Chapter 8:   Conclusion, observations and recommendations

8.1   Outline, need and purpose of human resource development in the Department of Public Service and Administration

Chapter 1 detailed a discussion on the outline, need and purpose of conducting an investigation into the reality of establishing a learning organisation in the Department of Public Service and Administration. The Public Service comprises employees - each with its own potential and personal agenda regarding development and training. The need for this study is highlighted in the fact that the DPSA needs to align individual training priorities with departmental training priorities in order to lay the foundation for a learning organisation. The DPSA can also not afford not to train and develop their employees because only through continuous training and development can the Department justify their human resource expenditure.

The normative research consisted of a literature review of current developments in the field of Public Administration regarding human resource development and training. The literature review thus formed the theoretical basis from which the research was developed and evaluated. The research, also, comprised a questionnaire distributed to the employees in the Branch: Integrated Human Resources in the DPSA. The questionnaire utilised a summative scale ranging from one to four, with one indicating the minimum knowledge or total disagreement with the statement and four suggesting an excellent understanding or total agreement with the statement. Questionnaires were used because it is a relatively uncomplicated way to determine and assess attitudes, perceptions and behaviour towards the human resource development and training initiatives of the DPSA.

As priorly identified, several limitations exist with respect to this study. The DPSA comprises five objective areas including Public Service Policy Management and Leadership, Integrated Human Resources, Anti-Corruption and High Profile

Cases, Information and Information Technology Management and Service Delivery Improvement. Currently 227 employees are situated in the DPSA and Integrated Human Resources is responsible for the human resource management and development practices that would enhance effective and efficient utilisation of human resources in the entire Public Service.

The time frame for the thesis extended to 2001 from 1995 - six years. The purpose of the thesis was to determine and assess the status of training and development within the DPSA. The assessment related to the quality of training and development courses in terms of their content, applicability and evaluation.

The problem statement of the thesis centred on ascertaining whether training and development initiatives satisfy both individual employee and departmental training priorities. The reasoning behind the problem statement deals with the fact that without the strategic alignment of individual goals and objectives with departmental goals and objectives, a learning organisation could never be implemented. Thus the problem statement focused on the extent to which human resource development and training can facilitate the implementation of a learning organisation in the DPSA.

The different concepts associated with human resource development and training in the Public Service were discussed and for the purpose of this thesis specific concepts were defined within the scope of this thesis alone.

8.2   Theoretical constructs in public administration

The purpose of this chapter was to highlight the different administrative theories contributing to the integrated approach to human resource management. Public administration, as a field of study, has its origins in Political Science. The political ideologies of Aristotle and Machiavelli proposed the original framework for the role of government in the lives of its citizens. From their original theories, the

administrative theories of government developed. The chapter discussed several administrative theories as they pertain to the activity of public administration.

The human resource management function evolved from public personnel management, as a generic function. The administrative theory used in this thesis, is the generic administrative theory. The various functions of administration were discussed and the correlation with human resource management, was described. The main aim of this chapter is to propose the integrated approach to human resource management as the only approach through which the DPSA will be able to ensure that the correct employee is placed in the correct position. The integrated human resource management approach emphasises the principle that employees are not isolated from the services they deliver and, thus, normal employee interaction will have a great effect on the effectiveness and efficiency of the DPSA. The main observation that could be made, from the discussions in this chapter, is that the DPSA will have to approach its human resources as limited. Because human resources are not limitless, appropriate mechanisms should be put in place to ensure that employees are developed in such a way that would ensure maximum productivity (in terms of organisational effectiveness and efficiency). The integrated human resource management approach maintain that all human resource management functions impact on each other and should be linked in order to secure effective and efficient service delivery.

8.3   Historical perspective of the development of the Department of Public Service and Administration: 1995-2001

In 1996 the Commission of Inquiry regarding the Transformation and Reform of the Public Service was instituted in order to investigate the structures and functions of the public service, conducting an internal audit review and proposing amendments to the systems, procedures and functions of all state departments. The Commission was titled *'Presidential Review Commission (PRC)'*. The PRC restructured the DPSA and added all matters relating to human resource practices, condition of service, labour relations, organisational development and

information technology to the scope of the DPSA. Serious challenges would however hinder the transformation process including the lack of racial, gender and occupational representativeness, lack of clarity and communication, centralised control, poor productivity, disempowering work ethics and the absence of clearly defined role and responsibilities. The DPSA realised that by adhering to and implementing the key themes of the White Paper on Transformation of the Public Service they would be able to address the challenges. Specific key themes that are of importance in terms of this thesis are:

a)   improving the strategic planning and prioritisation process; and
b)   prioritising individual and departmental capacity building through the development and introduction of human resource planning, training and development.

