

A NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF THE NORTH- WEST PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT'S TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

RESEARCHED FOR

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BY THE

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LIST OF PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS INTERVIEWED

Department of Education:

1. Mr Francois D. Conradie: Director – Finance
2. Mr T. N. Chabeli: Assistant Director – Human Resources
3. Mr P. Tlolane: Director – Logistics

Department of Health

1. Mr Molefi Mosenogi: Acting Director – Health Care Services

Department of Finance

1. Ms M. Venter: Director – Administration
2. Mr Maki: Provincial Treasury: Director – Budget planning and Control

Department of Developmental Local Government and Housing

1. Ms K. Mahlobo: Chief Director – Developmental Local Government and Housing
2. Mr Mosiane: Acting Director – Rural Development
3. Ms Lamont: Director – Planning and Infrastructure
4. Mr Sinovich: Director - Housing

Department of Home Affairs

1. Mr Henry Madalane: Assistant Director – Head Immigration Services

LIST OF EX-PARTICIPANTS INTERVIEWED

1. Ms Hedre Dednam
Chief Town Planner
Brits Local Council: Community services – Town planning

2. Mr Dikele P. Bokaba
Assistant Director- Personnel services and management
Developmental Local Government and Housing

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASE), has been commissioned by the Japanese International Co-operation Agency (JICA) to conduct a study investigating the training requirements of government officials in the North West Province. This research report is a follow-up on a previous study carried out by CASE for JICA on the relations between different spheres of government with the focus on the need for capacity building in the provincial sphere.

Research Aims

The overall aim for undertaking the research was to investigate the training requirements of government officials in the North West Province, with the plan to design training interventions for these government officials. The findings report the main themes (outlined below) and opinions of government officials who were interviewed.

The information collected from government officials included:

- Educational Background;
- Main tasks and responsibilities;
- Training received;
- Usefulness, strength and weaknesses of training received;
- Training needs;
- Target group for training;
- Training methods;
- Duration of training intervention.

In addition to the above information further information were collected from ex-participants of the JICA course. This included:

- An assessment of the JICA training course (i.e. relevance, usefulness, strength & weaknesses, of the course content);
- Expectations of the course;
- Level of training;
- Course format;
- Selection criteria for participants;
- Recommendation on course content.

Information collected from SIDA interview included:

- Type of assistance provided by SIDA to provincial government departments;
- Format of their capacity building programmes;

- Target group
- Identification of needs;
- Duration of programmes;
- Problems in the setting-up and administration of training interventions;
- Other organisations involved (sub-contracted by SIDA) with training programmes;
- Strength and weaknesses of training programmes;
- Twinning arrangement between South Africa and Sweden (i.e. how it works, successes and obstacles of the twinning programmes);
- Transportability of SIDA programmes to other provinces.

Methodology

The data collection process only involved the qualitative research methodology in which a series of in-depth interviews were conducted with various role-players. A structured self-reporting questionnaire was used, which was either administered telephonically by a CASE researcher or self-administered by the relevant government official. The sampling procedure was purposive in nature with the focus on getting as wide a range of government officials from various departments and line-departments.

The research process included:

1. In-depth interviews with provincial government officials from various government departments and line departments;
2. In-depth interviews with two provincial government officials who attended the JICA training course in 1996 and 1999 respectively;
3. Face to face in-depth interview with a senior official from the Swedish International Donor agency (SIDA);
4. Analysis of the outcome of a seminar held in February by JICA for government officials;
5. All in-depth interviews were carried out in March 2000.

The breakdown of number of departments interviewed on provincial level is as follows:

Interviews with Provincial Government Officials		
Departments	Line Departments	Number of Interviews
Developmental Local Government and Housing	⇒ Chief Director ⇒ Rural development ⇒ Planning and infrastructure	4
Education	⇒ Finance ⇒ Human resources ⇒ Logistics	3
Finance	⇒ Administration ⇒ Budget planning and control	2

Health	⇒ Health care services	1
Home Affairs	⇒ Immigration services	1

Ex-participants who attended the JICA training course		
Provincial Departments	Line Departments	Number of Interviews
Brits Local Council	Community services	1
Developmental Local Government and Housing	Personnel services and management	1

Analysis of results

The results were analysed and presented according to topics discussed in the interviews and to the requirements as outlined in the Terms of Reference.

The analysis is based on the transcriptions of the in-depth interviews conducted and a further corroboration of information gathered through the observation of JICA training course materials, the interview with a SIDA representative and the outcome of a seminar held in February 2000.

ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS WITH EX-PARTICIPANTS

Interviews were conducted with two government officials from the North West Province who attended the JICA training course. The participants attended the course respectively in 1996 and 1999. The latter is a short analysis of the in-depth interviews conducted with them on their experiences of the course and their recommendations.

