

Human Resources Capacity-Building in Local Government

A Case Study of the Training and Development Scheme in Durban

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The Training and Development Scheme (TDS) is an affirmative action-based program located in the Greater Durban Area of Kwazulu-Natal. The program was conceived in 1992 to address the racial and gender disparities in the Durban Metropolitan Area. At the time the Scheme was introduced, the transition from an apartheid city council to a non-racial council had yet to take place, and the uneven racial and gender employment patterns were all too evident. The TDS would be one of the mechanisms to address the under-representation of Black (Indian, Colored, and African) employees in the management cadre of local and provincial government. The Training and Development Scheme has since evolved from a small affirmative action pilot project into a comprehensive human resource development program with additional objectives and partnerships. It is envisaged that at the end of the 1997-98 program, approximately 145 participants would have graduated from the Scheme. The participants would have been provided with education and training that complies with the requirements of the National Qualifications Framework and is dynamically linked to the broader institutional transformational issues of local and provincial government management. The Training and Development Scheme has since been upgraded and since 1998, has been offered as a Post-Graduate Diploma in Public Administration (Development Management) by the School of Public Policy and Development Management of the University of Durban-Westville.

Ushering in a non-racial and democratic local government dispensation in South Africa was facilitated by the **Local Government Transition Act** (as amended), 1993 (Act 209 of 1993). The transition process has resulted in numerous training challenges. The process of integrating budgets and amalgamating administrations has resulted in a large number of new functions (both for officials and councillors) entering the system resulting in new training needs. This training is in addition to the retraining of existing staff. The restructuring of the local government training sys-

tem has to be pursued within the wider context of challenges facing local government to transform it from its narrow service delivery orientated character to one that is developmentally orientated, participatory and responsive to the community. This has to take place within the context of stability and continuity in local government.

The characteristics, principles, and values of a new local government system have to be strategically located within the policy framework of the Reconstruction and Development Program, Growth and Development Strategy, and the South African Qualifications Authority. Comparatively, in terms of international standards, there is very little investment in South Africa in the development of human resources. In this regard, the Growth and Development Strategy adopted by the government recommends that there should be a substantial increase in training, in both the public and private sectors, with expenditure being equal to an average of 5 percent of the payroll. This would also be applicable to local government. Local government training programs have to be linked to the National Qualification Strategy, which seeks to improve the quality of education and training, ensure the transfer of skills, and encourage social mobility.¹ This article briefly reviews the current status of local government training and development in South Africa. The article also focuses on a local case-study, the Training and Development Scheme, which is a collaborative project of the School of Public Policy and Development Management of the University of Durban-Westville, the Durban Metropolitan Council and the Department of Local Government and Housing of the Province.

Contextualising the Restructuring of Local Government Training in South Africa

The concepts of education, training and capacity-building cannot be used interchangeably. Training refers to those sets of activities that are specifically designed to improve skills thereby enhancing increased performance or productivity. Education refers to the processes of general information or knowledge transfer that need not be related to enhancing increased performance and productivity. Capacity-building refers to skills, knowledge, and information transfer and training in general, which is aimed at performing tasks that could not be previously performed.²

Local Government Education and Training: A Review of the Experiences of Commonwealth Africa

The Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) Symposium on Education and Training for Local Government held in Durban noted the absence of local government training policies in the majority of countries in Commonwealth Africa. However, most of the countries represented were to varying degrees working on the formulation of national training policies for local government. The Symposium came to the conclusion that:

- all countries should develop a training policy specific to local government;
- local government should be recognised as a specific service;

- training policy should recognise specific needs of councillors and staff within an integrated approach/framework; and
- training policies must guide the design of specific programs to meet the needs of local government training.³

It was generally accepted that local authorities have the capacity to formulate training and capacity-building policies, providing they had the necessary experience, resources and that there was clear identification of the relevant roles and functions. The priority areas for capacity-building included *inter alia*, financial and institutional management, change management, strategic and integrated development planning, housing and infrastructure investment, implementation management, operation and maintenance, environmental management and local agenda 21, local economic development and poverty alleviation, community awareness, and private sector/ngo participation. The key target areas were identified as councillors, staff, and the community. It was noted that the process of local government reform and decentralisation has resulted in new roles and has led to new training needs. Consequently, the following linkages were seen to be important:

- structures relating to intergovernmental relations;
- agencies involved in the capacity-building process (local government and their associations, training institutions, and non-governmental organizations); and
- regional and international bodies.⁴

The above-mentioned networks have a crucial role to play in the co-ordination of policy, sharing of information, and synchronising the approach and methodology of training providers.

Restructuring of Local Government Training in South Africa: Towards a New Vision and System

According to the White Paper on Local Government (1998: 103), the local government training system has been coordinated by two statutory bodies which were functioning separately. The Local Government Education and Training Board was established in terms of the Manpower Training Act of 1989 and has been funded primarily by national government grants and a levy by municipalities. The Training Board for Local Government Bodies was established in terms of the Local Government Training Act of 1985. The two bodies have been operating a separate network of training centres throughout the country. This has resulted in a wastage of resources and furthermore stifled the development of a national vision for training. In addition, it has hampered the establishment of a holistic human resources development strategy at the local government level.

According to Moseley⁵ the new local government training vision should result in:

- educated and equipped councillors and officials capable of performing their functions and duties under a new local government paradigm;

- improved capacity of local government officials to ensure effective, efficient, and sustainable delivery of services thereby promoting good governance; and
- an informed community that can participate and encourage the process of stable governance.

In this respect, the following target groups and possible training needs can be identified:

1. *Councillors*: improvement of skills in policy formulation, decision-making, resource allocation, constituency representation, ensuring good and stable governance, and decisively providing guidance and direction for the local government transformation process; and

2. *Appointed Officials*: orientate officials to new values, culture, system and role of local government (this applies equally to the councillors and frontline workers). They are central to sustaining effective and efficient service delivery and overall development of the communities. There must be a shared vision between the management and councillors. Management development training for officials is important as this will focus specifically on strategic management and human resources development; and

3. *Frontline Workers*: focus on literacy training, continuous upgrading of skills corresponding to an identified career path, on the job training, empowerment, better consumer awareness, and improved service delivery.⁶

The local government training system in South Africa is currently being restructured. The White Paper on Local Government⁷ has proposed a new system, which will have three components:

1. *Regulator*. A Local Government Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA) will be established as a single co-ordinating body for local government training in the country. It will be registered as an Education and Training Quality Assurance body (ETQA) in terms of the Skills Development Act, 1998. It will be responsible for managing a local government Education and Training Fund built from the proceeds of the National Skills Fund as levied from local government. It will also play a role in allocating these funds to provincial training structures, setting national training priorities, establishing standards, accrediting service providers, and providing trainee certification.

2. *Purchasers*. Provincial training structures will be established in each province to undertake a systematic needs analysis. Acting in concert with local authorities, they would be required to purchase the provision of training from a variety of agents. They will include representatives from organized labor and local government. The provincial training structures will package the training needs and priorities of local government proposals in "invitations" to tender and then allocate funding to suitable tenders. They will also evaluate the quality of training programs and assess their impact.

3. *Providers*. Training will be designed and delivered by a variety of contracted agents in response to needs defined by SETA and provincial training structures. In this regard, providers who may compete for training contracts tendered by provincial train-

ing structures includes, *inter alia*, NGOs, universities and technikons, provincial training centers, individual municipal training departments, private sector companies and centres, commercial training and development consultants, and professional bodies.

The training of local government councillors will not be the responsibility of the Local Government Sector Education and Training Authority. The South African Local Government Association will be responsible for training in this regard.

The Training and Development Scheme: A Historical Perspective

The Training and Development Scheme (TDS) was conceived in 1992 to address the racial and gender disparities in the then Durban Functional Region (DFR) which broadly defined the boundaries of the Durban Metropolitan Council. The term "public sector" was used then to encompass both local and provincial government. The Training and Development Scheme was extended to the province in its second year of operation.

At the time the Scheme was conceived, the political restructuring of local government had yet to take place, and the uneven racial and gender employment patterns were all too evident.⁸ The Training and Development Scheme anticipated the democratic transition in local government and the establishment of a Metropolitan Council. It was generally accepted that the under-representation of Black (African, Indian and Colored) employees in management positions would have to be addressed as a matter of urgency if municipal services were to be provided efficiently and effectively. The Training and Development Scheme as an innovative affirmative-action-based program would be one of the strategies to address this management deficiency in the then-Durban Functional Region. The political restructuring of local government will be facilitated by the *Local Government Transition Act* (as amended), 1993 (209 of 1993), while the dearth of Black personnel in management positions would be addressed by proactive employment policies and practices promoting affirmative action both nationally and locally.

