

A NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR A MANAGEMENT TRAINING PROGRAMME FOR STAFF OFFICERS AND AREA MANAGERS IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL DEFENCE FORCE (SANDF) SOCIAL WORK DIRECTORATE

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ABSTRACT

Management is a process that requires both art and skill to be efficient and effective in service rendering. The goal of the study was to explore the need for a management training programme for staff officers and area managers in the SANDF Social Work Directorate in order to make recommendations for the development of a management training programme. This exploratory study utilised qualitative and quantitative methodology. No sampling was done as the entire population was used for the study. The staff officers and area managers in the nine provinces in South Africa, within the SANDF, Social Work Directorate, were used as the population in the study.

The study clearly indicates that a formal management training programme is critical within the SANDF Social Work Directorate.

It is recommended that a formal management training programme should be implemented within the SANDF Social Work Directorate to address the management needs identified in this empirical study. Various identified experts should be utilised in the provision of training.

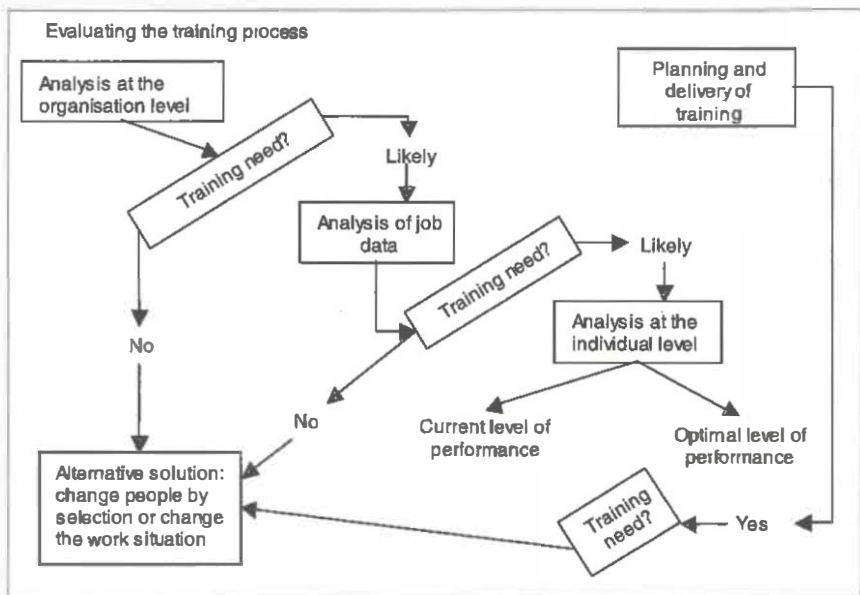
INTRODUCTION

According to Lewis and Kelly (1986:8), as a first step towards increasing overall effectiveness, managers must be aware of what managerial work involves. It is generally agreed that the purpose of management is to ensure that the results are achieved. To understand what needs to be done to achieve results, managers must develop an insight into what their work involves, the tasks they are expected to perform, and the attitudes and skills that help them perform these tasks efficiently and effectively.

According to Steinmetz (1997:20), with the ever-increasing manufacturing and process industry establishing itself in South Africa, companies are facing stiff competition to gain and maintain a competitive edge. To prosper in this environment companies must take full advantage of available resources. One of the most significant resources is training. Ongoing training programmes enable companies to understand, develop, maintain and upgrade human resources.

Training is a prerequisite for performance of any management activity. Organisational needs are constantly changing and hence employees need to be trained on an ongoing basis to enable them to perform their job effectively and efficiently. According to Plunkett (2000:410), training imparts attitudes, knowledge and skills. It is an ongoing process governed by basic principles and provided by people with the aid of machines and methods specially suited to the topics to be covered and the persons to be taught. Training, like daily living, increases our knowledge and understanding of the people and situations that surround us.

A method of integrating training needs is to start from the business plan and cascade objectives down through the organisation. The following is an indication of a training needs assessment model by Vintor, Clark and Seybolt (1983:28).



Management training-needs assessment is an initial step towards the development of any management training programme. Johnson (1993:22) indicates that leadership training is mandatory. According to him, too many managers have had little exposure to concepts of leadership, and this shows when they attempt to gain commitment to the changes required in the attempts to improve performance.

The motivation for the study developed through networking with colleagues in SANDF, where the researcher observed the need for a formal management training programme, especially amongst staff officers and area managers. They are confronted with management activities/tasks as their daily responsibility at work, but no training was provided.

The goal of the study was to explore the need for a management-training programme amongst staff officers and area managers in the SANDF Social Work Directorate, and to provide recommendations for the development of a management training programme.

