The importance of training and development for government officials in South Africa

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**ABSTRACT**

An organisation's performance suffers when employees are not adequately skilled in certain job areas. This article sought to investigate whether training and development affected the delivery of citizen-centric services in a government department in South Africa. The study adopted a mixed research methodology and a non-experimental research design. The data was collected via 20 open-ended interviews and 130 structured questionnaires. The study results indicated that shifting the government's focus to citizen-centricity would improve efficiency and service delivery. One of the significant findings suggests that training in service delivery requirements awareness could positively improve and motivate public officials' performance to remain relevant to the needs of citizens.

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**ARTICLE INFO**

Article history:

Received 17 July 2022
Received in rev. form 28 August 2022
Accepted 06 September 2022

Keywords:
Citizen-Centric, Service Delivery and Training, Development

JEL Classification:
H1, H11, G38

**Introduction**

With the birth of the new democracy in 1994, the newly appointed South African government sought to fix some of the imbalances created by the previous dispensation (Tshishonga, 2019). The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa deliberately prepared the way for a new form of governance that shaped the rights that the citizens of the Republic of South Africa (RSA) enjoy today (Brooks, 2018). The Constitution spawned many pieces of legislation and mandated that the government of the day approach service delivery with a people-centred approach. Various mechanisms, such as the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) and – at a later stage – the National Development Plan (NDP), were established to accomplish this new public management paradigm. Public servants must be upskilled and educated on the importance of involving communities in this endeavour and allowing their voices to positively influence the service standards they receive (Southall, 2019). Yet, after two and a half decades of democracy, a shift towards a more citizen-centric approach to service delivery is still needed. The key motivation for this research study was to demonstrate why government departments should capacitate their employees to ensure effective service delivery.

The Constitution validates the statement mentioned above by requiring that “government departments should encourage residents to participate in policymaking, be responsive to the people’s needs, and provide timely, accurate information on government’s plans, performance and service offerings” (South Africa, 2006). According to Finance Minister Tito Mboweni's 2021 Budget speech, a staggering 59% of South Africa's 278 municipalities are in severe financial trouble, with 14% unable to provide essential services (Gossel & Koelble, 2021). Unsurprisingly, inadequate delivery of essential services, including housing, education, and sanitation, remains a significant concern, contributing to violent protests in the country's underprivileged communities, especially in the Western Cape (News24, 2017; SABC News, 2019). Several authors, including Mamokhere (2019) and Hough (2008), have argued that the government’s inability to adequately meet the community’s service needs is a root cause of the poor quality of service. Inadequate human resource policies, Lack of employee capacity, poor planning, and lack of monitoring and evaluation are some highly publicised causes of poor service delivery in South Africa (Makanyeza, Kwandayi & Ikobe 2013). In order to be successful, a company must achieve its long-term goals (Delbridge, Edwards, Forth, Miskell, & Payne, 2006; Morris & Reed, 2008). Organisational skillsets are
a critical factor in reaching those long-term goals. In this view, a company's success is proportional to how well its current employees can put their skills to use.

All things being the same, a company's success is proportional to how well its current employees can put their skills to use (Ahmed et al, 2018). Even though over 1.1 million people are employed by the South African government (PERSAL, 2017), many of them move on from their jobs every year due to retirement, promotions, successions, technological advancements, the launch of new initiatives, or the adoption of new policies and procedures (Mkhonza & Letsoalo, 2017). The employee's responsibilities are bound to shift because of these alterations, necessitating the development of new abilities and possibly highlighting a skills gap. The organisation's performance suffers when employees are not adequately skilled in certain job areas (Morris & Reed, 2008; McIntyre, 2013; Mkhonza & Letsoalo, 2017). This article examined if training and development impacts the quality of government services delivered to the public. The article adopted a mixed research methodology and will be organised in the following manner: Introduction followed by the literature review, research methodology, findings, discussion and conclusion.

Literature Review

The literature reviewed equipped the researcher with a holistic understanding of the research topic. It further assisted the researcher in compiling and presenting the most relevant data pertaining to the research. The risk of duplication of earlier studies was eliminated by studying the literature.

Theoretical and Conceptual Background

Public Service Delivery

The term "public service delivery" refers to the provision of a good or service by a government to its citizens following an undertaking or promise (Crous, 2002, Lewis, Nguyen & Hendrawan, 2020) and is often funded by taxes. Public services could include but are not limited to governance, healthcare, defence and justice, education, housing, transport and public works, environmental affairs, home affairs services linked to birth and death registrations, identification and passports (Osborne, 2020; Eneanya, 2018). This suggests that government service delivery is a complex web of interdependencies.

The South African government plays a significant role in delivering an array of essential public services that comprises, among others: housing, health care, transport, social welfare, electricity and water (Akinboade, Kinfack & Mokwena, 2012; Flynn & Chirwa, 2005). In South Africa, there are three spheres of government which each enjoy their autonomy and respective service delivery responsibilities (Ostrom & Ostrom, 2019). There are also administrative services and proceedings, in addition to the necessities mentioned above.

