Reimagining training and development programmes in municipalities of South Africa: A qualitative enquiry

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**ABSTRACT**

Business organizations face more issues due to globalization and continually changing customer expectations. To overcome these challenges, businesses must invest in the training and development of their employees. Training and development are essential nowadays. Employee performance is improved via training and development. A company's personnel determine its efficacy. In this era of globalization, training is crucial for the competitive and challenging corporate environment. The nerve must contribute to raising employees' quality of life at work and expanding the business. This paper aimed to investigate the impact of training and development programs on employee performance and productivity in the selected municipality of OR Tambo District Municipality, South Africa. To conduct this study, the researchers embraced an exploratory qualitative approach. The rationale for implementing qualitative methodology emanates from the need to understand the effectiveness of training programs in the Oliver Tambo district municipality in Eastern Cape Province, South Africa. The administration of the Nyandeni Local municipality conceded permission. The researchers acquired the letter, which permitted them to gather information from employees from the local municipality. Ethical clearance was affirmed genuinely. Non-probability sampling was used for its convenient strength. Precisely, data was obtained using semi-structured face-to-face interviews for this study. Thirty-five participants were included in this research study. According to the results, poor training and development were seen as a cause for the poor performance of employees. Capacity building was seen as a tool to increase employee commitment. Training programs were only visible to some in the municipality and the present study recommended that the Skills office conduct roadshows so that all employees could understand the office's role in the municipality. The study further recommended that training and development be closely monitored to determine its effectiveness.

**Introduction**

Organizations today must contend with intense competition and a business climate that is constantly evolving. Business companies need help with globalization and constantly evolving client expectations. Organizations must invest in their workers' training and development to tackle these difficulties (Sal & Raja, 2016). Training employees is essential nowadays because employees are always ahead in new industry developments and technological advances.

Every firm needs well-trained workers to carry out tasks successfully and efficiently. The organizations' ongoing processes aid in developing talents, knowledge, and skills (Karim, Choudhury & Latif, 2019). Training and development improve staff performance. The effectiveness of a company depends on its workforce. Training is essential for competitive and challenging business in this age of globalization. The nerve must contribute to improving workers' quality of life and growing the company. In most firms, training and development are essential components of illuminating employee performance (Chukwuemeka & Endurance, 2022).

Swanson and Holton (2001) defined training and development as "a process of systematically developing work-related knowledge and expertise in people to improve performance." Various authors have also described the training as a process of employees...
acquiring and improving skills, knowledge, behavior, and attitude to perform their assigned work effectively (Karim et al. 2019 & Chukwuemeka & Endurance 2022). Employees are the heart and soul of every business, and their skills make it run efficiently.

Factors such as job satisfaction, motivation, and organizational commitment influence the performance of an individual and facilitate them to reach determined goals. Furthermore, training transforms employees' behavior, attitude, and perception from negativity to positivity, improving their performance. This changing behavioral phenomenon enhances employees' energy and involvement levels and eliminates exhaustion and inefficacy (Shuck & Wollard, 2010). Furthermore, engaged employees exert great effort to attain organizational objectives that elevate employees' overall performance (Arwab, Ansari, Azhar & Ali 2022).

This study, therefore, assesses the impact of training and development on employee performance in the selected municipality of OR Tambo District municipality. Nyandeni Local Municipality is one of the five local municipalities under the OR Tambo district, serving many communities around Libode to Ngqeleni villages. Service delivery is at the center of every municipality, and in this regard, Nyandeni is obligated to serve its communities effectively.

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of training and development programs on employee performance and productivity in the selected municipality of OR Tambo District Municipality, South Africa. The main objectives of the study are:

i. To assess the impact of training and development on employee performance
ii. To explore the method of training and development that enhances the productivity of employees.

