A management framework for training providers to improve skills development in the workplace

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South Africa is in a skills revolution, launched by the Department of Labour via the Skills Development Act in 1998 and the Skills Development Levies Act in 1999. The skills revolution challenges workplace training providers through employers who pay a percentage of payroll towards skills levies and want to recover these levies via skills grants; skills legislation that call for employees to be trained annually; and upgrading to provide SAQA/NQF accredited learnerships and skills programmes. Training providers need an internal management framework to enable them to improve workplace skills development.

Introduction: workplace skills development and training providers

South African managers, employees and training providers are committed to addressing the areas of redress, equity, cultural integration, capacity building, access, special needs, human rights, technology and skilling a largely unskilled labour force. Responsible citizens must meet international obligations as agreed upon by various global leaders (South Africa, The National Action Plan for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, 1998:18-39; 94-97; 122-127). The skills levy-grant system is the state's initiative for creating local economic, educational and social skills development infrastructure to meet international obligations.

South Africa's Department of Labour (DoL) and Department of Education (DoE) have joined forces to improve the country's lack of skills and to develop general human performance via a 'Call to Action' (Asmal, 1999). Various workplace and skills legislation, including the Skills Development Act (SDA), Skills Development Levies Act (SDLA), Employment Equity Act (EEA), and the South African Qualifications Authority Act (SAQA) aim to skill a largely unskilled workforce. A skills revolution was initiated due to South Africa's 80% (12 million) semi-skilled, unskilled, or unemployed population *versus* the 20% (3 million) skilled or highly skilled and professionals (South Africa, DoL, 1999:14-16). The challenge is for employers, employees and training providers to understand, implement and take ownership of workplace and skills legislation, and improve the country's skills levels.

Training providers must arm themselves with different education, training and skills development policies, procedures and practices if they are to succeed and benefit from the skills revolution. Their task is to improve workplace skills rapidly and effectively according to national standards. Skills development calls for managers and training providers to strategically plan, implement and report on annual training using an effective internal management framework.

The management role of workplace training providers in the midst of the skills revolution is under spotlight in this research. This discussion highlights workplace-training providers as the skills development soldiers of the skills revolution. The skills battlefield is a complex, ruthless, demanding environment that is influenced by local criticisms, international trends and obligations, lifelong learning principles, human asset investments and effective training provision benchmarks.

Recent concerns are that South African revolutionaries are divided on whether to comply with the current skills legislation. The skills legislation has received criticism for not having real teeth or meat (Phillips, 1997:35-43). Critics claim that the national skills strategy was designed to revolutionise skills development by promoting competitiveness, yet it lacks in content and mechanics for setting standards. The process for accrediting training providers is criticised for being complex, lacking clear direction and being open to abuse and corruption. That training providers and experts in the field of skills development are relegated to a consensus decision-making process, means that they now play a secondary role in workplace training and skills development. Skills legislation forces the collective agreement of all role players in skills decisions leading to the neglect of training providers.

Similar to South Africa, the British skills levy-grant system during the 1960s and 1970s managed workplace training via state driven, industrial training authorities (Esland, 1991:196-206). Unfortunately, the system failed to improve skills development due to many reasons. A significant reason for failure stemmed from neglected, complacent training providers who failed to encourage and empower managers to plan for and sustain workplace skills development.

Compared to West German training providers and managers, who undergo formal training to manage the challenges of training in the 21st century workplace, South African training providers do seem neglected. Germans receive regulated 3-year management skills (Esland, 1991:314-315). Trends favour employers and managers to become empowered to create a culture of learning within their organisations and transform into learning organisations (Pont, 1995:19). Managers must be competent to deal with action learning, mentoring, self-development, counselling, coaching and developing skills. Employees must be more competent at learning to learn and more committed to lifelong learning.

Managers and training providers must first change their attitude towards employee empowerment. Trainers are challenged to improve employee development, create job satisfaction and treat every human resource as part of the assets of the organisation (Dale, 1998:67-9). Employees must be trained to add value to the organisation and sector skills pool. The competence levels of employees and organisations must be audited to determine the organisation's skills bank and strategic plans for the future. The cost of training is also a significant management-planning question.

Current workplace skills development legislation and strategies are aimed at curbing ineffective training provision, improving the education and training system, reducing unemployment figures, meeting workplace skills shortages, and enhancing social mobility. Inter-

national and national skills policies focus on improving lower level skills, human capital and the competitiveness of the country. These policies shift power from training providers and employees onto employers and politicians (Trowler, 1995:73). Workplace skills obligations challenge employers to invest finances, time and resources on risky educational consultants while internal skills development remains under funded.

Research problem

Four years after the launch of the skills revolution, South African training providers, employees, managers and employers continue to be challenged by the skills legislative criteria. Training providers are uncertain of their place, unable to clearly determine their role, and unskilled to manage and improve skills in the current dynamic workplace. The problem this research investigates revolves around the management framework that training providers employ to improve skills development under such challenging workplace conditions. The aim is to explore an internal management framework for effectively developing and improving workplace skills.

This research problem is based on the premise that although the state provides a legislative framework for training providers to embrace the skills revolution, it does not provide an effective internal management framework for their skills soldiers. Training providers are unclear on the basic management assumptions, operational principles and management framework for developing skills. Furthermore, training providers are tasked to meet legal Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETA) requirements, which are costly, time consuming and the scope and quality requirements means that SAQA/NQF skilled expertise must be sought.

This research explored and recommended an effective internal management framework for training providers to improve skills development in the South African workplace. The research problem was directed by key research questions, such as: Who are training providers? What do they do? Are they effective? What limitations, opportunities and shortcomings face training providers in the current workplace? How can they improve skills development?