Profile of ex-participants

Interviewee 1: Ms Dednam

Position: Chief town planner

Department: Brits Local Council - Community Services

Interviewee 2: Mr Bokaba

Position: Assistant Director - Personnel Services and Maintenance

Department: Developmental Local Government and Housing

Both participants have extensive experience within the South African government since they have been employed within government for seven years and longer.

Assessment of the JICA training course

Course evaluation:

[Ran to include to observation from the course material]

Course content:

Generally both participants felt that although most of the courses were very interesting, it was not useful/relevant to their present job situation, with a few exceptions.

The participant who attended the course in 1999 (Ms Dednam) only found the course on the city planning of Sapporu very useful. Other courses which was partly useful to her include:

- Planification system and management;
- Local development projects and local economic structures;
- Agri-projects and co-operatives;
- Recycling and waste resource classification;
- Development of national parks;
- River management system.

All the other courses not mentioned above, were not at all useful to her.

Courses that proved not be useful to the other participant who attended the course in 1996 include:

- Local government functions;
- Regional development;
- Education.

Strength and weaknesses of the course:

Both participants mentioned strengths that were not directly related to the course content. Instead they mentioned that the course provided exposure on how the Japanese government approaches issues as well as a “yard stick” to judge South Africa’s developmental strategies, that all the arrangements was done very efficiently and that the venue was lovely.

With regard to the weaknesses the following were mentioned:

- course was too elementary;
- covered to many issues once;
- lectures are too academic and concentrated on the theory too much and failed to include the practicalities of implementation;
- needs lecturers not only from academici, but also from people with practical experience in the related fields (those who facilitate implementation);

Training:

Training areas needed as part of the course:

- The emphasis should be more on actual activities and functions of local government;
- How to promote local economic development of communities in the city (making the region more sustainable);
- Personnel management;
- Training methods;
- Performance enhancement and management;
- Strategies for private sector movement in the civil service;

Even though the participants felt that the training lacked detail and that too many issues were dealt with in a short time, both were satisfied with the style and format as well as the level of the training programme. The preferred training methods are a combination of lectures, mentoring, on job training, field trips and case studies.

The suggested selection criteria for participants should be based on the course content, position of employment and their job description.

With regard to the relevance of the JICA training to the respective departments of the participants, both agreed that to a certain extend to course was relevant. The one explained that

since his department is involved in the development of local government and he is partly involved in capacity building initiatives the course was relevant in those areas. The other participant said that she was able to apply some of the skills in her job and that the information that was not useful to her she passed on to the relevant person.

Beneficiaries for the training

The one interviewee strongly felt that people employed at municipality and local government level should attend the course. She explained that since these people are the implementers of government policies they in a better position to directly apply what is taught on the JICA course as opposed to the senior officials (policy makers) who are currently attending the course.

In contrast, the other participant felt that people employed within senior position i.e. directors from the department of local government and housing should attend the course.

The favoured time and length of training should be in summer or spring and should not last longer than six weeks, although the latter should be based on the course content. Both are of the opinion that it is better to focus on one thing (work or training) at a time. The one participant mentioned that if the training was to be held locally than more people could be targeted and benefit from the training.

Recommendations from participants:

- Include more practical examples of city related projects i.e. National Parks and waste recycling;
- Exclude field trips of projects that are not related to city council activities;
- Include more case studies;
- Include more examples of community projects;
- Training should be focused and job related.

Overall both participants said that they enjoyed the course, was able to utilise the information to some extent and was able to give some feedback to their departments.

ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS WITH PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

Profile of the government officials interviewed

Only government officials in senior management positions in several departments were interviewed. Positions held ranged from assistant director, deputy director, acting director to director. Except for 3 officials, all the other officials have been employed in government for more than 5 years. Four officials has masters degrees, two honours degrees, two degrees and four diplomas. Of the total of eleven officials interviewed eight are males and three females.

Most of the officials indicated that although they might not have been employed for very long in their current position (between 1 to 4 years) they have been working within government (other departments, positions) for much longer (between 5 to 42 years). Only one official was fairly new in his post and also in working for government (about one year and six months).

Main tasks and responsibilities

The main tasks and responsibilities of officials primarily depend on their position of employment as well as the department in which they are employed.

Since only officials in senior positions were interviewed, common responsibilities and tasks that are the same include supervising, planning, approving, co-ordinating, general financial management, implementation of policies, attendance of meeting etc.

But generally it was very specific to the different departments and position held. For example the Director of Budget Planning and Control main responsibilities and most of his time is spent on budget planning, asset control and monitoring financial management of parastatals and local authorities.

