

THE USE OF A PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM TO ENSURE AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

This article proposes an integrated approach to facilitate human resource development. An appropriate performance management system is a suitable mechanism to promote an integrated approach to human resource management. The process and implementation of current performance management systems in the Public Service, is described and attention is paid to the importance of providing incentives and rewards for effective and efficient performance. Training and development could be used as incentives, although the strategic link between organisational effectiveness and individual satisfaction, has to be made abundantly clear. This article also revisits some of the definitions and proponents of human resource development and offers a more holistic view to human resource development in the Public Service. The application of an integrated approach in, specifically the learning organisation is discussed and some of the more important management tools for the implementation of a learning organisation, is described. The article concludes with the principle that current human resource development initiatives should not be in vain, but without a strategic intent to develop, the development will not achieve organisational effectiveness.

INTRODUCTION

The Public Service comprises people, individuals with their own potential and career paths. Managers in the Public Service need to align the potential of their employees with organisational strategies and policies. Training employees becomes a necessity when departments want to keep track of new developments and meet the expectations of their internal and external environments. The Public Service has realised that it needs to be responsive to the needs of the citizens of the country, but it

cannot respond to changing needs if employees are not able to cope with the transformation or are not skilled or capable of handling new developments.

The article proposes an integrated approach to human resource development through the process of performance management. If and when performance management is implemented appropriately, the possibility for the creation of a learning organisation is enhanced. Specific guidelines for the establishment of a learning organisation are discussed and attention is focused on some management tools that would enhance individual and organisational capacity and learning.

REVISITING HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Human resource development is described as the integrated use of training and development, organisational development and career development to improve individual, group and organisational effectiveness (Harris & DeSimone 1994:9). The focus of training and development is to ensure, identify and help develop the key competencies that enable individuals to perform current and future jobs.

Harrison (1993:300) defines human resource development as the planned learning and development of employees as individuals and as groups to the benefit of an organisation as well as its employees. Horwitz *et al.* (1996:138) take the concept further by stating that human resource development would not only benefit the individual in his or her job performance, but will also enable and skill him or her in other social, cultural, intellectual and political roles that society demands from them. Human resource development is an investment and not a cost because institutions link their human resource objectives with their overall organisational objectives and strategies.

The concept of human resource development was first researched by Rippley (1972) and was defined as organised learning experiences provided by employers, within a specific timeframe, to bring about either organisational change and/or personal growth. Sambrook (2001:170) explores another perspective to the study of human resource development and calls it the 'negotiated order perspective'. Training and development are attached not only to organisational goals but to individual goals. Training and development should be practised within a particular environment, for example, the management training of nurses will vary from the management training of engineers and so also from the management training of human resource professionals. Different competencies and skills are required. The environment could have a significant impact on the type of training and development.

Human resource development can be grouped into three broad categories, including (Simpson 1999:1-2):

- *ad hoc* development through organisational change, people changing jobs or individuals seeking change and progress
- traditional/functional human resource development by selecting training and development initiatives based on organisational requirements and
- innovative human resource development by way of job enrichment strategies, changes in expectations, performance management systems based on performance planning, development, continuous training and education.

This article proposes that human resource development be defined as the management function pertaining to training with the main aim of simultaneously developing both the institution and the individual. The aim of human resource development is to secure effective and efficient service delivery through appropriately trained employees. Public managers have to implement policies that would increase productivity in terms of effective, efficient and responsive delivery of services. One way to realise this objective, is through placing the appropriate employee in the appropriate position, providing an enabling environment for training and development and ensuring that training and development efforts address organisational effectiveness and efficiency.

AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The key to an integrated approach of human resource management is found in the definition stated by Halloran (1978:5). He defines the study of human resources management as the study of how people can work effectively in groups in order to satisfy both organisational goals and personal needs. Personal needs such as job satisfaction, recognition and career advancement are influenced by organisational conditions in the work environment. Frederick Taylor, in his discussion of scientific management, indicated that the objective of management was to remove the cause of antagonism between a supervisor and a subordinate, because only when working together can the productivity of an institution be increased (as quoted in Halloran 1978:8). Elton Mayo, in his research, developed the concept of the informal organisation and determined the extent to which it could influence employee behaviour and, thus, productivity. The strategic link between employee behaviour and productivity could not be denied. Employees are not isolated from the production process, and no matter how sophisticated the technological advances become, complex human beings' normal human interactions would affect the total production output (Halloran 1978:10-11).

It could be argued that when an employee's abilities and ambitions match the demands of a specific position, the employee could be productive and experience personal satisfaction. However, within the current human resource management system in South Africa, this is not always the case. The government's emphasis on human resource devel-

opment is an attempt to address the gap between human resource within the organisational structure and human resource supply. Human resources are not in limitless supply, and the Public Service needs to analyse and explore ways to utilise its current human resources as effectively and efficiently as possible. The approach to human resource management should be based on the integration of all human resource functions in order to ensure a coherent system that will address human resource issues responsibly.

The integrated approach to human resource management is based on the argument that institutions do not only have to be clear on their purpose, but more specifically on the strategy that would operationalise the purpose. Thus, the structure and system of the institution need to be integrated and the focus placed on the development of employees as key resources. An integrated approach to human resource management will also enable the employees to identify a clear career path, as well as determining the development and training initiatives that would have to be undertaken to reach a pre-determined position within the organisational structure of the institution.

A key aspect in the integrated approach to human resource management, is the individual identification of positions. However, employees should not just know how they fit into the overall organisational structure. They should, also, understand the relationships affecting and support needed, which would enable them to be successful in those positions. While the main aim of the institution remains the effective and efficient realisation of organisational goals, it should be considered within the context of achieving optimum well-being for its employees, placed within a structure where each position adds value to the overall organisational strategy.

IMPLEMENTING PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT TO ENHANCE DEVELOPMENT

Since 2001, the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) has been extensively involved in formulating policies for the implementation of a performance management system within the Public Service. The Senior Management Service (SMS) Directorate in the DPSA was responsible for formulating the performance management framework pertaining to the SMS (level 13 and up). DPSA also formulated the performance management framework for the rest of the Department in 2001 titled "Performance Management and Development System (PMDS)."

According to Chapter 5, Section 10 of the SMS Handbook (Department of Public Service and Administration 2001(a)), performance management and development systems need to be integrated with all other organisational processes to be effective. Performance management is thus an approach to how work is done and organised. The approach should focus on continuous improvement of performance, be driven by senior management and should be strategically aligned with all organisational training goals and priorities.

The purpose of the PMDS is to provide policy measures and guidelines for effective and efficient implementation of performance management within a department. Performance management is aimed at optimising the potential and current employee output in terms of quality and quantity, increasing the total organisational performance (Department of Public Service and Administration 2001(b):6). Thus, the policy not only links the importance of human resource training and development with individual development, but also with improving organisational performance.

The objectives of the PMDS are to establish a performance culture that would reward and recognise effective performance, be used as a vehicle for implementing organisational goals and priorities, facilitate continuous performance improvement and organisational development. The PMDS aims to continuously enhance individual employee competence through identifying outputs relating to training and development needs. The main principle of performance management is that it should be developmental though the identification of competencies required from employees, thus determining the content of the training and development initiatives to which employees should be exposed (Department of Public Service and Administration 2001(b):6-7).

The PMDS makes provision for equal access of all employees to training and development opportunities. The link between performance management and training and development is crucial. It can almost be seen as parts of an unbroken cycle. If performance management is not implemented correctly, it will not influence management of skills or identify competence gaps. Training priorities will not be determined according to organisational needs, but will be based on individual perceptions of what is lacking and what is appropriate. Without the strategic link between performance management and training, neither individual nor organisational training goals and objectives will be achieved.

Performance management cycle

The performance management cycle begins with establishing standards of performance. Because of the interrelationship between planning and control, control should start as early as the planning stage. A performance standard is a projection of an expected or planned performance outcome, taking into account a specific time frame. During the setting of performance standards the objectives and goals should be specified in order to facilitate the assessment of actual performance (Smit & Cronje 1997:401).