Research design

This research is grounded in both the Positivist and Interpretivist approaches. Positivists view social behaviour as predictable, regular and patterned. The Positivist method for conducting research is hypothetic-deductive, employing quantitative or statistical research methods to test hypotheses. Interpretivists conduct investigations by viewing reality in action or as it happens, with researchers interpreting 'what is going on' in different ways (Trowler, 1995:32-40).

Action field research strategies were employed to investigate an effective skills management framework. The research model was designed to gather quality empirical data from the skills revolutionaries for scientific analysis and conclusions. Table 1 presents the research design for the training provider management factors of: effectiveness, improvement, limitations, shortcomings and opportunities for skills development.

The primary aim of this research was to develop a management framework for training providers to improve workplace skills development. The three management levels: basic assumptions, operational elements and management framework levels for improving skills development are investigated in this research study. An exploration of the relevant general and specific literature highlighted the sample population and scope of the available empirical evidence. Through rich qualitative interviews, management factors, such as, effectiveness, limitations, shortcomings, opportunities and improvement ideas were identified. The purpose of the primary aim is to revolutionise the management role of training providers so that workplace skills development is improved holistically and systematically.

The secondary aim of this research was to identify the basic and operational management elements for improving workplace skills development. This aim was achieved via a robust quantitative survey

Table 1 Research design for a skills management framework

Research aim	Description of aim	Research method
Primary aim	To investigate and recommend the most effective management framework for training providers to improve skills development in the workplace	Quantitative: questionnaire Random sample population: SMME managers; employees; skills development practitioners and skills development authorities
Secondary aim	To investigate the effectiveness, limitations and opportunities facing training providers in the workplace today. Furthermore, how can training providers improve skills development in the workplace?	Qualitative: Interview Random sample population: Managers in the workplace; training mangers; employees; training authorities

analysis conducted on the skills battlefield. The purpose of this aim is to radically improve training providers to improve skills development via an investigation of who training providers are, what they do, how effective they are and how they can improve skills development.

The research model employed an integrated, multimethod approach to gather and analyse empirical data. Quantitative research strategies and tools offered accurate, valid and reliable statistical analysis tools and techniques. Factor analysis was conducted on 245 survey questionnaires of a 600 research sample population. Significant factor correlations provided the empirical evidence for the recommendations of this study. However, samples and statistics present limitations that could jeopardise the significance and reliability of any study. Hence, qualitative interviews were used to complement the statistical conclusions.

Qualitative strategies and tools offered the benefits of detailed responses to structured questions. Interviews with key skills revolutionaries offered opportunities for focused action field research. However, qualitative research methods also have limitations and shortcomings that must be identified, controlled and managed.

Research sample

The population of this research includes all Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), managers, training providers and employees involved with the workplace. The sample population includes SETAs, managers, training providers and employees. Table 2 outlines the sample population and research matrix used to gather data from the stratified sample population of this multi-method study.

Table 2 Sample population for skills management framework research

Sample population	Quantitative questionnaires	Qualitative interviews
SETAs		✓
Managers	✓	✓
Training providers	✓	✓
Employees	✓	✓

A variety of data collection methods promote action field research (Fitzgibbon, Magarrey & Poechman, 2000). A piloted and adapted quantitative questionnaire was distributed to 600 employees, including managers, training providers and trainees. Simultaneously, workplace managers were targeted to provide the 60 rich descriptive narratives to represent the underlying attitudes, actions and voices of managers, training providers, skills authorities and employees. Structured interviews of an average of 30 minutes each were conducted with individual, key role players, especially managers who interact with training providers.

With SMME employees, managers and training practitioners as

the core research population, the sample population was clearly defined for this research's quantitative survey questionnaire distribution. The qualitative research and sample population become clear when 'management framework' was highlighted as the focus of this research. Mangers at various levels were targeted for comments and opinions. The results were astounding. Rich, descriptive data was gathered from various managers of skills development in the workplace.

Validity and reliability

The validity of this research design is ensured by the cross curricula nature of the topic. The subject of managing and improving workplace skills development is well grounded in sociological, educational, training and management theories as researched and documented by Trowler (1995), Bush (1995), Mouton & Marais (1990), Creswell (1994), and others. This research employs action field research methodology, using scientific methods to study the effects of actions and to recommend changes based on the results. Employees in the midst of the skills revolution were consulted as employee attitudes, values and behaviour are being impacted upon by this research (Walters, 1996: 3-5).

Reliability tests analysed whether the quantitative management factors of the variables 'effectiveness' and 'improvement' of current training providers were reliable to contribute significantly to any relationships and/or comparisons. All three factors for both variables were found to be reliable. For the variable 'effectiveness of current training providers' factor 1, 'job relevant training', 7 items were found to contribute to possible correlations. The alpha coefficient statistic for the reliability test on factor 1 is 0.8701, which falls between 0 and 1 and is higher than 0.7. Therefore this factor, job relevant training, comprising 7 items, is reliable to use in the factor analysis.

The 4 items of the 2nd factor 'continuous assessment' of the effectiveness of current training providers are reliable at above 0.7 and below 1 with an alpha level of 0.8490. The alpha coefficient for the 3rd factor contribution to the measure of effectiveness of training providers, 'SAQA/ NQF accreditation' is 0.7955, with 4 reliable items comprising this factor. Table 3 outlines the effectiveness factors and their reliability alpha coefficients.

Table 3 Alpha statistics for 'effectiveness of current training provider' factors

Factor	Items per factor	No. of items	No. of cases	Alpha statistic
Job relevant training	C3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 12; 13	7	215.0	0.8701
Continuous assessment	C8; 9; 10; 11	4	227.0	0.8490
SAQA/NQF accreditation	C1; 2; 14; 15	4	218.0	0.7955

Secondary tests using SPSS factor analysis confirmed that there was a significant correlation amongst the 3 factors under the 'effectiveness of current training providers' factor. The KMO measure of sampling adequacy had a value of 0.722 and Bartlett's test of Sphericity found the measurement of the 3 factors under the 'effectiveness of current training providers' correlated with a significance value of 0.000, when $p < 0.05$.

