

CAPACITY BUILDING AMONGST ROAD SAFETY OFFICIALS WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO THE WORK OF THE BOEKENHOUTKLOOF TRAFFIC COLLEGE

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1. INTRODUCTION

The future has suddenly and dramatically become the present! Due to the rapidly changing and increasingly more challenging road safety environment, medium to long term plans for staff capacitation are substituted by immediate and short term training and development actions.

Traffic Management in Gauteng is no longer defined by what it does, but what it delivers. Maximising performance is one of the highest priorities for the traffic fraternity. **Training is something we have to integrate into every manager's mindset.** Nothing is more important than growing our high performers and simultaneously training and developing our new recruits as part of a comprehensive capacitation program.

We came to realise that if we want to achieve our goal of reducing the carnage on our roads by 10% per annum, the training and capacity building of road safety officials require much more than only training new recruits the curricula of basic courses focussing on Road Safety Acts and Regulations.

Training and capacity building should go beyond being successful in integrating practical exposure with the theoretical curricula. **The challenge lies in a successful ongoing multidisciplinary and multi-skilling process** whereby road safety officials' knowledge, skills and attitudes are aligned with the requirements of an increasingly complex road safety environment.

In the past, the most important role Boekenhoutkloof Traffic Training College played was to present standardised basic and advanced courses. The new challenge today is to also perform ongoing evaluation and validation, gap analysis between competencies required and demonstrated and creation of opportunities for skills development for road safety officials. **The future requires a comprehensive, integrated and holistic approach whereby training specialists as well as supervisors and managers in all road safety disciplines work together to achieve staff capacitation objectives.**

We've learned from past experiences that the recruitment and selection of staff involves much more than only choosing the best available person. Selecting the appropriate set of knowledge, skills and abilities, which come packaged in a person, is an effort to get a "fit" between what the applicant can and want to do and what the Directorate needs. **However, good training will not make up the bad selection of staff!**

This paper intends to provide an outline of the integrated approach that the Directorate : Traffic Management of the Gauteng Department of Transport follows to capacitate road safety officials and to highlight the role and contribution of the Boekenhoutkloof Traffic College in the capacitation process.

2. COMMITMENT AND PERFORMANCE OVER THE PAST YEAR

The target set for the Province was to reduce its road fatalities by 10% compared to the previous year and to increase our overload control activities by 25% compared to the previous year.

Analysis of all accident data on record and estimates on outstanding data, indications are that Gauteng has achieved the following results over the past year (2000/01) compared to the previous year (1999/00)

- 27 % decline in fatal accidents;
- 25% reduction in road fatalities;
- 20% reduction in pedestrian fatalities;
- 17% reduction in road accidents;
- 52% increase in overload control activities.

A number of factors contributed towards this significant improvement of road safety in Gauteng, namely:

- The new holistic approach involving all role-players and focussing on hazardous routes and locations;
- Integrated planning, co-ordinated law enforcement programmes and joint operations between National, Provincial and Local Government.
- Provincial co-ordination through representative Traffic Forums (e.g. Overload Control, Arrive Alive, etc.)
- Effective traffic management monitoring and control measures;
- Efficient road safety education and communication programmes;
- Implementation of a comprehensive capacity building program.

Gauteng will continue to build on these successes towards ending the carnage on our roads.

The Traffic Training College presented a number of courses over the past year including:

- Computer based adult basic education training;
- Two traffic officer courses training 123 traffic officers from Gautrans, Local Authorities and 3 other provinces;
- Training 43 students in courses for examiners of motor vehicle licenses;
- Training 36 students in courses for examiners of drivers license;

- Training 90 students in overload control procedures;
- Training Transport Inspectors and Road Safety promotion officials;
- Presenting induction courses for new recruits.

3. CULTIVATION OF A LEARNING CULTURE

Much progress has been made over the past 3 years to cultivate a learning culture in the Directorate including the following:

- A clear picture of how the Directorate should operate and employees at all levels understanding the importance of learning and application;
- Performance reviews are focussed on both evaluative and developmental objectives which can be outlined as follows :

