THE EFFECTS OF TRAINING AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES ON EMPLOYEES' PERFORMANCE IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE: THE CASE OF SOUTH AFRICA

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This article explores the issue of training and skills development programmes on employee's performance at the local government sphere in South Africa. Training and skills development programmes are about learning. In order for an individual to be competent in a job, an employee needs certain knowledge, skills and attitudes. Training helps employees to develop skills so that they can do certain jobs or tasks better. Training is conducted when a particular need has been identified, for example, when new technology and new skills need to be developed. The goal of skills development in organisations is to improve work performance. Skills development is more about providing ongoing learning opportunities so that employees can improve over a longer period of time and learn skills other than those that they already possesses. Training and skills development involve a planned effort by an organisation to help employees improve their performance.

Existing research argue that in local municipalities, serious shortcomings of service delivery have been experienced across all the nine provinces of South Africa. These include degrees of mismanagement, incompetence and corruption. Lack of accountability by managers and councillors in municipalities has resulted in communities demanding improvements in service delivery with anger being voiced at persistent non-delivery and non-responsiveness. The intervention of national government through service delivery projects such as Project Consolidate, and the emphasis on greater alignment between national, provincial and local government spheres is the result of shortcomings in terms of public service delivery at local level.

The research design used on this article was in accordance with the qualitative approach. It uses a narrative-analytical approach with a focus on descriptive analysis of variables and their impact on the effective implementation of training and skills development programme. This approach is relevant in predicting a future framework. Data was collected by means of an extensive review of books, legislation and public documents, and academic articles.

The outcomes point to the fact that the current situation in local municipalities is encountering service delivery challenges in areas such as billing system, provision of water and sanitation, local economic development and skills development amongst others. The most pressing challenges are how the local municipalities deal with lack of adequate internal controls, lack of capacity and compliance to legislation such as the Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act, 2003 (Act 56 of 2003). These challenges can be attributed to capacity problems associated with lack of training and relevant skills development programmes.

Keywords: Training; Skills; Development; and Municipalities

1. INTRODUCTION

The human resource capability of the South African municipalities directly and visibly affects the capacity of government to implement its development

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programmes at local level. Uneven municipal capacity is the greatest risk to municipal performance and the provision of equitable services, and investing in municipal human resource will be a key to address this issue. Municipalities recognise that the human resource at their disposal is the driver of successful service delivery. Thus, this article argues that there is a need in every organisation to enhance the job performance of employees. The implementation of training and skills development programmes is one of the major steps that most municipalities, especially in South Africa, need to embark upon in order to enhance employee's performance. Municipalities who have better trained and developed employees may be in a position to avoid wasteful expenditure and improve performance. In today's organisations, employees or staff are increasingly demanding change, choice and flexibility. Training and skills development programmes are key activities that may possibly respond better to this demand, through the provision of knowledge and skills. The problem that this article attempts to answer is as follows: whether training and skills development programmes contributes to employee's performance in the South African municipalities. The article initiates its discussion by presenting an exploratory discussion of training and skills development legislative framework. Secondly, the review of related literature is explained briefly. Thirdly, different types of training methods are described. Finally, the article provides a discussion and conclusion incorporating recommendations.

2.   LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

Hattingh (2000: 169) argues that the skills development legislation aims to promote an integrated approach to education and training to overcome the past fragmentation between theoretical and practical work, between "brain wok" and "hand work", between "technical and academic work" and between "formal, informal and non-informal training". Thus, in this context, the following paragraphs outline the pieces of legislation and policies that give legitimacy to training and skills development.

2.1. Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996

Section 152 (1) (a – e) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 provide for the objectives of local government as follows:

- to provide democratic and accountable government for local communities;
- to promote a health and safe environment;
- to encourage the involvement of communities in the matters of local government;
- to ensure the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner; and
- To promote social and economic development.

Thus, in order for local government to meet these objectives, it is the people (both appointed officials and elected council members) and their ability to manage the organisational dynamics, the systems and the processes at hand as well as social development project management capabilities.

2.2. The Green Paper on Skills Development for Economic and Employment Growth in South Africa, 1997 (No. 11 of 1997)

The Green Paper states that there was a need to increase competency levels in the country to promote economic and employment growth and social development. To this end, the following objectives were identified:

- The facilitation of general increase in the skills profile of the population, through accredited high quality education and training linked to the National Qualification Framework;
- An increase in the quality and quantity of intermediate levels skills in the country;
- The facilitation, through uplifting applied competency levels, of more efficient and infrastructural delivery; and
- Raising the quality, relevance and cost effectiveness of skills development throughout the country.