The debate regarding the role and existence of the DPSA was highlighted through the PRC and the fact remains that any department (but especially a staff department) can only justify their resource consumption if the role that it plays in supporting the rest of the government departments is indispensable. Thus in 1997 the DPSA initiated the change from personnel administration to human resource management through the *White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service,* 1997. The principles for human resource management included the development of employees focusing on effective and efficient service delivery, being multi-skilled and multi-cultural. The DPSA realised the importance of strategically linking human resource development to the pressures of effective and efficient departmental performance. Through the PRC the importance of human resource development was highlighted.

In 1999/2000 the DPSA commissioned an investigation into the skills and competency levels of employees in the DPSA. The *Tswelopele Report,* 2000 intended to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the DPSA focusing on the role, strategy, structure, systems, resources, processes and culture of the DPSA. The *Tswelopele Report*, 2000 was able to identify the weaknesses in the DPSA,

but was not able to identify or implement the steps to address the weaknesses in the current training and development system. The *Report* highlighted the lack of guidelines regarding the skills and competencies as well as job content of the different job profiles and the recommendation was made that the DPSA should identify an integrated framework of competencies highlighting all the appropriate skills, knowledge and attributes of each position. The *Report* further indicated that the learning cultures of the DPSA should be characterised by information sharing, creativity, innovation, professionalism, collaboration, transparency, ownership and leadership. All the values mentioned are also basic characteristics of the learning organisation and if the values do not become a reality, the learning organisation will not be realised.

During 2001 the DPSA formulated *the Human Resource Development Strategy for the Public Service*. Ironically the DPSA never devolved the policy down to departmental level and the DPSA still does not have a training or development policy. The *draft training policy* was formulated in 2002 and it is hoped that it will be finalised by March 2003. However, the creation of a national human resource development plan aimed to encourage the development and training of public employees since the training initiatives that have taken place to date have been fragmented, uncoordinated, lacking monitoring and evaluation.

The focus on human resource development introduced the concept of lifelong learning as part of the management framework to implement human resource development in the DPSA. The *Human Resource Development Strategy* specified the responsibilities for both managers and employees in terms of identifying training priorities for individual and departmental performance. The devolution of human resource development and training priorities to line managers imply that they will now be held accountable for the capacity building and empowerment initiatives within the Department.

Investment in People is a project sponsored by the Department of Labour in collaboration with the European Union and aims to address current human resource and equity challenges in the DPSA. Another joint initiative between the South African and Malaysian governments assist women in middle and senior management positions to develop skills and undertake leadership development programmes. The lack of appropriate skills and rate of attrition due to promotions and transfers, resignations, HIV/Aids affect the human resource composition of the DPSA. Equity and development plans have to be coordinated in order to fulfil the required equity targets for the Department.

The Draft Training and Development Policy is in the process of being formulated and finalised and will set out the roles and responsibilities regarding training and development in the Department of Public Service and Administration. The draft policy does not specify the extent to which effective and efficient training and development initiatives could be identified thus indicating how important the evaluation of training courses are, in order to ensure quality in training and development initiatives.

8.4   Environmental framework for human resource development

The environmental framework within which the DPSA operates has been divided into the external and internal environment. The external environment comprises the political, technological and socio-economic environment and the internal environment deals with motivation, attitude, skills, knowledge and perception. The clients of the DPSA are mainly its own employees and employees from other government departments. The DPSA is responsible for formulating policies regarding human resources, service delivery innovations and information management systems.

The questionnaire was used in this chapter to determine the level of understanding and knowledge that employees have regarding the legislative framework for human resource development and management. Understanding of

the *Constitution*, 1996, *Public Service Act*, 1994, *Labour Relations* Act, 1995, *Employment Equity Act*, 1998, *Basic Conditions of Employment Act*, 1997*, White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service*, 1997, *SAQA Act,* 1995, *Skills Development Act*, 1998, *White Paper on Public Service Training and Education,* 1997 and the *Public Service Regulations*, 2001 were tested. The overall deduction was made that employees of the DPSA have an average to good understanding of the legislation pertaining to human resource management and development. The only challenge is the ability that managers have to align departmental training priorities with government policy.