Literature Review

Employee training and development

Employees should be well-trained, informed, and master a variety of abilities, according to Noe and Kodwani (2018), to deal with globalization and achieve a competitive advantage. The company employs training and development as part of human resource development as a strategic tool to get personnel closer to predefined goals. It is critical to maximize workers' contributions to the objectives and goals of the companies to maintain economic growth and successful performance. Leading authors have long understood the need of training as a key component of management. For instance, giving people the vision and capacity to execute is the one contribution a manager is specifically expected to provide, according to (Laing 2021).

Cole (2002) defined training as a learning activity aimed at acquiring certain information and abilities for a job or task. The focus of training is on the work or task, such as the requirement for efficiency and safety when using certain tools or equipment, or the requirement for an efficient sales force, to name just a few. Training is the deliberate and systematic alteration of behavior via learning experiences, programs, and activities so that participants attain the levels of expertise, competences, and abilities needed to do their jobs successfully. Training is described as the systematic process of changing employees' behavior and/or attitudes in a way that would promote the attainment of corporate goals by Chahlti, Batool, and Javed (2021). This means that for any firm to be successful in realizing the goals of its training program, the design and implementation must be well thought out, methodical, and geared toward boosting performance and productivity.

Most firms have long understood how crucial training is to their growth. More emphasis is being put on the necessity for a knowledgeable and highly trained workforce as new technology advances and eliminates some jobs and talents (Chahlti et al. 2021). Unskilled and semi-skilled positions have made up a large portion of those that robots have taken over, which underlines the importance of a higher education and specialized training for individuals looking to find employment in the future.

Employee performance and Productivity

Long-term profitability and optimal performance of businesses are greatly influenced by the calibre of people and their growth via training. Adaobi & Smr (2022) assert that it is wise to invest in the growth of employees' skills, knowledge, and talents to attract and retain excellent workers and eventually boost individual and organizational productivity. Training is typically only provided to new hires. This is a mistake since continuing education for current personnel enables them to quickly adapt to shifting job needs.

Employee performance, training, and development are hot topics in every organization because they are crucial to a company's ability to survive. In accordance with that, an employee is seen as a significant or priceless asset to an enterprise and is the primary factor in ensuring that its operations go according to schedule. The management and development of human resources includes training. The importance of training may be attributed to its capacity to reduce risk, increase production and efficiency, boost staff morale, and promote employee loyalty and flexibility. Ahmad, Nasim, Bashir, and Khan (2021) said that attendance/presence of the finished task, efficacy of the work performed, amount of output, and quality of output are all related to performance.

Chukwuemeka & Endurance (2022) asserts that training and development initiatives make ensuring that businesses have the qualified, talented, motivated, and dedicated personnel they require to successfully compete. The globe has become a global village, and as a result, employees must constantly improve their knowledge, talents, skills, and competences to keep up with the latest procedures and systems (Urbancová, Vrabcová, Hudáková & Petruš 2021). Jobs that once needed only a few basic abilities are increasingly being replaced by those that demand technical, interpersonal, and problem-solving skills because of globalization. In
addition, comprehensive quality management, collaboration, and international business necessitate the development of skills that will equip workers in both the private and public sectors to handle new and more demanding tasks and responsibilities.

Theoretical grounding

The study was guided by Social Learning theory that was propounded by Albert Bandura (1977). According to his theory, social learning occurs when individuals observe, copy, and model one another. As a result of social contact, Bandura also saw learning as a sequence of information-processing phases. According to Bandura (1977), learning new behaviours may be accomplished through observation and imitation of others. According to this, learning is a cognitive process that happens in a social setting and may happen just through direct teaching or observation, even in the absence of motor reproduction or explicit reward.

According to Bandura (1977) cited in Laing (2021), there are four components of social learning theory which comprises the observational learning and modelling process;

i. Motivation
ii. Retention
iii. Attention
iv. Reproduction

Social learning theory encourages trainers to include play-acting exercises or example movies to reinforce notions of proper and unsuitable workplace conduct by applying social learning theory to workplace training. Therefore, the idea that learners’ appreciation of the teacher increases the efficiency of their teaching is supported by social learning theory. This theory’s implications for the research include that executives should make sure that workers receive proper training that will improve their performance and productivity. Additionally, this theory is applicable to this study since it clarifies the value of training and development in enhancing people’ capabilities to fulfil their regular job objectives and how it deters underperformance and redundancy.

