

# **TRAINING NEEDS ANALYSIS FOR MIDDLE MANAGEMENT: A SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC SERVICE EXPERIENCE**

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## **ABSTRACT**

**T**raining and development for public officials have been changed from being action-orientated to being results orientated. The focus of training and development has shifted from merely designing, developing and conducting training programmes to a process where not only the needs of the organization is taken into account but also the needs and desires of the individual. It became necessary to introduce a process of needs analysis to enable organizations to identify specific training opportunities. The results generated from this process will provide a clearer direction on the strategies to be followed in the development and training of public officials.

## **INTRODUCTION**

**T**he need for training and development continues to be a top priority in the South African Public Service as a result of the rapid changes in the economical and social environment, but mostly in the work environment. Government departments are spending significant amounts of money on training activities for their officials. However, training efforts are fragmented.

The end result is a lack of “value for money” for organisations, which must be addressed in a coherent manner. A strategic framework is required, to evaluate the immediate and medium-term training priorities in the broader context of a “human resource development plan” for the various disciplines in organizations. Such a training framework requires that a number of issues be considered, including: -

- Who is to be trained? (what is the size and composition of the target audience?);
- Where are they starting from? (the present level of performance?);
- What is the desired outcome to be achieved? (the required level of performance);

- What is the training content? (what is necessary to move from “present” to “required” performance);
- How is training to be delivered and by whom? (what is the appropriate delivery channel?).

The development of a training strategy starts with a needs analysis. In this presentation the development and the findings of a comprehensive training needs analysis of middle managers are reported.

## FOCUS OF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

**T**raining and development have changed from being action-orientated to being results orientated. The focus of training and development has shifted from merely designing, developing and conducting training programmes to aligning individual learning needs and competency requirements to organization strategy, and ensuring that individual and organizational performance are enhanced as a result. The primary purposes of training and development are to:

- improve performance;
- maintain performance;
- prepare for new job challenges on higher levels;
- apply competencies.

Public sector employees with the right mix of skills and profiles are of critical importance in the service delivery process. Therefore the competency framework provides and enhances focused development for improved performance in order to achieve the determined quality results.

Training and development in the South African Public Service focuses on staff on salary levels:

- 6 – 8 (Referred to as emerging managers)
- 9 – 12 (Referred to as Advanced Managers or middle management level); and
- 13 + (Referred to as Executive Managers).

Currently only the Senior Manager Service (SMS) is receiving a specific training programme namely the Presidential Strategic Leadership Development Programme (PSLDP).

At present government’s spending on training activities for officials does not meet the real needs which exist and there is very little – if any – coordination of training efforts. This state of affairs could be attributed to the following (Fourie, 2002:128):

- firstly, providers (i.e. private sector institutions, technical colleges and institutions of higher learning) are operating in an increasingly commercialized environment and are driven to (opportunistically) offer training programmes of (at best) variable quality on matters the providers perceive to be topical;
- secondly, currently no clear direction from government to training providers exists in terms of the various training needs; and

- thirdly, officials choose to attend or are enrolled for inappropriate courses, as managers experience a desperate need to do 'something' to improve performance, resulting in a lack of 'value for money' for government.

## DRIVING FACTORS FOR TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

The need for highly skilled employees in the South African Public Service is contrasted by unequal skills on race and gender basis caused by decades of the apartheid rule and to international isolation. A number of aggressive strategies have been introduced by the government with reference to human resource development and skills training.

In this regard the Human Resource Development Strategy for the Public Service 2002-2006 aims at the improvement of the economic and social infrastructure of the country as a whole, whilst at the same time reducing the disparities in wealth and poverty. Furthermore to develop a more inclusive society and to improve international perceptions of the country and thereby promote investor confidence in the Republic of South Africa as an investor friendly country.