The Assistant Director of Human Resources are chiefly responsible for performance management of sub-ordinates, salary administration, training and co-ordinating the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).

Training received

The training officials have received both internally and externally differed considerably. While some have received extensive training other have received none at all and while some have rated the courses as successful, others felt it was not useful.

One official explained that he has received so much training in his 26 years of employment that he has no other training requirements.

Common explanations given for courses that were rated as not useful are:

- too theoretical;
- too difficult to follow;

- not interested;
- repetition/overlap of course content by presenters of the same training programme;
- no follow-up support from organisers;
- lacked detailed input;
- too general and not adapted to people's working needs;
- people attending training without knowing the course content;
- too much information condensed into a short period of time;
-

Courses rated as useful are:

- Computer training – organised internally and conducted by Lesedi Consultants;
- Intergovernmental relation - organised by the UCT graduate school of business;
- Short-courses/workshop- organised by the IMF and World Bank;
- Top echelon management course – organised by Wits PNDM and university of Potchestroom;
- Senior Executive programme – organised by Wits business schools and Harvard business school;
-

Training needs

The training needs listed by the various interviewees varied considerably according their job descriptions in the varied departments.

Responses from officials that were the same include:

- Project management & project implementation (i.e. project identification, costing, setting indicators, monitoring, evaluating etc.);
- Strategic planning;
- Financial management and budgeting (planning, prioritise, policies, monitoring etc.);
- Policy making/development and evaluation;
- Human resource training (i.e. personnel management, motivate/encourage staff, team building etc.);
- Planning skills (in order to put directorate planning in perspective with departmental planning).

Financial management and budgeting was prioritised as very crucial by the different departments. Reason given mainly focused on the seriousness of the mismanagement, and misappropriation of funds. Overspending and fraud are huge problems and officials in management positions need to have the basic knowledge of costing, budgetary constraints, monitoring and keeping it consistent with the priorities of the department and with the province.

Most officials put a strong emphasis on the planning, development and implementation of the various aspects mentioned above as it would ensure that tasks are not duplicated within

departments and with other departments, well planned and properly implemented. This is crucial since most of the policies are in place and needs to be executed now. Skills are therefore required to ensure that departments work more closely together and co-ordinate their activities better.

One department pointed out that although the staff in his department received a lot of training from the provincial government, it was ineffective because it was too theoretical, generic and not tailored to the department's specific need. There is a strong need for practical hands-on training.

Other training needs listed include:

- Time management;
- Administrative management;
- Norms and standards for school funding;
- Communications skills;
- Leadership development;
- Computer skills (from basic to more advance skills).

Beneficiaries for the training

On the whole there are consensus that government officials employed in senior positions i.e. directors (i.e. assistant, deputy), senior administrators, head of departments and MEC's should be the recipients of the above mentioned training. One interviewee mentioned that the department in general, including people employed at municipalities, should be targeted.

The Director of Budgeting and control within the Provincial Treasury department suggested that everybody in the various government departments that deals with budgetary issues should be trained so that they speak "the same language" as the finance section.

A concern was raised that senior officials are sometimes reluctant to receive training because they feel it undermines their status as managers. This lack of exposure to new ideas can block initiatives to change the way government department's function.

Only one interviewee felt that the capacity of women managers must be build to "equip them for the competitive corporate world.

Effective training methods to acquire skills

Almost all government officials interviewed proposed a combination of training methods, highlighting, short courses, mentoring and on-the-job training as the most essential. The latter would ensure for true capacity building (since a lot of training courses just rush people through short courses), provide time for staff to put their skills into practice, minimise long absences from work and guarantee transfer of skills.

Three officials indicated a preference for formal courses. Reasons given ranged from it would allow officials to focus and that it is more “recognised” training for people who want to become “experts” in their field.

Preferred Length of training

Although some officials linked the length of the course to the venue and course content, most preferred courses not longer than 2-3 weeks due to the shortage of personnel within departments and the heavy workload of officials.

One official preferred courses not longer than 5 days, preferably in December when staff are less busy or over weekends. Another also suggested distance training as more cost effective.

Suggestion from government officials

ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW WITH SIDA REPRESENTATIVE

Background

The Swedish International Donor Agency (SIDA) was requested in 1994 by the North West Province to assist them with the setting-up and support and development of the province.

Training methods

Training programmes

Target group and length of training

Officials employed in top-level positions are targeted i.e. directors and head of departments. Training takes place over one or two planning periods. One planning period is three years and training may not exceed more than two planning periods.

Strength and Weaknesses

Measuring success of capacity building programmes

Transferability of SIDA programmes

Lessons to be learned

ANALYSIS OF SEMINAR

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS