

CHAPTER 6

6. FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND MOTIVATED RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The education system in South Africa is in a process of transformation and institutions have to re-invent and align themselves with the changing demands of society and the economy. Due to the recent and continuing restructuring of the education system of South Africa the Council on Higher Education Task Team was requested by the minister to come up with a document Towards a New Higher Education Landscape to look at South African Higher Education. “The overall objective is the development of a higher education system characterised by quality and excellence, equity responsiveness and effective and efficient provision, governance and management”. (CHE, 2000:13).

The aim of this research was to investigate empirically the process of lifelong learning for the development of academics at colleges of education and technikons.

In order to achieve the stated objectives as outlined in Chapter 1, the proper conduction of needs analysis of academics can improve or address possible reasons for the lack of interest in staff development.

The research is aimed at looking at workplace training done continuously in these changing times, when great demands are made on our education system and resources. These challenges reflect on all lecturers. There is no doubt that higher education contributed a lot to the development of human resources in South Africa, but the country and the world as a whole are changing and there is a need to resort to innovative ways of providing education and training.

Chapter Four revealed through the analysis and interpretation of empirical data, how lecturers view the importance of lifelong learning to update their knowledge. Training and development programmes are essential in institutions of higher learning. The challenge facing institutions of higher learning is to run training properly by involving academics with initial planning. Failure to do so will cause academics to become disillusioned.

6.2 OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH REPORT

In Chapter One an attempt was made to facilitate a better understanding of workplace training through lifelong learning as a vehicle to train and develop lecturers. The following headings were addressed:

- Statement of the problem
- Aim of this study
- Area of investigation
- Research methods
- Clarification of concepts.

In Chapter Two the theory of lifelong learning was investigated. Different concepts such as the SAQA act, NQF, ETQA'S, SGB'S, NSB, Skills Development Act and Skills Levy Act, were discussed to provide a comprehensive frame of reference within which training for lifelong learning could be defined and explained.

Chapter Three focused on a variety of issues relating to institutions of higher learning as learning organisations; learning challenges; implications and the relationship between staff development and lifelong learning. The emphasis was placed on a theoretical background for lifelong learning at institutions of higher learning.

Chapter Four focused on the analysis and interpretation of data. Academics agree that no educator will remain qualified without some form of continuous education. However, the respondents of both institutions indicated that

management is not committed to training and development of staff. There are other findings that call for a review of how training and development should be conducted.

In Chapter Five guidelines for the development of academics at institutions of higher learning were outlined. Much emphasis was placed on a model of participation, opportunity and motivation. Commitment by management was also outlined as it is a critical aspect in changing the way institutions view training and development.

6.3 FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made:

Both colleges of education and technikons employ a variety of mechanisms to identify training needs. It is very interesting to note that at colleges of education the majority of respondents agreed that needs analysis is done through discussion with staff members, whilst at technikons it is done through observations by management. Though there are a variety of mechanisms used to identify training needs, technikons should avoid using mainly observations by management. They should introduce other mechanisms especially those that involve lecturers in their training needs analysis.

It emerges as a dissatisfaction that few lecturers agree that their institutions encourage staff to identify their training needs, (27.87%) colleges of education and (32.73%) at technikons.

It would be appropriate for management to encourage staff to look at their own training needs.

- Management's commitment towards training and development will encourage excellent performance. In addition staff development will be managed correctly because of the interest and intervention of management.

- The two most popular objectives of training and development are to
 - update lecturers' skills
 - improve their performance
- The respondents agreed that the most popular training and development method is workshops.

6.4 CONCLUSIONS FROM THE RESEARCH

Management should be committed to training and development of their staff. It is essential that management formulate specific and realistic goals in consultation with staff members.

Research has been conducted in this field, but it is important to conduct more research to note changes in behaviour patterns and training mechanisms. In this research, the researcher selected lecturers at different institutions of higher learning, that even differ in their status, and the survey provided useful guidelines, though not new for future provision of staff development and training.

The research will not necessarily provide a major change in the process of training and development but will measure how far this process is acceptable and viewed as important.