## The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa

The *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996), makes provision for the basic values and principles governing public administration. Section 195(1) of the Constitution, 1996 lists the following:

- a high standard of professional ethics must be sustained;
- efficient, economic and effective use of resources must be sought;
- public administration must be development-oriented;
- services must be delivered in an impartial, fair, equitable and unbiased manner;
- public administration must be accountable;
- transparency must be encouraged and enforced;
- good human resource management and career development to augment human potential must be refined; and
- public administration must be broadly representative of the South African people.

## National Skills Development Strategy

The National Skills Development Strategy promotes government priorities and policies for training and development of public officials in South Africa. The aforementioned rests on the pillars of the relevant skills development legislation, such as the *South African Qualifications Act*, 1995 (Act No. 58 of 1995), *Skills Development Act*, 1998 (Act No. 97 of 1998) and the *Skill Development Levies Act*, 1999 (Act No. 9 of 1999).

The updating of the Public Service legislation with reference to education and training manifests in the *White Paper on Public Service Education and Training*, 1998 (WPPSET) whereby the WPPSET seeks to transform Public Service training and education into a dynamic, needs based and pro-active instrument, capable of fulfilling a critical and

an integral strategic role in the process of reconstructing and shaping a new Public Service in South Africa.

## Human Resources Development in the Public Service

The South African Management Development Institute (SAMDI) is mandated to provide Public Service training and development that will ensure increased capacity of service delivery and implementation of the initiatives of government as determined by national priorities. To effect Public Service training SAMDI has undergone a significant transformation process during the past decade, and has thus been able to achieve better coordination of public sector training.

### HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

**H**uman resource development is described as the integrated use of training and development, organisational development and career development to improve individual, group and departmental effectiveness. The focus of training and development is to ensure, identify and develop the key competencies that enable individuals to perform current and future jobs. The focus of organisational development is to ensure inter- and intra-unit relationships and to assist groups to initiate and manage change. Career development is aimed at ensuring and aligning individual career planning and departmental career management processes, in order to match the individual's needs with the needs of a department (Harris & DeSimone 1994:9).

Harrison (1993:300) defines human resource development as the planned learning and development of employees as individuals and as groups to the benefit of a department 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 them in other social, cultural, intellectual and political roles that society demands from them. Human resource development should be aimed at overcoming labour market segregation by addressing past inequalities based on race, gender and class. Human resource development is an investment and not a cost because departments link their human resource objectives to their overall departmental objectives and strategies.

Sambrook (2001:170) maintains that human resource development is a complex concept to define due to the fact that the theoretical foundations of human resource development cannot be traced to economic, psychological or systems theories alone, and that it encompasses those and other disciplines. The concept of human resource development was first used in 1972 and was defined as organised learning experiences provided by employers, within a specific timeframe, to bring about either departmental 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 departmental goals but also to individual goals. Training and development should be practiced within a particular envi-

ronment, 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 and the environment should 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 departmental change, people changing jobs or individuals seeking change and progress;
- traditional/functional human resource development by selecting training and development initiatives based on departmental 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.

Simpson (1999:3) states that human resource development will place an additional challenge on human resource departments or units due to the fact that they will have to develop programmes that are practical, effective and appropriate to the needs of the department, and provide for proper information, training, tools and support to both managers and employees.

The aim of human resource development is to secure effective and efficient service delivery by appropriately trained employees. Managers have to implement policies that would increase productivity in terms of effective, efficient and responsive delivery of services. The only 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 departmental training priorities.

## PURPOSE OF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

**T**raining and development have long been functions in the field of human resource development (HRD), fraught with difficulties and frustrations for development and training practitioners. Organisations, public and private, have always wanted employee training to address issues such as performance deficiencies, acquisition of new skills, and orientation of new employees.

Some of the problems that training and development practitioners have to deal with to make training and development realities are:

- lack of management support
- training not systematically planned for the whole organization
- training not linked to organisational objectives
- training lacks focus.

The reasons for these problems are normally symptomatic of traditional training and developmental initiatives.