Research methodology and design

Research design

The researchers embraced an exploratory qualitative approach. The rationale for implementing qualitative methodology emanates from the need to understand the effectiveness of training programs in the Oliver Tambo district municipality in Eastern cape province, South Africa. De Villiers, Dumay and Maroun (2019) assert that the researcher builds a dynamic, realistic image through a qualitative analysis paradigm; analyses words; presents accurate opinions of the participants; and performs the research in a natural setting. Additionally, Aspers and Corte (2019) explain that the method of qualitative research is appropriate when the researcher attempts to understand a new phenomenon in a particular situation rather than attempting to establish a relationship between two or more variables. The qualitative interview aims to explain the environment from the interviewee's viewpoint; the respondents should recite their tale in their own terms and gain sense and understanding through their experience (Kaae & Traulsen, 2020). Qualitative research has a characteristic of exploration where knowledge is generated to some extent (Ulian, Diazgranados, Pironon, Padulosi, Liu, Davies & Mattana (2020).

Ethical considerations

Permission was conceded by the administration of the Nyandeni Local municipality. The researchers acquired the letter which permitted them to gather information from employees from the local municipality. Ethical clearance was affirmed genuinely, and this study acted as per the ethical benchmarks of scholastic research, which incorporate, in addition to other things, A protecting the respondents’ identities and guaranteeing secrecy of data given by the participants. Sampling frame According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2017), a sampling frame is a complete list of all the eligible sampling elements from which a sample can be drawn. A sampling frame could be identified for this research established list of the entire population of employees.

Unit of analysis

Ritella, Rajala and Renshaw (2020) describe a unit of analysis as the principal entity being examined in a sample. Population of relevance in research, population refers to the sum of all the units valid for an investigation (Majid, 2018). Abutabenjeh and Jaradat (2018) define a population as a group of entities with a standard set of characteristics. In this study, the population of relevance consisted of employees within the OR Tambo area.

Sample size

A sample is defined as a fraction of a larger population (Dube, RobertsLombard & Van Tonder 2015). Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole (2013) defines sample size as the number of factors that are involved in the study. A sample size greater than 30 and less than 500 is optimal for most studies according to Bless et al. (2013). Therefore, 35 participants were included in this research study. Sampling technique, Sarstedt, Bengart, Shaltoni, and Lehmann (2018) state that two sampling techniques exist, namely, probability and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling is used where each case, individual or element has an equal chance of being selected, whereas nonprobability is used in situations where a complete sample frame cannot be compiled (Bless et al. 2013). In the present study, non-probability sampling was used for its convenient strength.
Non-probability sampling techniques comprise convenience samples, quota samples, judgement samples, and snowball sampling (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2022). This is because there was no register of women survivalist entrepreneurs in Johannesburg. The current research utilised the snowball sampling procedure. This necessitated a decision for employing the snowball sampling procedure. Snowballing sampling is a non-probability sampling method in which the researcher approaches one member and the member in turn refers the researcher to another member (Choto et al., 2014). Likewise, Iacobucci and Churchill (2010:287) state that “when referrals are made, there is a great chance of attaining unique characteristics and/or sample elements that are not easily identified”. Moreover, the snowball sampling method was the most appropriate method for this study. The researchers had a few individuals to participate in the study who helped identify other participants who best matched the research.