6.5 PROBLEM SOLVING AND GOALS ATTAINMENT

Many changes are taking place in the South African education system. The changes that have turned South African education into a merry-go-round are political, social and global. Education is also influenced by technology and the challenges that it is offering. Competition as a result of globalisation is also playing a role. Some of the major changes that are taking place in higher education include curriculum restructuring which will address relevance

education in meeting the needs of the country and promoting quality education and improved institutional management. The predictable and stable character of education has been replaced by unpredictable realities for lecturers, lies in the fact that multiple programmes should be short and flexible. The empirical research revealed that attitudes of lecturers towards lifelong learning were positive. A convincing majority of lecturers believe that lifelong learning maximises human potential and keeps staff up to date.

Development and training programmes may have different forms ranging from teaching assessments to workshops in order to provide continuous learning opportunities to academics to enable them to confront the changes that are taking place. The researcher also found that to analyse training needs is a collective joint effort by management and academic staff at the institutions for higher learning.

The aim of the research was to discover attitudes of lecturers towards ongoing training. The majority of lecturers at colleges of education (93,44%) and at technikons (94,55%) agree that no educator will remain qualified without some form of ongoing education. Guidelines based on collected empirical survey and theory, a suggested model to approach training and development are discussed in Chapter 5.

6.6 MOTIVATED RECOMMENDATIONS

“In the globalising information society we now occupy, institutions of higher learning surely have special roles to play and obligations to fulfil. There is a need for new skills and knowledge, in order to enhance society's capacity.

Institutions should position themselves to serve the country beyond teaching and research. Institutions approach development training differently and each should consult with its lecturers in order to provide the relevant workplace training.

It was mentioned in Chapter 4 that the research will not necessarily improve the present status, it was done to have an idea of how lecturers view lifelong learning. The recommendations are based on the research done as well as many literature sources that the researcher has read.

In order to fully contribute professionally, it is essential for a lecturer to acquire new competencies and skills to perform his/her tasks effectively and efficiently.

The following issues should be noted by staff developers for the benefit of training and development:

6.6.1 Method of delivery

Institutions should also take a critical look at delivery methods. They should provide a range of options, taking into account the individual or departmental needs. Some academics might prefer to learn by means of a computer, others by personal contact, while others by interpersonal contact. To make use of computers will be easy due to their availability at institutions of higher learning.

6.6.2 Know the Client

In order to determine what the needs of the lecturers are, staff developers need to satisfy their clients' needs.

Staff development at institutions of higher education needs to change its approach. Institutions should know their clients, know what product they want, why they need it and how they want it to be delivered. If the product is new, lecturers should be involved from the start so that they will buy into it. Lecturers are pressed for time, therefore the training programmes must be good, relevant and convincing to them.

6.6.3 Consultancy

Usually staff takes external consultants seriously compared to internal staff developers. They seem to have confidence in consultants. Some consultants might have experience of the corporate world but not of the education environment. However there is a disadvantage in using external consultants because they come and go, unlike internal staff developers they will not always be available for follow-up. The disadvantage about internal staff developers is that they might get used to the environment and be subjective in their activities.

6.6.4 Facilitators

The researcher's advice would be to exchange staff developers or facilitators at institutions. For example, a staff developer or facilitator from one technikon trains staff at another technikon and vice versa because they understand the education environment. Exchanging trainers might also be cost effective. Institutions should however, be very cautious when they swap trainers because the problems encountered might differ from institution to institution.

6.6.5 Competencies

An ability to teach has always been a competency of lecturers. However there are so many changes that other competencies, e.g. collaborating with other stakeholders in matters relating to curriculum design and having a thorough knowledge of the provisions of related sections of legislation also form part of the package. It, therefore, becomes increasingly difficult if a person is not prepared and ready for change.

6.7 REPORT ON THE TESTING OF THE HYPOTHESIS

The hypothesis stated in Chapter One were tested and the following were the results:

Lecturers in general like any other profession need continuous education to address the issues of change, e.g. regulations, technology, etc. The questionnaire distributed to lecturers at both colleges of education and technikons revealed that the majority of lecturers believe that no educator will remain qualified without some form of ongoing education.

However, lack of interest in attending staff development programmes offered at their respective institutions is a clear indication that staff development is not managed properly as the majority of lecturers responded that staff development would develop academia if correctly managed, and they also agree that they do not participate in the need analysis process. Participation seems to be essential in getting buy-in and positive attitude from lecturers.

Needs analysis at institutions is of vital importance in assisting staff developers in identifying and providing the needed development programmes.

Lack of needs analysis and participation of lecturers in their training needs, may lead to lecturers not motivated or having a negative attitude to attend training programmes. Though some people might be motivated by monetary rewards after attending development programmes, others will be motivated by the thought of being given an opportunity to plan their development training.

According to the above mentioned results the researcher therefore accepts the hypothesis as was formulated in paragraph 1.3 page 3.

6.8 SHORTCOMINGS OF NEW DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

It is important for institutions of higher education to adopt the principles of a learning organisation. There should be endorsed policies on training and development that are linked to the vision and mission of an institution. The institutional training needs of training should be linked to the individual training needs.

A coordinated needs analysis needs to be conducted professionally. The needs for training should be well communicated to staff members. Management should show commitment towards training and encourage staff to participate in training endeavours.

The education environment is changing so fast that management and staff developers need to be proactive. It is sad to wait for a situation to explode to take action. Fear of the unknown is more powerful than fear of the known. The changes are fast and many. Institutions need to create an environment of support during these trying times.

Staff developers are agents of change and should help institutions to manage change by offering courses to confront the change, they have to know why certain things are changing and lastly to help staff to be part of the change. Knowledge is power. Not all change is negative. Sometimes there are a lot of good things in change.

6.9 FURTHER RESEARCH

Since change is constant, it is important to further research the need and approach of staff development in institutions of higher learning. Ongoing research on lecturers' expectations is also important.

The researcher's empirical investigations have resulted in the revelation of various questions and opinions. However, there might be factors which have influenced the subjectivity of the respondents' responses especially with regard to uncertainties at colleges of education as well as major changes taking place in the education environment in South Africa. Further investigation might provide a different scenario because the environment will be stable.

Further research is imperative to probe further into the need of management commitment towards training and development. The researcher is of the opinion that there exists a need to address the fears and threats of mergers of

institutions of higher education. The fears and threats can be addressed through motivation coupled with counselling to support staff during the period.

The researcher feels that her empirical research failed to probe more on employee participation in training needs analysis. The following aspects remain untouched and may lead to further research:

- Does management view employees' involvement as a shared responsibility?
- Will lecturers feel empowered through participation?
- Will participation of lecturers in training needs analysis make them feel a strong sense of ownership?

6.10 CONCLUSION

Institutions of Higher Education that want to survive and grow, need to investigate what type of training is needed by their academic personnel for survival. Management of these institutions needs to support the development of new skills and competencies of their academic staff.

Academics are part and parcel of the transformation process. They are faced with the challenges of participating in the restructuring of education by contributing and playing an important role. The study was greatly supported by literature. It is not disputed that change can be stressful if there is no support – hence the need for management to motivate academics and offer them learning opportunities, a critical aspect is to involve academics in the initial preparation of training programmes.

Development programmes should be designed to suit the needs of the academics of an institution or department. They should choose which programmes to attend. If the course is compulsory, there should be a clear explanation from management about the aims and objectives of the course. As argued in chapter 5, a sense of ownership by academics should be

fostered by management through participation in the planning phase of the training.

It is clear that academics embrace lifelong learning. In conclusion, institutions of Higher Education should have a sound training as well as motivated policies and operational academic strategies to implement these policies. Academics, as is the case with every citizen of this country, have to be engaged in lifelong learning enterprises if these institutions want to survive and be competitive in an ever-changing knowledge research and technological environment for the new millennium.

In conclusion the country is looking at education to provide opportunities to be more responsive to the country's needs and to adapt to rapid social and economic changes that are taking place in South Africa.