The factors for the variable 'improving training providers' were also found to be reliable. The Bartlett's test of Sphericity found the measurement of items under this variable to be related at $p = 0.000$, when $p < 0.05$. Reliability coefficients found alpha levels as follows: factor D1: job relevant training: 0.8487; factor D2: continuous assessment: 0.7929; factor D3: SAQA/ NQF accreditation: 0.7672. All 3 factors of the 'improving training providers' variable are above the probability significance level of 0.7 and hence all 3 factors are valid and reliable for further factor analysis in this study.

Data collection

A quantitative and a qualitative questionnaire were designed to gather data according to the research aims. Testing or piloting the designed questionnaires ensured that the sample population could answer the questions. The selected questions were designed to maximise ease, speed and quality of responses (Fowler, 1984:99-106).

The biographical information in Section A of the quantitative questionnaire dealt with job title, SMME size, SETA affiliation, WSP status, amounts of training received and provided, and the management of training. Section B measured the receiving and providing of training and asks the respondent to choose from a menu of possible training options. Section C measured the effectiveness of current training providers and Section D measured the improvement of training providers using the Likert type scale.

Qualitative interviews gathered data on the opinions of managers on current training provision. Interviewing required intense listening or 'hearing the meaning' of what respondents said. Interviewees were allowed to describe their experiences in their own terms while the interviewer listened to all parties (Rubin & Rubin, 1995:7-18). Five questions directed the interview process: Are training providers effective (Reasons)? What limitations face training providers? What opportunities face training providers? What are training provider shortcomings towards improving workplace skills development? How can training providers improve to improve skills development? Interviewees were instructed to reflect on each question and respond with concise statements (Merriam, 1998:84; 87). All responses were captured on the interview form and transferred onto computer tables.

Data analysis

The quantitative research data was analysed using factor analysis methods. Significant statistical facts and relationships were identified amongst the data. Since responses differ from one respondent to the next, each survey item was regarded as a variable. Variable correlations were identified via multivariate analysis tests and strategies (Alreck & Settle, 1985:287-288). SPSS/PC+ procedures for statistical analysis offered frequency and cross tabulation analysis (Frude, 1987: 58; 62). The frequencies procedure resulted in tables displaying the number of responses that have a particular value for a specific variable. Cross tabulation or joint frequency tables display the joint distribution of two or more variables with a limited number of categorical value.

The qualitative data were 'open' or 'axial' coded for possible links to management concepts. Common voices were identified and coded into specific categories. The responses to each of the qualitative questions were then compared to the quantitative factor analysis (Bryman & Burgess, 1994:5). The qualitative data categories are: effectiveness of training providers; limitation of training providers; opportunities of training providers; shortcomings of training providers to improve skills development; and ideas on improving training providers to improve skills development.

The multi-method approach (Brewer & Hunter, 1989:11) allowed for the quantitative and qualitative data to combine to reveal significant research conclusions. The integrated analysis and multi-method findings presented a planned, systematic synthesis of data aimed at providing a management framework for training providers to improve skills development.

Research findings and conclusions

Empirical data analysed as per the quantitative and qualitative approaches, allowed for the findings and conclusions to be integrated to reveal valid recommendations. The significant correlations of the empirical research are discussed under the following questions: Who are training providers? What do they do? Are they effective? How can they improve themselves to improve skills development?

Who are training providers?

The survey questionnaire addressed employees at all job levels and

specifically targeted the following as respondents: human resource managers, training managers, CEO/directors, internal assessors, managers, skills development facilitators, trainers/ tutors, workers, learners and others. Factor analysis reduced these ten variables to three key independent variables. Table 4 displays the frequencies of three factorised groups of research subjects: managers, training providers and employees.

Table 4 QA1-respondents to the survey questionnaire

Groups of survey subjects who engage with training providers in the workplace	Research subjects	No.	%
Managers	HR managers, training managers, CEOs, directors, general managers	66	27.6
Training providers	SDFs, trainers, tutors	52	21.7
Employees	Workers	121	50.6
Total		239	100

Most of the respondents, 50.6 %, were employees who were either working or learning or working and learning at the time of the survey. Managers comprised 27.6% of the subjects and training providers comprised 21.7% of the survey subjects.

Section A, Q6 and Q7 reveals the number of employees either internal or external training providers trained during 2001. In response to QA6, 64% attested to internal training providers providing skills development in their organisations. In response to QA7, 49% attested to external training providers developing skills in their organisation. In response to Q9, 33.5% attest that their organisation provide training to other organisations. This means that 33% of the respondents are training providers. Table 5 below details the responses to QA6, QA7 and QA9 of the survey questionnaire.

Table 5 Provision of training to organisations during 2001

Training provider	Yes	No	Unsure	Total
QA6: Internal training providers	154	43	43	240
	64.2%	17.9%	17.9%	100%
QA7: External training providers	119	70	53	242
	49.2%	28.9%	21.9%	100%
QA9: Training providers to other organisations	77	79	74	230
	33.5%	34.3%	32.3%	100%
Total trained	350	192	170	

Table 6 displays the number of employees trained during 2001as responses to QA8 and QA10 of the research questionnaire. 50% of the respondents revealed that between 1–49 employees were trained by either internal or external providers during 2001. 23.3% attested that between 50–250 employees were trained during 2001. According to 6.7% of the respondents, over 1 000 employees in their organisation were trained during 2001.