This Green Paper further states that workers should be supported to achieve nationally recognized qualifications, in order for them to assume increased independence and responsibility, so that employers can achieve rising levels of productivity and competitiveness. The objectives expressed in this regard are as follows:

- To facilitate more structured and targeted skills within enterprises;
- To increase access by workers to education and training; and
- To increase the proportion of intermediate levels skills in enterprises.

Based on this objective, the employers will be supporting the people who are the most vulnerable in the labour market, including those in micro enterprises, to enter and successfully remain in the employment and enjoy a rising standard of living.

The Skills Development Act, 1998 (Act 97 of 1998)

The purpose of the Skills Development Act (SDA) are:
- To develop the skills of the South African workforce -
  - ➢ To improve the quality of life of workers, their prospects of work and labour mobility,
  - ➢ To improve productivity in the workplace and competitiveness of employers,

  ➢ To promote self-employment, and

  ➢ To improve the delivery of social services.

• To increase the levels of investment in education and training in the labour market and to improve the return on that investment.

• To encourage employers -

  ➢ To use workers as an active learning environment,

  ➢ To provide employees with opportunity to acquire new skills,

  ➢ To provide opportunities for new entrants to the labour market to gain work experience, and

  ➢ To employ persons who find it difficult to be employees.

• To encourage workers to participate in learnership and other training programmes.

• To improve the employment prospects of people who were previously disadvantaged by unfair discrimination and to redress those disadvantages through training and education.

• To ensure the quality of education and training in and for the workplace.

• To assist -

  ➢ Work seekers in finding work,

  ➢ Retrenched workers in re- entering the labour market, and

  ➢ Employers in finding qualified employees.

This Act provides for the establishment of an institutional framework to devise and implement national, sector and workplace strategies to develop and improve the skills of the South African workforce. It provides for learnerships that lead recognized occupational qualifications, and among other things, it provide for financing of skills development by means of a levy grant scheme and a national skills fund.

2.3. Skills Development Levies Act, 1999 (Act 9 of 1999)

This Skills Development Levies Act, 1999 (Act 9 of 1999) (SDLA) established by system of levy financing to fund skills development, and allowed for additional regulation under the SDLA which, in turn, provides for all the allocation of grants by SETAs. The aim of the Act is to finance learning progrmmes aimed at developing scare critical skills by way of a compulsory levy system. The levy payment is regarded as fair because it is based on payroll. This is used to fund large-scale development projects that will address national skills needs, such as training those who are unemployed, the youth, people living in rural communities and people with disabilities. A range of stakeholders, including SETAs, may access the funding.

2.4. Skills Development Amendment Act, 2003 (Act 31 of 2003)

The Skills Development Amendment Act, 2003 (Act 31 of 2003) introduced a number of important changes to the SDA, the key objective of which was to strengthen the then Minister of Labour's powers to influence the work of all to hold to tighter account, the SETAs. A further significant amendment was the introduction of a new learnership concept, allowing employers to contract a dedicated agency to perform their functions in the learnership agreement and contract employment.

This Act empowered the Minister to make regulations to this effect and to prescribe the relationship between employers and the dedicated agency.

2.5. Skills Development Amendment Act, 2008 (Act 37 of 2008)

The pervasive skills shortage challenge in South Africa led to a system wide review, new thinking and serious consideration being given to the reforms and formulation of the skills development and NQF legislation respectively. The Skills Development Amendment Act, 2008 (Act 37 of 2008) provides anew for both the functions and composition of the National Skills Authority, SETAs, and provide clarity on the continuation of apprenticeship training, and among other things, provides for the establishment of the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations.

2.6. Skills Development Amendment Act, 2011 (Act 26 of 2011)

This Act provides for an amendment of the Skills Development Act, 1998 (Act 97 of 1998), so as to effect the necessary amendments to the provisions relating to the establishment of the SETAs, amalgamation and dissolution of SETAs, the incorporation of sub-sectors from one sector to another, the composition of the SETA Accounting Authority, constitution of a SETA, conduct of a member of staff or Accounting Authority from engaging in business with the relevant SETA, disclosure of conflict of interest , the repeal of sections which were excluded in the transfer of the statutory functions to the Minister of Higher Education and Training dealing with employment services and productivity in South Africa.

3.   LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous research by Meyer (2000: 254) indicates that the concept of the learning organisation constitutes a new approach to learning and workplace performance, and requires a new way of managing the organisations. It is not only does it necessitate changes to education, training and development interventions, it also encompasses a fundamentally new way of managing people, processes and systems in modern organisations. Erasmus, Loedoff, Mda, and Nel (2006: 263) argue that learning organisations do not simply appear, but they are fostered by devoting time, energy and resources on a continuous basis to the training and development of people.

Findings by Marquardt (2002: 13) seems to suggest that learning occurs throughout the organisation and across systems and it offers organisations the best opportunity of not only surviving but also succeeding. To obtain and sustain competitive advantage in the new environment, organisations will have to learn better and faster from both successes and failures. They will need to continuously transform themselves into learning organisations, to become strongholds in which groups and individuals at all levels continuously engage in new learning processes through training and skills development. Furthermore, Molapisi (2006:116) seems to suggest that, to achieve improved performance in municipalities we need to adopt the model of a people- centred society in which a working and learning community is supported by people-driven initiatives supported by training, skills development and infrastructure.

Gibbs (2002:5) research on training also states that training is more concerned with learning undertaken for the development of skills for work and in work, to promote effective performance in job or role. Training is something different, and separate from education and development. Thus, it can be argued that in the work and organisation training context, development is most often used to describe learning for managers and professionals, employees are trained, managers and professionals are developed.

Mampane and Ababio (2010: 176) argue that training is seen as an essential component for the institution and is a major management tool with which to develop the full effectiveness of the organisation's most important resource, that is, its people. Training must be task and results oriented, and must focus on enhancing those specific skills and abilities needed to perform the job. Training must be measured and must make a real contribution to improving both goal achievement and the internal efficiency of an institution.

In the context of this article , the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, 2000 (Act 32 of 2000) stipulate that a municipality must develop its human resource capacity to a level that enable it to perform functions and exercise its powers in an economical, effective, efficient and accountable way, and for this purpose must comply with the Skills Development Act, 1998 (Act 81 of 1998) and the Skills Development Levies Act, 1999 (Act 28 of 1999). Furthermore, a municipality may in addition to any provision for a training levy in terms of the Skills Development Levies Act, 1999, make provision in its budget for the development and implementation of training programmes.

Cascio (2003) presents reasons why training and skills development programmes are important and they are summarised as follows:

1. *Improve employee performance*: Employees who perform poorly because of a deficiency on skills are good candidates for skills training. Although training cannot solve all problems of poor performance, a sound training and skills development programmes can reduce these problems.

2. *Update employee's skills*: Technological change means that as the job changes, employee's skills must be updated so that technological advances can be integrated into the organisation.

3. *Prevent managerial, professionalism and critical or scare technical skill obsolesces*: Rapidly changing technical, legal and social environments affect the way managers, professionals and technical experts perform their jobs, and the skills of employees who fail to adapt to these changes become out dated and ineffective.

4. *Orient new employees*: Sometimes a new or newly promoted employee does not possess the skills and abilities required for the job. New workers may undergo training to give them the skills and abilities they need to fulfil their roles in the organisation.

5. *Prepare for promotion and managerial succession*: Training and skills development programmes enables an employee to acquire the skills needed for a promotion, and eases the transition from the employee's present job to one involving greater responsibilities.

6. *Satisfy personal growth needs*: Education, training and continuous professional development can play a double role by providing activities and opportunities that result in greater organisational effectiveness and increased personal growth for all employees.

7. *Solve organisational problems*: Training and skills development can solve organisational problems, such as absenteeism, ineffective, and inefficient performance, low productivity, high employee turnover, disputes and poor service delivery'

8. *Promote employability and sustainable livelihoods*: South Africa has a high rate of unemployment, worsening social issue, such as poverty and crime. The government provides financial support to companies, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) to run skills development initiatives. All skills development initiatives include strategies for the placement of individuals in the employment, self- employment or social programmes, or engagement in further educational studies.

9. *Enhance employability of designated groups*: The National Skills Development Strategy (April 2011 to March 2016) emphasizes the need to confront racial inequalities by giving more opportunities to previously disadvantage South Africans. Such opportunities include assisting unemployed people from designated groups to participate in skills upliftment programmes. Through these programmes, unemployed people can acquire skills they need to enter the labour market or start their own

small businesses. These programmes include learnerships, apprenticeships, internship, bursaries and new venture creation initiatives.

10. *Promote and accelerate employment equity*: To address the inequalities in the educational and equity profile of South Africa's workforce, skills development legislation makes provision for levy grants for employers who promote the development of Blacks, Coloureds and Indians, women and the people with disability. Work Skills Plan's (WSPs) and annual training reports must therefore support and reflect the employment equity targets of the company to qualify for levy grants.

Based on the above reasons, after the training need-analysis have been completed and the organisation has identified one or more employees who need additional training, the organisation then has to make decisions on questions such as follows as outlined by Meyer (1996: 124):

- What method of training to use;
- How much time to allow for the training;
- How many trainees to train at one time; and
- Whether training will be in company time or after hours.

There are number of factors which affect what organisations decide on these issues, the first being the organisational constraints. Constraints on training programmes include the time the organisation will be given to prepare and present the course, the money that can be spent on the programme and how much of a priority it is to the organisation. Secondly, to develop effective training programmes, it is also important to understand how individuals learn. According to Noe (1999:68), the following learning principles should be included in the raining process:

- Employees are motivated to learn if they understand the objective of the training programme. They need to know why they should learn.
- Training must be linked to employees own experience.
- Trainees need to actively participate in the learning process and they need to have meeting the opportunities to practice what they have learnt.
- Employees need continuous feedback. This means trainees need information about how well they are doing, are they meeting the training objectives?
- People learn by observing and interacting with others. Watching what another competent worker does and then practicing the same behaviour in a very successful way of learning.

3.1. Training Methods

When selecting the method of training to be used, trainers should choose a method, which will help trainees to transfer what they have learned to their actual job. Various training methods include:

3.1.1. On-the-job training

When the employees' supervisor or an experienced co-worker teaches the employee about the job while she is actually working, this is usually called on-the-job training or OJT. The majority of training and skills development on the job and OJT is usually very effective. Learning by doing is a reliable educational technique. OJT technique helps trainees to practice new skills, make mistakes and learn from their mistakes under the guidance of a more experienced worker. OJT is also not just limited to employees at one specific level in the organisation. All employees, from front line to management, can benefit from it. OJT methods include coaching, job rotation, and learnership training.

3.1.2. Coaching

In coaching, a colleague or manager who works with an employee motivates her, helps her develop skills, and provide feedback on her progress. Coaching is a planned one-on-one instruction method, where the coach, working with only one learner at a time, set a good example of what is to be done.

3.1.3. Job rotation

Job rotation means that employees are transferred from job to job on a systematic basis (Meyer,1996: 126). With job rotation, job assignments can last from two weeks to six months. Rotating through various jobs give learners a fresh approach, giving them new challenges and keeping their interest. This will enable them work with new procedures and make changes in their existing jobs. This method means trainees gain practical experience quickly. However, they need to be continuously guided and monitored for job rotation to succeed.

3.1.4. Learnership training

Hackney (2005: 88) argues that learnership training is also referred to as apprenticeship, learnership training combines theoretical training, usually at a site away from the job, with practical, hands-on work experience . A contract is signed between the trainee and those providing the training, and continuous monitoring takes place until everybody is satisfied that the trainee has acquired the necessary knowledge and has demonstrated the required level of skills in her chosen field.

3.1.5. Away-from-the-job-training

This method of training includes any form of away-from-the-job-training performed away from the employee's immediate work area. There are several away-from-the- job-training methods that can be used to train empolyees. Some of the most commonly used techniques include lectures, case studies, role-play and adventure training, and they are briefly explained below.

3.1.5.1 Lectures: The most obvious method is for the trainer to give a lecture on the material to be learnt. According to Sisson & Storey (2000: 43), a lecture is an educational talk to an audience. It is a one sided method of training as it is usually one person, the lecture who presents information to a large group of people, with communication only travelling one way, from the lecture to the listeners. The disadvantage of this is the lack of opportunity for learners to interact and take an active part in the learning process, but it is still a useful method because of its flexibility and cost-effectiveness. Combined with other techniques, the lecture method can be used very successfully.

3.1.5.2 Case studies: Another method is the use of case studies. Case studies are particular, examples, which illustrates a certain principle. Trainees read, study, analyse and discuss a hypothetical business problem that contains elements of a real-life situation. A hypothetical business problem is a proposed problem that evidence shows could possibly happen.

