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Employee participation in training and development interventions at a selected municipality

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Orientation: Investing in manpower leads to positive results in the long run. This Study examines the role played by the management in encouraging employee participation in interventions by management on training and development.

Research purpose: This study aimed to explore management interventions in employee participation in training and development intervention in a selected municipality.

Motivation for the study: Studies show that positive economic and social development is dependent on the capacity of the workforce in the labour market. Therefore, motivated the investigation on challenges faced in local government to ensure that employees acquire adequate skills to perform their duties efficiently.

Research approach/design and method: A qualitative approach was adopted through semi-structured questionnaire to collect data from a purposive sample of 20 questions developed and distributed to administrative personnel. Questionnaires containing open and closed–ended questions were distributed to determine employee perception towards training and development programme interventions.

Main findings: The findings suggest that there is a lack of effective communication and management practices within the organisation, leading to poor participation and understanding from employees. Addressing factors such as role clarification, change management, planning and time management can also help improve employee participation and job satisfaction.

Practical/managerial implications: The study highlights the importance of management creating platforms to engage with subordinates and listen to staff needs. Additionally, the study exposed the crucial role that management plays in communicating a diversity training initiative.

Contribution/value-add: Management should explore the development of a supportive environment in which employees can freely communicate their perceptions and attitudes towards training and development interventions.

Keywords: training; employee training; employee development; employee competencies; skills audit; municipality training policies; on-the-job-training.

Introduction

Orientation

The South African public service institution requires competent and experienced public servants in order to achieve good service delivery. Ongoing changes caused by radical economic and social issues in the labour market in recent years have highlighted the central role played by the learning process in individual career development and organisational success. It is therefore important for the organisations to invest in manpower to have positive results in the long run. Interventions must be introduced early so that staff may acquire positive outcomes.

According to Blum et al. (2012, pp. 1–2), the public sector has the potential to be a major contributor to growth and social welfare, by delivering quality outputs for citizens, managing infrastructure, regulating social and economic behaviour and ensuring fiscal and institutional sustainability. The study focusses on human resource (HR) development of a selected municipality in Western Cape, South Africa, through employee training and development practices. This study sheds light on the relationship between employee training practices and employee development, with specific emphasis on employee performance and job satisfaction. To date, no policy has been

developed to address employee participation in training and development in this municipality.

Research purpose and objectives

The purpose of the study is to investigate administrative staff perceptions of the potential benefits of participating in training and development initiatives. This study is undertaken to give insight into management, development strategies and policies to address this and align with organisational objectives. It further aims to explore diverse factors influencing administrative staff decisions on whether to be involved in training and development programmes. Employee participation in training and development refers to the involvement of employees in various learning and development opportunities offered by their employer.

Every organisation knows the values of employees because they contribute to the growth and success of the organisation (Amin et al., 2014; Singh & Kassa, 2016). Organisations are required to acknowledge their importance to retain its employees in accordance with rapid and continuous changes occurring globally and also to ensure that knowledge capital remains productive and reactive to the requirements of their stakeholders (Malik et al., 2010; Singh & Kass, 2016). This can include formal training programmes, such as workshop and courses, as well as informal learning opportunities, such as on-the-job training and mentoring, which will be discussed further. Employee participation in training and development is important for both the employee and the employer, as it can lead to increase job satisfaction, improved performance and a more skilled and knowledgeable workforce. But how can workers be motivated so that they can perform their duties to the best of their ability? Is there any link between training and development? This article intends to assess the role of interventions in the implementation of the training and development within the certain municipality in Western Cape. Furthermore, it intends to explore the benefits of employee participation in training and development, as well as some strategies for promoting and encouraging participation.

According to Lambert et al. (2020), cited by Dasy Muleya et al. (2022) the benefits of having employees who are emotionally attached to the organisation far outweigh those with other forms of commitment; therefore, training and development interventions need to be embraced as an organisational resource from which employees can learn, grow, develop and become empowered. It is universally accepted that training and development interventions are the responsibility of the organisation. The government has the responsibility of creating a legislative framework that is conducive to skills enhancement in the economy. The Organisation Development Network (2019, p. 1) states that organisations should drive 'a process that benefits the organisation or community and the world around them'. A training and development perspective examines the current environment and assists staff as a team in different

directorates to effectively identify strategies for improving service delivery.