Hence SIGMA (n.d) concurs with Akinboade et al., (2012) and Flynn and Chirwa (2005) and claims that service delivery encompasses any form of contact made by a citizen/member of the public or private sector with a member of the public sector to obtain or provide data and or deal with matters pertaining government mandates. Thus, this researcher argues that the involvement of the service's intended recipients is crucial to its success. Through constructive participation, the government can assess its communities' current situations and identify interventions to ensure effective, efficient, citizen-orientated service delivery.

Public versus Private Sectors Service Delivery

Services provided by the public sector differ significantly from services offered by the private sector. However, the most significant differentiating factor is that services provided by the private sector are profit-driven, whereas services offered by the public sector are citizen-orientated (van den Bekerom, van der Voet & Christensen, 2021). However, the two sectors are related because the government frequently hires private companies to perform essential functions like garbage collection and public transportation. One key distinction is that the public sector typically lacks price competition compared to the private sector (Parker, Waller & Xu, 2013). Therefore, the focus of this research will be limited to the provision of public services.

Good versus Poor Service Delivery

Service delivery is the core function of public administrations throughout the world. Unfortunately, with service delivery comes the possibility of it being deemed good or bad. Since the foundations of each society are unique (e.g., inheritance, lack of resources, and integration), so are their service delivery needs and the degree to which they should be judged as good or bad. The goal of any government agency should be to transform itself from a vulnerable and uncertain institution into a unified body that can fulfil its responsibilities after consulting with those who stand to benefit from its efforts. For this reason, public administration should become more adaptive and less rigid (Odaro; Essien, 2015; Reddy, 2016). This shift necessitates that public administration incorporates electronic service delivery, connectivity and tailor-made service requirements per the community’s needs (Tech Cetral, 2020).
Table 1 compares bad service delivery characteristics with good service delivery for the reader's benefit.

| Good Service Delivery                                      | Bad Service Delivery                                |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| Services are easily accessible                             | Services are inaccessible                           |
| Government officials are responsive to complaints          | Little to no contact with governmental departments  |
| Services delivered efficiently and effectively             | Service delivery is always delayed and incomplete   |
| Total quality management ensured                           | Poor quality (below standards)                      |
| Government accountability                                  | High dependence on the third party                  |
| Openness and transparency                                  | Fraud, corruption, nepotism                         |
| Services are demand-led                                    | Service is compliance-driven                        |
| Skilled and capable public workforce                       | Incompetent, unskilled workforce                     |
| Public Participation                                       | No consultation with community’s                    |
| Policies formulated in line with citizens' requirements    | Policies formulated at the top level but fail to be implemented effectively |

**Source:** Adapted from OECD iLibrary (2020)

Cognisant that the concept of good or bad is subjective, the researcher opted to lean towards what the citizens prefer and how they want them delivered (citizen-centric approach).

**Factors that influence service delivery**

The researcher found Ken Wilber's Four Quadrant Framework helpful in deciphering the motivations behind people's actions and the factors that shape the community's view of government service. The framework is crucial to creating a holistic understanding of the actions and behaviours of particular communities (Wilber, 2017). It is commonly held that individuals are the only ones capable of bringing about change, that communities can't change from the outside, and that enacting new laws and policies is not a foolproof method of bringing about transformation (Howard, 2005, Rocheville, Keys & Bartunek, 2021).

The tool is analytical and explores the linkage between intentions and values on the one hand and actions on the other – on both collective and individual levels. It is hoped that by tracing the causes of social issues, the government will be better able to provide services centred on their citizens' needs. By effectively placing the relevant responses of social ill or a service delivery demand in the applicable quadrant, stakeholders can determine the responses to date (Ferreira, 2018). The critical contribution this tool brings to the table is that it creates an informed understanding of the linkage between intentions, values and actions. After plotting the various aspects of the quadrants, the first quadrant dealing with values individually may appear emptier than the rest. This indicates that the focus is generally shifted to a collective response instead of focusing on individual responses first. As a result, more suitable and realistic actions can be implemented through self-questioning, inevitably reducing blaming others for various actions (Wilber, 2019).

This tool has three main objectives: to identify the root causes of social ills in terms of both individual and collective origins, to emphasise the relationship between the causes and actions relating to social ills and to examine the relationship between diverse parts holistically to uncover links between individual and group behaviours and ideals (Youth Volunteers for Development and Environment Conservation, 2005; Allwyn & Amalaveenus, 2022).

**Table** Error! No text of specified style in document.: Ken Wilber’s Four Quadrants

| 1 I Interior- Individual | 2 IT Exterior-Individual |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Intentional              | Behavioural             |
| Subjective               | Objective               |
| Upper Left               | Upper Right             |

| 3 WE Interior-Collective | 4 IT Exterior-Collective |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Cultural                 | Social                   |
| Intersubjective          | Interojective            |
| Lower Left               | Lower Right              |

**Source:** Howard, 2005.

The first quadrant deals with individual introspection concerning change. It deals with both psychological and spiritual development. The main focus in this quadrant is creating awareness that change is not possible if consciousness regarding particular issues remains stagnant (Fisher, 2007). The second quadrant deals with an individual’s external response and views to change. This quadrant focuses on technical and social skills and performance psychology. This quadrant is the focal area for enhancing skills and effectively promoting performance and motivation through psychological methods (Filipsone, 2009). The third quadrant focuses on the collective internal characteristics of change. The primary focus in this quadrant deals with the aspect of culture. This area comprises the interior and often suppressed ideologies and images that influence what happens when socialising with others. This area houses
stories, myths and the unwritten laws that govern beliefs. Government should, at this point, be paying attention to the subtle messages that present themselves in daily interactions (Howard, 2005). The fourth quadrant looks at the external and collective aspects of change and its social and organisational system. The quadrant addresses organisational design, policies and procedures, as well as workflow. The quadrant reminds everyone that system design determines performance and that if higher-level performance is required, it must be developed. Observing the synergy between the quadrants and the impossibility of each quadrant to develop alone is vital. The quadrants cannot be overlooked when it comes to an individual's growth because culture can help or hinder it (Visser, 2012).

The philosophy and practice of government in an array of democracies have progressed substantially in recent years. According to Hughes (2017), two to three decades ago, the paradigm shifted from what was seen as the traditional public administration to a new public administration model that introduced a business perspective that saw the politicians as the managers and the citizens as customers. This approach was grounded on the principles of accountability and transparency (Hujran, Abu-Shanab and Aljaafreh, 2020; Dudley, Lin, Mancini & Ng, 2015). Another recent development is the cluster or networking approach, which brings together public and private sectors, non-governmental organisations, civil society, politicians and citizens (OECD 2009; Holmes 2011). Citizens are now viewed as agents rather than customers under the new approach. This status now entitles citizens to participate in decision-making regarding services delivered. As a result, the public sector has shifted from a bureaucratic to a pluralist orientation in order to provide better service (citizen-centric service) to the general public (Robinson, 2015).

The following figure illustrates how the government can encourage citizens through citizen-centricity:

![Figure 1: Encouragement through citizen centricity; Source: Adapted from Gupta (2008)](image)

Figure 1 illustrates the three critical factors to building a citizen-centric government. Masuku and Jili (2019); Luna-Reyes, Gil-Garcia and Celorio Mansi (2011); Sharma, Guttoo and Ogra (2014) agree with Gupta (2008), who lists the following as valuable factors that influence service delivery:

i. Creating awareness of the vision and mission of the citizen-centric approach among citizens.
ii. Setting clear boundaries and laying solid foundations for the limitations and capabilities of a citizen-centric approach.
iii. Ensure that multiple services are available that are geared toward achieving citizen-centric service delivery.
iv. Developing a good marketing campaign detailing the benefit of a citizen-centric approach and propagating its credibility for service delivery.

General Service Delivery in South Africa and the Western Cape

Several authors have argued that it is impossible for a single governmental body to effectively cater to all its citizens' needs (Nkomo, 2017; Masiya, Davids & Mangai, 2019; Thornhill, 2011; Tau, 2013). Therefore, South Africa's government structure comprises national, provincial, and local spheres. These three realms are founded on intergovernmental ties, and the South African Constitution delegated authority to each.

According to Cheruiyot, Katumba and Wray (2019), the National government is responsible for creating and approving laws and policies. These laws and policies must be implemented and adhered to by every government department regardless of the sphere. Both provincial and local governments cannot do anything that goes against what has been set down by the national government. Provincial and local governments are funded by national governments, although each sphere generates income through services provided. Service delivery to communities is mainly delivered through the local sphere of government, although the provincial and national spheres remain responsible for certain services such as traffic and defence. Services provided by the local government include but are not limited to water supply, sewage, refuse removal, electricity and parks and recreation (Mlambo, 2019).
Finance Minister Tito Mboweni, in his 2021 Budget speech, noted that 59% of South Africa's 278 municipalities are in severe financial trouble, with 14% unable to provide essential services (Gossel & Koelble, 2021). Inadequate housing, education, and sanitation are significant issues, fueling violent protests in the country's poorest communities, particularly in the Western Cape (News24, 2017; SABC News, 2019). Several authors, including Mamokhere (2019) and Hough (2008), have argued that the government's inability to adequately meet the community's service needs is a root cause of the poor quality of service. Makaneyeza, Kwandayi and Ikobe (2013) believe that inadequate human resource policies, a lack of employee capacity, poor planning, and a lack of monitoring and evaluation are well-publicised reasons for South Africa's poor service delivery.

Training and development

Training and development is a set of formal and informal lessons given to workers to improve their abilities and knowledge. Effective training and development will equip workers with the knowledge and skills to perform specific tasks as required (HR helpboard, 2022). Although the terms training and development are often used interchangeably in a human resource context, they are two separate but interlinking concepts.

Training is usually provided on the job to allow the employee to navigate the day-to-day task successfully. In contrast, development focuses on the employee's abilities to perform a task in the future (Noe & Kodwani, 2018).

Importance of training and development

In a nutshell, training and development is the educational process by which an organisation enables new learning and reinforces existing knowledge and skill sets. Management needs to be innovative and find new ways of training and development that would promote effectiveness and efficiency among employees, as this would ultimately improve the organisation's output. Training and development are vital to an organisation as it facilitates adopting and adapting to new technologies, making organisations remain relevant. It further allows management to correct behaviour and improve performance (Karia, Omari, Mwanangoro & Kimori, 2016). According to Long, Kowang, Chin and Hee (2016), the following are factors need to be considered to deem training and development effective: the cost of the training, the nature of the training, the training in relation to existing training policies, the ability of the training to close the gap between the competence of the employees and their job requirements and the significance of the training in relation to its correlation with the organisations productivity.

Aguinis and Kraiger (2009), Anlesinya & Amponsah-Tawiah (2020) posit that for an organisation to be competitive based on the skill and knowledge of its employees, it needs to realise the importance of training and development. Training and development is, in fact, a psychological research process aimed at improving the well-being of employees and the efficiency of an organisation. Effective training interventions can be assessed based on the following four factors: employee satisfaction, client satisfaction, management’s satisfaction and the overall improvement in productivity of employees post-training.

Citizen-Centric Service Delivery and Western Cape Government’s T&D Programs

The public sector has ongoing difficulties in enhancing its personnel’s capabilities. However, within public administration, extremely particular standards must be met, and Human Resource Management is a crucial component of its execution. Additionally, it should be mentioned that training and development are essential to achieving this goal (Public Service Commission, 2014).

Impact of Training and Development on Employee Skills Development in the Western Cape

The Department of the Premier’s strategy plan for 2020-2025 emphasises the need to create and establish connections with its residents through training interventions and community engagement to provide satisfying services and a citizen-centric approach (Western Cape Government, 2020). This is consistent with the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998, which aims to increase the skill set of the South African labour force and enhance the quality of life for South African employees. By fostering a spirit of healthy rivalry in the workplace, the Act also seeks to increase workplace efficiency. The Act envisions promoting new skills development and enhancing service delivery efficiency and effectiveness by investing in education (South Africa, 1998).

Continuous Capacity Development

According to Saha (2008), governments face a continuous challenge in delivering services to the public. One primary reason is the continually shifting conditions and increased demand for essential services.

As South Africa and the rest of the world adapt to the 4th industrial revolution, the government must modernise its services, upskill and educate its officials accordingly (Oke & Fernandez, 2020). According to Howard (2001), who agrees with Saha (2008), citizens' expectations of government and its capacities have grown due to their increased knowledge and expertise in the digital age. As a result, governments must also adapt to meet the needs of their citizens. As a result, the government's development efforts increasingly focus on education and training.

Centeno, van Bavel and Burgelman (2005) identify the following areas that require training and development that needs to be addressed in an attempt to improve public administration:

i. adopt an evidence-based decision-making approach;
ii. constantly examine the needs of citizens;
iii. acknowledge the intermediaries who are often the gatekeepers of communities; and
iv. build relationships and encourage collaboration.

Influence of capacity interventions on service delivery

The concept of individual development can be described as the actions taken to improve or enhance an employee’s knowledge base and skill set. Thus, the interventions are actioned to obtain new knowledge and improve job performance. The training interventions include but are not limited to the following: e-Learning, coaching and mentoring, self-led learning, and on-the-job training, which will be discussed further below:

e-Learning

When providing training for employees using an eLearning environment, there is a dependency on a desktop-centred application. With eLearning, the student’s access to the various knowledge sets and material is not dependent on an instructor or facilitator but on the specific medium used to deliver the training. Students must independently access training materials before interacting with classmates or completing assigned assignments (Caudill, 2015).

Coaching and mentoring

The concept of coaching and development may sometimes be misunderstood or underrated. However, it plays a significant role in staff development by handing over valuable intellectual insights that cannot be learned by attending formal classes, as this knowledge was obtained purely through experience. There is a substantial difference between coaching and mentoring. Some organisations believe mentoring has proven to be less expensive than coaching and has produced more impactful results. The coaching activity usually takes the form of a session between a manager and their coach and very seldom involves team coaching.

The shortfall, however, in many organisations is that the coaching and mentoring programs are not integrated into the more significant development activities (Thomas & Saslow, 2007; Minter & Thomas, 2000; Werner (2021).

On-the-job training

The norm for training has been moving away from the daily hustle and bustle of the workplace. However, this approach has been a barrier between what is being learned in the classroom and its implementation back at work. On-the-job training can break down this barrier as it allows the student to engage the facilitator regarding a relevant work scenario and receive immediate feedback due to its nature and the fact that actual specific work-related scenarios are used for activities instead of general examples as used in a broader training context recall is strengthened. If the employee’s everyday work is combined with new training techniques, it allows for better development.

While there may be many benefits to on-the-job training, there is also a considerable shortfall in that time allocated for training can easily be cancelled and replaced with other work-related tasks, thereby impacting the intended training (Training Industry, 2014).

Research and Methodology

Observational research allows for direct observations of participants in their natural settings. With a naturalistic approach, the researcher observes the participants’ behaviour without intervention. This is the most suitable design for this paper as the researcher sought to obtain a true reflection of the participants’ views and opinions regarding the research topic (Atlas.ti, 2019). Following the preceding, the non-experimental research design was adopted for this paper. With the understanding that a qualitative approach is more likely to produce the required data (Hancock et al., 2009), unstructured interviews were directly administered to the identified sample and accompanied by questionnaires. The purpose of combining qualitative and quantitative approaches was to verify the validity of the survey results through in-depth interviews (Tengeh, Ballard & Slabbert, 2012).

The Strategic Programs branch within the Western Cape Government’s Department of the Premier was the study’s target population, from which a representative sample for the unstructured interviews was drawn. Quantitative data was collected from homeowners in a specific Cape Town Metropolitan Area neighbourhood. The researcher set out to interview 30 individuals (for in-depth interviews) from DotP’s Strategic Management Department to gather qualitative data. However, saturation was achieved at 20 participants. The sample size of 20 was determined following Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006); van Rijnsoever (2017); and the National Center for Biototechnology Information (n.d.), all of whom agree that saturation occurs most frequently between 15 and 30 research participants in a qualitative study. The participants were purposely selected based on their rank and subject knowledge. A questionnaire was sent to 130 community members selected via snowball sampling for the quantitative data collecting procedure. The sample size was determined using the guidance of CloudResearch (2021) and Beleites, Neugebauer, Bocklitz, Krafft and Popp (2013), who feel that 100 participants are sufficient for a survey to produce relevant results.

The researcher effectively analysed quantitative and qualitative data using two distinct methods. Face-to-face interviews were used to gather qualitative data, then analysed using content analysis. Microsoft Excel was used to analyse the data collected through the quantitative instrument (questionnaire).
Understanding of Training and development

A question was posed through the qualitative data collection tool that sought to gauge the participants’ understanding of the concept of training and development and its relevance in the workplace.

Summary of the responses

All (100%) of the respondents agreed that the term training and development encompassed a set of tools designed and aimed at improving the performance of an individual or group. If carried out successfully, it may assist employees in gaining the knowledge and skills required to effectively carry out their jobs which would inevitably improve the output of the department or unit they represent.

Each respondent emphasised the importance and relevance of training and development in the workplace. The following points best capture the perspective of the respondents regarding the applicability of training and development in the workplace:

i. it creates a sense of unity among staff and may foster team building and equality;
ii. it enhances performance;
iii. it improves an employee’s skills, thereby improving his employability; and
iv. it encourages innovation.

Reference was also made to the fact that training and development may create an environment that assists people from previously disadvantaged groups (due to the apartheid era) to develop their skillset and knowledge base, allowing them to apply for top management posts.

However, there was a difference of opinion among respondents who claimed that although training and development are of utmost importance in the workplace, it is unfortunately not effectively implemented. In some cases, the approval of training is manipulated and highly biased towards specific individuals.

Interpretation of the responses and selected captions

All (100%) respondents were eager to answer the above question. This eagerness may be a direct result of past experiences regarding training and development in the workplace. Overall, the comments indicated that the concept of training and development was critical to respondents as they noted that it had contributed to the development of staff and ensured that staff remained relevant and effectively addressed the needs of the citizens.

Kleynhans et al. (2006) believe that skills development is a massive help to the workforce as it encourages employers to allow the workplace to be a place of learning and development. This ensures that employees can broaden their knowledge and critical skills, improving their work performance and employability, resulting in an improved standard of living. This solidifies and validates the importance and relevance of training and development in the workplace.

The responses further indicated that respondents had been exposed to various training programs, funding options and limitations in the workplace. The general understanding was that training and development opportunities are additional benefits that receive from employers to empower employees with the required skills, knowledge, and capabilities to meet targets and performance measures.

Some strategic responses included:

i. the fact that staff needed to be kept up to date with the ever-changing needs of both the external and internal environments;
ii. the importance of maintaining a high standard of work in an attempt to deliver quality services;
iii. the fact that if employees are not adequately trained, it would have an adverse effect on the quality of services being produced; and
iv. the fact that, in some cases, the same officials would repeatedly be beneficiaries of training and development opportunities without notable improvement in their capacity.

Respondents further highlighted that legislation such as the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 and departmental-specific policies paved the way regarding the importance and relevance of training and development in the workplace. Respondents thought all departments should provide training and development opportunities and adhere to their processes. (Anderson, 2021) stresses that all officials should be educated regarding matters that affect their employees, including training and development that would foster a congenial environment.

A comparison of the positives and negatives of training and development in the workplace can be seen below:
Table 3: Positives and Negatives of Training and Development

| Positives                                                                 | Negatives                                                                 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Staff are kept up to date with the needs of beneficiaries                | If staff are not trained accordingly, it would have an adverse effect on service delivery standards. |
| Helps maintain a high standard of work and service delivery               | Often the same officials are being trained without any notable maturity in their capacity. |
| May help with diversity and cultural differences in the workplace         | The same methodologies are applied year after year, not everyone responds well to specific methods. |
| May improve individual performance                                        | Training programmes are not explicitly formulated but are rather general and require a one-size-fits-all approach. |
| May create a more effective and efficient workforce                       |                                                                          |
| Encourages innovation and out-of-the-box thinking                        |                                                                          |

Source: Anderson, 2021.

Commlab India (2017) notes the importance of training employees regarding the policies, procedures and systems that regulate a company. Training and development may assist employees with understanding company regulations which promote business continuity.

Training and development in a workplace further promote innovation and boosts the morale of staff and the department’s goals. The first step towards achieving compliance is the education of staff regarding procedures of the department. It is imperative for employees to be aware of the goals and objectives set by the department. This awareness can be created through training platforms within the department (Progression, 2016).

Employee capacity development

The researcher sought to determine whether public officials were adequately capacitated to meet their department’s service delivery demands effectively and efficiently. Please explain.

Summary of the responses

The rationale for posing the above question was to determine how public sector employees regarded staff capacitation and its relevance to service delivery. Service delivery problems are often tied to the incapacity of public sector officials. Therefore, the researcher sought to obtain the opinion of public sector employees to identify possible shortcomings and use them to form recommendations for improving service delivery standards in the Western Cape.

Interpretation of the responses and selected word verbatim captions

The respondents (20%) who answered in defense of the capacity of public sector officials stated that in the public sector recruitment and selection process, one is appointed based on his/her skillset and, therefore, one’s capacity to perform is justified. Emphasis was placed on the fact that the Government needed to report on service delivery indicators and that a capable workforce was created through training and development programs.

However, most respondents (80%) believed that public sector officials may be adequately capacitated in processes but cannot step outside their regular processes and mandates.

Respondents listed the following reasons as justification to solidify their stance:

i. Officials are not allowed to work outside of their daily scope of work.
ii. Training and development should be more accessible.
iii. Employees are not driven by effectiveness but rather by compliance.
iv. With the ever-changing environment and the shift toward the 4th Industrial Revolution, are departments willing and ready to allow employees to respond to the needs of the citizens differently?
v. Public sector employees who do not operate at a front-line level may not fully comprehend service delivery demands.
vi. Employees at the managerial level are given ample capacitation opportunities, whereas service delivery often occurs among the lower levels of employees – this was emphasised as a significant factor.

It is important to note that the respondents felt that, although they were appointed with certain skill sets to fulfil a specific role according to their job descriptions, they have more to offer.

Employees’ skill sets often improve through work experience and further education. However, the respondents felt that, in most cases (based on either experiencing it themselves or being witness to it at some point of their career), employees’ skills, knowledge and education are being underutilised or not acknowledged resulting in:

i. having to upskill employees who do not have the necessary skills but who are employed in the post;
ii. failure to effectively and efficiently deliver service due to incapacity;
iii. procrastination due to having to consult with employees or external service providers who possess the required skills and knowledge; and
iv. restricting the development of staff.

The following was highlighted:

“Employees at front-line service of delivery generally understand their duties without really understanding the overall priorities of the department. Those officials who are not front-line staff may not understand the service delivery demands in context but may rather possess a superficial view of service delivery.”

Respondents stated that there had been attempts to address the above situation through the process of matching and placing, but it does not happen often enough. Therefore, Morris (2019) encourages organisations to create awareness pertaining to an ever-changing environment and the motivation for self-initiated learning.

Importance of training and development

Clarity was sought using either agreeing or disagreeing that training and development is a crucial component to achieving effective and efficient service delivery in the public sector and after that, justifying why.

Summary of the responses

All (100%) respondents agreed that training and development play a critical role in achieving effective and efficient service delivery. Emphasis was placed on the fact that South Africans are living in an ever-changing society, a society fashioned by both the west as well as the Fourth Industrial Revolution, a community in which technology is enjoyed by both the old and the young, a society in which people are no longer required to stand in long queues from the break of dawn to pay their bills.

For these reasons, among others, respondents felt that for public officials to remain relevant to the needs of their citizens, it requires both training and development. There was, however, a recommendation made by several respondents requesting the public sector to create tailor-made training modules to address the various challenges as there is no one-size-fits-all approach to training.

Interpretation of the responses and selected word verbatim captions

With the demand for productivity and the need for Government to deliver services, public officials need to manage their time and resources effectively. How to effectively manage time and resources can either be cultured over time or taught via training and development initiatives (Bright Network, 2019).

The idea that training and development are utilised to polish employees' skill sets quickly emerged among respondents who believed that these programs would not only improve their skill set and knowledge but could also impact and change people's mindsets. Training and development are critical to developing a capable workforce capable of carrying out its task successfully and efficiently.

Respondents listed the following reasons to support why they felt that training and development is a crucial component in achieving effective service delivery: It fosters skills; creates confidence; creates a positive working environment; keeps public officials responsive to the needs of the citizens; encourages innovation; assists public officials in transitioning from a traditional service delivery model to one that is more citizen-centric; assists with ensuring that the public official is adequately capacitated; it assists with personal and career development.

Participants felt strongly that the working environment is constantly changing and that staff needed to be equipped to deal with these transitions:

“Training and development is the foundation of what makes an official capable of doing their job. Needs of the organisation and communities are constantly changing – as a result, the needs of the individual to do the work are always changing. For service delivery to be effective, the individual needs to be trained on soft skills, hard skills such as IT skills and community engagement skills.”

Through investment in education and the formulation of specific legislation, the government envisages promoting the acquisition of new skills and improving service delivery efficiency and effectiveness (South Africa, 1996). Therefore, training and development should remain high on any organisation’s objectives (Public Service Commission, 2014).

Responses from the participants indicate a positive attitude towards training and development and that business continuity and effective and efficient service delivery can be ensured if officials are adequately capacitated.

The effectiveness of the current training and development programs

Using qualitative and quantitative instruments, the research sought to determine if the training and development programmes offered by the participant’s department were relevant to addressing its service delivery demands.

According to the South African Government (2020), all government departments’ norms and standards are set by the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA). The department ensures that all service delivery, human resource, and institutional
initiatives are applicable and designed to meet the needs of the citizens. This is done to ensure that services are accessible, delivered efficiently, and delivered at the lowest possible cost while ensuring quality and accountability.

Therefore, this question aimed to determine to what extent the training and development programs are meeting their demands.

**Summary of the responses**

Half (50%) of the respondents agreed that the training offered by their department was relevant to addressing the service delivery needs, while 12.50% strongly agreed with this notion. 22.5% disagreed and were supported by the remaining 2.5% who strongly disagreed. The remaining responses comprised 12.5% of the respondents who chose to remain neutral.

The responses from most respondents indicate that the training and development programs offered by their department address the service delivery demands. At the same time, a smaller percentage felt that there is indeed a gap between the training provided and its inability to address the service delivery needs of departments and highlighted this gap as an area to improve.

**The link between training programs and service delivery**

*Participants were asked to elaborate on how much training and development is prioritised to empower employees to improve service delivery.*

**Summary of the responses**

The South African government is committed to promoting skills development. This commitment is demonstrated through various pieces of legislation: The South African Qualifications Act 58 of 1995, the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 and the Skills Development Levies Act 9 of 1999. These Acts collectively allowed the development of programs and policies that ensured an uptake of skills development and guaranteed quality training and education. The Skills Development Act focuses explicitly on developing the skill set of employees and improving their quality of life. The Act further affords employees opportunities to obtain new skills and use the working environment as a place of learning.

Thirty five percent of respondents agreed and were supported by 15% who agreed that training and development is designed and prioritised to empower employees to improve service delivery. More than a third (40%) of respondents disagreed. In comparison, the remaining 10% of respondents remained neutral.

Fifty percent (50%) of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that training and development within government departments aim to improve its employee’s ability to effectively and efficiently deliver on their service delivery mandates. However, a big percentage (40%) of the respondents maintained their response disputing the linkage between training and development and the fact that it improves service delivery.

**The link between competency and output**

*The researcher sought to gauge the participants’ understanding on improving employees’ competencies and ability to deliver better services after attending training.*

According to Chron (2020), the concept of training provides individuals and groups of employees with an opportunity to expand their skill set and knowledge base. Employees sometimes have shortfalls in their competencies and abilities. Training programs allow individuals and employers to strengthen those shortfalls. On the other hand, development programs aim to bring employees to a higher level to create a holistic skill set and knowledge base. Therefore, this question sought to determine if employees felt their ability to deliver services was improved after attending training.

**Summary of the responses**

A cumulative percentage of 60%, comprising 43% who agreed and 17% who strongly agreed, made up the bulk of responses to this question. 20% of the respondents disagreed, while the remaining 20% decided to remain neutral. The proportion of respondents who agreed with this statement was three times that of those who opposed or remained indifferent. One-fifth of respondents chose to maintain their neutrality.

**Discussion**

According to OECD/Asian Development Bank (2019), by creating a public administration based on citizen-centricity, the government can ensure high quality services and respond to the citizens' constantly changing needs. This, in essence, means that the government should create a workforce that equitably caters for all of society. To do this, the government would need to capacitate its employees on the principles of engagement, relationship building with communities, and developing policies geared towards transparent, accountable, and citizen-orientated service delivery. The need for a citizen-centric approach to governance and its influence on transforming governmental policies and procedures is at the forefront of public administration reforms in Italy, the United Kingdom and Austria.
These countries' decision to pursue a citizen-centric approach to government service delivery is based on the premise that it fosters efficiency and adds value. The researcher agrees with the above author, who posits that governments need to adequately understand the cultural, social, and political factors that have framed their citizens' makeup to become citizen-centric. Therefore if the Western Cape Government can were to ensure that the services it provided were of high quality and answered the needs of its citizens, the following training areas identified by this paper would need to be addressed:

i. training programmes to promote the awareness among staff pertaining to service delivery requirements of the department;

ii. training on the principles of community engagement and public participation;

iii. training and workshops showcasing the effects of the lack of service delivery; and

iv. training on how to integrate service delivery requirements into departmental strategies.

Special attention needs to be given to creating awareness pertaining government's perception of the service delivery needs of communities. This can be based on its financial status and geographical location, this data would need to be used to determine if service delivery is rendered equally among communities or on a demand basis (eLibrary, 2020). According to Saha (2008), for the government to achieve citizen satisfaction, it needs to shift its service delivery focus to achieving success by identifying citizens' needs and their fulfilment from a citizen-centric perspective. The success of service delivery would thus be measurable based on citizens' level of satisfaction with the services received. On a global scale, governmental administrations have recognized the need for greater customer-centric service delivery and have spent resources to assure user happiness.

According to the study, training employees to be aware of their departments' service delivery requirements and mandates may increase morale and productivity by fostering a culture of trust, innovation, and cooperation among employees. It may also help ensure that public officials' performance remains relevant to the needs of the public. Another important conclusion is that if training and development opportunities are motivated by the desire to increase employees' ability to attain and deliver their departments' service delivery mandates, it will improve efficiency and service delivery. Additionally, it should be mentioned that training and development are essential to achieving goals (Public Service Commission, 2014). Governments must adopt a more customer-centric approach to service delivery in order to bridge the gap between them and the people they serve and provide better, more effective, and more productive services.

Citizens are the government's power, thus making sure they are happy with the services they receive is a top priority. Citizen centricity can aid the efficiency and government functions, thus improving service delivery. Therefore, a concerted effort should be made to determine the needs of the citizens and, through partnerships and relationship building, deliver on these needs. If governments are to satisfy the needs of their citizens through a citizen-centric approach, they would need to address the working culture and capacity of public servants (Malik, Gupta & Dhillon, 2014). Eighty percent of the participants in this study agreed that training and development enhances efficiency, which in turn improves service delivery. Their answers were bolstered by the fact that employees place a high value on training and development opportunities because it helps them grow professionally and provides them with the tools they need to better serve their communities. This evidence suggests that providing employees with learning and growth opportunities at work can boost individual performance and the organisation's ability to meet its goals and provide its services. Saleem, Shahid, and Naseem (2011) and Kennedy (2009) support these conclusions by elaborating on the idea that training is more than just a means of accumulating specific skills and instead serves to bridge a gap that may be preventing workers from performing at optimal levels. Training employees may be primarily concerned with enhancing their potential, but if everyone is given the tools they need to succeed, the organisation as a whole will benefit.

Conclusions

Against the backdrop of the racial segregation created by South Africa’s previous dispensation, cognisance should be taken of the enormous gap in the service delivery requirements of the various racial groups. Therefore, the DotP and the WCG can change their service delivery approach through training and development programs. This article aimed to examine the influence of training and development on the delivery of services in a South African government agency, assuming the existence of a correlation between the two. The paper found that training around awareness of service delivery requirements could positively affect and motivate public officials’ performance to remain relevant to the needs of the citizens. Further, the study found that if training and development opportunities are driven by the need to enhance employees' abilities to achieve and deliver their departments' service delivery mandates, it will improve efficiency and service delivery. This, in essence, means that the government should create a workforce that equitably caters for all of society through a citizen-orientated service delivery approach.

In conjunction with the current approaches and mechanisms to both measure and ensure service delivery standards, the department should ensure that both training and development, as well as a greater awareness regarding service delivery, is created among its employees. Awareness campaigns should be published using platforms that are easily accessible to staff, such as the departmental intranet, corporate communication tools, and training workshops that provide a more in-depth understanding of the service delivery requirements of the department. Government departments and public officials are obligated to embody a certain level of accountability to ensure effective, efficient and quality service delivery. The focus of this research was limited to the provision of public services. The researchers posit that future research could look into formulating a research instrument or tool that would allow emerging researchers to conduct a study of this nature in the private sector.
Acknowledgement

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, Methodology, Data Collection, Formal Analysis, Writing—Original Draft Preparation. Writing—Review And Editing by authors with equal participation. All authors have read and agreed to the published the final version of the manuscript.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Ethical review and approval were waived for this study, due to that the research does not deal with vulnerable groups or sensitive issues.

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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