QA10 measured the training provided to employees within other organisations during 2001. Of the 78 subjects responding to this question, 29.5% responded that between 1–49 employees of other organisations were trained by their staff during 2001. 33.3% responded that they trained between 251–500 employees of other organisations during 2001.

The empirical findings reveal that training providers are individuals, organisations or consultants. Training providers are employees who provide internal and/or external training to other employees. It is highly significant to this research that the people conducting the "training" as workplace-training providers are not professional educators but industrial experts who transfer their skills, knowledge and values to other employees within and outside their organisation.

Table 6 Number of employees trained during 2001

Categories trained	0	1– 49	50– 250	251– 500	501– 1000	Over 1000	Total
QA8: Training by internal and external trainers	4	82	38	18	10	11	163
	2.5%	50.3%	23.3%	11.0%	6.1%	6.7%	100%
QA10: Training provided to employees of other organisations	4	23	26	10	9	6	78
	5.1%	29.5%	33.3%	12..8%	11.5%	7.7%	100%
Total trained	8	105	64	28	19	17	241

What do training providers do?

Section B, Q1 and Q2 of the survey questionnaire inquired what training providers do. Respondents selected services provided to them, such as: training needs analysis; fulltime courses; on-the-job training; awareness workshops; quality assurance management; research and development; and assessment type courses. Table 7 reveals the factors extracted from the various types of training received and provided.

Table 7 Factors of training received and provided in the workplace

Received/provided training factors	Description of training received and provided in the workplace
Training programmes	Full-time courses; Part-time courses; Distance learning; Technical skills; ABET
Training workshops	Awareness workshops; Mentoring; Coaching; Personal development training; Generic skills training; On-the-job training
Assessment training	Training needs analysis; Training audits; Monitoring and assessment; Quality assurance; Internal assessor
Management training	Management training; Training trainers; Workplace skills plans; Research and development

The findings reveal that training providers offer a range of skills and training related services to the workplace. Respondents, including 'other', selected every item of the 21 items listed on the training menu. The conclusion is that more services than those listed on the questionnaire are being offered by training providers in the workplace.

Tables 8 and 9 outline the frequencies for training received and/or provided in the workplace. In Table 8, 87% of the respondents received training workshops while 68% received a variety of training programmes such as: full-time courses; part-time courses; distance learning; technical skills training; and ABET. It is significant that 58% of the sample population received management type training.

Table 8 Frequency of training received in the workplace

Training categories	No. of respondents per category	% of respondents per category
Training programmes	160	67.8
Training workshops	205	96.9
Assessment training	84	35.6
Management training	137	58.0

Table 9 displays the training provided by workplace training providers. 28% of the respondents provide workplace-training pro-

grammes. 24% provide workplace-training workshops such as: awareness workshops; mentoring; coaching; personal development training; generic skills training and on-the-job training. 15% of the respondents provide management type training to the workplace, while 9% provide assessment type training.

Table 9 Frequency of training provided in the workplace

Training categories	No. of respondents per category	% of respondents per category
Training programmes	65	27.5
Training workshops	57	24.2
Assessment training	21	8.9
Management training	36	15.3

Section A, Q11 of the research questionnaire inquired who manages training in the workplace. 70% attested to general managers managing training in their organisation. Training is also managed by skills development practitioners (31%) and by training providers (25%). Furthermore, according to 25% of the respondents, other authorities such as SETAs, are also responsible for managing training in the workplace. Table 10 details the frequency responses of the four groups of workplace training managers.

Table 10 QA11: Who manages the training in organisations?

Groups of survey subjects who manage training in the workplace	No.	%
Managers	166	70.3
Skills development practitioners	74	31.3
Training providers	60	25.4
Other authorities	59	25.0

The empirical findings revealed that training providers do much in the workplace. Employees receive and provide a variety of training and related services. Training providers themselves receive and provide training programmes, workshops, management and assessment type training. Furthermore, workplace managers, skills developers, training providers and other authorities manage training. Although a variety of training is received and provided in the workplace, the pertinent question is: Are current training providers effective in developing workplace skills?

Are current training providers effective?

The effectiveness of current training provision was measured in the survey questionnaire in the form of 15 Likert-type statements. Table 11 presents the 15 items of this variable. Most respondents ranked the effectiveness of training providers as 'sometimes'.

The Bartlett's test of Sphericity, which assesses whether the dependent measures are correlated, found the measurement of items under the 'effectiveness of current training providers' to be related at a significance value of 0.000, when $p < 0.05$. Anti-image matrix correlation tests limited the effectiveness variable from 15 to 3 factors. A diagonal variance of 0.6 is required for factor analysis. Closer to 1 is the ideal variance for correlation. C1 to C15 of the survey questionnaire in this study all have variances of between 0.6 and 1. Hence, all 15 items were entered into the rotation factor matrix. The results of these analytical tests reveal a regrouping of items into 3 specific 'effectiveness' factors as in Table 12.

The 3 effectiveness factors: job relevant training, continuous assessment and SAQA/NQF accreditation, were factor analysed with each of the biographical items of Section A and B of the quantitative questionnaire. All 3 factors of effectiveness are significant to skills development practitioners and training providers when they manage

Table 11 Responses to survey questionnaire on effectiveness of current training providers

Effectiveness of current training providers	Never		Sometimes		Always		Tot
Training providers ...	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
C1: Are partners with organisations	46	20	120	52	63	28	229
C2: Show us their training policy	80	35	112	49	38	16	230
C3: Supply relevant training program	25	11	130	56	76	33	231
C4: Provide job related training	13	5	115	50	103	45	231
C5: Provide on-the-job training	27	12	113	48	91	40	229
C6: Supply relevant learning material	15	24	135	57	84	36	234
C7: Provide effective training manual	18	8	138	59	78	33	234
C8: Inquire about previous learning	63	27	118	50	53	23	234
C9: Assess during learning	48	21	113	48	73	31	234
C10: Assess after learning	48	21	114	49	70	30	232
C11: Provide feedback on progress	48	21	125	53	60	26	233
C12: Focus on outcomes of learning	40	17	117	50	76	33	233
C13: Improve performance on the job	21	9	100	43	115	49	236
C14: Provide national certificates	102	44	71	31	56	25	229
C15: Provide national credits	137	60	51	22	42	18	230

workplace skills development.