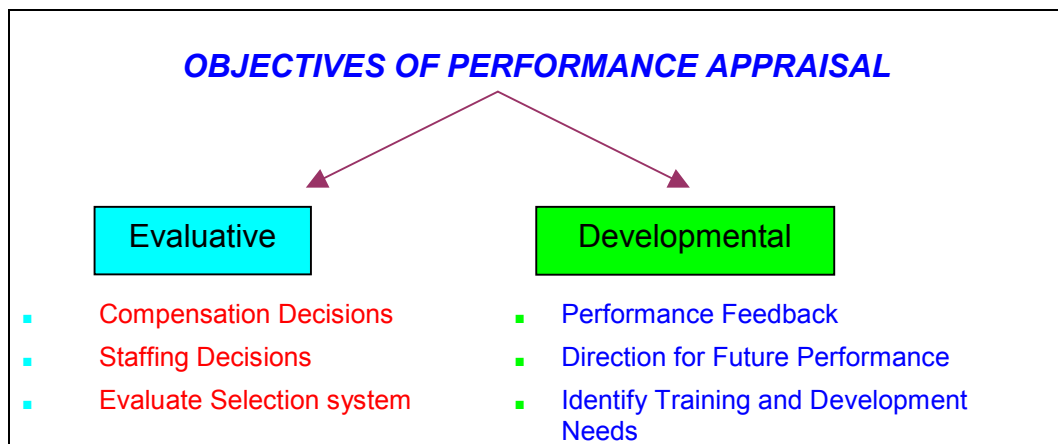


Figure 1: Objectives of performance appraisal

- Feedback systems that provide ongoing information on results and deliverables as well as factors contributing towards the achievements and under achievements;
- Training and development programmes that are designed to support the management – operational – and change strategies of top management;
- Open communication channels whereby successes and lessons learned are shared and discussed;
- Open encouragement of self development of all staff;
- Strong emphasis on planning, implementation and control of programmes and projects to be executed in teams during joint operations. Management specifies the resources and outcomes required and teams within that framework exercise the freedom to allocate tasks and responsibilities. The releasing of leadership and learning in this way has opened up new ways of working and learning for staff in the Directorate.

4. DIRECTORATE'S APPROACH TOWARDS STAFF CAPACITATION

The Directorate applies the following approach towards the capacitation of staff comprising of the following components :

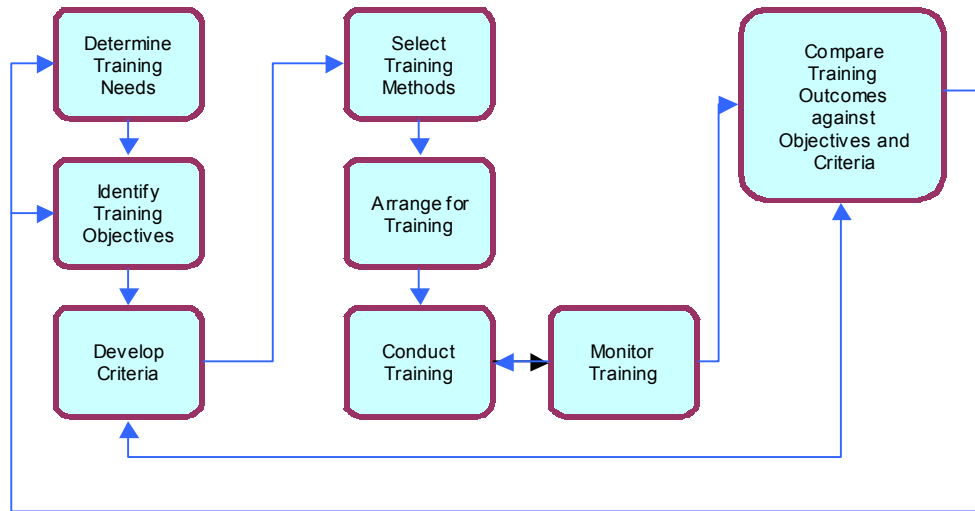


Figure 2: Approach towards staff capacitation

The assessment of training needs is conducted on 3 levels in the Directorate namely Directorate-wide level, task level and individual employee level. The 3 levels of training needs assessment can be outlined as follows :

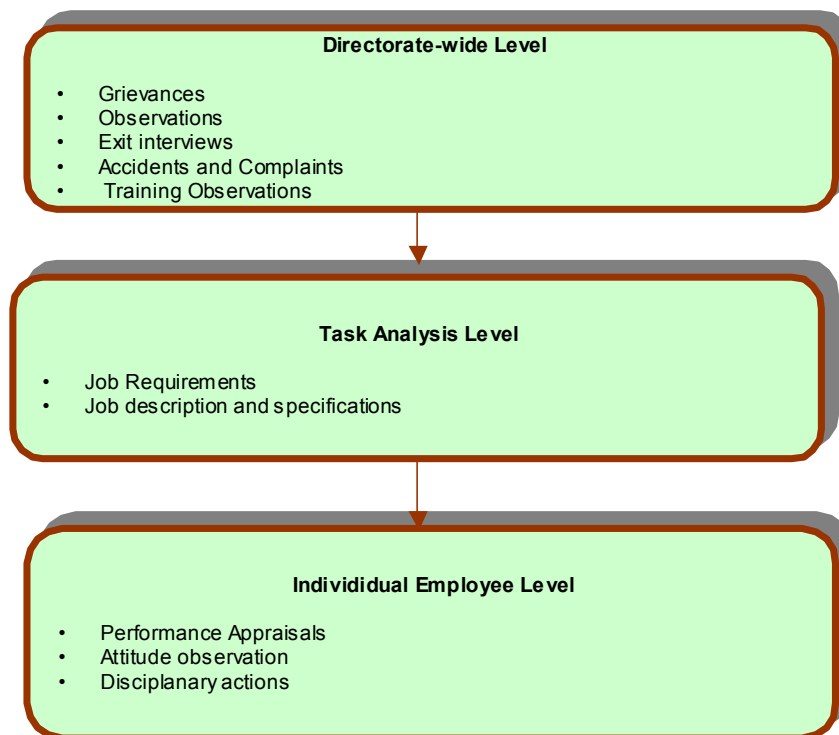


Figure 3 : Three levels of determining development needs

The utilisation of job performance to analyse training and development needs is of high importance to the Directorate. The process that is followed in the Directorate can be outlined as follows :