In this regard, the Training and Development Scheme would have to develop the management potential of young Black graduates through internship and lateral entry at the local level. Since the inception of the Scheme in 1993, it has since evolved into a comprehensive human resource development program in the Province, with additional objectives and partnerships.

The pilot project of 1993 was managed by the Centre for Community and Labour Studies (CCLS) and the Department of Public Administration of the University of Durban-Westville in collaboration with the then Durban City Council. After the initial cycle, it was decided other local authorities in the then Durban Functional Region should be drawn in. Consequently, the former Pinetown municipality became an integral part of the program in 1995. In addition, during the same year, CCLS responded to the need for affirmative training in provincial government, and the program was subsequently extended to incorporate the then Natal Provincial Administration.⁹

The program has since become accessible to graduates and diplomates from all the tertiary institutions in the Province, namely the universities of Natal and Zululand, M L Sultan, Natal, and Mangosuthu Technikon. The Joint Universities Public Management Education Trust (JUPMET), which is a consortium of South African universities catering for the training and development needs of the public sector, intends replicating the program in other parts of the country where a need is recognized.¹⁰

Since the inception of the Scheme in March 1993, approximately 176 participants have been on the program. In terms of racial breakdown, approximately 66 percent of the participants were African, 29 percent Indian, 4 percent Colored, and 1 percent White. In terms of gender breakdown, approximately 65 percent of the participants were female and 35 percent male.

Postgraduate Diploma in Public Administration

It is generally accepted that past education policies and practices created and promoted the artificial division between education and training. Furthermore, these policies tended to be biased towards traditional study at the expense of training. This has resulted in a severe shortage of relevant skills, which has to be addressed as a matter of urgency. In response to this, the government introduced the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), which integrates the education and training systems. This will ensure that learning will be relevant and work-related thereby providing access to those who can prove competency but, for some reason, lack qualifications. Learners will enter the system at a point which is appropriate to their knowledge and skills. With the NQF in place, learning will be decided by objectively assessing what individuals know and can do and not what previous qualifications individuals have and where and how the previous learning took place.¹¹

Research has indicated that the majority of students graduate from tertiary institutions with formal qualifications, but are lacking in terms of the relevant skills and competencies. Consequently, they experience difficulties in attaining employment in their chosen field and quite often have to settle for second best. The Training and Development Scheme through the Postgraduate Diploma in Public Administration seeks to address the problem by developing a linkage between education and training. Graduates who have qualifications but lack the necessary skills and experience are provided with training directly linked to the job. On the other hand, employees who have received informal training on the job, with no recognition of skills acquired over many years of experience, will have an opportunity to acquire formal academic qualifications.

Given the above, the certificate course has since been converted to a Postgraduate Diploma in Public Administration (Development Strand) and became operational in February of 1998. The modules for the course are:

1. Orientation to Local/Provincial Government Administration;
2. Administrative Theory and Practice;

3. Financial Management;
4. Research Methodology;
5. Development Planning and Project Management; and
6. Human Resource Management.¹²

The requirements for admission to the program is a recognised degree. In exceptional cases, an appropriate professional qualification together with suitable work experience may be approved by the Head of Department in conjunction with the School of Public Policy and Development Management and the Senate of the University of Durban-Westville. The lectures for the program are held on Fridays and examinations are conducted in June and November of each year.

Components of the Program

Training is an integrated process in which the various parts add incrementally to the total learning experience. The Training and Development Scheme is a three-part affirmative action-based strategy. It comprises three distinct and unique elements, namely internship, coursework, and a mentoring program.

Internship Component

The internship program is critical to the success of the Scheme and runs over twelve months. Trainees in the program are graduates and diplomates drawn from the six tertiary institutions in the Province. The candidates are drawn from law, social work, development studies, public/municipal administration and specialised disciplines such as accounting, surveying, information systems and engineering. They are placed in the various departments of the Durban Metropolitan Council and the Department of Local Government and Housing of the Kwazulu-Natal Provincial Administration. In addition, designated aspirant middle-management staff of the Council and the Department of Local Government and Housing of the Province are also participants in the program.