Significant correlations for effective training providers were identified in organisations that paid skills levies; submitted annual Workplace Skills Plans or WSPs; received and provided internal and external training; and used managers, skills development practitioners, training providers and other authorities to manage training. The significant values of the factor analysis are presented in Table 13.

Table 12 Factors impacting the variable 'effectiveness of current training providers'

Factor	Description	Likert type questionnaire statements
Factor 1	Job relevant training	Relevant training programmes (C3); Job related training (C4); On-the-job training (C5); Relevant learning materials (C6); Effective training manuals (C7); Focus on outcomes of learning (C12); Improve on-the-job performance (C13)
Factor 2	Continuous assessment	Inquire about previous learning (C8); Assess during learning (C9); Assess after learning (C10); Provide feedback on progress (C11)
Factor 3	SAQA/NQF accreditation	Are partners with our organisation (C1); Reveal their training policy (C2); National certificates for learning (C14); National credits for learning (C15)

The qualitative interview questionnaire also measured whether the learning "transferred" by training providers were actually effective in the workplace. Most of the interviewees (managers, training providers, skills authorities or employees) responded 'yes and no'. The effectiveness of training providers is described as 'pockets of success' and 'handpicked training providers are effective' validating the quantitative research finding of 'sometimes'.

Table 13 Significant factors for 'effectiveness' variable

Biographical items	Hotelling's trace, $p < 0.05$	Significant effectiveness training	Between subjects ANOVA, $p < 0.05$
Paid skills levies	0.029	Job relevant training	0.024
		Continuous assessment	0.009
Submitted WSPs	0.005	Job relevant training	0.005
		Continuous assessment	0.001
Internal training providers	0.000	Continuous assessment	0.004
External training providers	0.000	Continuous assessment	0.000
		SAQA/NQF accreditation	0.000
Managers managing training	0.023	Job relevant training	0.005
Skills practitioners managing training	0.006	Job relevant training	0.013
		Continuous assessment	0.000
		SAQA/NQF accreditation	0.033
Training providers managing training	0.000	Job relevant training	0.000
		Continuous assessment	0.000
		SAQA/NQF accreditation	0.003
Other authorities managing training	0.008	Continuous assessment	0.001
Training programmes received	0.022	Job relevant training	0.040

Table 14 Significant factors for 'improvement' variable

Biographical items	Hotelling's trace, $p < 0.05$	Significant improvement factor/s	Between subjects ANOVA, $p < 0.05$
Submitted WSPs	0.022	SAQA/NQF accreditation	0.003
Training in other organisations	0.003	SAQA/NQF accreditation	0.002
Training providers managing training	0.004		0.243
			0.184
			0.003
Training programmes provided	0.003	SAQA/NQF accreditation	0.001
Management training provided	0.027	SAQA/NQF accreditation	0.014

Successful training providers can be 'models sending messages to other training providers' who are challenged when aligning with the skills revolution. They offer 'customised courses that are technology specific'. Interviewee responses on the reasons for training provider effectiveness in the SA workplace were mapped against the factors/ categories of job relevant training; continuous assessment; SAQA/ NQF accreditation and other reasons.

A comparison of the factors shows that managers, training providers and employees rate the 1st and 3rd factors: job relevant training and SAQA/ NQF accreditation, as important contributory factors to the effectiveness of training providers. Continuous assessment was not part of the paradigm of many of the interviewees.

Skills development authorities rated the effectiveness of training providers largely from the perspective of the 3rd 'effectiveness' factor: SAQA/NQF accreditation. Other reasons for the effectiveness of training providers according to this qualitative research are: skills development; skills and experiences integration; updated manuals; support systems and personal skills are developed via training. A significant comment was that training providers are effective because the 'principles of the skills development and related legislation are correct'.

Interviewees also responded that training providers are not effective in the skills development process. Managers and training providers were most vocal on the reasons for their 'no' responses. Job related training, SAQA/NQF accreditation and other reasons were significant correlations. Training providers are ineffective in providing job relevant training due to a lack of 'application of skills to change mindsets'; 'irrelevant courses; no customised and quality courses'; and training 'takes too much time'.

The category of 'other reasons' contained some of the following reasons for ineffective training providers: 'fly-by-night institutions'; provide 'synthetic' training; and 'organisations do not take time to train employees and training providers do not force training'.

The conclusion to the empirical research on the effectiveness of training providers is that they are both effective and ineffective. The recommendations must capitalise on the significant effectiveness fac-

tors to improve workplace skills development. Furthermore, risk management of the ineffectiveness factors is imperative if training providers are to survive as successful soldiers in the skills revolution.

How can training providers improve skills development?
The above research findings reveal that training providers are sometimes ineffective and will need to improve. Hence, the 'improvement of training providers' variable was also measured in this research. Similarly to the 'effectiveness of training providers' variable, the 15 statements of this factor were factor rotated and limited to 3 main contributory factors: job relevant training; continuous assessment and SAQA/NQF accreditation.

The Bartlett's test of Sphericity found the measurement of items under the 'improving training providers' variable to be related with $p = 0.000$, when $p < 0.05$. The significant factor correlations between the 'improvement' variable and the biographical items of the respondents are presented in Table 14.