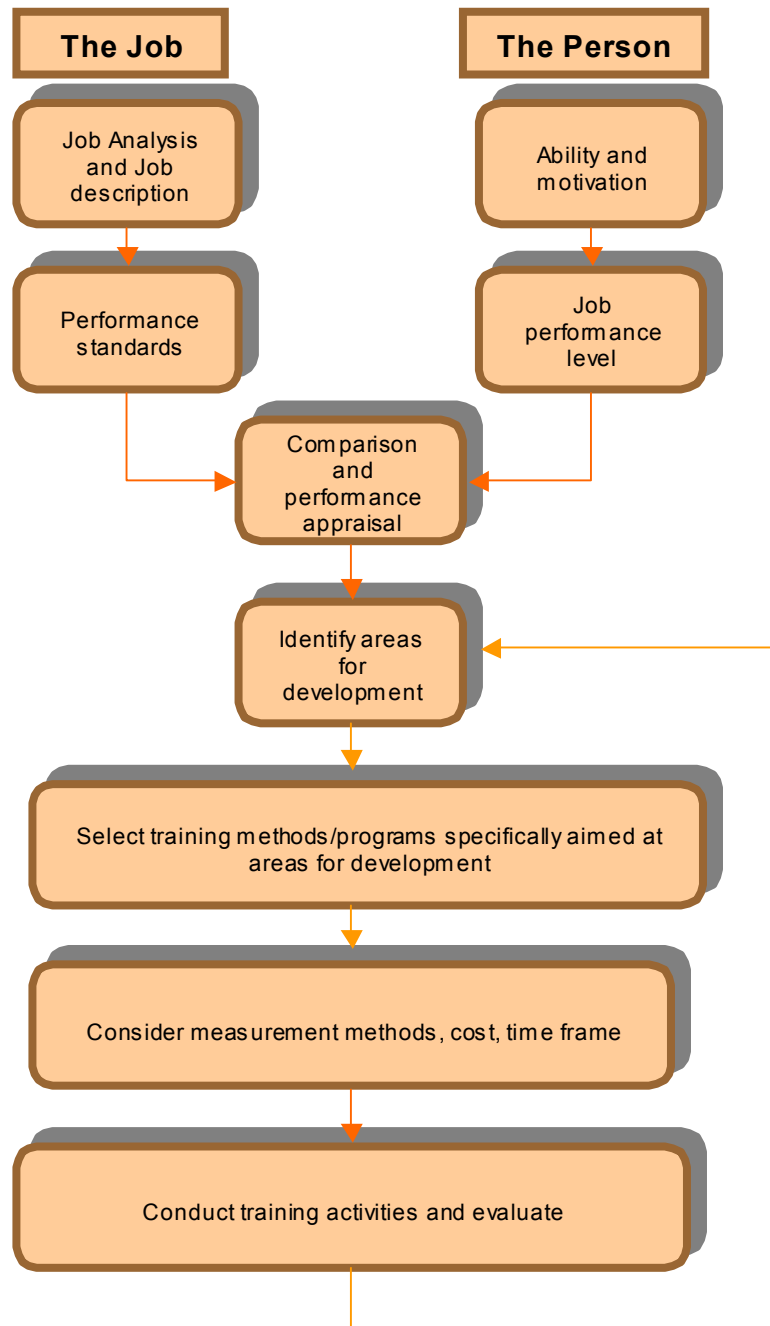


Figure 4: *Utilising performance appraisal as tool for identifying training and development needs.*

5. THE OBJECTIVES OF THE CAPACITATION PROGRAM

The Directorate has set 7 major objectives to be attained by its capacitation program :

- **To provide the basic knowledge and skills** required to execute the tasks of the relevant post in accordance with post and person specifications.
- **To improve performance.** Employees who perform unsatisfactorily because of a deficiency in skills are nominated for training. Although training cannot solve all problems of ineffective performance, we believe that appropriate training is instrumental in minimising these problems.
- **To update employees' skills.** Managers in all areas are made aware of technological advances that will make their divisions function more effectively. Employee skills are updated through training so those technological advances are successfully integrated into the organisation.
- **To avoid managerial obsolescence.** Managerial obsolescence is the failure to keep pace with new methods and processes that enable them to remain effective. Rapidly changing technical, legal and social environments have affected the way our managers perform their jobs. Management personnel who fail to adapt to these changes become less effective.
- **To solve organisational problems.** Managers are expected to attain high goals in spite of changes in administrative and support functions and systems. Although organisational problems are addressed in many ways, training is one important way of solving many of these problems including areas of human resources, finance, purchasing, information systems and asset management.
- **To orient new employees.** During the first few days on the job, new employees form their initial impressions of the Directorate and its managers. These impressions may range from very favourable to very unfavourable, and may influence their job satisfaction and productivity. Therefore the Directorate makes an effort to orient new employees to the Directorate and the job.
- **To prepare for promotion and managerial succession.** One important way to attract, retain and motivate personnel is through a systematic program of career path development. Training enables an employee to acquire the skills needed for a promotion, and it eases the transition from the employee's present job to one involving greater responsibilities. Experience has taught us that if we fail to provide such training we may lose our most promising employees.

6. THE CAPACITATION PROGRAM OF THE DIRECTORATE: TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

The capacitation program of the Directorate is aimed at attaining organisational, group and individual objectives and comprises of the following key components, some of which will be discussed in this paper :



Figure 5 : Components of the Directorate’s capacitation program

7. CAPACITATION THROUGH INDUCTION OF NEW RECRUITS

After accepting a job offer, most new employees are very keen to learn more about their job and the Directorate’s **induction, which is also known as orientation or socialisation, is the process of integrating the new employee into the Directorate and acquainting him or her with the details and requirements of the job.** It is the process by which employees are transformed from being complete outsiders to becoming participating and effective members of the Directorate.

Realising that starting a new job is considered to be one of the most stressful life experiences, our induction process is designed to be sensitive to the anxieties and uncertainties, as well as the needs of a new employees. It not only involves the job training of new employees, but also the whole process of integrating employees into the Directorate.

We have learned from experience that the influence of the first few days on a new employee and the impressions he or she has gained have an important bearing on performance and on labour turnover in general and that **the rewards in terms of goodwill, morale and work efficiency by far outweigh the effort utilised to enable the new employee to feel comfortable and at home.**

We have unfortunately also realised that induction cannot entirely counteract the negative effects of unwise recruitment or poor selection.

Our induction process has several important objectives namely :

- Acquainting new employees with job procedures;
- Establishing relationships with co-workers including subordinates and supervisors;
- Creating a sense of belonging among employees by showing them how their job fits into the Directorate and overall Department;
- Indicating to the employees the preferred means by which these goals should be attained;
- Identifying the basic responsibilities to the job;
- Indicating the required behaviour patterns for effective job performance.

Experience has taught us that our induction programme has reduced the adjustment problems of new employees by creating a sense of security, confidence and belonging for them. **The results from the Directorate's induction programme can be summarised as follows :**

- Higher job satisfaction;
- Lower labour turnover;
- Greater commitment to values and goals;
- Higher performance as a result of faster learning times;
- Fewer costly and time-consuming mistakes;
- Reduction in absenteeism;
- Improved manager/subordinate relationships; and
- Better understanding of company policies, goals and procedures.

8. CAPACITATION THROUGH TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Development is different from training, in that development is often the result of experience and maturity that comes with it. For example : training staff basic traffic law enforcement execution knowledge and skills is different to developing staff in such areas as judgement, responsibility, decision-making and communications. Development activities are much more difficult because such skills may or may not develop over time, through experience and as part of our planned development activities.

Development can be thought of as growing capabilities that go beyond those required by the current job; it represents efforts to improve employee’s ability to handle a variety of assignments and challenges.

The differences between training and development as part of our Directorate’s capacitation program, can be outlined as follows:

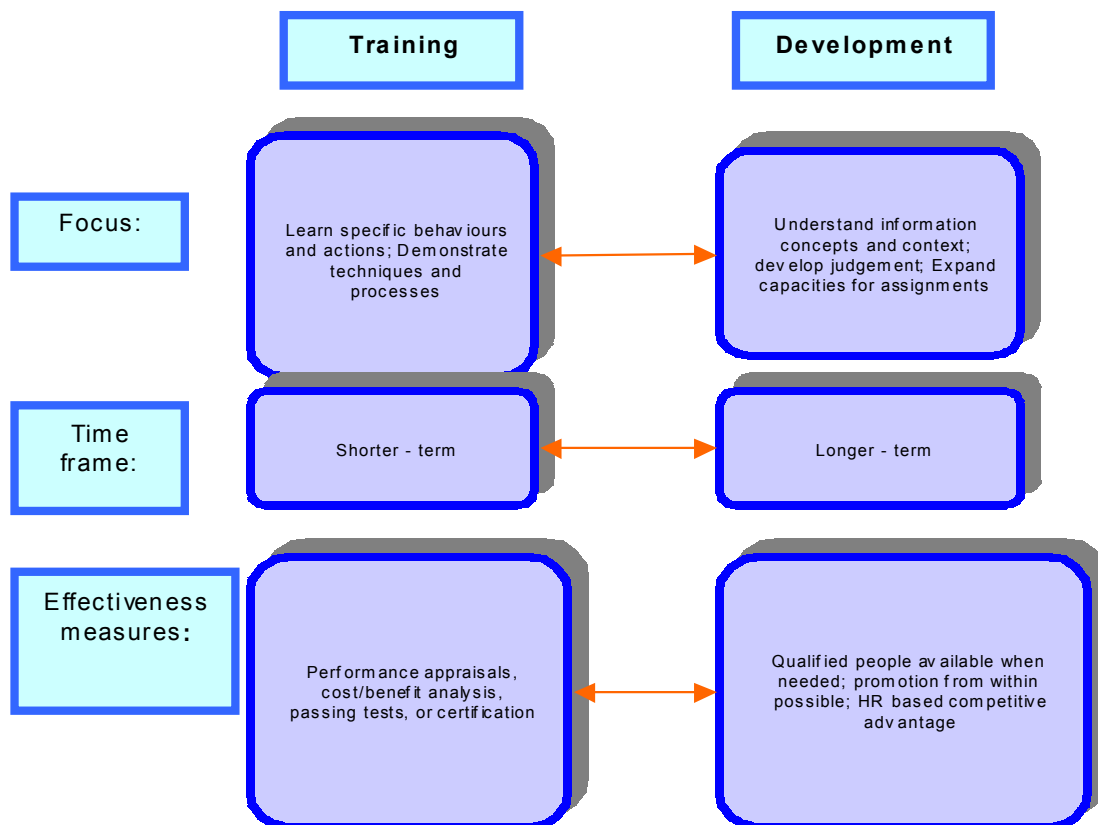


Figure 6: Differences between training and development in the Directorate.

9. SUPERVISORY AND MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Supervisory and management staff in the Directorate benefit significantly from the Directorate's capacity building program. This program entails the following components :

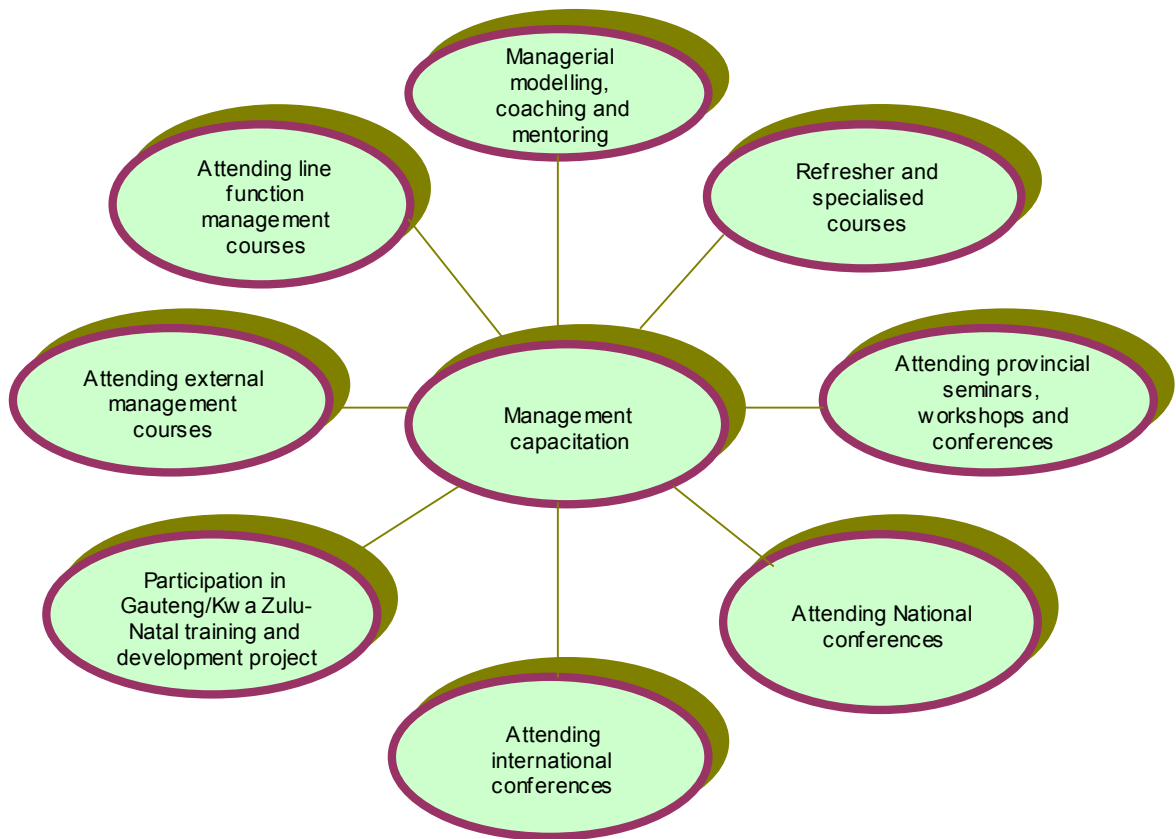


Figure 7 : Components of the Directorate's management development program

The Directorate is paying particular attention to **mentoring** as a method of developing young and inexperienced supervisors and managers.

We believe in the common adage in management development theory that says that managers tend to manage as they were managed. Another way of saying this is that managers could learn by behaviour modelling by copying someone else's behaviour.

Our management development efforts take advantage of natural human behaviour by matching young and developing managers with appropriate models and then reinforcing the desirable behaviours exhibited by the experienced managers.

Mentoring is best accomplished when it involves a relationship between managers for a period of time as they perform their jobs. We have found some success in solving behavioural problems that threaten to derail managers. Even abrasive or inflexible managers benefit from mentoring by the right executive.

Mentoring is a relationship in which managers at the midpoints in their careers aid individuals in the earlier stages of their careers. Technical, interpersonal and management skills are conveyed in such a relationship from the more experienced manager to the less experienced manager. Not only does the less experienced one benefit, but also the more experienced one may enjoy the challenge of sharing his or her wisdom.

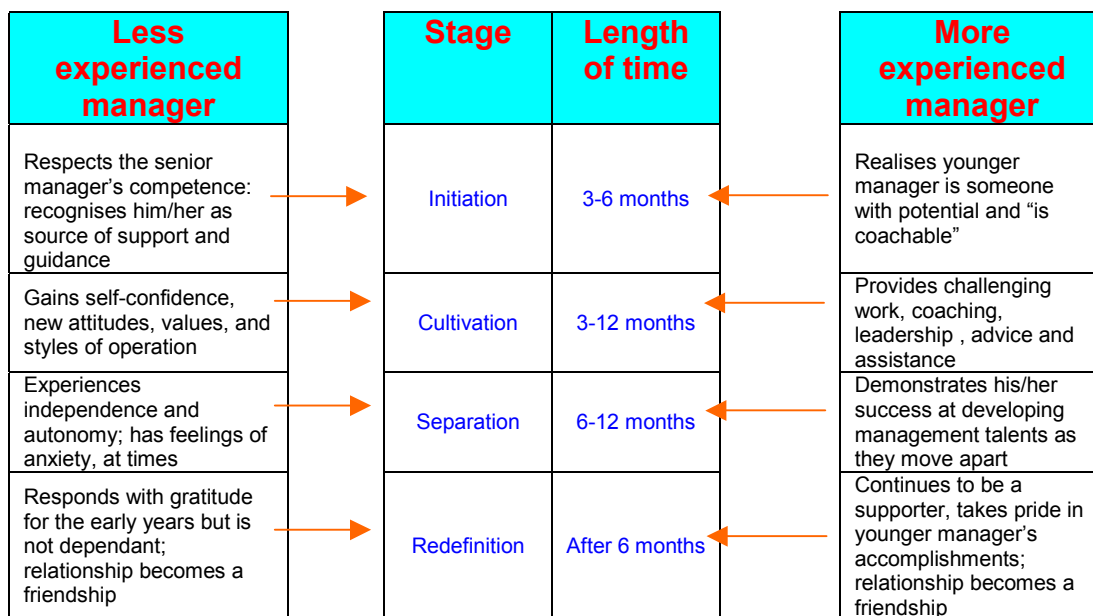


Figure 8 : Mentoring program of the Directorate

10. IMPORTANCE OF ALIGNING THE DIRECTORATE'S BUSINESS PLAN AND STAFF CAPACITATION PLAN

We have learned from experience that by aligning our staff capacitation strategy with the business strategy of the Directorate much better performance outcomes could be attained. **Example 1** : The business strategy dictated an increase of 25% in the level of overload control activities in Gauteng in 2000/01 financial year compared to the 1999/00 year. The training and development strategy was amended to include retraining of 90 traffic officers on local and provincial level in Gauteng in overload control operations.

The performance outcomes of the province, subsequent to alignment of the business and staff capacitation strategies are as follows :

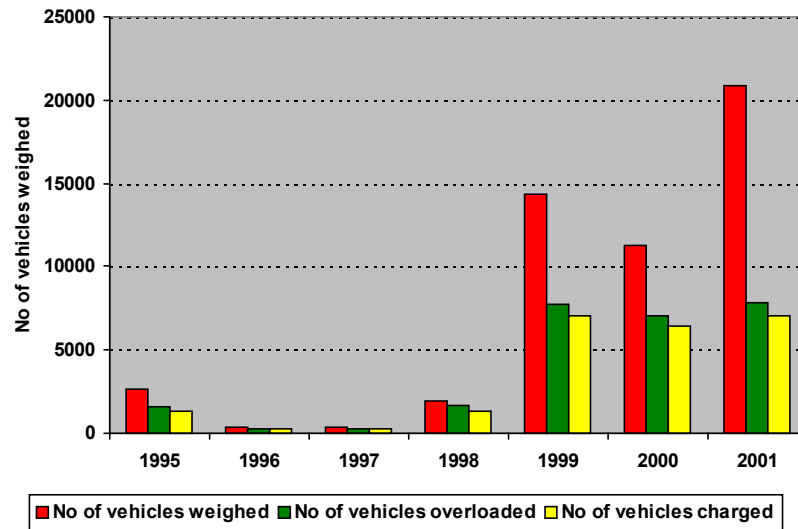


Figure 9 : Overload control activities between 1995 and 2001

Example 2 : In order for the Directorate to meet its business objective of reducing road fatalities by 10%, the Directorate secured an additional R25m from the Gauteng Legislature to fill 203 vacant posts and train new recruits over a 12-month period. The staffing and development plan was adjusted to become aligned with the business plan of the Directorate.

The alignment and integration of the Directorate’s mission and business plan with the staff performance review plan and staff capacitation plan, can be outlined as follows :

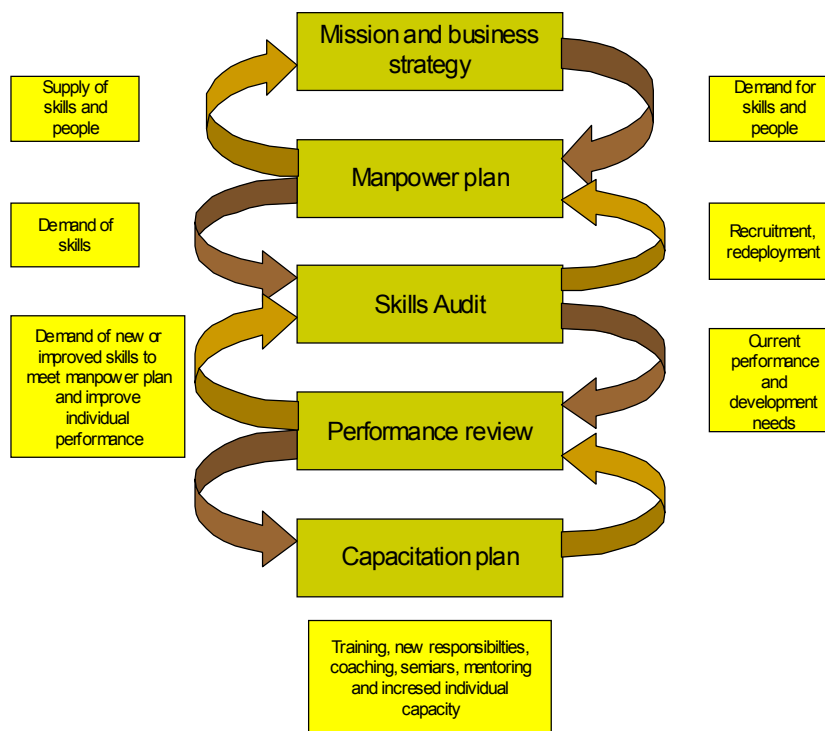


Figure 10 : Alignment of staffing and capacitation plans with business plan of the Directorate.

11. EVALUATION OF CAPACITATION PROCESS

The Directorate applies 4 questions when evaluating the capacitation process namely:

- **How did the participants react?**

This highly subjected assessment is based on analysis of the opinions and attitudes of participants towards the process, contents of courses, lectures, mentors, etc.

- **What did the participants learn?**

This assessment is performed by applying the tests, examination and interviews with participants. Assessment of advanced skills such as communication, leadership and interpersonal skills are in the absence of test results performed through interviews and reports by mentors.

- **How did participant's behaviour change?**

Participants in the Directorate's program are expected to learn skills and/or a body of knowledge that result in a positive change in job behaviour. The supervisors and managers are expected to perform assessment whether learning was transformed from training to the job.

- **What organisational goals were affected?**

Ultimate, capacitation is expected to result in more effective organisational divisions and Directorate. The impact of the learning on the Directorate's goals of productivity, quality, decreased turnover, absenteeism, accidents, grievances, and increased job satisfaction are assessed by applying the performance appraisal system as an evaluation and developmental management tool.

The 4 levels of evaluation of capacitation can be outlined as follows :