The DPSA has decided that the performance agreements of individual employees will be based on the Department's strategic plan, in order to ensure strategic alignment between organisational training priorities and individual training goals and objectives and the functional plans of the individual components. The PMDS came into effect on 1 April 2001 and performance assessment takes place on a quarterly basis. The formal annual

assessment coincides with the fourth quarterly assessment (Department of Public Service and Administration 2001 (b):10-11). Botes (1994:206-207) states that a process involving performance management ensures that employees are properly supervised, are correctly placed, promotions and transfers are used to the best advantage of both the department and the individual employee and, most importantly, careers are systematically and purposefully developed.

The performance assessment report is the main source of training information for the institution. Employees are able to identify shortcomings in knowledge and experience. The performance contract should stipulate the individual development plan. Section 35, Chapter 5 of the SMS Handbook (Department of Public Service and Administration 2001(a)), stipulates that in order to address the gap that might exist between the required competency profile and the actual competencies, a training and development plan should be designed through a collaborative process between a manager and his or her subordinate(s).

The institution should stipulate that all performance agreements contribute to the achievement of institutional objectives, as highlighted in its strategic plan. In order to address the gap between current capacity and required competencies, a personal development plan should be part of the performance management system. The personal development plan should comprise a training and development plan specifically designed for the individual employee. The training and development needs should not only be identified through performance assessments but also upon appointment when a work plan is developed (Department of Public Service and Administration 2001 (b): 12,17).

The reasoning behind training and development initiatives is to enhance the capacity, not only of the individual, but more importantly of the institution. Performance indicators such as have been identified in the SMS Handbook as *Core Management Criteria* comprising 11 competencies, should inform training priorities. Three competencies, namely people management and empowerment, financial management and client service and customer care, have been identified as compulsory competencies for all senior managers. In most cases, the identified competencies for senior managers have also trickled down to the lower management levels, where functions such as people management are crucial. Training courses can be used as ways in which performance can be improved.

Because of a possible employee perception regarding a lack of information provided by senior management, employees decide which training would satisfy their own needs regarding personal career development. In some cases training takes place for the sake of individual fulfillment that does not necessarily realise organisational training priorities. For instance, senior managers could decide that they need to further their educational qualifications, something that might take three to five years. However, according to their performance contracts, they have only been appointed for a period of three years. Thus,

the training does satisfy individual development needs. If they obtain their qualifications, it would also benefit the institution, but obtaining their qualifications might not occur during the period of their employment. The institution can therefore not justify spending resources on individual development if the development is not aligned with its institutional goals and objectives.

Part of the performance management system is offering incentives to employees to improve their performance. Both the SMS Handbook and the PMDS of the DPSA emphasise the important effect of offering rewards and recognition for performance, not only performance in terms of institutional goals and objectives but also, individual performance.

Recognition and reward

Part of the PMDS is the use of rewards and recognition as incentives for improved individual or group performance. The organisational policy regarding rewards is prescribed in terms of the *Public Service Regulations, 2001*, and dictates decisions regarding promotion, pay progression, performance bonus allocation, non-financial rewards or the initiation of incapacity processes.

The SMS Handbook (Chapter 5, Section 26) provides examples of non-financial rewards that may be allocated to senior managers, including increased autonomy to arrange their own work, explicit acknowledgement and recognition in publications or public awards in recognition of a specific achievement or innovation. The executing authority, in DPSA's case, the Minister of Public Service and Administration the discretionary powers to allocate performance rewards (cash bonuses) to senior managers. There is a provision that only employees who have signed the performance agreement are eligible for performance rewards.

Botes (1994:216-217) describes specific factors that could influence performance decisions made by a supervisor. The attitude of employees regarding the implementation of a new system, the supervisor's own subjective norms and the tone of the annual appraisal meeting are some of the factors contributing to decisions made during performance assessments.