Data Collection

Semi-structured face-to-face interviews. Precisely, data was obtained using semi structured face-to-face interviews for this study. According to Csillag, Csizmadia, Hidegh and Szászvári (2019), interviewing in qualitative analysis is the prevalent style of data collection. Semi-structured face-to face interviews were held at the municipalities in O R Tambo district, South Africa, with the employees. Semi-structured interviews are described as interviews organised around areas of particular interest, while allowing for considerable scope and depth flexibility (McGrath, Palmgren & Liljedahl, 2019). The interviews combine specific questions (to get the foreknown information) and open-ended questions to provoke unanticipated types of information. The semi-structured model often helps the investigator to engage with additional questions if necessary. It is also imperative to state that a tape recorder was used for the purpose of data collection. Precisely, a tape recorder was used to record the conversation. The researchers then wrote everything down listening to the tape recorder, including pauses.

Data Analysis

All interviews were recorded for analysis and transcribed. Using the process suggested by Corbin and Strauss (1990), the researchers analysed all the records of the face-to-face interviews after a verbatim transcription of the interviews. In the data analysis, the authors considered the use of the following procedures:

i. Open coding: “open coding is the process of breaking data, analysing, associating, conceptualising and categorising data” (Corbin & Strauss, 1990:15).

ii. Axial coding: According to Muposhi and Dhurup (2016), axial coding entails reading the transcribed notes to identify the connections that emerged from open coding between the themes.

iii. Selecting coding: Selective coding is a technique for choosing the main category, systematically comparing it to certain categories, validating such relationships and filling the categories that require more refining and development (Corbin & Strauss 1990). This process will be performed to identify the main themes related to this research (Morrison, Fernando, Kalra, Cresswell & Sheikh (2014). and make conclusions on the themes that have emerged.

Research findings

The discussion in this study was based on the concepts arising from the transcripts of the face-to-face interviews. The thematic analysis was utilised, which is described as a careful process in which themes arising from a qualitative sample are established, evaluated and recorded (Hunter & Howes, 2020). Bandara, Fernando and Akter (2020) regard Thematic Analysis as a basic form of qualitative research. The main advantage of the Thematic Analysis is that it is a logical process that allows the researcher to comprehensively scrutinise interview transcripts and glean all possible themes (Glesne, 2011). The following framework depicts the main themes identified in the data sources. Each theme will be discussed individually, followed by substantiating quotes. Interpreted data was then compared with existing literature.

Theme 1: Lack of support from management

Although capacity building is costly and time consuming for managers, it brings about improved employee performance. Participants in the study revealed that although trainings are important, managers do not open these opportunities for them to attend such trainings. The following is a sentiment from the respondents, and it supports the arguments above:

*Our managers cannot see all our challenges in the field but at least to focus on our Personal Development Plans. As employees we know our short falls and if this can be attended to by the managers, we can do better. Changes in the municipality require us to be trained every year. But we never get that.*

*We live in a world where training has become a necessity. The changes in the world of work require workers to be aware of their field, more especially technological advances*

Theme 2: Lack of trainings offered to employees

Karim, Choudhury & Latif (2019) contends that employee growth in career-enhancing abilities is constantly valued, which promotes employee engagement and retention. Without a question, a team that has received proper training and development will be a significant addition to the business, increasing the likelihood that they will do their jobs effectively and efficiently. However,
employees in this study have revealed that they do not get trained and developed to perform better. Majority of the respondents have indicated that they hardly get trained.

We received training just once. We firmly think that training is crucial because it exposes employees to a wide range of topics within their area of expertise and improves their understanding of recent advancements in that area. It is quite regrettable that we are here without having received any training so that we might perform better and see new advances.

Theme 3: Poor service delivery

Various communities rely on the municipality to provide services. To provide services to the communities, municipal personnel must be present daily. Employee development and training are crucial in this process. Participants in this survey reported that training and development aids in their ability to do their jobs effectively. The municipality has been hesitant to provide those chances to the staff, though. This claim of poor service delivery is supported by the following sentiments from the participant:

We are not properly trained, thus there are some services we cannot provide. We look to service providers for help. We think we can handle these things, but we lack the necessary training, which may be why some services, like dealing with water problems, are outsourced. All I can say, my brother, is that we need to be trained.