The technological environment offers potential to the enhancement of service delivery in the DPSA. Technology makes service delivery more accessible, but it places a burden on the development of appropriate skills for the implementation and management of information technology. Electronic government was defined as the use of information communication technologies to enhance service delivery by offering citizens and businesses the opportunity to interact and conduct business with government. Currently the human resource development and training priorities are largely determined by the demands of the technological environment. Employees have to be equipped, in terms of their skills and competencies, to deal with and realise the potential created by the technological environment. The only way electronic government can become a reality is through the implementation of a learning organisation - where each employee takes responsibility for continuous training and development that affect departmental performance and enhance individual capacity.

The socio-cultural environment is characterised by serious challenges such as high levels of poverty, a high unemployment rate, slow economic growth and increasing shortages of skilled (expert) employees. The only way to transform the economy is to increase and attract investment and thus stimulate job creation. South Africa need to become competitive (in terms of its human resource development) and as such the DPSA needs to be able to place employees and

resources in the areas and services that will have the most impact to reduce the poverty levels of the country. The four most important areas that have been identified for this purpose include:

a)   human resource development

b)   public-private partnerships for enhancing service delivery;

c)   improved managerial capacity and flexibility; and

d)   improved performance management systems.

The DPSA places the appropriate emphasis on the development and training of its employees but the impact of the training has never been fully evaluated. The DPSA is charged with developing training and development initiatives that would be aligned with departmental training priorities in order to address the challenges presented by the socio-economic environment. The impact of HIV/Aids on human resource development and training is a dilemma between morally justifying training an employee with a limited career span and every employee having the right to access to development initiatives. The management of the DPSA is responsible for the functional and emotional needs of employees and the constraints placed on the Department through HIV/Aids have to realistically be planned for and thus will also be reflected in the departmental human resource development and training plans.

HIV/Aids, gender and age issues should be handled with great sensitivity and will affect training and development priorities. The questions were asked whether the medical status of employee should affect the decisions of who will attend training courses, or should only women be targeted for training and development initiatives. The training and development initiatives undertaken by the DPSA so far have targeted women for development, but not only women. Training and development have been made accessible to all and the challenge no longer lies in training opportunities not being available but rather in choosing which training would be most appropriate to promote departmental effectiveness and efficiency.

The internal environment is defined as those factors that influence an employee's performance in terms of his or her perceptions, attitude, knowledge and understanding of training and development priorities of the DPSA. The motivation of employees refer to their willingness to implement, for instance, a new training course and even to acknowledge the importance of incorporating evaluation into the design of training courses. The willingness of employees depends on their needs and when departmental training needs coincide with an individual employee's needs - effective and efficient human resource development and training can take place.

Questions were posed to employees, through the use of questionnaires, to determine their motivation, attitude and perception of training and development in the DPSA. Figures 4.1 to 4.8 tested the extent to which training in the DPSA realises personal career goals; is aligned with departmental training goals; is provided as incentive for increased work performance and is evaluated against individual training objectives and goals. The majority respondents indicated that training realises personal career goals and that training is evaluated against individual training objectives and goals. Half of the respondents believed that training is provided as an incentive but the majority disagreed that their career goals coincide with departmental training opportunities.

Skills are the abilities demonstrated by employees that affect their behaviour and performance, either negatively or positively. Transferring knowledge is an integral part of learning, but learning will only become wisdom through reinforcement. The knowledge and skills of employees were tested through determining the extent to which training courses contribute to improved work performance and culminates in formal qualifications. In both instances respondents disagreed with the statements. The majority agreed that training courses are not evaluated in terms of improved work performance and that training courses do not culminate in formal qualifications. Thus indicating that there is not meaningful evaluation of training courses and the knowledge that is transferred and the skills that are

taught have not been evaluated in terms of the value that they might add to departmental and individual work performance. The recommendation is made that only if the proposed performance management systems are implemented correctly will training and development initiatives be developed according to the appropriate needs.

The attitude of employee determines whether they regard training as favourable or not. Employee attitude might also be influenced by the degree to which they perceive the training to fulfil a specific individual training need. The questions were asked whether departmental training courses were aligned with departmental training goals and objectives and the majority of respondents indicated a favourable outcome, but when asked if departmental training courses were evaluated against departmental training goals and objectives, the majority indicated a negative outcome. The recommendations are made that the DPSA will have to:

a)   align departmental training goals and priorities with individual goals and priorities if training courses are to be planned appropriately;

b)   provide training as an incentive if the Department is able to identify how departmental training priorities will realise individual career goals and *vice versa*

c)   align departmental training priorities with governmental training priorities;

d)   align departmental training priorities with individual training priorities; and

e)   evaluate training courses in terms of value for the Department and not for the individual employee.

8.5   A human resource training and development profile of the Department of Public Service and Administration

Children perceive themselves as dependent on teachers for a learning experience while adults are self-directing. Adult learners are more problem centered than content centered and want to actively participate in the learning process and share the learning responsibility. Adult learning is based on four

assumptions, namely that learning is a continuous and active process, all employees have the capacity to learn and learning is important for individual self-development. Thus adults will choose what to learn and where to learn it and whom to learn it from. Individual training priorities are important to a department such as the DPSA because individual training priorities will influence departmental training opportunities and if the Department is unable to align departmental training goals and objectives with individual goals and objectives, training and development initiatives will not be successful.

The learning cycle consists of four stages including experiencing, processing, interpreting and taking action. Taking action implies that what has been learned is reinforced through continuous use. Thus another way of describing the learning cycle is that data is experienced, information is processed, knowledge is interpreted and wisdom is reinforced through taking action. Wisdom cannot be conferred to anyone and this is a major flaw in training systems. Trainers assume that knowledge and wisdom are the same – that finishing a training course and having gained knowledge of a particular skill or competence assumes that the employees will now know everything there is to know about that specific skill or competence. Yet the fact remains that, if the employee does not go back to work and through continuous practice reinforces the taught skill, it will have been in vain. Learning does not end with the end of the training course and this is one of the foundations of the learning organisation – continuous learning. After a training course has been completed and the employee reinforces the newly acquired skill, group and departmental performance should be enhanced because individual learning should have a ripple effect on the group and departmental performance.

Learning begins with individual experiences that employees have. The extent to which employees are able to put into practice what they have experienced depend on the comprehensive nature of the training system in a department. Individual cognisance and identification with departmental goals and objectives

will also facilitate the process of learning. The four main outcomes of learning are ability to adapt to change, innovation, continuous improvement and transformation.

The behavioural and cognitive approaches to training were identified and discussed and attention was given to the various types of training including on-the-job training, off-the-job training, competency training or action learning and on-line learning. The most important factor to bear in mind is that training does not automatically result in competence being built or increased but relies on individual and departmental commitment to training and development initiatives.

The training and development profile of the DPSA including questions divided into the planning for, guidance of, budgeting for and interpretation of departmental training goals and priorities. The questions related to the extent to which the DPSA is able to identify, align, develop, implement and communicate training goals and objectives. Based on the perceptions of employees in the Branch: Integrated Human Resources specific observations can be made, including that the:

a)   DPSA is able to develop and adjust training priorities according to departmental needs;

b)   DPSA is able to develop alternative strategies for the implementation of departmental training priorities;

c)   DPSA is able to assess the financial feasibility of training courses;

d)   DPSA is not able to assess the technical feasibility of different training courses;

e)   DPSA is able to develop training plans that would include costs, employees and material needs; and

f)   DPSA is not able to develop personal career paths for individual employees.

Guidance in terms of departmental training and development refers to the extent to which obstacles are detected and the Department is able to implement training courses that satisfy departmental training priorities. Once again, the perceptions of employees were communicated through the distributing of questionnaires. Specific observations include that the:

a)   DPSA is able to anticipate obstacles in achieving training goals and identifying means to overcome them;

b)   DPSA is able to identify specific training courses that will be needed to accomplish departmental training goals;

c)   DPSA is able to establish priorities among competing training courses;

d)   DPSA is able to set realistic deadlines for the completion of departmental training courses;

e)   DPSA is able to identify specific courses needed to accomplish personal training goals;

f)   DPSA is able to provide guidance on how accomplishment is to be measured; and

g)   DPSA is able to involve staff in making work decisions that would affect the employees themselves.

The budgeting part of the training and development profile comprises the input received from employees into the formulation of the Department's annual training budget. The importance of reciprocal communication cannot be emphasised enough. Employees need to know the decisions regarding the training budget in order to establish which training courses are feasible within any given financial year. Input into the budget also establishes a sense of participation, which is an important part of creating a learning organisation. Respondents were tested regarding the extent to which they provide input into the annual training budget, are being provided with the necessary information regarding the training budget and were asked to explain and justify the training budget requests either orally or in writing. In all three questions respondents indicated that the:

a)   DPSA is unable to provide opportunity for employee input into the training budget;

b)   DPSA does not communicate the content to the training budget to the affected employees; and

c)   DPSA does not ask employees to justify their training requests.

The interpretation of the training priorities explains how effectively the DPSA is able to explain and clarify the broad training priorities of government to employees as well as keeping employees informed regarding the external factors that could influence training and development including factors such as access, funding and availability or identity of trainers. Respondents were also tested regarding the extent to which they apply government training priorities to their own individual training priorities and ensuring that departmental training courses reflect senior management directives and policies. The following were observed:

a)   perceptions exist that senior management in the DPSA does not always effectively communicate government's training priorities to employees; but

b)   the DPSA is able to communicate the important training priorities of the Department is its employees.

Based from the above synopsis from respondents, the following recommendations are in order.

Recommendation 1:   It is recommended that the DPSA increase their strengths in terms of determining departmental training priorities; ensuring the financial feasibility of training courses; and anticipating the obstacles to implementing successful training courses

Recommendation 2:   It is recommended that the DPSA re-evaluate their communication processes because communication seems to follow a top-down approach without much input and participation from employees regarding individual training priorities *versus* departmental training priorities.

Recommendation 3:   It is recommended that the DPSA ensures that individuals understand the importance of their positions within the current hierarchical structure as well as understand the importance of developing their individual capacity in order to ensure departmental effectiveness and efficiency.

8.6   Evaluating training and development through the implementation of performance management in the Department of Public Service and Administration

Evaluation seems to be the missing link in training and development of human resources in the DPSA. The only way to ensure that training priorities are met is to make training evaluation part of the design of a training course. Training courses will add no value to departmental effectiveness and efficiency if they are not appropriately evaluated against predetermined training priorities, goals and objectives. Evaluation was defined as determining the total value that a training course could bring the DPSA. Evaluation in itself, does not validate the resources spent, but validation should be an integral part of evaluation. The purpose of evaluation was discussed as dealing with the gathering of information in order to make judgements regarding the value of a specific training course. Evaluation is part of the learning organisation because the learning organisation is continuously evaluating the value of training input in terms of departmental effectiveness and efficiency.

Due to the lack of evaluation, employees are sent on training courses that do not satisfy their own individual needs but might satisfy departmental training priorities. However if employees do not understand the value of their positions, they will also not align their own individual needs with departmental needs and thus the training provided will not be reinforced and wisdom will not be created.

The implementation of a performance management system in the DPSA is aimed at aligning departmental strategies with individual strategies and thus the system will advise the training and development priorities of the DPSA. However, the

system has only been implemented during 2002 and the success of this reasoning cannot be determined, as yet. However, the performance management systems of both senior management and the other levels in the Department have the potential of realising the importance of alignment. The learning organisation necessitates more than just individual and departmental alignment and it is argued that group or team learning and development can mean much more to the Department, if the group objectives are aligned with departmental objectives. Thus the DPSA cannot consider itself to be a learning organisation if it has not aligned individual positions to the Department.

Questions were posed to respondents to ascertain the degree of alignment between performance management and training and development. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which performance targets are set on training that has already been received. The majority suggested that performance targets do not match training thus indicating that previous training is not taken into consideration when performance targets are set. Respondents were also asked to identify whether performance is enhanced through training. The majority indicated that the DPSA allows performance to advise future training objectives but if the evaluation lacks, the training will not add value to the performance of individual employees and thus also not to the effectiveness and efficiency of the Department.