It is highly significant that many respondents highlight SAQA/ NQF accreditation as the most significant factor of the improvement variable. These findings reveal that training providers are in need for improvement in the area of national accreditation. Those organisations that submit WSPs, provide training to other organisations, employ training providers to manage their training, and who specifically provide training programmes and management type training to other organisations, show significant correlation in improving training providers.

Qualitative research interviews also measured the improvement factors of training providers. The limitations, opportunities, shortcomings and improvement ideas for training providers and workplace skills development were documented and analysed. Interviewees responded that training providers were limited in providing effective 'job relevant training'. Interviewees mentioned that 'experiential training' is lacking and that there is 'no time to train'. In the category of 'other reasons', many managers reveal that 'no money for training' is the most limiting factor to effective training.

Employees view 'unmotivated providers and learners' as a limitation to providers. The skills development authorities view the 'barriers to change for SETAs, providers and organisations' as a training provider limitation. Training providers feel limited in 'training towards competencies'. They also view the lack of 'commitment from organisations' as a limiting factor to effective training provision.

Managers mentioned opportunities for training providers that included job relevant training, continuous assessment, SAQA/NQF accreditation and other reasons. Training providers are required to deliver 'focused training in industry' so that 'focused skills injected will move organisations forward'. Managers identify 'SMME development as linked to self employment opportunities'. There are financial benefits since the 'skills levy makes a ready market for providers'. Managers and skills development authorities see opportunities in 'assessment provided by providers' and 'learnerships ... workplace training, practical experience and assessment'.

Definite shortcomings were identified with training providers improving skills development. Managers assert that 'little focus on learner/worker's needs' and a lack of 'workplace skills' as significant shortcomings in training providers improving workplace skills. 'Managers need to give up control' and promote 'multi skilling' and engage in 'solution thinking with the people'.

On 'SAQA/NQF accreditation', managers feel that training providers have been short changed by the system. The 'government process of selecting providers feeds corruption' in that 'large commissions for persons contracting providers' are almost guaranteed. The 'process of accrediting providers is not accurately addressed'. This presents a serious limitation for training providers who need to verify their status.

According to a workplace manager 'job relevant training' entails a 'complete overall of the system to beef up people'. Managers should 'communicate clear understanding of roles, funds available, criteria and principles'. Furthermore, the role of managers and training providers should be made clear by the mandate that 'the DoL needs to show 85 000 qualified and skilled learners by 2005'.

On the 'SAQA/NQF accreditation' factor, some managers are already moving away from SAQA's proposed 'Elective' to a 'Contextual' model. The 'contextual' model is based on a 'unit standards design' however, this model 'talks to needs of the industry' by clearly identifying 'skills needs and career paths of employees'. SAQA/NQF accreditation should aim to offer courses that 'balance between industry needs and learner needs'. SAQA must be aware that a 'framework for (the skills) system is necessary, a broad framework to address skills needs'. The next manager, speculates that further frameworks are necessary because the DoE and the DoL 'can create legislative system, policies and practices yet can't make it happen'.

Training providers claim that 'pegging training at levels ideal for workers is challenging'. This means that placing learners in the applicable job relevant training programme challenges training providers. Further challenges face training providers including: 'training should be the organisation's initiative, not just trainees and learners; providers and managers must work hand-in-hand; decentralise and make training on-site; career management; more involvement with training personnel; and training, promotion and benefits should go hand-in-hand'. However, South Africa's 'HRD strategy indicates what SA needs and skills development should address the HRD findings'. It is necessary for training providers to inquire 'what is necessary for SA as a whole?' Furthermore, 'pockets of institutions and sectors should not benefit from training, e.g. Maths and Science, only'. Mangers should 'avoid multi-skilling and transferability versus overspecialisation'. Instead, managers and training providers should 'identify each training programme as a project and manage it well'.

The 'DoE and DoL are not yet integrated in their approach and strategy' according to training providers. The 'intended seamlessness is not yet visible' between the two departments. However, 'legislation is the right track' to be on. The SETAs will work out the reward system of incentives amounting to between 110–120%' returns for organisations. Furthermore, 'they (SETAs) will train'. That 'carrots work better than a stick!' may be true providing there are adequate carrots. Since 'money drives industry', carrots in the form of money are necessary for all role players in skills development. The SAQA/NQF accreditation system is criticised in that 'any system is better than no system yet, social responsibility can be done in a smarter way'. The advice from providers to SAQA is to 'get the unit standards off the ground, then look for the bottle necks and amend the system' regularly.

The skills development authorities suggest that 'job relevant training' should entail the authorities 'selling incentives to organisations and training providers to train', while organisations should 'treble the number of trained employees'. The emphasis is that 'skills levies should not just be seen as another tax imposed' especially when SA and the world is in the middle of a skills revolution. Furthermore, 'drivers and captains must drive the issues' and simultaneously 'get buy-in from all'. Skills authorities are adamant that South Africans have 'got to make it work!' especially if we are to compete internationally.

Other countries, such as 'Taiwan, use natural resources to create employment and industry'. Perhaps South Africans should also look at both the established and more developed countries such as 'Germany, (who) realises that knowledge and skills development are necessary and have moved away from the tax incentive motive'. The advice of the skills authorities on 'job relevant training' are in keeping with managers, training providers and employees, that all South Africans need to 'build businesses and invest in people'.

On the issue of SAQA/NQF accreditation, the skills development authorities feel that 'providers can contribute to improving skills development by implementing the principles of the NQF'. Workplace 'learnerships are subsidised by SETAs for approximately 2 years'. 'Learnerships are a combination of workplace training, practical work, and assessment'. There is a 'need for a customised fee structure to all parties of learnerships' to prevent unequal, unethical and unfair practices. Skills authorities are advised that 'credits can be given quicker if clusters of SETAs lead to more unity and uniformity, smaller bureaucracy and common standards'.

