

Recent Activities in South Africa relating to skills development and project management

By Lesley Rider

As part of the building of a new South Africa (SA) a key national strategy is the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS). The implementation of this is complex and involves several different government departments in conjunction with extensive stakeholder consultation, contribution and commitment.

Our government structures for improving the skills in SA include a partnership between the Departments of Education & Labour and to some extent the Department of Trade & Industry. During 2000 - 2001 they have made a lot of progress in establishing their new operations and institutions. The model is complex and much of it is described on the websites referred to below. A key part of the NSDS is National Qualification Framework (NQF); which sits under the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) in the Department of Education. The NQF includes Standards that are outcome (competence) driven and qualifications. All sectors are involved and standards' writing is undertaken by Standards Generating Bodies. During this year a lot of emphasis has been placed upon writing the standards and defining qualifications. In addition we are also now beginning to grapple with the role of assessors and the development of assessment guides to be used by assessors when conducting summative assessment of learners.

Under the Department of Labour we have a large programme that is funded by a range of Donors, the largest contributor being the European Union. The focus of the Department of Labour is the workplace, adult learning and job creation. Historically the investment in training in the workplace for many industries has been low. A skills levy has been introduced that will be used for sector related training and national projects for development of broader skills needs or skills not funded within the levy grants in a sector. Some of the Department of Labour's key activities include:

- the gathering of a skills levy, which is now 1% of the salary/wages bill of companies
- the establishment & operation of 25 Sector Education Training Authorities (SETA) which provide a forum for many stakeholders including the employers, the granting of rebates on the levy and the implementation of a range of projects to build capacity for the national skills programmes. This includes training interventions such as skills programmes and learnerships. The learnership is an evolution of the apprentice programmes and includes a triangular contract between a learner, training provider (formal) and workplace (experience). The SETAs are involved in many things so this is a quick summary.
- the operation of Education & Training Quality Assurance (ETQA) functions under contract from the Department of Education (assessment of learners & accreditation of providers)

So how does Project Management fit into this?? Our challenge as professional project people has been to work out how we fit in. PMISA is a national association representing project management people from all sectors and therefore PMISA has taken a strong lead in working within these evolving government strategies.

Quite a lot has happened during this year.

From a project management point of view we are hooked into several places. These include a PM Standards Generating Body (PMSGGB) under SAQA. Under the Services SETA we have a Project Management Chamber and a learnership project for an entry qualification in PM. The PMSGGB represents a wide range of stakeholders including several professional bodies with an interest in project management. PMISA has been a key player and information source. The Services SETA provided funding for a project to write two sets of qualifications and standards.

During 2001 our effort has been targeted at a **GENERIC PROJECT APPROACH AND APPLICATION**. I.e. not sector specific such as construction, engineering or Information Technology.

We have created qualifications at NQF4 (Top of the Further Education band) as a base (entry level) qualification for team members, project administrators, project controls, supervisors of small teams / projects and an NQF3 for those who have had limited education and who could benefit from using a project approach in their businesses (Small Micro Enterprise - SMME). We call them the 'bakkie brigade' and this ranges from small builders, decorators, garden / office irrigation, house painting etc.

The draft NQF4 standards were gazetted for public comment in late September and the NQF3 will be gazetted in late October or early November. Next year we shall proceed to the other levels. We had to start at NQF4 as it was required for the learnership and we could get funds to employ a standards writer!!!!

The learnership for the National Certificate in Project Management at NQF4 has been scoped and a curriculum framework is being developed. A pilot is anticipated for next year. It aims at being a year's programme resulting in the assessment of the learners against the National Certificate.

The following websites have useful information and you can access the draft standards. These include

- www.pmisa.org.za
- www.pmsgb.org.za
- www.saqa.org.za
- www.servicesseta.org.za.

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