The majority of respondents indicated that employees are not able to assess the progress towards achieving departmental training priorities, which link up with the observations made in earlier paragraphs – that communication flows from the top to the bottom, but is not reciprocated. The majority of respondents did, however, state that they are able to determine how training realises personal training goals but if the Department is not able to link individual performance to departmental performance, the resource spent on training and development initiatives cannot be justified.

Recognition and rewards are integral parts of an effective performance management system and is provided as incentives for improved individual and group performance. Specific models for evaluation were described and ranged from research-scientific models to pragmatic-naturalistic models. The model that is most beneficial to the DPSA comprises six primary phases, including:

a)   contracting;

b)   describing;

c)   focusing;

d)   confronting;

e)   consolidating; and

f)   disseminating.

The model proposed for the evaluation of training and development initiatives in the DPSA comprises adding value to both individual and departmental performance. Evaluation of training courses will always experience some degree of contestation, mainly due to the perceptions of senior management that evaluation is not really necessary or that, in the end, the performance of the Department will be enhanced. However, this is not a fact and thus evaluation cannot be taken for granted.

Specific weaknesses and strengths of the current training system were discussed as well as the different training opportunities that have taken place within the period 1995-2001. The weaknesses centered around the lack of knowledge of available resources, the implementation of new technologies offering opportunities for improvement, but can also impede performance if employees are not properly trained, lack of access to resources, lack of permission to learn and lack of permission to apply what has been learned, which coincide with the observation made that employee performance targets are not adapted after training has been provided. Budget and rime constraints also weaken the successful implementation of training and development initiatives.

Specific strengths, characterising the current training system, focused on the use of the competency based approach to learning that has proven to be most useful to employees. Partnerships with training institutions (tertiary and private) have also contributed to strengthening the training system and the use of bursaries is a great incentive for employees to learn and develop themselves. Through the identification and formulation of a human resource development strategy, the support of management for employee training and development has become a cornerstone for effective and efficient training systems.

8.7   The implementation and management of a learning organisation

The challenge of implementing and managing a learning organisation lies with management's ability to recognise the importance of continuous learning and making learning part of the day-to-day functioning of the DPSA. The importance of comprehending the holistic nature of the human resource management process is the framework for a successful learning organisation. This reiterates what has already been discussed in Chapter one – that human resource management is a cycle and that if one of the parts is missing, the whole cycle will not function effectively and efficiently.

The five disciplines for a learning organisation are personal mastery, mental models, a shared vision, team learning and systems thinking. Personal mastery deals with the approach that an employee has towards learning and his or her work. Employees need to progress from a creative point of view and not from a reactive point of view. The mental models speak to the deeply ingrained assumptions that influence the way in which employees understand their work and take action. A shared vision is the sense of cohesiveness and commonality that employees need to share, thus creating a vision that all employees buy in to, understand and want to implement or attain. Team learning is probably the most important discipline that prevents the DPSA from becoming a learning organisation. An unaligned team results in wasted energy and will not contribute effectively and efficiently to departmental performance. Each individual employee

might be a master in his or her work, but if they do not share their learning experiences and let information flow freely among the different group members, departmental performance will not be positively affected.

Systems thinking is the amalgamation of the all the previous four disciplines into a system that analyses the interrelationship and patterns which bind departmental functions together. The learning organisation has to be realised from inside the Department and builds on the notion of continuous improvement. However, the learning organisation cannot be managed without overcoming specific challenges, including:

a)   operational preoccupation;

b)   hierarchical thinking

c)   reluctance to train;

d)   lack of real empowerment; and

e)   individual or departmental barriers.

Various steps and approaches to the implementation of a learning organisation were discussed, but a learning organisation is not really possible if the building blocks (five disciplines) for it are not in place. Thus this thesis promotes the learning organisation more as an approach to transforming training and development initiatives, than an actual departmental restructuring. The management of the learning organisation begins by identifying the different levels on which learning has to take place, namely individual learning, group learning and finally organisational learning. Organisational learning cannot be enforced and has to be preceded with an alignment of individual learning priorities with departmental learning goals and objectives.

The key management functions inherent in the learning organisation dealt with the strategic planning for human resource training and development, the organising of human resource development and training, guiding the training and development efforts and controlling the process through effective and efficient

performance management systems. The most important aspect is that the manager in charge of managing a learning organisation has to be aware of his or her own training and learning priorities. The employee who thinks he or she already knows everything there is to know about his or her job, denies the original intent of the learning organisation – continuous learning.