The South African public service domain requires competent public servants to achieve effective service delivery. It is therefore vital to ensure strategies that encourage employee participation in training and development activities. Despite the training and development initiatives undertaken by public sector employers to develop workforce competencies, employers have reported that there is still reluctance among employees to fully support or participate in the training and development interventions that are offered (Organisation Development Network, 2019). The Department of Public Service and Administration announced its intentions to reintroduce the Public Administration Management Bill, commonly known as the Single Public Service Bill in June 2012 (SALGBC, 2012, p. 32). These are some of the legislative measures taken by government to tighten the workforce and ultimately provision of quality basic services.

The Public Administration Management Amendment Bill aims to leverage existing legislation with better coordination across government. The Bill proposes a process of engagement to align norms and standards across the public administration within the framework of existing laws. Clause 1 deals with the amendment of definitions for ease of interpretation and clarification, such as 'head of institution', 'national government component' and 'organ of state'. Clause 2 seeks to amend Section 5 of the Principal Act, noting that the amendment to these transfers may have an impact on the employees' personal lives and affect their rights; therefore these transfers would require the consent of the employees. Furthermore, the bill aims to improve public service delivery in South Africa by establishing clear responsibilities in the three spheres of government, promoting accountability and transparency, ensuring compliance with regulations, addressing staff capacity and skills development and enabling effective service delivery through human resources policies and practices. Additionally, employees, revealed that employers do not engage with staff prior to training and development interventions to ascertain employees' impressions of training and development interventions. This dilemma could be one of the factors affecting employees' attendance.

Literature review

According to Mathis et al. (2015), training is the process taken for workers to acquire capabilities to be equipped for performing the jobs, while development refers to the initiatives and efforts applied to improve employees' ability to handle a variety of assignments and to cultivate capabilities beyond those required by the current job. Training is mostly short term with a concrete goal; it focusses more on the role as it aims at a specific job or requirement and revolves around present or immediate worker needs. Development, on the other hand, is more long term, focusses more on the person or employee, is more conceptual as it focusses on the overall progression of employees and is oriented towards the future (Masadesh, 2012). According to Ahmed and Yohanna (2014),

training and development is used as an important tool to provide employees with the knowledge, skills and abilities and modifies their behaviours and attitudes to perform efficiently both in the present and future. Furthermore, it helps to increase the performance of employees both at individual and organisational levels (Al-Mzary et al., 2015; Okechukwu, 2017). Khan et al. (2016) suggest that it is highly critical for every organisation as it meant to modify not only skills, attitudes and behaviours of employees but also make employee adapt to new technology that in turn increases the efficiency of both individuals and organisations. According to Afsana et al. (2016) and Singh and Kassa (2016), a positive relationship between training and development and employees job performance has been found, even though there is no further explanation on what this positive relationship is. This study attempts to highlight the answers to these claims. Vinesh (2014, as cited in Mensah, 2016), also believes, training and development is very critical to an organisation because once workers are equipped with requisite skills, they are bound to produce quality goods and render quality services, thereby reducing waste and cost to company and increasing in knowledge to give quality services and reducing supervision. This approach implies that senior management should also be developed to decrease the tensions between control and learning. Furthermore, it is emphasised that training and development intervention is imperative for organisations to be able to assess readiness and capabilities of employees. Thornhill and Cloete (2014) believe that training of top supervisors for leadership should be a priority. They further argue that the fact that a person is appointed in a top post does not prove that he or she is properly equipped to perform leadership functions within a particular organisation setting. Therefore, it is important that not only lower level receive training but top management as well.

The main objective of every organisation is to encourage staff to attend training and development programmes offered by organisations. Investing in staff should be prioritised by most organisations to achieve positive results. Thus, doing so, will ensure employees are valued and chances of being promoted are achieved. It is also important that employees introduce training and development interventions early so as to address strengths and weaknesses of staff.

Radical economic, social and cultural changes experienced by the labour market in recent decades have highlighted the central role played by the learning process in individual career development and organisational success. In such dynamic contexts, skills and competence rapidly become outdated and need to be addressed continuously so that the labour force becomes empowered and knowledgeable, as this is a strategic factor for global competitiveness.

South African employees' perceptions of work-related learning should be interrogated to understand employees' and employers' attitudes and approaches to work-based learning initiatives as well as an organisation's ability to achieve its goals (Mavunga & Cross, 2017). Rebelo and Gomes (2011, p. 7) state that this is done by engaging in 'a social process of sharing'. For effective employee learning to take place, the cooperation of all the various agents, organisational and statutory, is vital (Radebe, 2017). This approach places importance on human capital, and it acknowledges the input and interests of all stakeholders and encourages collaboration and sharing of knowledge.

South Africa is faced with the pressing challenges of increasing the productivity of lower-level workers, addressing the shortage of highly skilled managers and preparing the workforce for the requirements of a changing global working environment. It is essential that all training and development possibilities be fully exploited to alleviate these problems in the South African economy (Rebelo & Gomes, 2011, p. 27). The training and development agenda in South Africa primarily revolves around policies and programmes to facilitate job creation to ultimately eliminate income differentials between the various population groups and to redress inequalities in access to wealth. One of the primary objectives of training and development programmes is to create opportunities for all South Africans to reach their full potential.

Chapter 2, Bill of Rights, of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), states that:

> Everyone has the right, (1) to a basic education, including adult basic education; and, (2) to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible. (p. 29)

Furthermore, 'Everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions where that education is reasonably practicable…' (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996). Additionally, the goal of training and development interventions is to create an impact that lasts beyond the training itself.

Training and development initiatives are aimed at increasing the ability of individuals to improve performance and productivity. 'Training' deals with the improvement of job skills, while 'development' means educating employees beyond the requirements of their present positions. Cooper and Schindler (2014) state that these objectives will enable employees to be prepared for possible promotions and help them adopt a broader view of their role in the organisation. Organisations can select two different methods but not limited, for the enhancement of training and development interventions of its employees.

A distinction is made between on-the-job training and off-the-job training (Van Zyl, 1994). Coaching is one way an organisation can introduce to empower employees. According to Thornhill and Cloete (2013), taking employees away from the job for training purposes will always be an expensive exercise. While it must be noted that on-the-job

training and off-the-job training are genre terminologies for classifications of training and development and not training and development methods per se. An organisation may decide to train employees while on the job or off the job by ensuring that every supervisor is qualified to perform satisfactorily in that respect. On-the-job training programmes entail training activities offered to employees working in their current positions over a certain period to obtain the required skills; in the process, a supervisor is allocated to monitor the progress of the employee. Off-the-job training programmes are offered as sessions outside the workplace. Thus, training becomes effective in the actual job setting. Skill, according to The Free Dictionary (2022), is defined as:

> [A] proficiency, facility, or dexterity that is acquired or developed through training or experience; an art, trade, or technique, particularly one requiring the use of the hands or body; or a developed talent or ability. (p. 1)

If one has a unique skill, more opportunities may arise where that skill is required. Therefore, it is crucial that management highlights the skills each employee must have to be suitable for a post and that can lead to tasks being completed effectively and efficiently. This should minimise the lack of productivity in the workplace, promote industrious personnel and present the situation where some employees may not need much supervision. This means that all staff members should be able to focus on their core functions. Training and development are very important for organisations. According to Katcher and Snyder (as cited in Kum et al., 2014), training and development enables an organisation to adapt to changes that meet the tastes and preferences of customers. It also improves employees' skills and boosts their morale, thereby making them efficient, reducing waste and operations and increasing productivity. In addition, training and development brings about reduction in employee turnover and results in minimal supervision. Moreover, it shortens the time for learning by new employees, reduces learning costs and motivates employees to be loyal to the organisation (Armstrong, 2003).

The primary purpose of such analysis is not an intellectual or academic exercise, but to increase understanding of what we can do to open up more alternatives (Hameed & Waheed, 2011). Hameed and Waheed (2011, p. 224) state that employees are essential elements for an organisation. Companies, therefore, are advised to highly engage in employee development and should invest large sums of money in the development of employees. Hameed and Waheed's (2011) study suggests that certain planned key variables like skills growth, employee learning, employee attitude, self-directed learning, and employee performance should be included in training and development strategies. Funds invested in training opportunities are an investment in the future of the organisation and its employees. Selection of participants should be enacted by a line manager, preferably made with the assistance of other professional staff. In the selection process, the individual and the supervisor should study the programme announcement and determine if the subject content is pertinent to the current or future job of the individual. An organisation should plan sessions in advance so that when important issues or challenges arise, they can be dealt with.

Coupled with organisational shortcomings like the inability to attend training and development interventions, increased workload and the lack of communication between employers and employees, employees may not only feel reluctant to participate in these interventions but may also find it impractical. Despite the various approaches, the initiation phase involves communicating the anticipated intervention and clarifying why the intervention is required. Russ (2009, p. 5) states that: 'frontline individuals are the true instruments in the implementation process; without them change is merely an implementer's idea, (Russ, 2009, p. 5). Organisations, need to ensure that training and development and its associated facilities are not neglected; it is therefore, essential that these be incorporated as goals in the purpose structure of the organisation so as to succeed in implementing the process. Harrison (2000) and Rothwell and Kazanas (1994, p. 1) believe that an organisation's mission statement and HR development plan should be linked; this will ensure that training and development programmes form an important component of the organisational corporate plan. Additionally, training and development activities interventions, will be seen by employees as beneficial to both the organisation itself and themselves. According to Sims (1990, p. 1), 'the purpose of learning from the employee's perspective is basically to acquire skills and knowledge to do the job and go gain promotion and advance the career'.

Finally, the implementation of the intervention focusses on various organisational levels, such as individuals, groups and leadership, as well as organisational processes procedures, structures and rewards (Khan, 2015; Nielsen & Abildgaard, 2013). Lastly, the evaluation phase involves collecting data to verify the effectiveness of the change intervention on single or multiple levels (Cady & Kim, 2017). Nielsen and Abildgaard (2013) advise that changes in attitudes, values and knowledge, the development of individual resources, procedures, working conditions, employee's general health and well-being, performance and organisational health and safety practices should be studied and monitored, Cooperrider (2017, p. 122) further, stresses the importance of analysis, diagnosis, treatment and follow-up evaluation to enable effective problem-solving.

Methodology
Research design

Qualitative research was adopted to achieve the purpose of the research study. Qualitative research is ideal for exploring subjective experience and describing the lived world (Miller et al., 2002). Bryman and Bell (2011) cited by Melaletsa

et al. (2023) describe research as sensitive to how the participants view and experience the problem. Duke and Mallette (2020) characterise qualitative research as a set of practices to respond to research questions in the field of knowledge that requires collecting, analysing and interpreting non-numeric data. Babbie and Mouton (2007, p. 1) emphasise the importance of the researcher choosing a study design that will provide acceptable answers to the research problem or questions, considering what kind of evidence is required to address the research question adequately and being aware of the possible challenge or limitations of the chosen design. Brynard and Hanekom (2006, p. 37) describe qualitative methodology as 'research that produces descriptive data and generally, is participants' own written or spoken words pertaining to their experience or perceptions'. Usually, no numbers or counts are assigned to these observations, and it also entails unanticipated findings and the possibility of altering research plans in response to these accidental discoveries.

Research approach

A qualitative research methodology was adopted through semi-structured questionnaire to collect data using a questionnaire containing open and closed-ended questions, with 20 questions developed and distributed to all administrative personnel sampled.

Research strategy

A case study research strategy was used. The structure of a case study should be the problem, the context, the issues and the lessons learned (Creswell, 2014). Having adopted Creswell (2014), structures, this strategy allowed for a detailed understanding of employee perception of training and development and the role of training and development in ensuring efficient and effective service delivery operations of training within the selected municipality in Western Cape. According to Oates (2006, pp. 156, 299), it is possible to use different research strategies linked to the philosophical paradigm.

Research methods

The study used a qualitative research approach that allowed the respondents to be interviewed using a semi-structured questionnaire. Qualitative data were gathered through using e-mail and ultimately document analysis. Babbie & Mouton (2004) and Kumar (2018) points out that a qualitative approach is embedded in the philosophy that follows an open, flexible and unstructured approach to enquiry.

Research participants and sampling methods: The selected staff members were available to partake in the study and held specific information pertinent to the study. Staff were given about a month to complete the questionnaire and to return to the researcher. Furthermore, enough time, was allocated to complete the questionnaire at own time without any pressure. The aim was to determine perception towards training and development programme interventions.

Data collection methods: The data were collected through semi-structured questionnaires returned from all the participants and the findings were collated on an Excel spreadsheet. The study investigated factors influencing employee participation in training and development interventions. Data collection was done through employing a semi-structured questionnaire, distributed to 50 staff members in selected departments at the chosen municipality.

Data recording: The questionnaire contained open-ended and closed-ended questions. Questionnaires returned by the participants were collated on an Excel spreadsheet. Participants during their work schedules could make time to complete the questionnaire and email it back. Questionnaire proved to be advantageous in that it reached a wider audience as opposed to interviews. However, it has the disadvantage of the researcher not being able to customise questions as is possible with certain other methods of data collection. According to Du Plooy (2009, p. 1), a semi-structured questionnaire 'is constructed to understand the respondents' frame of meaning. Understanding another person's meaning construction is an extremely delicate process that requires the researcher to be very sensitive to respondents'. The study was limited to participating administrators from different departments within the selected municipality.

Data analysis: The data were collated on an Excel spreadsheet and analysed with the assistance of a statistician from Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT). The purpose of analysing qualitative data was to determine patterns, ideas, subjects and meanings (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 111). Bogdan and Biklen (2003, p. 111) further describe qualitative data analysis as 'functioning with the information, organising it, dividing it into controllable parts, coding it, combining it and searching for outlines'. Bowen (2009, p. 27) posits that when data are analysed qualitatively, the researcher can construct the data to back the key argument the study intends to make. According to Weber (1990, p. 9), 'content analysis is a research method that uses a set of procedures to make valid inferences from text'. In other words, content analysis endeavours to analyse text in a systematic, empirical manner that is made sufficiently explicit to permit replication.

Discussion

The main objective of this research was to investigate employee perception of training and development and management interventions at a selected municipality in Western Cape, South Africa. The original analyses indicated that most employees are not happy with how the training and development interventions are conducted, which represented a negative employee perception regarding training and development. The participants perceptions of training and development interventions in terms of consultation also showed a negative result, which led to the conclusion that

there is insufficient consultation and involvement of management in training and development intervention of staff. The general model of planned change provides for consultation and information sharing with staff throughout the process (see Asumeng & Osae-Larbi 2015). However as demonstrated in this study and supported by Bartunek and Jones (2017), a lack of consultation for interventions and perceived irregular application of change initiatives are likely to result in employees rejecting the change.

The study's findings further revealed that employees believe their input is important in shaping the outcome of intervention. Participants experiences also indicate that executives make decisions on behalf of the staff without any consultation, and managers then drive decisions without the input of employees on lower levels. This resulted in dissatisfaction and a lack of trust within the department. Bussu and Marshall (2020), support that top-down approaches to training and development interventions might result in employees feeling that their voices are not being heard or are important. Russ (2009) argues that frontline individuals are the key components in the effective implementation of change. Employee, therefore, become part of the decision-making process and can share knowledge that can assist the organisation in solving problems and improving planning (Austin & Bartunek, 2012). Participants in the present study indicated that there is not sufficient communication around training and development interventions. In this case, employees are not given chance to make their own decisions, management decides on their behalf which leads to unwillingness to attend the training interventions. A lack of communication also leads to a disconnect between strategy and operations.

Findings

The study revealed that even though there were uncertainties, most participants attended training and development interventions and indicated that their expectations were met and that these were linked to the vision and mission of the organisation. Most participants also indicated that the training activities were applicable to their work and enabled them to fulfil their duties, as described in their current job descriptions, effectively. However, there were those who felt their expectations were not met. The training and development sessions prepared participants with the skills and knowledge required to advance within the organisation.

The participants indicated that training was linked to annual training and development needs assessments. An organisational analysis versus an individual analysis approach was adopted to determine which skills were available in the workforce. Employees who had undergone training, needed to be evaluated to understand the change in their learning levels and to implement what they had learnt in the workplace. Training practitioners should understand that their role does not end at training employees but that they should further engage in interventions that test how acquired skills are transferred on the job and what the impact is.

Participants believed that more effective communication should occur between employers and employees in terms of clarifying the individual's aspirations and organisational objectives. Two of the participants indicated that practising new knowledge cannot be viewed only based on achieving organisational goals. This should be a fulfilling process aligned with an individual's aspirations. Both parties, the employers and the employees, must benefit from the process. More staff should be hired so that workloads of current staff do not have to increase. This will also create the space for those wanting to attend training and development activities. Training programmes improved job performance and afforded staff the possibility of applying for promotions and some even acquired new knowledge. Participants also indicated that training interventions broadened their knowledge of the municipal sphere's operations and activities.

Participants stressed that basic municipal management should be introduced when employees are appointed at a municipality within their period of probation as majority of the new employees do not understand the role of a municipality and its associated operations. Participants indicated that this would promote a positive attitude and approach to rendering a service and would lead to a greater understanding and appreciation of the role of municipalities.

Conflict management, diversity management, productivity and people management were highlighted as important programmes that would boost employee morale and self-development. Participants indicated that there is value gained from training and development in terms of increasing confidence when rendering a service. Participants were further of the view that training and development activities improved job morale. Staff generally accepted that staff morale is key to successful organisations. However, different opinions were expressed regarding the provision of training and development opportunities. Some participants argued that training and development interventions improved how employees performed their tasks while others felt it did not. It is evident from these responses that the degree to which value is added by training and development initiatives varies according to the employees.

Employees believed it is beneficial to engage with management in training interventions. Staff discovered that when attending combined training activities where management is also present, a greater understanding of the various departmental roles like operational activities, projects and programmes, is achieved. Combined departmental training interventions strengthen teamwork, enhance communication and foster better relationships. Participants' views regarding the benefits of inter-departmental training interventions included improved morale, increased teamwork and understanding of work and duties. All responses were positive regarding inter-departmental training interventions.

When tested on programmes to be offered to administrative staff, participants were of the view that the following training

interventions should form part of the programme: (1) communication skills, (2) computer skills, (3) telephone etiquette, (4) time management and (5) office administration. Content in communication training activities needs to be addressed collaboratively with employees. Participants indicated that computer training and development programmes should especially be offered to administrative staff. Participants further indicated that office and telephone etiquette are required to equip newcomers to an office environment as well as empower employees to be considerate and polite co-workers. These should be included in induction training programmes as well.

Participants also indicated that the language medium in the training sessions is English and for an English third language speaker it was difficult to write in English (or even Afrikaans or isiXhosa when they were not familiar with the language). This, in some instances, is a barrier to carrying messages across or to engagement in the training sessions. Training programmes could be offered in all three languages, namely English, Afrikaans and IsiXhosa to enable participants to understand and participate in the activities.

Participants agreed though that English was the common language of the business world and that municipal workers should be able to write an email without language and spelling errors but not everyone was able to express themselves well. Importantly, these comments show that participants do understand the shortcomings regarding implementing programmes.

Participants acknowledged that management plays an important role in an organisation and in their career paths. However, they discovered that it became difficult for management to identify gaps between the knowledge and skills acquired in training programmes and the application thereof. The application of skills and knowledge acquired in the workplace should be monitored. Ultimately, the monitoring of knowledge and skills acquired in the workplace can be an indication to employers of the difference between those who attended and those who did not attend training and development programmes. Participants felt that employers should demonstrate interest in developing staff, and employees should be empowered and monitored against performance evaluation to perform their jobs effectively and to promote self-growth.

The participants shared the view that the organisation should continuously conduct skills audits to compare the current skill sets with the desired skills to achieve future operational and strategic goals. Operational shortcomings, which led to the inability to attend training and development interventions, were identified such as time constraints related to an increased workload and the lack of communication between the employer and employees.

The research results reveal that the training and development interventions meet respondents' expectations; however, operational shortcomings adversely impact their decision to participate in these interventions. The impact of training and development interventions for employees should always be tested. This will serve as a tool for management to evaluate what needs to be addressed as well as to monitor employee performance and ultimately minimise the protests and lack of service delivery by government.

Limitations and recommendations

From the findings, no limitations were identified; however, the following recommendations could be made for the selected municipality. A strategic HR plan with systematic and holistic planning could be adopted by the municipality. Not only should the organisational plan be linked to the HR plan, alternate avenues of obtaining skills should be investigated and both employers and employees' personal development paths and how effectively they develop others should be evaluated. Furthermore, systematic planning should include an evaluation post training programmes to ascertain the degree to which employees have applied what they had learned. The strategy should, furthermore, be linked to the opportunities available within the municipality to provide opportunities for all employees. With the emergence of HR development with a strategic focus, the municipality should investigate this approach as an option for optimising employee participation in training and development sessions. Human resource practitioners should include future-orientated exercises in their developmental plans. Instead of only focussing on the implementation and delivery of training programmes, HR practitioners and managers can create learning interventions that include possible future scenarios to discover possible future employee and organisational needs. Human resource departments could further partner with other government departments and arrange training and development workshops that address the service delivery protests as these affect the entire country. As the municipalities are customer centric, a concerted effort needs to be made to find the most suitable interventions recommended by the research participants. Employees will gain confidence in their interactions with the public, and this will further increase morale.

A needs analysis should be undertaken to ascertain employees' English language needs. The intention was to improve English language ability for both spoken interaction and written correspondence which, in turn, increases confidence and, therefore, better engagement with both colleagues and the public. The probation period of new employees should be revisited. The municipality would benefit from probation periods that proactively include modules that focus on basic municipal management. The municipality should embark on developing a supportive environment in which employees can freely communicate with managers about their needs and attitudes towards training and development interventions. The role of trade unions should be addressed. The prevailing socio-economic conditions in a country determine to what extent a

government would be able to intervene in areas of the training market that traditionally belonged to private enterprises. Trade unions have a statutory role in ensuring workers are developed by overseeing compliance of various legislation. Given the directive by government to ensure worker empowerment, union members, the management of organisations and employees could play a more collaborative role in implementing effective training and development interventions which are mutually beneficial to both the organisation and employees. Current local and international frameworks of training and development interventions should be investigated on an ongoing basis as comparative studies. This will assist with the goal of attaining best practice and ensuring the municipality keeps abreast of training and development trends.

Conclusion

This research study met its primary objective as the researcher was able to examine why employees are not interested in participating in training and development sessions at the selected municipality. Organisations need to invest in their staff members; however, a more strategic approach should be adopted. Even though: (1) the majority of participants attended training and development interventions, (2) participants stated that the outcomes were linked to the vision and mission of the organisation and (3) participants acknowledged that though they acquired the skills and knowledge required in order to perform their duties, a number of barriers to employee participation in training sessions were highlighted.

These include the role of training practitioners, evaluation of the impact of training programmes, a need for improved communication, identification of specific programme offerings, agreement that English should be the language medium in training sessions and a gap exists between the acquisition of knowledge and skills and the application thereof. Although these findings cannot be generalised to the rest of the public sector, the findings have several implications for the selected municipality. It is evident that the research participants were satisfied that training activities were relevant to their work, enabled them to complete duties effectively and equipped them with the skills and knowledge needed to advance within the organisation. However, the selected municipality should address the barriers if an authentic and ethical interest is shown in capacitating the South African public service sector to deliver basic services to the community responsively and effectively. While management has a specific obligation pertaining to career development and advancement of employees, employees also need to take responsibility. A strategic approach will ensure both employers and employees are developed, and all stakeholders will collaboratively engage with training and development needs. This will foster an environment of continuous improvement of both staff and the organisational needs. Evaluation of these needs also needs to be an ongoing practice.

Competing interests

The author declare that they have no financial or personal relationship(s) that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Author's contributions

N.Z. was the sole author of this article. Prof Annelie Jordaan provided, guidance, support and academic guidance.

Ethical considerations

The research undertook that a mutual contract is going to be prepared, which explains the purpose of the research, the expectations from the participant (e.g. to give an interview) and the procedure with the data (how long it is to be stored, who will have access, how is anonymity guaranteed). This is going to give me as a researcher a working basis; a time for withdrawing a signature should be defined (e.g. 2 weeks).

If this can be realised, this contract should also include whether the participant will be given the results or not. In undertaking this research various sources have been consulted in order to ensure that this study meets acceptable ethical guidelines. As a researcher, it is important to make sure that all involved in this study also undertake to abide by the Code of Research Ethics of the Human Sciences Research Council. Participants in the survey should know they are taking part in research and that this research should be carried out with their consent. This consent is voluntary and should be based on an adequate understanding of the survey.

In order to give participants a clear understanding of the study, the following are provided:

- Letter of invitation
- Information statement from the Researchers
- Verbal outline of the study by the fieldworker handing out the paper questionnaires.

Some of the ethical issues of the study are as follows:

- The research would support the principle of voluntary participation.
- Data will be collected with the informed consent of participants.
- Privacy and confidentiality of participants would remain assured and information will not be made available to anyone who is not directly involved in the study.
- The principle of anonymity would also be guaranteed by keeping the participants anonymous throughout the study.

Funding information

Data availability

The author confirms that the data supporting the findings of this study are available within the article. Furthermore, all the sources used in this article have been cited in the reference section.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and are the product of professional research. It does not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated institution, funder, agency, or that of the publisher. The author are responsible for this article's results, findings, and content.

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