THE IMPACT OF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE: A CASE STUDY OF ESCON CONSULTING

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ABSTRACT
The study focuses on the impact of training and development on employee performance at ESCON. Training and development is a critical process, which seeks to improve the performance of workers in the organisation. In order to form competent committees, employees’ relevant expertise and intellectual capacity needs to be improved. Some of the projects executed by ESCON fail at an embryonic stage owing to the fact that tenders are awarded to the lowest priced contractor. Moreover, the ineffectiveness of training and development of employees in the organisation reduces the organisation’s productivity, as organisations depend on having people with the right skills, attitudes and capabilities in order to reach goals effectively.

A random sampling method was used to select participants for this study, which adopted a quantitative approach. Accordingly, data was collected using a questionnaire. The study was limited to employees of ESCON. Subsequently, the findings revealed that working conditions and a lack of resources affect the training and development of employees. It is recommended that certain areas be improved, that is, management support, the provision of feedback to employees and the conducting of employee training on a continuous basis. The findings show that this would improve employee performance in the organisation.

Key Words: Training; Development; Impact; Employee Performance; Organizational Productivity; Ineffectiveness; Critical Process

Introduction
The South African public sector as well as the private sector is experiencing a significant phase of decline with regard to service delivery. This has seen limited investment in human capital development and a notable exodus of available skills, which has added to the acute shortage of skills in the very sectors. Moreover, the sector is lacking in intermediate artisan skills, which could be resolved by a significant investment in human capital and workplace exposure which
can rapidly develop artisan skills in addition to interpersonal and analytical skills. Against this backdrop, ESCON Cc. like most companies in the private sector are affected by weak service delivery, with employees in the organisation not performing their tasks up to expected standards.

**Background to the study**
ESCON is a privately owned company that is committed to its mandate of providing efficient, reliable and quality consulting and training services to both the public and private sector. The company strives to be recognised and to earn respect as a company that delivers high quality unrivalled services to its customers. ESCON therefore considers employees as its most valuable asset, because they share in the responsibility of fulfilling that mission.

In terms of the critical skills required by most companies, there is a significant shortage of experienced managers, professional project managers, candidate project managers and qualified artisans in South Africa. This shortage threatens to obstruct service delivery unless improved delivery systems are instituted. These challenges are reflected in the private sector where, for example, the lack of experienced site managers is seen to be undermining service delivery in terms of expected target time, cost and quality requirements.

The success of the project management section (PMS) at ESCON relies on the success of the projects being implemented. The PMS has, however, experienced an increasing number of project failures as a result of lack of training and development in terms of the employees who execute projects. The success of any business depends on the quality of its human capital and, while it is recognised that training plays an important role, there are still concerns as to which kinds of training and skills acquisition bring economic success. More importantly such training has to be quantifiable. Training should assist individual performance to impact positively on organisational productivity both in the short term and in the future. Currently, employees in the organisation make many mistakes while performing their tasks. These mistakes can affect the quality of the project offered and consequently the image of the organisation. In the early stages of projects, the poor performance of employees in the project section has led to project failure. This study intends to examine whether there is a link between training and employee performance in ESCON Pty Ltd.

**Objectives of the study**
- To investigate factors affecting training and development of employees at ESCON.
- To determine the impact of training and development on organisational productivity at ESCON.
- To investigate the impact of training on employee performance at ESCON.
- To recommend strategies that can be used to improve the training and development of employees at ESCON.

**Limitations of the study**

The study is limited to employees of ESCON in South Africa, who will be given the questionnaires to complete.
LITERATURE REVIEW

Reasons for carrying out training and development
Employers do not regularly consider the feelings of their employees regarding skills development. Accordingly, Frost, Vos and Dreyer (2003:147) claim that the traditional business organisation is closely modelled on the military style of management, probably because armies are the largest and almost certainly the oldest human organisations. In response to this, Katcher and Snyder (2003:90) identify some of the reasons why employers need their employees to continuously learn new skills:

- **Capital improvement.** Organisations tend to spend millions of rand on upgrading their plants and equipment, yet little on upgrading their human capital. Employees are an asset to the organisation but employers are more concerned about reaching deadlines and profit maximisation rather than employees skills development, without which employee performance could be hampered. Although the organisation still achieves productivity, the focus should also be on the dedication, commitment and loyalty of employees. If employees do not receive ongoing training, up-to-date equipment will not be used optimally.

- **Morale improvement.** Employees who continuously upgrade their job skills will also improve their productivity. Developing employee skills not only plays a role in the workplace, but in the external world as well. It contributes to the full personal development of each employee and the socio-economic development of the nation at large; therefore, happy employees may be productive, but more productive employees are happier.

- **Ability to adapt to change.** The more skilled the workforce is, the easier it will be for the entire organisation to adapt to changes that may arise in the domestic and global market place in the demand of its products and services. Sometimes employees are reluctant to adapt to change because of the uncertainty involved, but one of the objectives of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 is to develop the skills of the South African workforce as well as increasing levels of investment in education and training in the labour market.

Why is employee development important?
Employee development is something that most people imagine as intrusive all-day group training sessions. Unfortunately, this dreaded approach to employee development is just the opposite of how employee development should occur and feel to employees. Employee development can manifest itself in many forms of training, evaluation, educational programmes, and even feedback. If executed correctly, the effects of training on employee performance can often encourage growth within the worker and the organisation itself (Katcher and Snyder, 2003).

**Employee development: a self-fulfilling prophecy**
One of the larger aspects of developing employees’ skills and abilities is the actual organisational focus on the employee to become better, either as a person or as a contributor to the organisation. The attention given by an organisation, coupled with increased expectations following the training opportunity can lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy of enhanced output by the employee. Employees that receive regular, scheduled feedback, including training, along
with an increase in expectations, actually have a higher level of worker output (Katcher and Snyder, 2003).

**Employee development decreases operational costs**

The hope is that employees who receive training in line with their individual or organisational goals will become more efficient in what they do. Organisations should look at the positive effects of training on employee performance, and consider employee development as a targeted investment in making the workers stronger. More importantly, development plans that include “train-the-trainer” (training that trains employees to become trainers of a skill) can provide exponential benefits to the organisation. This training can be anything from how employees can do their own jobs better to employees being groomed to replace their supervisors. In addition, employees who become trainers might be further inclined to stay with the organisation, and possibly reduce employee turnover (Katcher and Snyder, 2003).