Performance management involves the process that measures individual employee performance against set performance standards. Evaluation becomes part of the process, especially where training and development initiatives have been identified that would address poor performance.

APPLICATION IN THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT - EVALUATING TRAINING

In order to ensure that training priorities are met, it is imperative that training courses be evaluated in terms of their effectiveness and efficiency. Critten (1994:157-158) states that defining evaluation can be equated with trying to define quality – one can recognise the outcome, but defining it is not an easy task. Evaluation draws attention to the judgement about the effect of putting the training objectives into practice. Validation becomes part of evaluation in terms of determining the appropriateness and practical applicability of a selected training course.

The purpose of evaluation is three-fold. Firstly, to gather information that would provide a framework for the improvement of future training courses regarding the same training need (formative role). Secondly, judgements should be made based on the training course's value in terms of its total effects (summative role) and thirdly, a learning role, in order to ensure that challenges identified during the implementation of a training course are not duplicated (Critten 1994:158).

The most comprehensive model of evaluation, according to Critten (1994:188) should be based on the following six primary principles, including that:

- evaluation is a dynamic process which generates value
- the schools of thought on evaluation can only provide perspectives from which to examine and describe the training data
- training data are complex and diverse and should be comprehensively described in order to have any meaning to the evaluator
- the evaluation in itself will have no meaning or value if it is not given value by the stakeholder
- value given to the evaluation should be based on the personal judgement of the stakeholder and
- the ultimate value of the evaluation is when more than one stakeholder is able to reach consensus on the value of the training course.

The model most appropriate for evaluation proposed in this article, was developed by Critten (1994:193-199). Evaluation is divided into six stages and the intention with the process of evaluation is aimed at meeting the evaluation needs of both the individual and the institution. The principles for the successful implementation of this model are that everyone is a learner, that everyone should act as a resource to each other, that everyone

details his or her competencies to be achieved and resources to achieve them with and that every manager sees his or her role as increasing the value of the employees in terms of increasing the range of skills and competencies.

The six stages of the evaluation model are contracting, describing, focusing, confronting, consolidating and disseminating. Through this model it can be proven that evaluation is a dynamic process that managers could readily implement. However, the evaluation should be done in the department in order to have the desired result and should, thus, be driven by senior management to achieve maximum value. The first stage, contracting, should comprise a meeting convened by the senior management to brief the trainees on the goals to be achieved. The evaluator should ensure that the group, to undergo training, is clear on its vision so that the benefits and process can be visualised to portray the desired results. Description aims to help trainees become fully aware of the aims that have to be achieved and the range of resources available to them. Focusing involves the evaluator assisting the trainee to draw together the common themes from the description stage and focus on the meaning for the trainee. Individual development planning characterises this stage.

Stage four deals with confronting. There is a very fine line to be drawn between focusing and confronting and the evaluator needs to facilitate this stage to ensure that the trainee draws as much knowledge as possible from the learning experience. The trainee should be able to make the personal breakthrough of achieving a new competence and mastering a new skill. Thus, during this stage the trainee obtains the ultimate value for himself or herself personally. Stage five is the consolidation and the evaluator takes charge of the process. All the different individual values now have to be put together so that the total picture of change can be visualised.

Stage six is the dissemination of information back to everyone in the institution that was involved in putting the training course together. Reflection should be given of the extent to which predetermined objectives were reached, the amount of resources used and the individual, group and organisational value derived from the training course.

The most significant aspect of this model is that it will inform future training courses as to the applicability and the framework for evaluation. The use of this model, for the purpose of this article, lies in the link created between individual and organisational performance. Training is not only strategically linked to organisational goals and objectives but the evaluation of the training courses also focuses on benefiting and realising not only organisational training needs but individual training needs as well.