Specific tools and techniques that managers can access to facilitate the implementation and management of the learning organisation were discussed. The most important tools relate to the listening, creativity and communication skills of managers. Creativity could easily be stifled by adopting the wrong management perception to learning and development. Creativity should be fostered and effective listening skills could enhance this because creativity will be stifled if managers do not listen to the suggestions of their employees. Decision regarding training and development should not be taken arbitrarily but participation should be encouraged.

The rewards of effective listening will produce a learning environment in which employees are able to add to their knowledge and understanding, be more encouraging and open in their communication and thus improving interrelationships resulting in a positive outcome for the group and affecting the Department in a positive way. Communication is a tool that will either result in a manager being effective or ineffective. The ability to communicate effectively is a skill that should be taught to all managers because communication implies understanding and through understanding wisdom can be reinforced thus leading to the creation of new knowledge (continuous improvement) and a learning organisation.

Questions were asked to determine employee perceptions regarding communication and how communication is used to assess training priorities. Specific observations included that the:

a)   DPSA employees do not provide formal feedback after training sessions, thus not fostering a culture of shared learning;

b)   DPSA employees are not expected to provide formal feedback sessions after training has taken place, thus not instilling a culture of training evaluation; and

c)   DPSA employees are expected to provide periodic reports on training courses being offered and thus training opportunities are being communicated to employees.

Communication is based on trust, mutual respect, a supportive departmental climate and the sharing of power through participatory decision making. However, if employees perceive the communication channels to be selective and not accessible to all, performance will suffer and departmental effectiveness and efficiency will decline.

Another technique used to facilitate the learning organisation is mentoring. Mentoring was defined as the most effective way to introduce newcomers into the culture of a department. Mentors have to play the role of coach and sponsor (developmental role) as well as offering personal support, friendship and being a role model to new employees. Through mentoring an individual employee will be able to determine his or her position within the group, thus positively affecting the alignment of individual goals and objectives with departmental goals and objectives.

The challenge of creating a knowledge-intensive Department was also highlighted as the next step for the DPSA. Knowledge is the primary source for competitiveness. Knowledge provides the Department with its edge – the skills, competence and resources that no other Department offers. However, before the knowledge-intensive organisation can even be approached, the building blocks for the learning organisation have to be in place.

From the above responses from the DPSA employees, the following recommendations are considered cogent, effective and contextual.

Recommendation 4:   It is recommended that the DPSA ensure that the five disciplines for the learning organisation are identified and implemented within the context and complexity of the current structure.

Recommendation 5:   It is recommended that the DPSA ensure that the principles guiding the implementation and management of the learning organisation are adhered to, including free flow of information, participative decision making and power sharing among the different levels of the hierarchy.

Recommendation 6:   It is recommended that the DPSA re-evaluate the way in which training priorities, goals and objectives are communicated to individual employees.

Recommendation 7:   It is recommended that the DPSA foster creativity through constant reinforcement of training, creating an information sharing environment and continuous emphasis on skill sharing between employees.

Recommendation 8:   It is recommended that the DPSA implement mentoring programme to facilitate the effective and efficient placement of individual employees within groups.

The learning organisation is a cross-functional organisation, characterised by information flowing freely between individuals on different levels of the hierarchy. In essence the learning organisation denotes a strictly hierarchical structure and favours a more matrix approach to work and employee structuring. The problem statement of the thesis states that the current training and development initiatives of the DPSA do not facilitate the implementation of a learning organisation. Research has proven that the problem statement is a reality for human resource development in the DPSA. Without the proper alignment of individual positions to

departmental effectiveness and efficiency, training and development will continue to satisfy the individual, more than the Department. The DPSA is able to identify the training priorities that are important to the functioning of the Department. What needs to happen now is that senior management needs to initiate a process where individual positions, their importance and contributions, are aligned with the effective and efficient realisation of departmental strategies. The training and development initiatives that have been implemented, up to date, cannot have been in vain or a waste of resources. The DPSA needs to build on the strengths of its training system and turn all training opportunities to competency related strengths with the overall intent of producing a viable mechanism for human resource development in the public service of South Africa.