**Perceived benefits of employee development**

Besides supporting the organisation, employees might recognise that most types of employee development initiatives provide them with benefits. Employee development programmes that range from certification to education reimbursement, even to basic job skills training, have a certain cost to the organisation that can easily be considered a benefit to the employee. Such awareness on the part of the employee can also lead to greater loyalty to the organisation as well as enhanced job satisfaction. Training and development that can be added to the employees’ résumés are big ticket items in terms of compensation plans (Taylor, 2000:455).

**Employee development limits organisational liability**

According to Frost *et al.* (2000), most human resource professionals would agree that limiting organisational liability when training employees is a very important aspect of employee development. Certain jobs require training and certification in order for an employee to successfully execute the minimum job requirements related to that position. The proper documentation of employee development before or during the employee’s completion of their job cannot only help follow and develop training, but also limit liability in the case of human error on the part of these employees. An example of how documented employee training could be helpful would be if a stockroom employee were assigned the position of forklift operator. Obviously, the organisation would be expected to put this employee through all the necessary training to ensure the employee can operate the equipments, and do so in accordance with any applicable policies and regulations. Although employee training documentation will almost never completely protect an employer from legal liabilities, training and certification can hopefully reduce legal costs and reputation damage for the organisation (Frost *et al.*, 2000).

**Factors affecting training**

Feedback is a very important condition for the successful acquisition of skills. Training can be done mentally, where the employees go over the events in their heads in order to be properly prepared. It is important that information is given correctly in the early stages of learning. This is so because if errors are not picked up early, the employee will be greatly disadvantaged when someone spots them later. Indeed, if the employees have been applying such faulty skills for years, it may mean that they are never fixed. The role of practice in the business of skills acquisition is very important when one thinks how much time employees spend perfecting the
skills involved in their tasks. The main purpose of job training is to give employees the knowledge and skills they need to perform effectively in their fields of expertise.

According to Kreitner and Kinicki (2007:69), there are a number of factors on the job that prevent transfer of learning. These include the following:

- If learners see no value in applying new skills, believe no rewards will result from doing so, or do not value the rewards, and then transfer of learning from classroom to the job will not occur.
- If individuals have little or no latitude to change what they do because the job tasks are too tightly controlled, then training can never be applied unless task controls are relaxed.
- If a learner’s supervisor is not in favour of training, then there is little or no likelihood that a learner will be applying newly acquired skills. Supervisors exert a powerful influence over the behaviour of subordinates because they control rewards and punishment.
- If a trainee returns to the project field only to find that fellow workers greet new ideas with scepticism, then training will not be imparted successfully.

Cascio (2005:342) enumerates other factors that affect training, these are explained below:

- **Funding for employee training**: Adequate funding continues to be a concern. While the need for resources to provide employee training and development increases, funding may not be available. In fact, funding for training and development may be one of the first items to be eliminated in times of financial constraints.
- **Less job security**: Employees in the private sector (and employees in general) have less job security than previously. It is often said that people can expect to have many different employers and even different careers during their work life. Given this idea and reality, employees will continuously search for employers who will provide them with opportunities to develop transferable skills.
- **Limited opportunities for development**: Most organisations have a flat organisational structure. This means that there is little room for promotion. Employees and organisations need to embrace the idea that moving up is not the only way to be satisfied with one's work. An alternative is to create challenges for employees in their current positions or in a similar position.

**Employee training**

Training addresses gaps or discrepancies between an ideal and an optimal stage of development. However, from a comparison between desired and actual work methods or between desired and actual results, needs arise on the job. Smit and de Cronje (2003:78) refer to three methods for identifying needs: the generic methods, performance analysis, and competency assessment. Where performance analysis focuses on deficiencies or problems, competency assessment focuses on opportunity for improvement. Trainers identify how they believe people should perform and then design a training programme to give the workers the skills they need. Training can only be executed when it has been determined which employees should receive training and what their current levels, knowledge and skills are. Consequently, the assessment of the individual will indicate the range of skills and knowledge that is to be
acquired. Note that the difference between actual performance and required performance will ultimately form the training gap, and therefore indicate the extent of training needed.

**Types of training**

The following are the types of training provided in organisations:

**On-the-job methods**

Management education normally takes place off the job, but a great deal of learning takes place on the job. According to Smit and de Cronje (2003:73), there have been several recent studies on managerial learning and skills development in South Africa that result from on-the-job experience. This research suggests that managers learn most from assignments that are very difficult and challenging. A programme of management education should include assignments and job rotation plans that stretch managers to their limits (Grobler, Warnich, Carrel, Elbert and Hatfield, 2006:123).

**Off-the-job methods**

Sensitivity training includes techniques such as laboratory and t-group training, communication workshops and outward board’s trips. The purpose of sensitivity training is to make employees more aware of their own behaviour and how their behaviour is perceived by others. It also increases the participants’ awareness and acceptance of the differences between them. In terms of this type of training, small groups of eight to fourteen individuals who are strangers to each other are usually grouped together and assisted by a trainer. During the discussion, employees discuss themselves, their feelings, and the group process (Grobler *et al.*, 2006:130).

The most frequent changes derived from this training include a more favourable self-perception, reduced prejudice, improved scores on tests of interpersonal relations, and changes in interpersonal behaviour as observed by others, all of which are particularly relevant in South Africa.

**Training and development programmes**

In the view of Grobler, Warnich, Carrel, Elbert and Hatfield (2004:345), training needs have to be determined first. In this regard, a basic “communication-linking process” between both parties is required. Training must be addressed in such a way that it covers the employees’ performance-development needs and is in accordance with their job descriptions. Both the employee and the employer have to work together in order to determine what the employees do not know. They must also identify training method which exert an impact on the job, so that he/she can be trained in order to fill that particular gap. The employee should be granted the responsibility to make decisions regarding his/her training, while employers should provide their employees with opportunities to improve their foundational skills so as to enable them to cope with more complex situations. The American Society for Training and Development recommends a minimum of 40 hours of training a year for every employee (Kreitner and Kinicki, 2007:124).