Organisations today can no longer justify supporting training and development that do not enhance the performance of its employees and directly contribute to its strategic objectives. Training and development have therefore to change from being action-orientated to being results orientated. To achieve this aim, the focus of training and development has to shift from merely designing, developing and conducting training programmes to aligning individual learning needs and competency requirements to organisational strategy, and ensuring that individual and organisational performance are enhanced as a result.

The primary purpose of training and development for management and staff are as follows:

- Improve performance – Training that is offered in order to improve performance should be based on decisions made after the analysis of indicators such as productivity measures, quality of service, etc. Therefore the development and training should be conducted that will accomplish organisational strategic goals.
- Maintain performance – In order to avoid employee skills from becoming obsolete due to technological advances, changes in work processes or as a result of strategic planning, managers must constantly be aware of the changes in the environment and what the impact will be on the employees. Managers may also require development to enable them to make and implement decisions e.g. about job design, career counseling, either to reskill or deploy people, whilst as far as possible maintaining levels of performance. It is clear that managers who fail to keep pace with new methods and adapt to changes become obsolete and ineffective.
- Prepare for new job challenges on higher levels – Most people prefer organisations that provide opportunities for internal advancement and career progression. Organised career development can provide management with information about employee skills, vacancies and their skill requirements making it easier to determine where training may be required.
- Purposes of management development are to:
  - identify and provide a broader base of competence with which to engage an area of responsibility, such as leadership;
  - to apply this competence to positions within the organization in order to enhance goal achievement;
  - to provide a working environment, which makes optimal use of human resources for the continuing growth of the organization and the individual.

## SKILLS AND COMPETENCY

Skills can be identified as an area of knowledge that needs to be acquired to function effectively. Skills training can be seen as the process of enabling individuals to assume new roles and implement systems effectively in order to achieve positive performance outcomes (Harrison 1993:264). A skills inventory should be conducted to obtain information regarding employee skills, education, performance evaluation and career preferences. During a departmental needs assessment, the human resource development component could utilise a skills inventory and determine any skill shortages

(Harris & DeSimone 1998:374). Critten (1993:50) identifies four skills that are more or less typical of all jobs, i.e.:

- task skills making up the technical components of a job;
- contingency management skills referring to the ability to recognise and deal with irregularities and changes in the immediate working environment;
- task management skills relating to the skills needed for managing tasks and prioritising it; and
- job role environment skills needed to work well with others and cope with specific environmental factors.

*The Public Service Regulations*, 2001, issued in terms of section 41 of the *Public Service Act*, 1994 define competence as the blend of knowledge, skills, behaviour and aptitude that a person can apply in the work environment. A person's competence should indicate his/her ability to meet the requirements of a specific post. Rocco (2000:204) identifies four different competencies in human resource management, namely managing self, communicating, managing people and tasks and mobilising innovation and change. The Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) categorises competencies into three areas:

- competency clusters, for example technical or functional, thinking or planning, departmental leadership, managing employees and managing self or personal effectiveness;
- generic competencies which represent critical skills and behaviours that span the roles and functions within a department, for example leadership and strategic thinking; and
- proficiency levels which measure the ability of an individual to perform in a professional context – meaning the level of knowledge, skills and personal qualities required for the successful completion of activities.

## **Competency framework in training**

The Human Resources Development Strategy for the Public Service 2000–2006 (HRD-SPS) summarises a number of key challenges facing human resources development in the Public Sector as follows:

- ensuring effective service delivery;
- coordination of missions and goals;
- retaining effective managers and people with scarce skills;
- establishing effective management information systems;
- coping with limited resources;
- complex organizational structures;
- effective public financial management practices;
- establishing effective interfaces among systems;
- integration of career and life goals;
- impact of HIV/AIDS;

- meaningful advancement of women and the disabled in the Public Service; and
- performance management in the Public Service.