Sometimes when we get to the sites, we end up staying all day since the skilled employees are elsewhere. We hold out till they arrive. We only recommend training to our supervisors to avoid holding up the clients we service.

Theme 4: Poor leadership style

Managers are the key pillars of organizations, and it is expected that they lead organizations with humility and respect. The capacity to inspire others and persuade them to work together to accomplish a goal may be attributed to leadership. In this way, people will emulate their boss and instinctively steer their work in the direction he suggests, and everyone will eventually come to understand these principles and ideas. In other firms, this is not always the case since staff members frequently have trouble getting help from supervisors. Both the employee and the management take the initiative to start training and developing new hires. Employees are expected to submit their personal development plans to their bosses, who will then carry them out. Managers may occasionally start trainings because of changes in the job environment owing to gaps, they have detected. In this study, employees have a different perspective with regards to leadership and development and the following sentiments elucidates it all:

There are moments when we (the employees) believe that our supervisors should be doing more. We lack support and are unaware of the personal development plan you are referring to. Gaps will inevitably be found, and it is terrible that we do not have the option to participate in trainings. This all begins with managers taking the initiative. When there is no assistance from the higher levels, how can you expect us to attend training? Absolutely impossible.

Yes, Skills department is there but I have not seen their visibility and I am not sure about the training programmes being offered to us.

There is a need for training of managers before us. I believe if they can master this art of leading, capacity building will be easy, particularly for us field workers. We really need training.

Keeping employees up to date in terms skills helps in service delivery. Skills development enhances both people's capacities to work and their opportunities at work, providing greater room for innovation and job happiness.

Discussions

This study aimed to assess the effectiveness of training and development programmes in the selected local municipality of OR Tambo District Municipality. Authors such as Adaobi & Sr (2022), Arwab et al (2022), Chukwuemeka & Endurance (2022) and Csillag et al. (2022) have discovered the link between human resources development programmes offered to employees and their performance after those trainings. They contend that training and development programmes should be made available to all employees to increase their level of performance. Training programmes are a necessity in any organization. Employees should be trained and developed so that their level of performance could increase. Changes in the world of work and the advances in technology require managers to implement training methods to the employees. Skills office in the municipality should play a key role in enhancing the skills of employees. Participants from this study have indicated that training programmes are not visible and that they find it difficult to use their funds to advance their knowledge about the job. It is crucial that managers take skills development as a priority to gain public confidence when it comes to service delivery.

Poor leadership has been labelled as one of the issues that hamper Human Resources Development in municipalities. Some respondents have indicated that poor leadership style has impacted negatively to their development within the municipality. Training should not focus only on the employees on the ground, it should also be offered to managers so that they can lead employees effectively, said Participant 11 and 17. There is a strong assertion that many employees do not get an opportunity to attend trainings and that the opportunities are not available to everyone.
Another theme that received a lot of attention from the participants was “poor service delivery.” They contend that if they were given the necessary training, their level of performance would rise. They said that the communities the municipality serves continuously criticize it for its inefficiency. This is due to employees’ static performance, a lack of staff training and reskilling opportunities, and how these things influence service delivery.

Conclusion

The study aimed to assess the impact of training and development programmes in the municipalities. Based on these findings, participants have indicated that training and development programmes increases employee performance. However, their experiences towards these training programmes are that there is a need for constant monitoring for trainings offered. This will help employees be ready for the changes and advances in their respective workstations. Sentiments from the participants were interpreted based on literature. The researchers have since recommended the following:

i. Training and development of employees should be done continuously

ii. It is important to identify training requirements in a more professional manner, working with the line manager, the participants, and the HR team. Everyone concerned should agree on precisely what the trainees lack, such as the skills required and the attitudes that need to be modified towards work performance.

iii. There should be constant monitoring of training of employees.

iv. Managers must be included in the training and development of employees, although their training will focus more on leadership

v. Training offered should be evaluated

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