In addition to the previous arguments, McConnell (2004:159) supports a partnership approach between the employees and their companies in determining training needs, as well as the involvement of the employees in setting up training goals. By being involved, employees will not only support the training programmes, but their morale will also be enhanced. Training is a life-long process which must be continued beyond the initial qualification in an effort to
maintain, upgrade and update skills throughout the person’s working life. Employees should understand how their jobs affect the bottom line. As with training, both company and employee must hold shared/collective responsibilities in the employee education process (Noe, Hollanbeck, Gerhart and Wright, 2003:399).

Firstly, the employee must carry out self-assessment, where he/she is expected to identify his/her opportunities and needs for improvement. The second step is a reality check where the employee identifies which needs can realistically be developed. The third step comprises goal setting. Here, the employee identifies goals and methods in order to determine his/her progress towards the goal. The final step consists of action planning, where steps and timetables are identified in order to reach the desired level of development.

During the self-assessment stage, employee behaviour is expected to provide assessment information in order to identify the strengths, weaknesses, interests and values pertaining to the career of the individual. During the reality check, the company communicates the performance evaluation, and where the employee fits in regarding the long-range plans of the company. During the goal-setting stage, the company ensures that goals are specific, challenging and attainable. Subsequently, the company must make a commitment to assist the employee in reaching the goal. During the final stage, the company identifies the resources that the employee will need to reach the goal, including courses and work experience.

**Effective training and development in the organisation**

Effective employee training leads to an increase in quality goods and services as a result of potentially fewer mistakes. Consequently, accuracy, effectiveness, good work, safety practices and good customer service can be expected. An intelligent and well-trained workforce is central to both productivity and the success of an organisation. Organisations can save money by retaining valuable employees: the costs of recruitment and training of new entrants can be avoided.

Another gain from the training identified is its effects on quality. Training provides employees with skills that improve their performance. As human performance increases, business performance also improves. Rothwell and Kazanas (2006:234) are of the opinion that training not only influences the bottom line, but is also critical in cost saving. As a consequence of employee training, the level of turnover is reduced.

It is also important to train and develop the managers and supervisors of an organisation. Many managers are appointed managers because of their skills and expertise in their own job functions, but lack the knowledge and experience to manage people. They may be referred to as non-managers and McConnell (2004:239) advises that non-managers should be trained in the scientific problem-solving process. This includes diagnosing, setting objectives, deriving alternate courses of action, evaluating different causes, selecting a course, and testing and implementing it. One of the major causes of mistakes in business is a lack of discipline in the non-manager’s approach to problem solving.

The participative management style is practised in many organisations internationally, where workers are involved in decisions regarding their work. Perry (2007:78) confirms that this concept is widely applied in various parts of the world and particularly in the new South Africa. This is evident where employees participate in the management of organisations and in joint management decision making on certain issues. In participative management, employees put forward their ideas, thus contributing to solving problems that affect the organisation.
Investing in training and development is imperative for any organisation, which will certainly realise a return on investment in training and developing their workers. Those who neglect this important aspect of human resource management are bound to suffer the consequences as warned by Nel, Van Dyk, Haasbroek, Schultz, Sono and Werner (2004:167), who state that investing in employee training and education is vitally important in today’s competitive marketplace. When companies fall behind in the development of their human resources, they are prone to fall behind in countless other ways as well. The above is confirmed by Noe et al. (2003:51) in their comment on the fact that we live in very turbulent times. Changes occur frequently in organisations, in jobs and in the way they are performed. Nowadays, it is important for managers to help people to grow in confidence, and to develop new skills to cope and adapt to the challenges of change.

Workers are essentially assets to an organisation and should therefore be treated as human capital. The implications of more investment in them would raise expectations from them in terms of performance. Their improved skills and behaviour will give the organisation its competitive edge. Perry (2007:95) asserts that human capital represents the human factor in the organisation. The combined intelligence and skills and expertise of employees give the organisation its distinctive character. The human elements of the organisation are those that are capable of learning; striving for change, innovation and provision of creative thrust, which if properly nurtured will ensure long-term survival of the organisation.

Eskom’s quality assurance unit does have a training programme which is not currently being implemented effectively on a regular basis to enhance the performance of both management and workers alike. According to McConnell (2004:67), “[l]ine managers, supervisors and workers are often taken for granted and not recognized by senior management as important to the operations of the organization.” He further advises that people are not just cogs in vast organisational machines; rather, they also experience problems on and off the job, which impede their performance in a similar way to lack of individual knowledge or any structural deficiency in job design.

The training of workers is extremely important in any organisation and is even more important for South Africa, which is a new democracy where previously disadvantaged individuals were deprived of proper basic education and training. This has resulted in the country being placed in a position where huge numbers of older individuals are unskilled and have communication deficiencies. These individuals require basic training, which is termed adult basic education and training (ABET). Recently, the Minister of Higher Education, Dr Blade Nzimande, mentioned the intention to change ABET to AET (Adult Education and Training).

According to McConnell (2004:239), companies that have an investment perspective of human resource management view training as an opportunity to increase long-term productivity. Training may also be viewed as a solution to a number of problems, such as substandard quality resulting from skills deficiencies and the voluntary turnover of employees seeking more rewarding jobs. It may also reduce the involuntary turnover of employees who are terminated because of skills deficiencies and may provide a means of preventing skills obsolescence.

**Organisational training**

Training refers to the acquisition of the skills, knowledge and competencies required to perform a task, by means of teaching. Noe et al. (2003:251) defines training as “a planned effort to facilitate the learning of job-related knowledge, skills, and behaviour by employees”. Although the list of reasons for conducting training sessions is exhaustive, Rothwell and Kazanas (2006:212) categorise them into two sets: 1) to fill a "performance gap" as identified
during the performance management process; and 2) to fill up a "growth gap", that is, to be promoted or to be able to fill another open position in the organisation.

Other studies worthy of consideration have been carried out to determine the reasons why organisations should train their employees. Many organisations are forced to train only to reclaim their Skills Development Levies (SDL) which they pay monthly to government. Others do not even take advantage of this, and regard it as a cost to the company. They consequently do not bother with the training and development of workers. This seems to be an international problem, as confirmed by Robbins et al. (2003:157). The unfortunate situation is that many managers pay lip service to training, while allowing unsystematic and inefficient training practices to flourish. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the NDPW lags behind its main competitors in the training and development of people at work.