Employees require providers and managers to 'be more practical when training'. One challenge is that 'learners take in knowledge but cannot apply' the learning on the job. Therefore, 'learning must include practical training'. Employees request that 'AIDS awareness must be taught'. Training providers and managers should 'teach during weekends'. 'Schools for older people' are a crucial requirement. A significant finding is that 'workers receive salaries yet cannot read or write'.

The significant areas for improvement as highlighted in from this research is that training providers must comply with the skills legislation, provide job relevant training, continuous assessment and SAQA/NQF accreditation. Training providers must manage workplace training if they are to improve skills development. Significant empirical research conclusions lead to the need for training providers to seriously consider time, cost, HR, quality, administration and scope of training projects.

Skills management framework for workplace training providers

Training providers are internal or external to organisations. Some training providers are both internal and external providers. All training providers must comply with national skills development legislation. Skills authorities oversee training providers to ensure that the skills revolution and call to action for skills improvement are progressing successfully. Employees are also motivated by change, technology and advancement to learn and constantly upgrade their skills.

Workplace training providers are challenged by workplace legislation and the demands of organisations, managers and employees. They need an internal management framework to assist them to improve the skills of all employees. The recommendations for this research study are discussed under the following topics: skills development in the millennium workplace, project management for workplace skills development and a skills management framework for

workplace training providers.

The recommended skills management framework will benefit all skills development role players. Empirical evidence reveals the variety of role players involved in workplace skills development, who are just as challenged as training providers or; they depend on the effectiveness of training providers to improve workplace skills development. Figure 1 represents training providers amongst the other key workplace skills development role players.
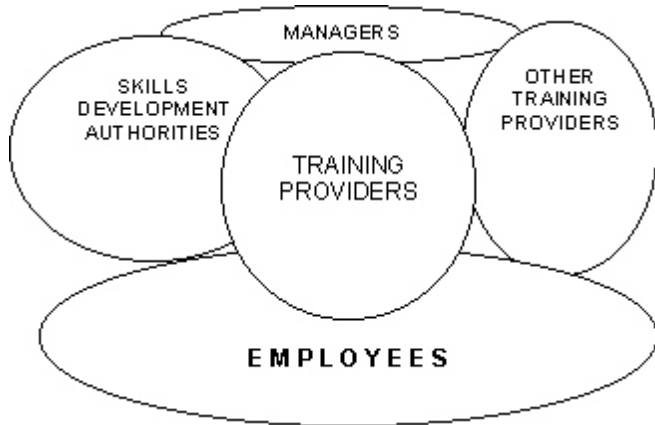

Figure 1 Role players that manage skills development

Managers and employees play key skills development roles and are the direct beneficiaries of improved, effective, well-managed training providers. Skills development authorities are responsible for sector skills projects while other training providers provide the 'checks and balances' necessary in peer reviews. All skills role players will benefit from an internally managed training provider that aims to improve workplace skills development.

Skills development in the millennium workplace

The millennium workplace is in a skills revolution. Workplace legislation dictates that employees must be treated as valuable assets that need continuous upgrading and development. Many challenges arise from the new workplace. Various management frameworks are employed by workplace training providers and managers to keep pace with the changes and challenges of their task to develop and ensure a skilled workforce. Local, national and international legislative and management frameworks that result in successful training management in the new millennium workplace formed the foundation for this study.

Current pragmatic frameworks range from formal (top-down structures), to collegial frameworks (advocating trainer participation in decision making), to political frameworks (highlights the goals and needs of subunits or departments versus organisation as a whole) to subjective frameworks, which highlight the goals of individuals versus those of the institution or group. Ambiguity frameworks assess the uncertain, often complex relations that exist between individual, group and organisational levels of management. The cultural frameworks emphasises and reinforces the culture and beliefs of the organisation.

Management frameworks investigated in this research include: the South African skills legislative framework; CBA and ROI or Cost Benefit Analysis to determine a Return on Investment; TQM or Total Quality Management; and PMF or Project Management Framework. The skills legislative framework and the project management framework were found to be highly significant to the research recommendations.

In summary, skills development in the millennium workplace entails the continuous management of: organisational, team and individual goals; decision making structures and teams; organisational structure, positions and relationships; external environment and networking with outside groups; and formal and informal leadership. This research identified the skills legislative and project management frameworks as key millennium frameworks for managing current workplace skills development.

Project management for workplace training providers

A significant voice in the midst of the skills revolution provided the catalyst for the project management focus in this research. That 'training providers (should) handle training as a project and manage it well' points directly to project management principles for developing workplace skills. The sample population for the qualitative part of this research study, managers, training providers, skills development authorities and employees, are challenged by skills legislative requirements, time for training, costs, HR and quality management issues. The project management framework is valuable to the new, fast paced, learning workplace bound by time constraints.

Many projects initiated in the millennium skills development workplace is governed by begin and end dates and times. The life cycle of skills development is clearly visible in the skills legislation. Annual workplace skills plans, annual training reports and annual implementation of skills projects are the current legislative requirements for workplace training providers. Skills levies are paid over annually and skills grants are claimed annually. Furthermore, the annual life cycle of skills projects must be broken down into the various skills processes and skills development phases. Time management is a significant responsibility of skills managers and training providers.

'Who pays for training?' is a question that must be asked and answered. Workplace skills development is currently funded by the industrial sector via the skills levy-grant system. Managers are required to budget for annual training, conduct a cost benefit analysis and report on annual budget projections. Organisational SDFs submit Workplace Skills Plans or WSPs, PSFs submit Project Skills Plans or PSPs, and the SETAs are required to use the project management costing framework to manage their annual business plans and SSPs or Sector Skills Plans. The project management knowledge areas are imperative for costing, budgeting and scheduling workplace skills development.