3.1.5.3 Role-play: A variation of the case study method is role-play, in which trainees act out a specific role, applying theory instead of merely thinking about it. This technique encourages trainees to take an active part, the trainer comments on the role-play once it is completed. As highlighted by Hackey (2005: 92), the primary goal of role-play are to analyse interpersonal and develop human relations skills. Role-playing is commonly used to develop skills in interviewing, negotiation, job counselling, disciplining, performance appraisal, sales and other job duties that involves interpersonal communication. For this method of training to be successful, the instructor must attempt to make the situations realistic and ensure that each role player takes his or her role seriously.

3.1.5.4 Adventure learning: In adventure learning, also known as wildness or outdoor training, a group of people learn how to work together as a team and display leadership skills by participating in challenging, structured outdoor activities such as wall climbing or completing obstacles courses together. This type of training is not suitable for every organisation but skills such as self-awareness, problem-solving, team-building and conflict management can be successfully developed.

4.   DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The researchers are of the view that a number of factors, such as, organisational growth and development, affects the effects of training and skills development on employees' performance. The development of organisations, employee training plays a vital role in improving performance as well as increasing productivity. This in turn, leads to placing organisations in the better position to face completion and stay on top. This therefore implies an existence of a significant difference between the organisations that train their employees and organisations that do not. Employee performance is a function of organisational performance since employee performance influences general organisational performance in relation to the above.

Beardwell and Holden (2004: 56) note that employee competencies change through effective training programmes. However, it does not only improves the overall performance of employees to effectively perform their current job but also enhances the knowledge, skills and attitude of the workers necessary for the future, thus contributing to superior organisational performance.

Ahurja (2006:67) concurs that training has been proved to generate performance improvement related benefits for the employee as well as for the organisation by positively influencing employee performance through the development of employee knowledge, skills, ability, competencies, and behavior. Hattingh (2000:194) also elaborates on training as a means of dealing with skill deficit and performance gaps as a way of improving employee performance. Bridging the performance gap refer to implementing a relevant training intervention for the sake of developing particular skills and abilities of the employees and enhancing employee performance. The author further elaborates the concept by stating that training facilitate organisation to recognize that its workers are not performing well and thus their knowledge, skills and attitudes needs to be moulded according to the organisation needs. It is always a fact that employee's possess a certain amount of knowledge related to different jobs. However, it is important to note that this is not enough and employees need to constantly adapt to new requirements of job performance. In other words, organisations need to have continues policies of training and retaining of employees and thus not to wait for occurrences of skill and performance gaps.

Cole (2002: 56) supports this argument and further points out that employee competencies change through effective training programmes. It does not only improves the overall performance of employees to effectively perform the current job but also enhance the knowledge, skills and attitude of the workers necessary for the future job, thus contributing to superior organisational functions. It is observed that through training, the employee competencies are developed and enable them to implement the job related work efficiently, and achieve municipal objectives in a competitive manner. Furthermore, dissatisfaction, complaints, absenteeism and turnover can be greatly reduced when employees are well trained and that they can experience the direct satisfaction associated with the sense of achievement and knowledge that employees are developing their inherent capabilities. In conclusion, the article argues that most of the benefits (inclusive of employees' performance) are easily attained when training is planned. This means that municipalities can be able to handle their constitutional mandate as discussed above.

It is recommended that the training and skills development programmes that are in place be reviewed to determine whether it is yieiding positive results and meeting the objectives that the orgarnisation intented to achieve. Training and development programmes are essential for every organisation. However, with the

negative sentiment that are unfortunately often synonymous with it, it has become a notorious exercise. To correct this, Sekwati (2003) recommend that, managers need to reassure staff at lower ranks about the benefits of training and development programmes on their performance.

In view of the above discussion, it is recommended that managers and supervisors should implement training and development in such a way it will assist them to identify lack of skills and act appropriately through development of skills, recognition and rewarding of good performance. The researchers recommends that employees should use training and development programme in such a way that it will achieve its purpose. There should also be regular and thorough training of officials and employees and continuously the training impacts through the productivity level and/or customer satisfaction surveys.

The Code of Good Practice within the public service indicates that, in order to effectively manage performance, an employer should ideally ensure that managers should receive unbiased and emotional training to ensure that they are able to objectively and consistently manage performance and provide honest feedback whilst being sensitive to employee's differences. Therefore, emotional intelligence training for managers, supervisors, and employees is recommended. Finally, the researchers s recommend that further studies based on applied research should be conducted with a view of examining the impact that training and skills development programmes has made over the eighteenth years that the Skills Development Act has been promulgated.

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