**Impact of training and development on organisational productivity**

Employee development is, in addition to training as reviewed above, the major factor in the creation of employee human capital, which determines the long-term productivity of an employee’s behaviour (Nel et al., 2004:145). While training is concerned with the employee’s current job, development prepares the employee for future job requirements. Effective development programmes allow management to maintain a workforce that can adequately replace employees who may leave the company or who are moved to other areas. It also allows for employees to cope with newly developed technology, and ensures that adequate human resources are available for expansion into new areas.

Nel et al. (2004:142) outlines the following effects of training and development on organisational productivity:

- increased success of quality projects
- reduction of project failures and defects
- reduction of staff turnover
- minimal supervision needs
- the ability to progress
- greater capabilities to carry out more projects
- changes in employee behaviour

Noe et al. (2003:379) compiled a list of different approaches for employee development. Their approaches fall into four categories: formal education, assessment, job experience, and interpersonal relationships. Formal education programmes include short courses offered by consultants, executive MBA programmes, and university courses. These involve lectures by experts, business games and simulations, adventure learning, and meetings with customers. Assessment is the collection of information and the provision of feedback to the employees about their behaviour, communication styles and skills. Job experience includes job rotation, promotion, transfer, temporary assignments and downward moves (Noe et al., 2003:391).

**Factors that hinder the training and development of employees**

Robbins et al. (2003:231) points out that many employers are opposed to training and development initiatives because they assume that the responsibility for training people to be workers falls on the school system, not on firms. In addition, they consider that it is the responsibility of the employees to learn how to do their job so that they are hired. Furthermore, they regard training and development programmes as an expense which it is difficult to convince shareholders to approve. According to the perspective of the researcher, if aligned
with the goals, mission and objective of the organisation, and supported by both the employer and the employee, training, development and education programmes delivered the right way and at the right time provide substantial returns for the employer in terms of increased productivity, knowledge, loyalty and profit (Robbins et al., 2003:401). In spite of the innumerable reasons and benefits derived from training, in most cases training and development programmes fail. This is regardless of whether the courses were attended in the best universities or delivered by the most prominent trainers.

Perry (2007:282) asserts that work appears among the first illustrations outlining the clear reasons why training and development programmes fail. His study was seconded by Kleiman (2003:389), who addressed the failures of training and development programmes in greater depth. In these two works, the first reason identified for the failure of training and development programmes stems from the training objectives not being aligned with the business needs. If the root of the problem of poor performance, for instance, it is related to factors such as reward systems, job design and motivation, which are not related to training, training will be pointless. Thirdly, in the absence of objectives to provide direction and focus, training will certainly not succeed. Training and development should include a focused process that allows the employee to ponder desired results. Objectives afford important direction and focus for learning the final product, which is a change in job performance.

Researchers also hold that when training is too expensive if compared to its short-term return on investment, then companies may consider it a failure and, therefore, unacceptable. However, the long-term pay-off may be rewarding. Training will be worthless if the participants regard the training programme as a mere event without any change to their behaviour. Whenever training is considered as a single event, the chances of behaviour change are slim. Training is also likely to fail if participants are not held accountable for the results. Generally, employees are not held accountable for the use of the contents of their course in the workplace. Unless they are held accountable, no change will occur in their behaviour (Kleiman, 2003:49).

If the conditions are not conducive to learning, the training efforts will have been in vain. Moreover, without the support of line management training will also fail. When there is no support from direct managers/supervisors, the employees will resist implementing the new skills and knowledge acquired during the training course. Management involvement is crucial to the learning process. Another reason for the failure of training and development occurs when the company fails to isolate the effects of training and development. However, other factors rather than training may influence performance. Thus, the advances directly related to training must be isolated. If not, some training programmes clearly noticeable as impacting on the bottom line may be discarded as irrelevant. For the success of a training programme, top executives’ commitment is critical. Top management will not only allocate resources but, for the training and development to succeed, will also participate in the design of the process. Lastly, training and development will be unsuccessful if there is a failure to provide feedback and use information about results. If the company fails to evaluate training by providing feedback, employees will not be able to know about their progress, nor facilitators to understand the success of their programmes.

At ESCON, employees are provided with training; however, after training they fail to transfer whatever they have learnt to their working environment in order to improve performance. When an employee retires or leaves the organisation it becomes difficult to find someone internally to fill the vacant post, even though other employees have been sent for training for
such positions. It has been found that adults prefer different training methods to younger employees; older adults prefer practical training methods to classroom training (theoretical training).

**Factors affecting employee performance**
According to Anderson (2003:122), the following are the factors affecting employee performance to increase productivity:

- **Experience**
  Hiring employees who do not have the proper background for the job is one of the things that start a performance downward spiral (Anderson, 2003:122). Company training should be used to enhance the employee's background. If an employee has undergone extensive training but is still experiencing performance issues, then the problem could be that the employee does not possess the necessary experience to do the job.

- **Work–home balance**
  As much as an employer may not want to be affected by the personal life of his employees, personal problems can sometimes affect employee performance. Managers need to be sensitive to employees’ personal problems, and be prepared to discuss the issues with employees when necessary. If an employee requires time off to deal with a personal problem, then granting that time off will help to show all employees that the company values them (Anderson, 2003).

- **Manager interaction**
  If an employee does not get feedback from his/her manager, then he/she has no idea how to rate his/her performance. Managers should be trained to give positive and negative employee feedback. In negative situations, the manager should work with the employee to create a programme that will help address the performance shortcomings. It is easier for employees to improve their performance when they know what they are doing right and what they are doing wrong (Anderson, 2003).

- **Setting goals**
  To help employees improve their performance, employers need to set goals that employees are required to achieve. Performing to the minimum standards means the employee is doing his job, and that can help an employee understand what is expected of him at a minimum. It would also be helpful to create incentives that will give employees motivation to go beyond the set goals (Anderson, 2003).

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

**Target population**
According to Saunders, et al. (2003), a “population” relates to the entire set of data that is of interest to the researcher, and the “target population” refers to the group of people or objects from which the sample should be taken. Because it is not feasible to collect data for the entire statistical population, a sample, which is a representative of the population, was drawn from the employees of ESCON Cc. These participants who were randomly selected range from entry-level employees to senior management.