According to project management principles, training providers must integrate skills development in any organisation by working with the SDF, internal Assessor, other training providers, managers and employees. Skills projects should be integrated with other internal organisational projects. The skills project will also benefit from integration with external skills and other projects.

It is imperative that training providers define the scope of the skills project. The scope will identify the inputs, range, criteria, teams and outcomes of the skills project. Once the scope is defined, the skills project should then be scheduled according to relevant times, dates and teams. Time management is essential for effective, successful and sustained skills development projects. Workplace skills plans, project skills plans, annual training reports, sector skills plans, and other key skills development plans are subject to annual deadlines. Effective training providers must submit these plans on time if skills levy-grants are to be recovered.

Costing the skills projects is a necessary task prior to beginning the projects. The cost of time, effort, resources and other factors for improving skills development must be calculated and budgeted for. Furthermore, the skills legislation demands that a cost benefit analysis be completed to determine the benefits to annual training investments.

Training providers, employers and employees must achieve quality standards of performance in all skills development projects. Effective training providers should promote excellence and quality in all skills projects, small or large. Successful, sustainable skills projects will lead to accreditation of the training provider to provide job relevant training conduct continuous assessments and provide national credits and qualifications to employees.

Human resources must be allocated and managed throughout the skills project. Effective training providers are those that value human resources as assets who need guidance, maintenance and support in

order to prevent risks to the project or people.

Risk management is necessary for unforeseen crisis interventions, especially with regard to skills project teams. Skills development risks must be identified, controlled, minimised and eliminated for the skills project to be successful. Therefore, **procurement** of key staff, resources and contacts for the project must be carefully considered prior to the skills project. Planning of how, what and when the administrators will 'record and report' must be completed and approved before the skills project begins.

Training providers employing project management to manage dynamic skills development roles and responsibilities evade crisis management situations. The uncertain, rapidly advancing, legislation-driven workplace demands that managers and training providers become innovative in improving workplace skills development. Skills project managers must incorporate sound management strategies, inputs, mechanisms, tools, techniques and outputs as solutions to skills management roles.

Skills management framework for training providers to improve workplace skills development

The current challenges facing training managers engaged in workplace skills development as identified by the research and empirical conclusions are summarised as the following:

- A skills revolution was unleashed on unsuspecting training providers, workplace managers, employees and skills authorities.
- Training providers are responsible for the continuous supply of skilled employees in all job categories.
- Training providers have been displaced from their position as skills drivers to become skills soldiers placed ill-equipped, in the midst of the skills battlefield.
- Training providers are forced to realign their training policies, procedures and practices to meet SAQA/NQF requirements and NSDS objectives.
- The skills legislative criteria and process for accrediting providers is complex, lacks clear direction and is open to abuse and corruption.
- National and international obligations and trends demand that employees become multilingual, multicultural and multi-skilled.
- Managers need to change their attitude towards employees who must be viewed as human assets versus human resources.
- Practical problems such as time, money and resources prevent providers from being effective skills developers.
- The negative reputation of previous ineffective training systems continues to impact upon current training providers.

In accordance with the DoE's and DoL's call to revolutionise skills development, this research calls upon training providers to undergo deep change and revolutionise their internal management strategies. Training providers who employ an effective management framework to manage and improve skills development within organisations will revolutionise skills development and empower employees simultaneously. An effective skills management framework leads to employers, employees and training providers benefiting from best practices in their search for excellence in job performance, as well as within personal, family and community life.

The aim of the skills management framework must enable training providers to achieve the principles and criteria of the skills legislative framework. The management framework must also aim to manage and improve workplace skills projects. Hence, the proposed skills management framework was designed to assist training providers to successfully comply with the skills legislative framework while managing day-to-day, practical, operational challenges.

Table 15 presents the proposed skills management framework for training providers to effectively develop workplace skills. As per the empirical evidence, the proposed skills management framework is a combination of a 10-step approach to meet the requirements of the skills legislation, as well the nine principles of the project management framework discussed throughout this report. As evidenced by the

literature reviews and the empirical data, the recommended framework is a practical approach to cope with and manage the challenges of the changing workplace and the complexities of current skills legislation.

This skills management framework was extensively researched in this robust socio educational, socio economic research study. Combined, quantitative and qualitative action field research undertaken in the midst of the skills revolutionary battlefield allowed for this creative skills management framework to emerge.

Table 15 The proposed skills management framework for improving workplace skills development

10 Step Approach to Skills Development	9 Elements for Project Managing Skills Development
1. Register with the relevant SETA.	1. Scope management.
2. Submit and report on annual workplace skills plan and recover levies.	2. Cost management.
3. Employ internal and external providers.	3. Human resource management.
4. Engage all skills role players in skills management.	4. Communications management.
5. Provide and receive training programmes, skills workshops, management and assessment training.	5. Integration management.
6. Provide job relevant training.	6. Schedule or time management.
7. Conduct continuous assessment before, during and after training.	7. Quality management.
8. Register to be SAQA/NQF accredited so that employees gain national credits and qualifications.	8. Procurement and administration management.
9. Strive to change towards a learning organisation.	9. Risk management.
10. Regularly review the management of skills limitations, shortcomings, opportunities, effectiveness and improvement factors.	

The voices of workplace skill managers, training providers, employees and skills authorities were loud and contributed to the above skills management framework. Furthermore, as skills soldiers, training providers are passionate to embrace skills development, the skills legislation and skills projects. However, training providers must begin by identifying each training programme as a project and managing it well, simultaneously, as per the 10 skills legislative requirements and the 9 project management elements in Table 15.

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