The scheme was designed to enable trainees, through incremental experience, to develop their specialities and leadership qualities, encourage their sense of inquiry, and help them to develop a culture of accountability and transparency in their work relations. At the same time, it was hoped that the internship of twelve months would provide opportunities for exposure to general management and decision-making skills. While it was thought unrealistic to target graduates without previous work experience for immediate employment in middle-management positions, it was generally accepted that the year's internship and fast-track management development program would provide opportunities to acquire basic skills in local government management.

The trainees would later build on these as their career paths widened. The selection criteria for participation in the program was based broadly on the above-mentioned assumptions and included inter alia, the applicants' management potential and skills, their capacity to plan and resolve problems, accept challenges, evaluate situa-

tions, and develop interpersonal relations. In addition, other criteria were related to governance and was designed to gauge the social concerns and awareness of applicants relative to the environment and urban development.¹³

Trainees are placed within the various Departments of the Metropolitan Council and the Department of Local Government and Housing of the Province in accordance with their fields of study. The trainees have a job description with the emphasis on problem-solving skills and on-the-job training. They are subject to all the general conditions of service applicable to other staff. However, they have the opportunity to rotate within their service units/departments/sections. They are exposed to general management skills such as *inter alia*, planning, organizing, decision-making, interpersonal relations, and communication. Equally important is their ability to become a resource person in the workplace, understand and develop an ability to provide ideas, and express informed opinions confidently.¹⁴

Trainees receive the following formal and informal training during their placement:

- formal lectures at the university
- facilitation skills
- computer literacy

It should be noted that there is no obligation on the part of the both the Council and the Province to offer the trainees permanent employment at the end of the program. However, a large number of the trainees have in fact proved themselves and have secured permanent employment with the Council or the Province. At the end of the 1997-98 program, more than 60 per cent of the trainees were employed by the Council. A study tracing mobility of the trainees since the inception of the program revealed that approximately 70 percent of them have since been employed in local government. In addition, research has also revealed that the trainees from the Council and the Province have enhanced their personal and career development opportunities.¹⁵

Coursework

An integral part of the Training and Development Scheme are two formal training courses, a Post-Graduate Diploma in Public Administration (with provincial and local government focus) and a Certificate in Development Management. Both courses are one year in duration and are managed by the School of Public Policy and Development Management of the University of Durban-Westville.

The Postgraduate Diploma in Public Administration is targeted at employees with academic qualifications and some kind of supervisory experience. The certificate course is designed for employees with no formal qualification and training but have the necessary potential. The certificate course could also be used as an entry point to the postgraduate diploma.¹⁶

The instructional methodology includes *inter alia*, formal lectures, plenary and syndicate discussions, case-studies, and project visits. In addition, the program utilizes

a network of visiting lecturers, both academics and practitioners, to further broaden the perspectives of the trainees. In addition, there is also a computer-based skills course, which is an integral part of the program. This ensures that the graduate will be computer literate and can keep abreast of developments in the field of information technology.

Mentorship

Mentorship support systems are seen by management specialists as indispensable for the achievement of an empowering environment. In fact, for an affirmation-action based program, they are unquestionably essential. According to Nasser,¹⁷ "a mentor is someone who enjoys developing people and who has the stature, experience, insight, and maturity to be a credible source of inspiration and influence for a protege, in developing him/her as a complete person."

This definition implies that mentorship is a total concept, a sharing of life experiences; an identifying of values and norms for exploration; an acceptance by both parties that the whole dynamic of helping the protege through an accelerated process of self-discovery, career growth, personal maturity, and job competence is an all-embracing, demanding, time-consuming, but most rewarding process. Thus mentors must possess a wide knowledge of the organization — especially its informal structures and processes.

Mentors generally fulfill a number of distinct functions:

- they perform a career development function consisting of sponsoring, guiding, advising, and providing visibility for the protege;
- they provide counselling and support, giving their proteges advice when and where required, as well as building their self-confidence;
- the mentor acts as a role model, exemplifying a model of effectiveness, which the protege comes to admire and emulate.

Probably, the most important and certainly the most innovative aspect of the scheme is the mentoring program.

The workplace mentors (internal mentors) are senior employees of the council and provincial administration. The internal mentors are based in the trainee's department and are responsible for the trainee's development in the workplace. He/she is responsible for the trainee's socialisation process, becomes a source of advice and information, coaches in activities that will provide experience and skills development, and assists in accomplishing personal and organizational goals. Because of their proximity and relationship, internal mentors see their proteges on a more regular basis.¹⁸ Participants in the scheme generally believe that the mentoring process was beneficial and assisted them in developing skills and in gaining work experience. As a result of the knowledge gained, they are able to blend theory and practice.