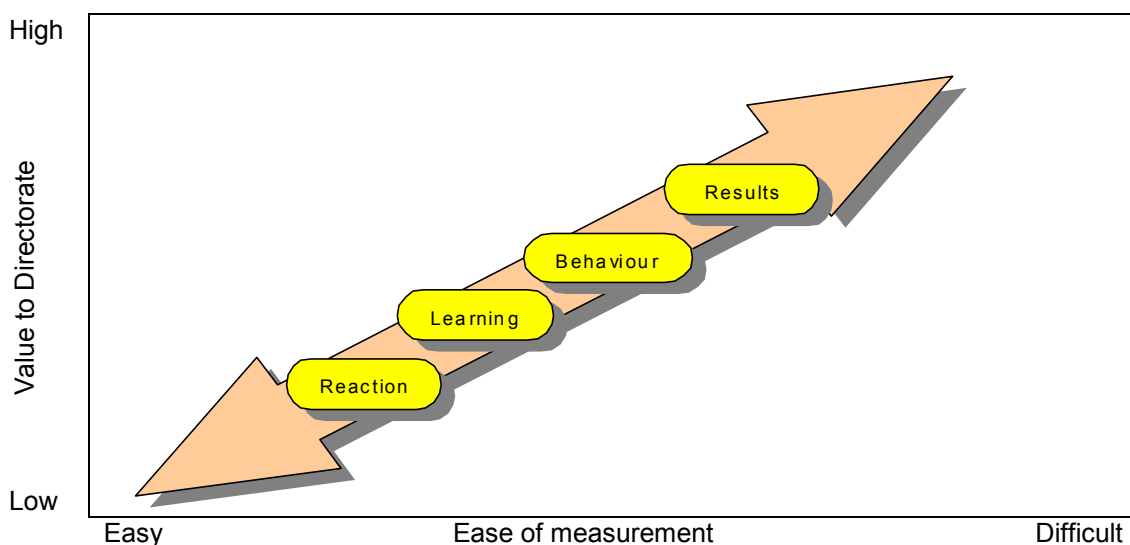


Figure 11 : Four levels of evaluation of capacitation activities

12. PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING APPLIED BY BOEKENHOUTKLOOF TRAFFIC COLLEGE

The College is applying a number of fundamental principles of adult learning as facilitators of the capacitation program in the Directorate in co-operation with line managers, namely :

- **Motivation**

Sometimes the need for capacitation is not clear to employees. They may consider it a waste of time and resist being taken away from their jobs for training. One effective way to motivate trainees is to show them how capacitation will help accomplish organisational or personal goals. These goals may include improved job performance and increased opportunities for promotion.

- **Participation**

Another way to inspire trainees is through active participation in the capacitation process. Discussions enable trainees to become directly involved in the act of learning.

- **Feedback**

Feedback on progress in courses reduces anxiety and lets participants know what they must do to improve. Similarly, employees taking part in the program want to know how they are doing and how their progress compares to objectives. Close communication between the trainer and trainee has been established to help the feedback process.

- **Organisation**

Training is presented so that the various segments of training material build on to one another. Gaps, contradictions or ambiguities in the material are avoided.

- **Repetition**

Our research shows that frequent practice during capacity building helps the learning process. Practice is important whether the skills being learned are technical (law enforcement) or behavioural (eg. communication or interpersonal skills). Refreshing the trainee's knowledge and skills also helps learning. The attendance of refresher courses has proved to be very successful.

- **Application**

Participants often complain that the real world is different from the learning environment. These transfer-of-learning challenges are addressed by applying the following techniques:

- Cross pollination between lecturers and line managers;
- Maximise the similarity between the training and the job;
- Provide as much experiences as possible with the task being taught;
- Provide for a variety of examples when teaching concepts or skills;
- Label or identify important features of a task;
- Make sure that general principles are understood;
- Design the training so that trainees can see its applicability;
- Use questions to guide trainees' attention.

13. CREATING AND MAINTAINING A HEALTHY AND SAFE WORK ENVIRONMENT

As part of the Directorate's capacitation program we recognise our responsibility for creating and maintaining a work environment free from unnecessary hazards that can lead to injury, illness and death. Job stress is considered to be a rising concern in the traffic fraternity of South Africa. One thing we came to realise is that ignoring the problems of job stress and frequent exposure of road safety officials to life threatening situations will only lead to increased absenteeism, disability claims, health care, recruitment efforts and training costs.

The physical, emotional and behavioural symptoms of job stress can be clearly identified. Although the organisational culture of the Directorate is most supportive to officials experiencing these symptoms, we realise that we will most likely be unable to prevent all possible causes of it. However, we are taking certain steps to capacitate staff to come to terms with job stress, including:

- Re organising the work to include more team work and joint operations;
- Improved equipment issued to officials;
- Acknowledgement of the problem and maintaining open communication;
- Train managers in recognising the symptoms;
- Controlling constant excessive overtime as a common cause of job stress and even burnout
- Provide retraining, job rotation and lateral movement to keep valuable employees motivated.

14. SOUTH AFRICA'S TRAINING CHALLENGE

One of the biggest challenges facing South Africa is that of rebuilding the economy. This process can only be successful if we raise performance and productivity standards through skill enhancement and development. Many studies have reduced the factors for sustainable productivity increases to three aspects:

- Education and training
- Economic restructuring
- Better management practices

Seeing to it that a country's workforce will have the necessary mix and level of knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes is the responsibility of two complementary systems – training and education.

In order to succeed in the rebuilding process, it is imperative that the various stakeholders – namely the private sector, the state and the providers of education – interact effectively.

The training and development of previously disadvantaged groups for entry into the job market, as well as their training for progression through managerial ranks is a great challenge for South Africa. In order to rectify the enormous shortage of skilled manpower with the limited budgets available, the South African government has embarked on a number of innovative and resourceful programmes.

- The merging of different education departments into one controlling body;
- The acceptance of an education policy that integrates the education and training effort within the country, thus making greater collaboration between training institutions possible;
- The passing through Parliament of the South African Qualifications Authority Act, during 1995. This Bill improves the quality of education and training at all levels in the country and relates more closely to the economic growth and national development strategy of South Africa. The Bill, which provides for the development and implementation of a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is designed to give national recognition to learning that takes place after compulsory education to encourage the growth of skills and redress the skills imbalance as well as the values deficit in South Africa.

The Directorate is at present in close liaison with all relevant bodies to have the college and its courses registered under the Bill and NQF provisions.