A number of suggestions and actions are listed by the HRDPS to address the mentioned and other challenges. For example, the development of a national training strategy, centralized training structure to facilitate all training interventions and the creation of a partnership with service providers.

Public sector employees with the appropriate mix of skills and profiles are of critical importance in the service delivery processes. Therefore competencies will fulfill a vital role. The competency framework provides and enhances focused development for improved performance in order to achieve the determined and desired quality results. The competency framework provides a basis for assessing the extent to which managers on all levels are competent to function or perform their respective roles. Where the performance is below standard the specific requisite competencies can be developed through appropriate training and development interventions. It should be noted that the training and development should be tailor made to meet specific needs of individuals.

## **DPSA Competency Framework**

The Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) identifies a comprehensive competency framework for the three levels of management, namely senior managers, middle level managers and emerging managers. The competency framework will be the key driver for effective human resource management in the Public Service. The competency framework describes the activities and behaviours of employees using a common set of terms and scales. Thus being able to identify the knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes described in one place within the framework is a helpful tool allowing both the individual and the organisation to know what competencies are needed to be effective in any given role. The competency framework developed by DPSA is as follows:



Competencies	Emerging Managers	Advanced Managers	Senior Managers
	Creative Thinking and its Application	Continuous Improvement	Service Delivery and Innovation
	Customer Service Orientation	Customer Focus and Service	Client Orientation and Customer Service
	Concern for Others		
	Diversity Citizenship	Diversity Management	Change Management
	Organisation Communication Effectiveness	Information, Communication and related Technology	Communication Knowledge Management
	Problem Analysis	Problem Solving and Decision Making	Problem Solving and Analysis
	Self Management	Influence and Impact	
	Team Membership	Team Leadership	
	Technical Proficiency		
	Applying Strategic Thinking	Strategic Capability and Leadership	
	Planning and Organising Project Management	Programme and Project Management	
	Budgeting and Financial Management	Financial Management	
	Developing Others	People Management and Empowerment	
	Networking and Building Bonds		
	Managing Conflict		
	Applying and Using Technology		
		Honesty and Integrity	

The competency framework provides the necessary information in compiling the training needs analysis on both emerging management as advanced management level.

## PROCESS OF IDENTIFYING THE TRAINING “GAPS”

In order to identify the training “gaps” the utilization of a questionnaire is often considered to be the most cost-effective tool. However, it would be a time consuming and costly project to capture the views of all the middle level managers (Salary levels 9-

12) in both national and provincial departments. Therefore a sample survey, conducted on behalf of the South African Management Development Institute, (March–June 2003) has been used to provide baseline data regarding the level of competence of middle level managers in the Public Service.

The training needs analysis questionnaire consisted of a self-report to be completed by the middle level managers. It was also expected from the senior managers to complete the competency verification analysis questionnaire (supervisor’s report) on the competencies of their subordinate managers.

In order to ensure that the questionnaire (self-report and supervisor’s report) was sufficiently ‘user-friendly’ a test was conducted in five national departments. The purpose of the test was to determine:

- whether the respondents will be able to understand the questions and address possible relevant areas of interpretation;
- whether the time allocated to complete the questionnaire was sufficient; and
- if the scale system to assess perception was appropriate.

The respondents of the test survey responded positively to the above.

With reference to sampling Stoker (1981: 13) indicates that a sample of 400 employees will be representative of the population indicated in Table 1 for this study.

**Table 1: Middle Management Level**

Gender	Race	Number of Middle Level Managers	%
Female	Black*	1067	19
	White	556	10
<b>Total</b>		<b>1623</b>	<b>30</b>
Male	Black*	2285	42
	White	1566	28
<b>Total</b>		<b>3851</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>5474</b>	<b>100</b>

*\* Black refers to African, Asian and Coloureds*

*Source: Department of Public Service and Administration, Extension of the Middle Management Competency Framework, Report 5, April 2003*

It should be noted that 501 middle level managers from 17 public service departments on national and provincial level completed the self-report as indicated in Table 2. A total of 85 supervisors from 15 departments on national and provincial levels completed the competency verification questionnaire as indicated in Table 3.

**Table 2: Place of work Middle Level Managers: Self Report**

	Frequency	%
DPSA	24	4.8
Public Enterprises	17	3.4
Defence	15	3
Free State	30	6
Agriculture	13	2.6
Provincial & Local Government	5	1
Social Development	5	1
Northern Cape	7	1.4
Health	6	1.2
Gauteng	89	17.8
Western Cape	40	8
Limpopo	99	19.8
North West	59	11.8
Natal	57	11.4
Indep. Complaints Directorate	9	1.8
Justice	9	1.8
Public Works	17	3.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>501</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 3: Supervisors of advanced managers that completed the questionnaire**

	Frequency	%
DPSA	4	4.7
Public Enterprises	8	9.4
National Treasury	1	1.2
Defence	2	2.4
Free State	5	5.9
Agriculture	2	2.4
Provincial & Local Government	1	1.2
Social Development	2	2.4
Health	2	2.4
Gauteng	6	7.1
Western Cape	4	4.7
Limpopo	13	15.3
North West	15	17.6
KZN	16	18.8
Indep. Complaints Directorate	4	4.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>100</b>

## ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The reliability coefficient was 0.9788 for the Middle Management Level. The SPSS for WIN was utilised to analyse the data. Results above 0.65 out of 1.00 are regarded as satisfactory. As can be seen from the alpha coefficient, the questionnaire has a highly acceptable reliability factor. In assessing competency gaps the general approach was to identify training priorities, as areas where the majority of employees participated believed that they are operating at an average or lower level.

The results obtained and expressed in Table 4 indicate the competencies (See competencies identified by DPSA, par. 6.2) where significant deficiencies were noted and requires training.

**Table 4: Competency results**

Competency	Employees' own assessment of lacking proficiency	Supervisors' assessment of lacking competency
	Self Report	Supervisors Report
Applied Strategic thinking	51,3%	65,9%
Budgeting and Financial Management	58%	72,3%
Communication and Information Management	49,5%	48,2%
Customer Focus and Responsiveness	41,1%	65,9%
Developing others	35,9%	56,5%
Impact and Influence	34,5%	55,3%
Managing Interpersonal Conflict and Resolving Problems	31,8%	51,8%
Networking and Building Bonds	31,4%	56,5%
Planning and Organising	42,4%	54,1%
Problem Solving and Decision-making	32,6%	50%
Project Management	55,9%	58,8%
Team Leadership	32,5%	43,5%

The questionnaire provided an opportunity to the respondents (middle level managers) to identify their own training needs. Although in some areas the middle level managers indicate that they exercise the necessary competencies in performing their duties, the supervisors' report indicates otherwise. The utilization of the supervisors' report not only provides credibility to the training needs analysis but also validates the training needs of middle level managers to perform their duties effectively.

## CONCLUSION

**A**s the introduction of the various policy documents to deliver services will intensify, the demand for the training will increase. There is also a growing concern that government is not receiving 'value for money' for the significant amounts departments spend on training officials. Furthermore the training programmes that the providers will offer may vary in quality on matters they perceive to be topical, but which do not meet the real, prioritised needs, which have been identified.

The results from the survey revealed that there are competency gaps, which in turn provide training opportunities. The training needs identified in the survey should be

addressed in a co-coordinated and structured framework. It should be kept in mind that when the curriculum is constructed a combination of academic and practical training is of the utmost importance especially in South Africa where a large core of middle level managers are from a disadvantaged background and is in need of acquiring the necessary skills and competencies.

Lastly to ensure that the training providers are addressing the identified training needs a validation mechanism is required. This mechanism will ensure that a co-ordinated approach are followed and thus ensures that government is getting 'value for money' spent from organised training programmes.

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