The external trainees are academic staff attached to the universities/technikons in the region. Their responsibilities are to address the trainee's academic problems,

mediate relations between parties, and oversee personal development. External mentors are required to see their proteges at least once a month.¹⁹ The mentors on the program are required to attend a Certificate Course in Mentorship.

Tripartite meetings (between the trainee, internal, and external mentors) are held every second month in order to continuously assess the progress of the trainee and to forge a congenial relationship amongst all parties. This also facilitates the regular feedback relative to the development of the relationship. It is imperative that the whole process be holistic in its approach.

According to Mahlawe²⁰ the following were found to be crucial in ensuring the program's success during the past five years:

- the relationship must be a voluntary one based on trust, mutual respect and confidentiality;
- developing and maintaining open communication channels between the mentor and protege is critical;
- roles and expectations of both parties must be clearly spelled out. Conflict will invariably arise if there is incongruity of needs;
- openness is absolutely crucial, particularly in issues pertaining to culture, language, ethnicity, race, or gender;
- disadvantage often means that a trainee is ill-prepared for some challenges of work and therefore an ideal mentor will respond to this with utmost caution;
- the marketing of the program internally and externally;
- the mentor must be prepared to devote time and furthermore has to be tolerant to address the needs of the protege; and
- most importantly, continuous training and retraining of mentors is critical.

Conclusion

Local government in South Africa is undergoing a process of fundamental restructuring and transformation. Local government training is an integral part of the process and is in fact at the cutting edge of this change. The local government sector in South Africa, if it is going to carry out its constitutional mandate and fulfill its developmental role, has to ensure that it has a skilled and motivated workforce committed to improving the quality of life of the local citizenry. The proposed local government training policy is directed at transforming local government from a mere service delivery mechanism to a development agent. A National Skills Development Strategy and National Qualification Framework is currently being developed, which will result in legislation being introduced thereby ensuring the uniformity and portability of qualifications in the local government sector. There will be a Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA) to act as a focal point for co-ordination. A National Skills Fund will act as a conduit for funding.

The White Paper on Local Government, which is currently serving as a reference point for the local government restructuring and transformation process, is critical to the development of a new local government training policy.

The Training and Development Scheme has been operational in the Durban Metropolitan Area for the past five years. It is an innovative affirmative-action based training scheme that seeks to address past imbalances through a “fast track management development program,” thereby developing a pool of prospective managers from the disadvantaged communities. It also seeks to link the concepts of capacity-building, education, and training through a system of innovative internship, coursework and mentoring. The Training and Development Scheme can be seen as part of a broader transformation process directed at achieving a local government system that is representative, transparent, and responsive to the needs of the majority of the local populace.

Notes

¹ Moseley, B (undated): Review of the Local Government Training Sector: Draft Recommendations to the Department of Provincial Affairs and Constitutional Development, Planact, East London, 1.

² Ibid, 2.

³ Commonwealth Local Government Forum (1998): Symposium on Education and Training for Local Government, held on 4-7 March in Durban, Commonwealth Local Government Forum, London, 8.

⁴ Ibid, 9.

⁵ Moseley, 3.

⁶ Ibid, 4.

⁷ Republic of South Africa (1998): The White Paper on Local Government, Ministry for Provincial Affairs and Constitutional Development, Pretoria, April, 104-105.

⁸ Levy, N and Maharaj, S (1996): Affirmative Action in Local Government — A Case-Study, in *Readings in Local Government Management and Development: A Southern African Perspective*, P S Reddy (ed)., Juta and Company, Cape Town, 127.

⁹ Mahlwe, O (1998): The Training and Development Scheme (TDS): A Case-Study, Paper presented at the CLGF Symposium on Education and Training for Local Government, 4-7 March 1998, Durban, 20.

¹⁰ Ibid, 2.

¹¹ University of Durban-Westville (1997): Agenda of the Board of the Faculty of Commerce and Administration dated 6 October, University of Durban-Westville, Durban, 5.

¹² Ibid, 2-3.

¹³ Levy, N and Maharaj, S, 129.

¹⁴ Mahlwe, O, 4.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid, 5.

¹⁷ Nasser, M (1987): Mentoring – the Key to Optimising Your Corporate Talent, *Institute of Personnel Management Journal*, November, 2.

¹⁸ Ibid, 6.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

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