**Sample size**
The sample size aims to have an appropriate number of respondents to participate in the study. In this study, the population size comprises of 60 out of the 87 employees at Eskom. This
makes an outreach level of about 60% and we expect a more than 80% response rate. Saunders et al. 2003:110 in their research stated that large sampling techniques maximize the degree to which the sample represents the whole population. Subsequently, results are a generalization to the population. In this study, all employees were given a chance to participate.

Limitations of the research
The study is limited to employees of ESCON in South Africa, who were given the questionnaires to complete.

RESULTS, DISCUSSION, AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

Response Rate
There was a high response rate of 84.5% higher than the expected 80%. Of the 58 questionnaires distributed 49 responded completely and correctly while just 5 questionnaires were returned incomplete, leaving only 4 questionnaires unanswered. For the sake of more accurate results only the fully and completed questionnaires were used for the research.

Analysis of Data
The final analysis are presented in the following sections; section 4.4 looks at the biographical information of the respondents, section 4.5 examines the factors affecting training, section 4.6 focuses on the impact of training and development on employee performance, Section 4.7 is based on the impact of training on organisational productivity and finally section 4.8 concludes with open ended questions for the respondents.

Biographical Data
Age of Respondents

Figure 4.1.1: Age of Respondents
At ESCON Consulting employees between the ages of 21 and 30 years make up a whooping 78% of the employed while only a meager 8% of those recruited are above the age of 40. This is clearly depicted in figure 1 above. These young employees working in the company are mostly in administrative positions but yet they have an opportunity to grow to higher positions within the company.

The company is actively leading by its promise to reduce youth unemployment in South Africa. There has been an ongoing debate as to whether a young workforce could positively affect productivity in a company. According to Martin (2005:97) calls the young workforce generation Y. She reckons this group of employees are “independent entrepreneurial thinkers who relish responsibility, demand immediate feedback, and expect a sense of accomplishment hourly.” They are the drivers of firms profitability and based on her findings they are essential to the growth of every company. Much could be said around this, but this goes a long way to support ESCON’s long term strategy.

Race

Figure 4.4.2: Respondents Race

As seen in the company’s policy of recruiting youths the company is also committed in addressing the imbalances of the country’s past. Eighty seven percent of the company’s staff is black with only three percent and four percent Indian and white respectively.

Race plays a key role in the employment history of the country. Unemployment in South Africa is amongst the highest in the world (Kingdom and Knight, 2004:315) and race alongside education, age, gender and location all play an important role. Eskom has made it a responsibility according to their CEO to defy the odds by headhunting young educated and talented young South Africans who can make a mark in the company. In his own words he said “our strategy is bound to succeed because the “Blacks” are willing to fight for their future and that of this beautiful country” Despite lots of criticism the CEO agrees that a work place with a lot more diversity would be healthier.
ESCOn employs a total of one hundred and twenty three employees with a larger proportion being female and black. In other words as represented on the chart above women make up sixty three percent of the staff while men make up only thirty seven percent. In a bit to empower the woman, ESCON’s recruitment strategy favours the recruitment of young black women. The company in its fifteen years of existence has always prioritised women according to the Human Resource officer of the company. When asked about the effect women’s pregnancy could have on the company’s performance, the HRM said it might be a concern for other company’s but at ESCON it is not. The company has a very successful cross functional team that limits the effects or even cancels out the effect of an employee’s absence, there are other employees ready to take up her role in her absence. She added that because it’s normal and does not happen suddenly the company has enough time to plan before an employee goes on leave.

**Management Level**

**Figure 4.4.4: Respondents level in the company**

[Diagram showing the breakdown of management levels]
Eskom has a functional organisational structure with support staff or first line employees forming eighty one percent. Lower level managers like supervisors; team leaders and coordinators form nine percent of the staff. The middle managers and senior mangers form six and four percent of company’s staff.

The staffs in senior management positions have spent averagely six years or even more in the company and every single personnel have grown through the management ranks of the company. Grove (2007:17) in one of his elusive articles pointed out that many organisations face leadership problems because of inadequate effective succession planning. When companies identify potential leaders according to Grove (2007) it is their duty to develop such skills and empower such employees. ESCON does recruit senior staff from within the company; this strategy has seen a lot of commitment from staff within the company and has served as a motivational tool. In simple words we can say that ESCON has been able to manage employee leadership development and succession planning.

**Length of Service**

*Figure 4.4.5: Respondents length of service within the company*

Sixteen percent of employees have worked only for less than two years in the company while the prominent sixteen-nine percent have worked between three and four years. For the upper tier seven percent of employees have worked between four to six years and eight percent have worked above six years.

The level playing ground that ESCON offers to all employees according to the human resource manger has encouraged hard work and more employee retention in the company. The company also has a salary and bonus structure based on employee longevity and performance. Despite claims made by the company, there are other factors, which can encourage employees to stay long in the company. The work environment, qualities of relationships that employees create are all factors that motivate employees to say on in a company. Fear of the unknown also plays a key role as employees are not sure as to what awaits them in their new job.
A total of eleven participants agreed that the training provided is aligned with business objectives, fifteen percent of participants were neutral and a total of fifty nine percent of participants disagreed that training provided is aligned with business objectives. In accordance with the eleven percent of participants who agreed that training provided is aligned with business objectives, Grobler et al. (2006:95) state that it is important that the relevant training plans are devised in order to fit appropriately the trainees, the job description, the managers and supervisors, and their different levels of education and background, especially in South Africa with its past history. Grobler et al. (2006:97) emphasise the importance of this aspect of the training process in their statement that trainees may well differ in terms of their level of educational achievement, their attitude towards learning, their ability to absorb new ideas or maintain concentration, and their team working skills. Fifteen percent of participants were neutral with regard to this issue; it could be that these employees do not see any alignment between training and job objectives or have not attended any training session and are ignorant. Fifty nine percent of participants, however, disagreed that training provided is aligned with business objectives. These employees must have attended a training session, which was not aligned with the tasks they were carrying out in the organisation.
Ten percent of participants agreed that clear directions are provided during training, 10% of participants were neutral on the matter and a total of sixty percent disagreed that clear directions are provided during training. In terms of the 10% that agreed that clear directions are provided during training, Kleiman (2003:103) states that, in the absence of objectives for providing direction and focus, training will certainly not succeed. Training and development should include a focused process that allows the employee to ponder desired results. Accordingly, objectives should include important directions and focus for obtaining the final product, which is a change in job performance. Only 10% of participants were neutral on the matter; these employees may be employees who are new to the organisation and who do not know whether clear directions are provided during training. A total of 60% of participants disagreed that clear directions are provided during training. Grobler et al. (2004:43) states that it is the employer’s responsibility to provide the employee with the information that enables him/her to perceive and correctly interpret the expectations of the organisation.

**Figure 4.5.3: Opportunities for career development affects training**
A total of 60% of participants agreed that a lack of opportunities for career development affects training, 5% were neutral on the matter and only 7% disagreed that a lack of opportunities for career development affects training. Robbins et al. (2003:72) believe the lack of chances for promotions and advancement can lead to one not seeing any future in an organisation, and therefore resorting to absenteeism. This was borne out by the fact that 60% of participants agreed that training increases opportunity for career development. When employees enter a new organisation there is the hope of moving to a higher position within that organisation; when employees realise that there is no opportunity for career advancement, they start looking for new jobs.

In a British study examining the impact of training on mobility, Green, Hill, Friday and Friday (2005:13) concluded that, in aggregate, training has on average no impact on mobility. However, training that is wholly sponsored by the individual (or their families) is on balance likely to be a prelude to job search. In contrast, when employers pay for training a downward effect on mobility is more likely.

Only 5% of participants were neutral to this statement. Those who were neutral were not sure whether they were satisfied with their positions in the organisation or not. A total of 7% of participants disagreed that training increased opportunities for career advancement in the organisation. Employees who are already in a good position in the organisation do not see the need for providing career advancement because they are protecting their own positions.

**Figure 4.5.4: Working conditions in the organisation are conducive to the transfer of learning**

Based of the figure above, only 60% of participants agreed that working conditions in the organisation are conducive to allow the transfer of learning, 16% of participants were neutral on the issue and only a few 7% disagreed (five percent) and strongly disagreed (two percent) that working conditions in the organisation are conducive to allowing the transfer of learning.

Bearing in mind that 60% of participants agreed that working conditions in the organisation are conducive to the transfer of learning, Hazier and Render (2006:392) state that working
conditions include the physical environment in which work takes place. Illumination, noise and vibration, temperature, humidity and air quality are work environmental factors that affect the transfer of training. Only 16% participants were neutral and, it would appear, had no opinion on this issue; these employees may be those who are doing office work in the organisation. A minority of participants (7%) disagreed that working conditions in the organisation are conducive to allowing the transfer of learning. Cohen, Fink, Gadon and Willits (2001:392) support the underlying reasons for this statement, saying that when the work environment is not conducive to promoting the employee’s well being and expectations, it can contribute negatively to employee performance.

**Figure 4.4.5: management is always available to give support after training**

![Pie chart showing the agreement level of management support after training.](image)

Only 65% of participants agreed that management is always available to give support after training, 15% of participants were neutral and 20% disagreed.

In this regard, Noe et al. (2003:442) state that the unwillingness of supervisors to delegate responsibility or to teach employees or exercise fairness in treatment can lead to employee dissatisfaction with their work. Supervisors act as a source of social support for the employee. A total of 15% of participants were neutral on the matter, which could be because they were afraid that they would lose their jobs. A total of 20 participants agreed that supervisors are unable to help them. Sound relationships between supervisors and employees are required in order for them to meet organisational goals.

**Figure 4.5.6: Feedback is provided after training**

![Pie chart showing the agreement level of feedback after training.](image)
Only 65% of participants agreed that feedback is provided after training; 13% of participants were neutral and a total of 22% of participants disagreed that feedback is provided after training.

In support of this, Robbins (2005:208) states that training and development will be unsuccessful if there is a failure to provide feedback and use information about results. If the company fails to evaluate training by providing feedback, employees will not be able to know about their progress, nor will facilitators understand the success of their programmes.

A total of 13% of participants were neutral on this matter; these employees may not have attended any training in the organisation and they may not be sure whether feedback is provided. A total of 22% of participants disagreed that feedback is provided after training. It would seem that feedback needs to be as objective as possible and delivered with the appropriate interpersonal and conflict resolution skills. It can be a mix of both informal feedback and feedback delivered as part of a formal performance management cycle (Robbins et al., 2003:222).

Figure 4.5.7: the degree of support from supervisors affects training within the organisation

A total of 65% of participants agreed that lack of support from supervisors affects training in the organisation, 14% remained neutral on the matter and 21% disagreed that a lack of support from supervisors affects training in the organisation.

According to Robbins et al. (2003:323), decreasing dissatisfaction in the area of supervisor support requires leadership skills and the ability to treat all employees fairly. Positive feedback is a key element to employee performance after training. Only 14% of participants were neutral. In this regard, McConnell (2004:177) states that good employees do not always make good supervisors. Moreover, employees who perceive they are not being treated fairly owing to unfair interpersonal treatment or unfair procedures develop low job satisfaction and may seek alternative employment with another organisation in pursuit of equity. Twenty-one percent of participants, on the other hand, disagreed that the degree of support from supervisors
affects training in the organisation. Immediate supervisors and managers need to display the interpersonal skills required to engage employees and enhance their self-confidence. This includes providing positive encouragement for a job well done (Noe et al., 2003:51).

Figure 4.5.8: Training and development promote successful succession planning

A total of 77% of participants agreed that training improves performance of employees by reducing uncertainty; 16% of participants remained neutral on the issue and only 7% of participants disagreed.

With regard to this issue, Nel et al. (2004:276) found that individuals become effectively committed to the organisation when they perceive that the organisation is pursuing internal promotion opportunities and providing proper training and that supervisors do a good job in providing information and advice about careers. George and Jones (2002:78) conclude that both on-the-job and off-the-job training have a significant effect on job mobility. While formal on-the-job training reduces the likelihood of mobility, particularly for young women, off-the-job training increases the likelihood of mobility. In a study of six local labour markets, Gibson, Ivancevich and Donnelley (2007:211) found that women who received employer-provided and job-related training had a lower probability of job dissatisfaction.

Sixteen percent of participants were neutral on this issue and it would seem that these employees are not sure if training improves employee performance. Moreover, a total of 7% of participants disagreed that training improves employee performance. In this regard, Wysocki (2002:312) detected a complex relationship between job satisfaction and training. He suggests that establishments that enhance the skills of existing workers have lower job satisfaction. In a British study that examined the impact of training on mobility, Robey and Sales (2007:431) concluded that training has on average no impact on mobility. However, training that is wholly sponsored by the individual (or their families) is on balance likely to be a prelude to job search. In contrast, when employers pay for training the downward effect on mobility is more likely.
A total of 10% of participants agreed that a lack of resources affects training, while only 10% of participants were neutral on the matter. The vast majority of participants (80%) disagreed that a lack of resources affects training.

In line with these findings, Rothwell and Kazanas (2006:55) maintain that employers should ensure that individual workloads and organisational systems and processes do not hinder employees from applying established skills or from practising newly acquired skills. Hence, adequate time and material resources need to be available to enable them to perform to the best of their ability. Only 10% of participants gave neutral responses thus indicating that they were not sure whether resources have an impact on training or not. The majority of participants (80%) disagreed that a lack of resources affects training. Rothwell and Kazanas (2006:59) state that employees’ work can be made easier, which helps to minimise error rates and customer dissatisfaction, by supplying job aids like templates, guides, models and checklists.

**Impact of Training and Development on employee performance**

**Figure 4.6.1: Training improves the performance of employees and gives more job security**

A total of 72% of participants agreed that training improves their performance and gives them a greater level of job security; while 5% were neutral on the matter and 23% disagreed that training actually improves their performance.
This finding is supported by Rothwell and Kazanas (2006:145), who state that effective employee training leads to an increase in employee performance. Consequently, accuracy, effectiveness, good work, effective safety practices and satisfactory customer services can be expected. The fact that 5% of participants were neutral may have been because these employees are never sent for training in the organisation. In total, 23% of participants disagreed that training affects their performance positively. Johnson and Redmond (2006:18) state that new employees cause a great deal of wastage. Moreover, organisations experience wasted time owing to inexperienced replacement staff. Management and other staff spend valuable time not doing their job but trying to orientate the replacement staff. In addition, productivity can be affected; wastage can be stationary, breaking machine, default goods as the new employee is learning in the organisation. Kreitner and Kinicki (2007:300) state that if an employee is not familiar with the organisation error may occur while learning to use equipment.

**Figure 4.6.2: Employees gain new knowledge after training**

Only 28% of participants agreed that employees gain new knowledge after training; 10% were neutral in this regard and a total of 62% disagreed that employees gain new knowledge after training.

In this regard, Nel et al. (2004:142) maintain that effective development programmes allow for the organisation to maintain a workforce that can adequately replace employees who may leave the company or who are moved to other areas. It also allows for the employees to cope with newly developed technology, and ensures that adequate human resources are available for expansion into new areas.

Ten percent of participants were neutral on this matter; these employees were not sure whether training gives employees the opportunity to gain new knowledge. On the other hand, a total of 62% of participants disagreed that employees gain new knowledge after training. These employees probably attended a training session which was not applicable to their work in the organisation.
A total of 55% of participants agreed that training increases employee confidence when performing his/her tasks after training; 13% were neutral on the issue and 20% disagreed that training increases employee confidence while performing their tasks. Noe et al. (2003:202) point out in this regard that, as employees undergo training, their confidence can be increased and their value can also be confirmed. They also point out that, by means of training, new knowledge and skills and changing attitudes are communicated to the employees in order to raise awareness of their current knowledge and skills. Only 13% of participants were neutral on this issue; these employees do not see any increased confidence in employees who undergo training. Moreover, a total of 22% of participants disagree that training increases employee confidence when performing their tasks. Rothwell and Kazanas (2006:167) state in this regard that an intelligent and well-trained workforce is central to both workforce productivity and the success of an organisation.
A total of 58% of participants agreed that training motivates employees to enhance their performance; while 12% were neutral and 30% disagreed. In line with these findings, Nel et al. (2004:310) state that a motivated person is always aware of the fact that a specific goal must be achieved, and continuously directs his/her efforts at achieving that goal, even in the face of adversity. Nel et al. (2004:207) state that a person is motivated only when his/her personal needs have been satisfied. The quality of work and the output of a motivated person are generally high. Only 12% of participants were neutral to the statement. Nel et al. (2004:207) defines motivation as follows: “Motivation is the force that makes us do things: this is a result of our individual needs being satisfied (or met) so that we have inspiration to complete the task. These needs vary from person to person as everybody has their individual needs to motivate themselves.”

Figure 4.6.5: Training improves the quality of products produced by the employees as a result of fewer mistakes

A total of 60% of participants agreed that training improves the quality of the products produced by employees as a result of fewer mistakes; 18% was neutral and only 10% disagreed that training improves the quality of products produced by employees as a result of fewer mistakes being made.

A total of 60% of participants agreed that training improves the quality of products produced by the employee as a result of fewer mistakes. Thompson (2004:304) supports the view that poor service results from a lack of the skills and knowledge needed to achieve performance objectives. Insufficient development in respect of new technology being utilised by private sector consultants results in reliance on external services rather than in the organisation developing and utilising its own resources. Glacer (2000:23) states that skills are still mostly available, but the problem is that they are no longer to be found even in government departments, as staff members have left to set themselves up as consultants. Only 18% of participants were neutral on this matter and 10% of participants disagreed that training improves the quality of products produced by employees as a result of fewer mistakes. These
respondents probably feel that after training employees continue make mistakes because they are not familiar with new skills they receive during training.

**Figure 4.6.6: Training assists employees to meet organisational targets by effectively managing time**

A total of 80% of participants agreed that training helps employees to meet organisational targets by managing time effectively, while 2% of participants were neutral on the issue and only 18% of participants disagreed.

In line with the above finding, Hazier and Render (2006:334) state that the training process enables employees to be aware of their individual roles and responsibilities in terms of meeting organisational targets. Training employees to work as a team will allow them to accomplish the organisation’s strategic goals and strategic objectives. In terms of the 2% of participants who were neutral, it could be that these employees do not know if training plays an important role in meeting organisational targets. On the other hand, a total of 18% of participants disagreed that training helps employees in meeting organisational targets by managing time effectively.