METHODOLOGY

A combination of both quantitative and qualitative approaches was followed whereby both numerical means and general descriptions were used (Mark, 1996). The type of research undertaken by the researcher is applied research as the findings will be applied to solve social problems of immediate concern (Bailey, 1994). An exploratory research design was utilised (Reid & Smith in Makondo, 1997). The population consisted of 39 staff officers and area managers

(Grinnell & Williams, 1990). The researchers undertook the research with 35 staff officers and area managers, and a pilot test was conducted with four area managers within the SANDF Social Work Department, at Gauteng Military Health Unit (Monette, Sullivan & De Jong in Makondo, 1997). As the population was used, no sampling was done.

Self-constructed questionnaires were hand delivered to staff officers and area managers at a planning session of the Directorate of Social Work. The questionnaires were then mailed back to the researcher. All 35 questionnaires (100%) were received back from the staff officers and area managers.

DESCRIPTION OF KEY CONCEPTS

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions of specific terms were formulated:

MANAGEMENT TRAINING PROGRAMME

Goldsmith, Nickson, Sloan and Wood (1997:91) are of the opinion that management training and development concentrates on developing skills geared toward the executive decision-making process rather than the hands-on craft element or the supervision and organisation of operational activities. Individuals' experiences and abilities are applied to requirements and the two are matched.

TRAINING

According to Plunkett (2000:410), training can be defined as an ongoing process governed by basic principles and provided by people with the aid of machines and methods specially suited to the subjects to be covered and the persons to be taught. Furthermore training, like daily living, increases our knowledge and understanding of people and situations that surround us. Training imparts attitudes, knowledge and skills.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

According to Van Dyk, Nel, Van Z Loedolf & Haasbroek (2001:179), needs assessment can be defined as a broad systematic examination of conditions conducted for the purpose of identifying general differences between what people should know or do and what they actually know or do.

MANAGEMENT

Weinbach (1994:11) defines management as those specific functions performed by persons within the work setting that are intended to promote productivity and organisational goal attainment.

STAFF OFFICER

According to Liebenberg (1983:340), a staff officer refers to an officer serving as a commander or assisting a commander or a section head in the exercising of command.

AREA MANAGER

No formal definition is available. According to the researcher, an area manager forms part of management. In some areas within the SANDF, such as the Cape and Gauteng areas, there are almost 40 social work officers to manage. In such instances it is not possible for the staff officer to manage them alone because of the high numbers and the vastness of the area. Area managers therefore assist the staff officer in managing social workers in the areas.

LITERATURE STUDY ON THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR A MANAGEMENT TRAINING PROGRAMME

MANAGEMENT FUNCTIONS

Koontz, O'Donnell and Wehrich (1986:4) classify the study of management functions into five categories: planning, organising, staffing, leading and controlling. Bedeian (1986:7), on the other hand, uses only planning, organising and controlling, whilst Mintzberg (1980:86-89) cites the classical management functions as organising, co-ordinating, planning and controlling. Skidmore (1978:70-71) cites the classical functions of management as organising, staffing, directing and controlling. Lewis, Lewis and Soufleé (1991:6-7) cite planning, organising, developing human resources, budgeting, supervising and evaluating as the functions of management. According to Weinbach (1994:17), all the lists suggest the efforts of a manager to take an active role in shaping various aspects of the work environment. The researchers will specifically focus on the management functions indicated by Weinbach, such as planning, leading, controlling and staffing, and on some noted by Lewis *et al.* (1991:6-7), such as budgeting and planning, because they depict management activities within the SANDF, Social Work Directorate and are most applicable.

MANAGEMENT STYLES

According to Weinbach (1994:335), everyone develops a certain approach to the role of manager, whether they ultimately decide to seek a career in higher-level management or remain in a job with more direct client contact. Managers' style of management is likely to resemble that of others, particularly managers whom they have known and admired. In the work arena the managers' style is likely to be (and should be) an extension of their personalities. How they plan, staff, organise, control and lead will be based in part on what others suggest or teach them about management and what methods they have found to work best. Hitt (1985:80) distinguished between participative and autocratic approaches. Rue and Byars (1996:289) and Bennet (1989) also highlighted the laissez-faire approach.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

TABLE 1
EXPERIENCE AS A SOCIAL WORK MANAGER WITHIN THE SANDF

Years of experience	Total number of respondents	Percentage
0 - 3 years	15	43%
4 - 7 years	5	14%
8 - 11 years	8	23%
12 - 15 years	4	11%
16 years and more	3	9%
TOTAL	35	100%

According to Table 1, 43% of the respondents have limited experience as managers (0-3 years) and it can be concluded that they require a management training programme to enable them to perform their job as managers effectively.

TABLE 2
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

Highest educational level	Total number of respondents	Percentage
Diploma in SW	4	11%
Any other diploma	0	0%
Degree in SW	22	63%
MA in SW	9	26%
Any other postgraduate degree	0	0%
TOTAL	35	100%

According to Table 2 none of the respondents indicated that they had other diplomas or other postgraduate degrees except for their degrees in social work. All 35 (100%) respondents further indicated that they did not receive any formal management training within the SANDF Directorate of Social Work.

SECTION B: MANAGEMENT LEARNING NEEDS

The respondents indicated that their skills in the following management functions are good or excellent: 57% in the planning of future activities of the organization, 74% in organising human and material resources, 72% in leading staff within the organization and 51% in controlling activities of the organization.

TABLE 3
BUDGETING

Budgeting knowledge	Total number of respondents	Percentage
Poor	7	20%
Average	15	43%
Good	13	37%
TOTAL	35	100%

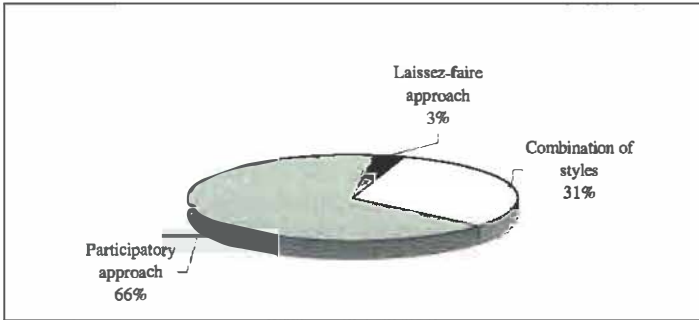
Evaluating Table 3 there seems to be a definite need for training in budgeting (63%), specifically with regard to overall departmental budgeting. Overall budgeting with clients seems not to be a problem, but organisational budgeting is a skill that should be developed. This will empower managers.

TABLE 4
STAFFING

Knowledge about staffing	Total number of respondents	Percentage
Poor	9	26%
Average	16	46%
Good	10	28%
TOTAL	35	100%

A large percentage (72%) of the respondents (Table 4) have poor or average knowledge about staffing. None of the respondents indicated that they were excellent in dealing with staff, and this reflects a definite need for training in staff management within the SANDF Social Work Directorate.

**FIGURE 1
MANAGEMENT STYLES**



A large percentage of managers (66%) use the participatory approach. They are of the opinion that this is the best approach in the SANDF Social Work Directorate.

SECTION C: MANAGEMENT TRAINING

From the data collected on whether the respondents think that the work performance of managers will improve if they had some form of management training, 32 (91%) of the respondents are of the opinion that work performance of managers will improve. Three respondents (9%) are not in favour of training.

**TABLE 5
MANAGEMENT TRAINING**

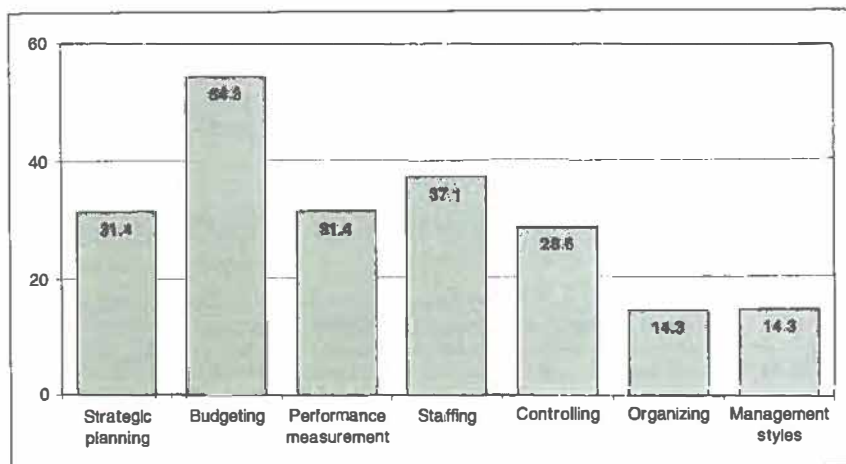
Suitable person to conduct training	Total number of respondents	Percentage
SW Directorate	14	40%
SAMHS Training Formation	7	20%
Consultant	25	71%
Others	5	14%
TOTAL	51	145%

Respondents could respond to more than one answer, hence the high response rate in Table 5. According to these responses, the managers preferred to be trained by a consultant. These were however also a 40% response indicating that the training could be done by the Social Work Directorate. Perhaps the ideal situation would be a combination of the two suggestions.

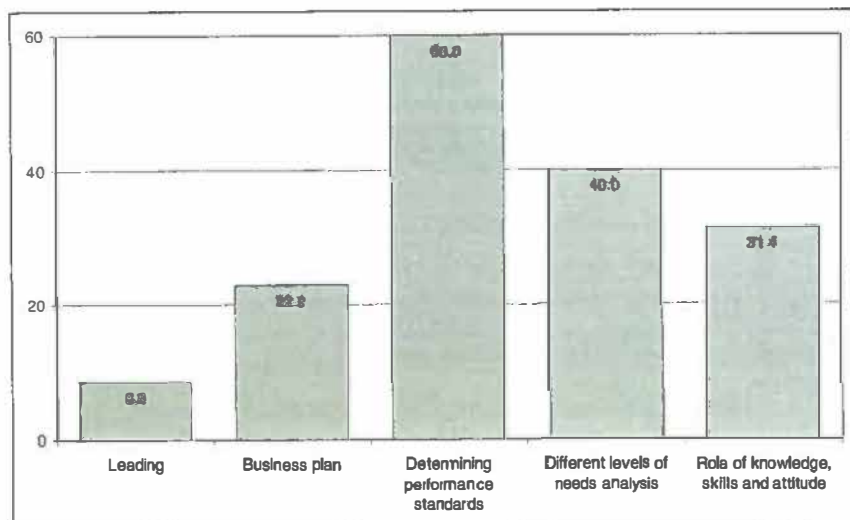
In Figure 2 the areas in which the managers experienced problems in performing their management tasks were highlighted. Budgeting for which they received no formal training rated

the highest. Although the other areas had less responses the need for training in all these areas is very high.

**FIGURE 2
TRAINING AREAS**



**FIGURE 3
ADDITIONAL MANAGEMENT NEEDS**



In Figure 3 the respondents indicated additional management needs. Apart from the knowledge they need as indicated in Figure 3, they also added that they need more knowledge on recent management literature/theory and how to approach staff members with different personalities. It is of utmost importance that all these needs be addressed by formal training.

All 35 (100%) of the respondents are of the opinion that training will assist them to perform on a higher level. Reasons cited for this were the following:

- Continuous management training will ensure that managers are equipped with updated theory and the practical implementation;
- Training will ensure that they are adequately equipped with the correct attitudes, knowledge and skills to execute the job professionally and diligently;
- Guidelines for functioning will be set and uniformity enforced;
- Training will serve as a motivator and integration of knowledge and practice will occur;
- Confidence and assertiveness will be enhanced.

TABLE 6
DEVELOPMENT OF A MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

Part of a management training programme	Total number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	26	74%
No	9	26%
TOTAL	35	100%

Due to the high percentage of those who would like to be part of this process, it can be concluded that staff officers and area managers should be consulted in this (Figure 1) regard. The managers rated the participatory approach as management style highly, and it would benefit the SANDF Social Work Directorate if they could be consulted when a management programme is developed.

TABLE 7
TRAINING

Form which training should take	Total number of responses	Percentage
Conferences	6	6.1%
Lectures	13	13.1%
Workshops	30	30.3%
Role plays	11	11.1%
Panel discussions	9	9.1%
Practical group exercises	18	18.2%
Simulation	12	12.1%
TOTAL	99	100%

In Table 7 it is clear that the respondents' preference for a training programme was workshops and practical groups exercises. This is further proof of their participatory approach and should seriously be considered when a training programme is developed.

CONCLUSION

No staff officer or area manager has received any formal management training within the SANDF Social Work Directorate. As has been confirmed by the study formal management training within the SANDF Social Work Directorate is critical. If managers are formally trained in management skills they will better be prepared and equipped to perform their tasks more efficiently and effectively.

Respondents indicated that they would prefer to be consulted when management training programmes are developed. They are of the opinion that this would help them to perform on a higher level. The training should be conducted by various experts and this includes tertiary institutions. Training should take place once in six months. Respondents prefer training in the form of workshops, followed by practical group exercises, lectures, simulation and role playing.

Budgeting was indicated as a problem area in the performance of their job, followed by staffing, strategic planning and performance measurement. Additional aspects of management that need attention are the determination of performance standards, different levels of analysis and the importance of knowledge, skills and attitudes in management and a business plan. Respondents are of the opinion that training imparts knowledge and increases the chance of success.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that a formal management training programme should be implemented within the SANDF Social Work Directorate. Management needs identified through this empirical study should be addressed. Various identified experts should be utilised in the provision of training. The duration of training should be based on the situational analysis.

It is further recommended that years of experience as a social worker should be considered before anyone is appointed in a managerial position.

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