chunking information to aid retention

A simple memory test during the course highlighted how well-organized information is easier to retain. The key isn't abandoning lectures—but improving them.

3. Discussion Leading: Unlocking Group Wisdom

The PPP method—Pose, Pause, Point—was one of the most transformative techniques I learned. By pausing after posing (asking) a question and pointing strategically, trainers ensure broader engagement instead of defaulting to the most vocal participants.

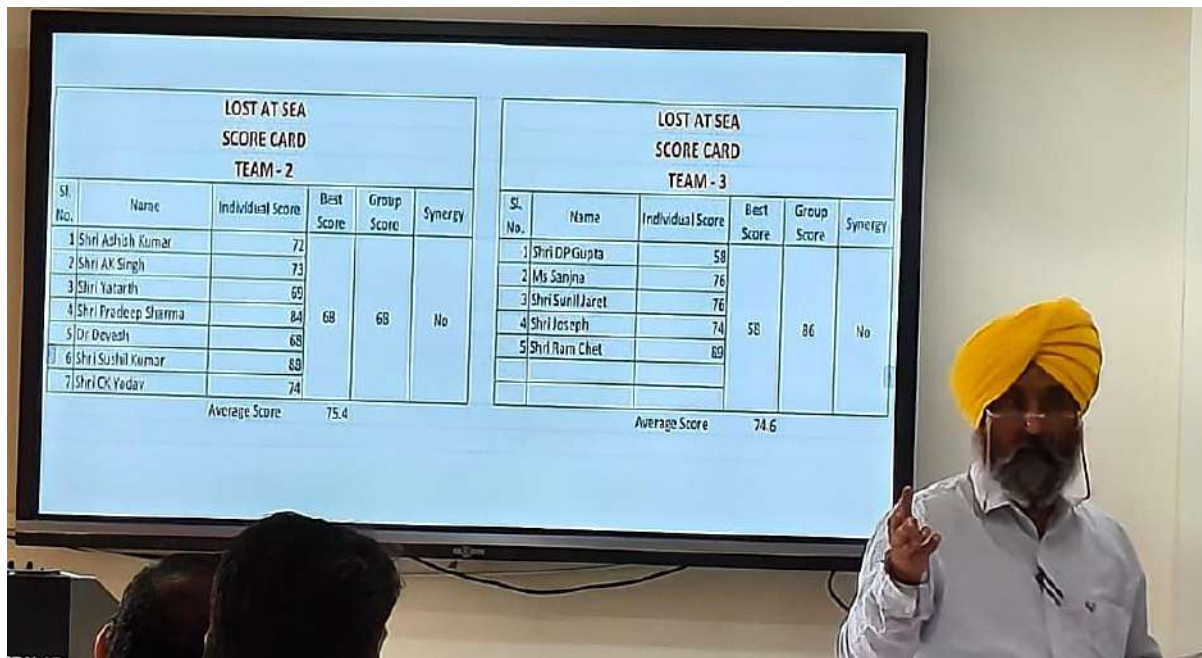


Crafting higher-order questions (e.g., "How could this apply to your work setting?") also encourages deeper thinking, discussion, and application.

4. Group Exercises: Learning Through Experience

Group activities such as simulations, role-plays, and games can make abstract concepts tangible. Some activities that I learned are:

- **Lost in the Sea:** A survival simulation that builds decision-making and teamwork.
- **The Principles Game:** A values-based activity fostering ethical reflection.
- **Rumour Clinic:** Demonstrates how communication can become distorted.



Sl. No.	Name	Individual Score	Best Score	Group Score	Synergy
1	Shri Ashish Kumar	72	68	68	No
2	Shri AK Singh	73			
3	Shri Yatanth	69			
4	Shri Pradeep Sharma	84			
5	Dr Devesh	68			
6	Shri Sushil Kumar	88			
7	Shri Ch Yadav	74			
Average Score		75.4			

Sl. No.	Name	Individual Score	Best Score	Group Score	Synergy
1	Shri DP Gupta	58	58	86	No
2	Ms Sanjna	76			
3	Shri Sunil Jaret	76			
4	Shri Joseph	74			
5	Shri Ram Chet	89			
Average Score		74.6			

These exercises foster not just learning, but lasting recall and real-world readiness.

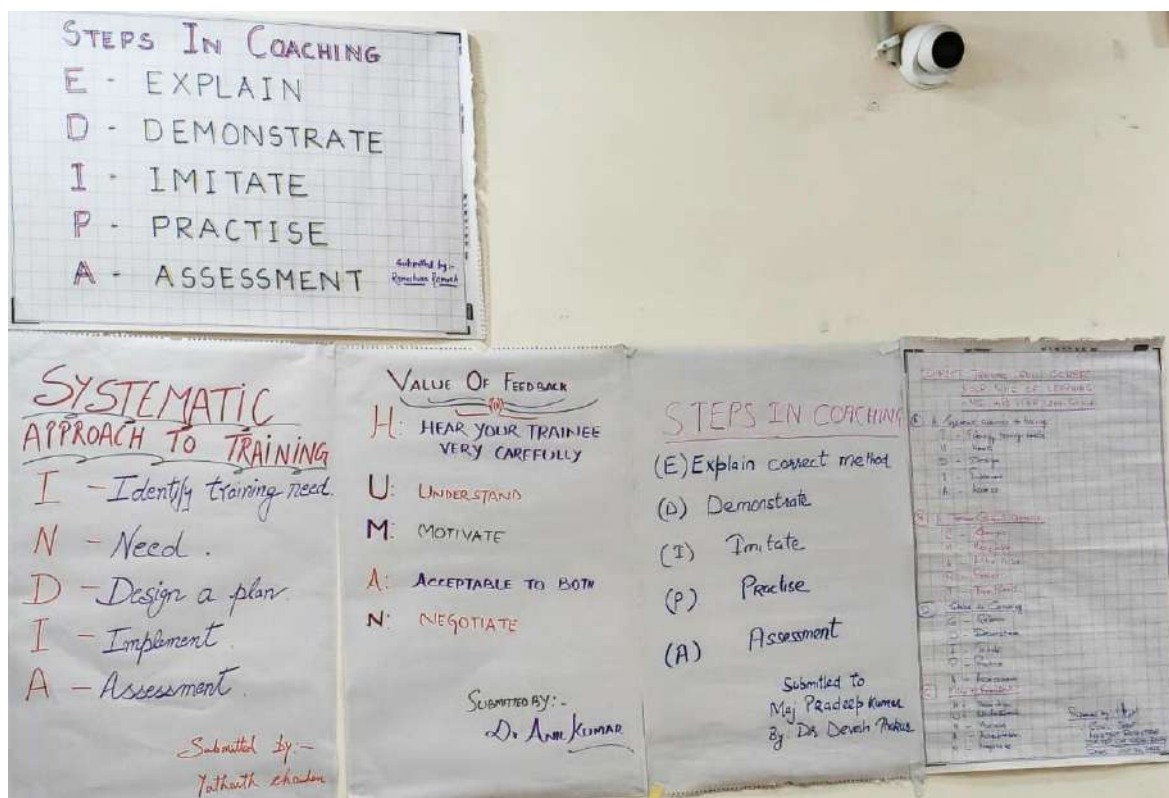
To support continued application beyond the course, we were also provided with ready-to-use tools—including checklists, rubrics, and sample exercises—designed to help participants assess performance and facilitate learning more effectively in their training contexts.

Micro-Sessions: Learning by Doing

One of the most impactful components of the Direct Trainer Skills (DTS) course was the series of daily micro-sessions, where we practiced each of the four core training methods: Coaching, Lecture, Discussion Leading, and Group Exercises.



While delivering the Coaching Method, I used the [EDIPA model \(Explanation, Demonstration, Imitation, Practice, Assessment\)](#) to teach a skill. This experience showed me how structured, step-by-step instruction, combined with timely feedback, significantly enhances skill acquisition.



The Lecture Method session transformed my understanding of teaching. Using tools like the CSM technique and spray diagrams, I learned how to prioritize and structure content effectively. I specifically practiced key elements such as attention getters, setting context, stating objectives, linking lessons to learners' entry behaviour, lesson planning, summarizing, testing understanding, and extending learning—essential tools for any educator.

Facilitating a Discussion was both challenging and eye-opening. Applying the PPP technique (Pose, Pause, Point), I learned to step back and let participants lead, enhancing engagement and depth. I also understood the importance of good questions, structured introductions, key prompts, summarization, acknowledgments, drawing conclusions, agreeing on actions, and closing with reinforcement and thanks.

The Group Exercises session was energizing. Through hands-on activities, I understood the value of experiential learning in fostering teamwork, communication, and problem-solving. I practiced essential steps like briefing, administration, collecting feedback, and debriefing.

Overall, these micro-sessions shifted my mindset from a content deliverer to a facilitator of learning, better equipping me to design learner-centred, participatory, and impactful learning environments.

MY IMPRESSIONS

As educators and extension professionals, we often find ourselves in training roles—whether teaching students, conducting farmer training programs, or capacity building for fellow professionals. This 5-day workshop on training methods offers valuable insights that can significantly improve our effectiveness in these roles.

Faculty members can use these approaches to make classroom teaching more interactive and practical.

For KVK scientists organizing farmer training programs, these methods provide a toolkit for creating more engaging and effective sessions. Instead of relying solely on lectures, incorporating coaching for skill-based topics, discussions for experience sharing, and group exercises for problem-solving can significantly improve training impact.

Extension officers working directly with farmers can particularly benefit from the coaching and discussion leading methods, which respect farmers' existing knowledge while introducing new concepts and technologies in participatory ways.

This workshop reinforced that effective training is not about information dumping but about creating environments where learning happens naturally through appropriate methods, structured approaches, and supportive feedback. As agricultural extension professionals, mastering these training methods can significantly enhance our impact in promoting agricultural development and rural prosperity.



SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE COURSE ENHANCEMENT

While the course was excellent, a few additions could enhance its impact:

- i. Extended Duration: A 7-day format could allow more practice and reflection.
- ii. Sector-Specific Breakouts: Tailored sessions for agriculture, education, or healthcare would help contextualize the learning.
- iii. Follow-up Support: Virtual meetups after 3–6 months would help troubleshoot implementation challenges and reinforce learning.

A CALL TO ACTION

The Direct Trainer Skills (DTS) course helped me evolve from being a transmitter of information to a facilitator of transformative learning. With a structured design framework and a versatile set of methods, now I can approach teaching and training with greater clarity, empathy, and intentionality.

"I love learning, but hate being taught."

— Winston Churchill

"I never teach my pupils; I only attempt to provide the conditions in which they can learn."

— Albert Einstein

These quotes perfectly capture the shift I experienced. True training isn't about the volume of content delivered—it's about creating conditions for deep, lasting learning.

Acknowledgements

I sincerely thank Dr. Naveen Kumar, Vice Chancellor, CSKHPKV Palampur, and Dr. A.K. Panda, Dean, Dr. G.C. Negi College of Veterinary & Animal Sciences, for their support during this training program.

Grateful appreciation to Mr. Sandeep Sharma (Training Coordinator, MSHIPPA), Major Pardeep Kumar, Mr. Atul Joshi (Master Trainers), and all fellow trainees for their active participation.

Special thanks to Mr. Dharmender Gupta, Sh. Sunil Jaret, Mr. Lalbiakenga, and Major Pardeep Kumar for providing the photographs used in the meeting notes.

Devesh Thakur is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Veterinary & Animal Husbandry Extension Education, Dr GC Negi College of Veterinary & Animal Sciences, Palampur, India. He can be contacted at drdth4@gmail.com.

**AESA Secretariat: Centre for Research on Innovation and Science Policy (CRISP)
Road No 10, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad 500034, India**

www.aesanetwork.org

Email: aesanetwork@gmail.com