Wexley & Latham (2002:161-162) identify reasons why the evaluation of training courses could be contested. Most often, senior management does not require training evaluation. If employees stay abreast of new developments and are able to adapt to changes in the environment, then it is assumed that the training must have served its purpose and a formal evaluation is perceived as being unnecessary. Senior managers might also not

want to indicate that they have no idea as to how to conduct the evaluation of training courses and they, therefore ignore the issues and hope that the training serves an organisational purpose. When evaluation does take place, determining exactly what needs to be evaluated could also be perceived as challenging. Thus, senior management might not know if a cost analysis is sufficient, or if the achievement of training objectives should also have been considered. Finally, evaluation is perceived as being a costly and risky exercise and as such, should not be undertaken if it will require additional resources in an already overextended budget. It could be argued that the perception exists that money would rather be spent on identifying new training courses than on realising that money already spent was wasted on a training course that did not add value to the effective and efficient functioning of the department.

The solution to the barriers to obtaining sound evaluation lies in educating senior management on the importance of evaluation in an integrated human resource development system and highlighting the organisational benefits that would be gained through the process. Thus, senior managers need to be taught on how to evaluate, what to evaluate and how to determine the degree to which the training goals and objectives of the organisation have been realised. Evaluation needs to be included in the budget so that the financial allocation is specified from the beginning. Continuous evaluation throughout the course would also alleviate the burden of trying to find the right information after the training course has already been implemented. The importance and benefits to be gained from evaluation should not be underestimated and commitment on behalf of senior management would strengthen the process considerably.

With regard to the learning organisation, evaluation is an integral part of the extent to which the organisation will be able to adapt to changes suggested through the evaluation of training courses. Training should enhance organisational capability, which would lead to organisational learning and the institution's capacity to learn from its own experience – a true characteristic of a learning organisation.

THE IMPACT OF AN INTEGRATED APPROACH ON THE LEARNING ORGANISATION

Establishing a learning organisation depends on creating a learning culture. A learning culture does not imply sending employees on as many training courses as possible without evaluating the outcomes of these courses, but rather identifying on a continuous basis those training courses that would satisfy both individual and organisational development needs. A learning culture should support learning and be based on ensuring the free exchange and flow of information to put expertise where it is most needed and encouraging individuals to network extensively across organisational boundaries in order to develop their own knowledge and expertise as well as supporting the commitment to learning and personal development where learning is rewarded and encouraged. Farago

& Skyrme (1995:2) maintain that the learning culture will be characterised by creativity, diversity and a climate of openness and trust. It supposes that learning from mistakes can often be more rewarding and instructional, than learning from success.

Any institution learns through employee learning but, will in most cases not guarantee that organisational learning takes place. The most basic building block for a learning organisation is its commitment to individual employee learning. Senge (1990:140) maintains that a manager's most important tasks no longer lie in planning, organising and controlling but in ensuring an enabling environment for employees to lead the most fulfilling life they can. Senge (1990:6-11) proposes five disciplines that underwrite the building blocks for a learning organisation. The five disciplines are personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, team learning and systems thinking.

The phrase 'personal mastery' is used to describe the discipline for personal growth and learning. Employees with high levels of personal mastery continuously expand their ability to create the results in life that they truly seek. Their quest for continuous learning is the basic spirit for the learning organisation. Being a personal master in a current position means that the approach to the position should be from a creative point of view and not from a reactive viewpoint (Senge 1990:140-142). The mental models focus on turning the attention inward, to the development of the self and realising what can be learned from others, without making assumptions regarding these persons are. Senge (1990:174) maintains that new insights are not implemented because they conflict with deeply held internal images of how the institution works. These images limit the way employees think and act and the managing of mental models would then imply surfacing, testing and improving internal images of how an organisation functions. Hodgkinson (2000:5) stipulates that establishing new mental models in an ever-changing environment will not be an easy task to accomplish, but that the first step towards it should be for all employees to acknowledge their mental preconceptions and learn to deal with them.

A shared vision creates a sense of commonality that penetrates the whole organisation and provides a sense of cohesiveness to all diverse activities and employees. When employees truly share a vision, they are bound by it, deriving a common care and aspiration for it (Senge 1990: 205-206). The shared vision is crucial to organisational learning because it provides focus and energy for learning. It could be argued that through shared vision employees will strive to learn because learning a new skill becomes part of their vision and is, therefore, important to them. Team learning invests in the potential wisdom of teams. An unaligned team is wasted energy and even though individual employees may work very hard, their collective effort does not translate into an efficient and effective group effort. The more a team becomes aligned in their performance, the more they will complement one another's efforts. Only when team functioning characterise an organisation, can team learning be propagated. Hodgkinson (2000:6) states that team learning could be achieved through an attitude of give and take and that sharing visions for the team would coordinate the team effort efficiently.

The fifth discipline as proposed by Senge is titled systems thinking, which is based on utilising the way of thinking about a language for describing and understanding the relationships that shape the behaviour of systems (Frydman *et al.* 2000:4-5). *Systems thinking is a discipline for seeing wholes* (Senge 1990:68). It analyses the interrelationships and patterns that bind systems together. Systems become more complex and complexity can undermine confidence and responsibility. It sees the interrelationships rather than just cause-effect situations and identifies the processes of change rather than providing snapshots.

Training and development in a learning organisation should be part of the daily activities of employees and should not be seen, as it is at the moment, as a measure to try and bridge the distance between actual performance and desired performance.

Critten (1994:204-205) states that the learning organisation has a climate that fosters individual learning and development. Furthermore, human resource development strategies will become an integral part of the organisational strategic policies enforcing a culture where learning and working become synonymous with one another. The learning organisation has to be realised from within, building on the principle of continuous transformation within an integrated human resource system.

The challenge of implementing and managing a learning organisation lies in facilitating the learning of all employees, thereby ensuring the continued transformation of the organisation itself. Thus, the learning organisation does not limit itself to bureaucratic forms of management with fixed chains of command or lines of communication. The purpose of the learning organisation is to enhance individual capabilities in order to strengthen organisational capacity, in order to secure responsive service delivery. The management of a learning organisation cannot be achieved through human resource development and training, but rather through the implementation of a holistic human resource management system that would address all aspects regarding the management and development of human resources.

SPECIFIC MANAGEMENT TOOLS TO ENHANCE THE LEARNING ORGANISATION

Frydman *et al.* (2000:181-206) list and describe the various characteristics of the organisational learning manager. The characteristics include that:

- managers are pragmatic visionaries seeing their work in the larger context of the system as a whole
- centrality of values reinforce the core set of organisational values

- managers are master strategists and tacticians being able to ascertain how external forces will shape the organisation and, as a consequence, also being able to articulate a realistic path for the future
- the essence of organisational learning management is the skillful devolution of power developing the leadership capability of subordinates
- managers are stewards of learning and continuously will encourage other to learn
- managers are learners themselves despite their capacity to direct and strategise and
- managers realise that there is no single path to organisational learning and depend on the culture and processes in an organisation.

The manager who is able to lead subordinates into a learning environment, should be aware of his or her own training and learning priorities. The organisational learning manager is able to guide, direct, influence, plan and implement training and development priorities that would address organisational needs but also be able to attract and retain individual commitment to organisational learning.

Popper & Lipshitz (2000:12) maintain that effective learning is enhanced through an investment of time and money in the training process and creating an environment that would protect transparency of performance. The manager should devote his or her time in terms of participating and therefore reinforcing the learning experience. Ensuring that the learning experience is evaluated, is another way of ensuring that a learning environment is created. Specific tools and techniques that could be utilised by managers to ensure compliance with the concept of a learning organisation include fostering learning and creativity skills, enforcing effective and efficient communication and providing a mentoring programme to reinforce the learning experience.

CONCLUSION

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. Without the proper alignment of individual positions to organisational effectiveness and efficiency, training and development will continue to satisfy the individual, more than the institution. An integrated approach to human resource development means that senior management should initiate a process where individual positions, their importance and contributions, are aligned with the effective and efficient realisation of organisational goals. The training and development initiatives that have been implemented, up to date, have not been

in vain or a waste of resources. The Public Service needs to build on the strengths of its training system and turn all training opportunities to competency strengths.

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