**Impact of training on organisational productivity**

**Figure 4.7.1: Training improves the quality of employees' productivity**
Only 14% of participants agreed that training improves the quality of productivity of employees, while 56% of participants were neutral on the matter and 58% disagreed. In this regard, according to McConnell (2004:239), companies having an investment perspective of human resource management view training as an opportunity to increase long-term productivity. Training may also be viewed as a solution to a number of problems, such as substandard quality resulting from skills deficiencies and voluntary turnover of employees seeking more rewarding jobs. Effective employee training leads to an increase in quality as a result of potentially fewer mistakes. Consequently, accuracy, effectiveness, good work, safety practices and customer services can be expected (Kleiman, 2003:234). In addition to and underlining the findings of this study (5% of participants neutral and 61% disagreeing that training improves the quality of productivity of employees), Perry (2007:120) states that if training is not aligned with the organisational objectives there will be no improvement in product quality.

**Figure 4.7.2: Training improves organisational productivity through employee performance enhancement**

A total of 62% of participants agreed that training improves organisational productivity through employee performance; 6% were neutral on the matter and 32% disagreed. Nel et al. (2004:110) supports the statement that training improves organisational productivity through employee performance when they state that employee development is the major factor in the creation of employee human capital, which determines the long-term productivity of an organisation. While training is concerned with the employee’s current job, development prepares the employee for future job requirements. Effective development programmes allow the organisation to maintain a workforce that can adequately replace employees who may leave the company or who are moved to other areas. Only 6% of participants were neutral on this issue, which might be because these employees do not see any difference in productivity after employees have attended training. Meanwhile, a total of 32% of participants disagreed that
training improves organisational productivity through employee performance; it could be that these employees believe that it is not only training that increases productivity in an organisation, but also the availability of resources.

**Figure 4.7.3: training helps employees to adapt to new developments in order to improve productivity**

Twenty-one percent of participants agreed that training helps employees to adapt to new developments in order to improve productivity; 15% were neutral in this regard; and 64% disagreed that training helps employees to adapt to new developments. In support of this, Noe et al. (2003:211) state that, through training, employees can quickly adopt newly developed and advanced technology such as robots and computer-based manufacturing processes. Only 15% of participants were neutral: these employees were not sure whether training causes employees to adapt to new development or their individual intelligence. A total of 64% of participants disagreed that training helps employees to adapt to new developments and that adapting to new developments depends on employees’ level of intelligence.

**Figure 4.7.4: Training improves the productivity of the organisation, as supervisors are able to spend a reduced amount of time supervising employees after training**
A total of 65% of participants agreed that training improves the productivity of the organisation because supervisors spend less time supervising employees after training; while 15% were neutral on this matter and 20% disagreed.

A total of 65% of participants agreed that training improves the productivity of the organisation because supervisors have to spend less time supervising employees after training. In line with this finding, Noe et al. (2003:51) found that immediate supervisors and managers need to display the interpersonal skills required to engage employees and enhance their self-confidence. This includes providing positive encouragement for a job well done.

Rothwell and Kazanas (2006:418) state that organisations can save money by retaining valuable employees, consequently avoiding the costs of recruitment and training of new entrants. Another gain from training that has been identified is its effects on quality. Effective employee training leads to an increase in quality as a result of potentially fewer mistakes. Fifteen percent of participants were neutral on this matter, which could mean that these employees were not sure whether supervision is required by employees after training. On the other hand, a total of 20% of participants disagreed that training improves productivity of the organisation as a result of supervisors spending less time on supervising employees after training. Mentors and coaches may be either internal or external to an organisation; either way, supervisors will need to possess the necessary facilitation skills to assist employees to apply existing skills and develop new skills (Cascio, 2005:111).

Figure 4.7.5: Training improves organisational productivity by reducing turnover

A total of 10% of participants agreed that training improves organisational productivity by reducing turnover; 15% were neutral on the matter and 65% disagreed that training improves organisational productivity by reducing turnover.

In support of these findings and according to McConnell (2004:239), companies having an investment perspective of human resource management view training as an opportunity to increase long-term productivity. Training may also be viewed as a solution to a number of problems, such as substandard quality resulting from skill deficiencies and voluntary turnover of employees seeking more rewarding jobs. It may also reduce the involuntary turnover of
employees who are terminated because of skills deficiencies and provide a means of preventing skills obsolescence. The 15% of participants who were neutral were probably not sure whether providing employees with training would prevent them from leaving the organisation. A total of 65% of participants disagreed that training improves organisational productivity by reducing staff turnover; employees can leave the organisation if they get a better offer from another company and providing training will not force them to stay within the organisation.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
Findings of the literature review

The findings of the literature review reveal that feedback needs to be as objective as possible and should be delivered with the appropriate interpersonal and conflict resolution skills. Adequate time and material resources need to be available to enable employees to perform to the best of their ability. The findings from the literature review reveal that the transfer of training is more than just applying the knowledge, skills and attitudes learnt in training when back on the job. It requires the generalisation of learnt behaviour and the maintenance of this behaviour over a period of time. Employees in the organisation need to see that professional development learning and their day-to-day activities are related and relevant to the training programme conducted. Adult learners need direct, concrete experiences in which they apply the learning in real work. In addition, adults often learn best by experience, rather than from extensive note taking and memorisation.

According to Kreitner and Kinicki (2007:41), there are a number of factors on the job that prevent transfer of learning. These include the individual (learner). For example, if learners see no value in applying new skills, believe no rewards will result from doing so, or do not value the rewards, transfer of learning from classroom to the job will not occur. The literature findings reveal that training may be viewed as a solution to a number of problems, such as substandard quality resulting from skill deficiencies and the voluntary turnover of employees seeking more rewarding jobs.

The literature reveals that many managers are appointed as managers because of their skills and expertise in their own job functions, but lack the knowledge and experience to manage people. Employers who neglect this important aspect of human resource management are bound to suffer the consequences as warned by Nel et al. (2004), who state that investing in employee training and education is critically important in today’s competitive marketplace. Other employers do not take advantage of this, and take this as a cost to the company, rather than bother with training and developing workers (Robbins et al., 2003:84). It is important that relevant training plans are devised which fit the trainees, the job description, the managers and supervisors and their different levels of education and background appropriately, especially in South Africa with its past history.

Noe et al. (2003:71) point out that, by means of training, new knowledge, skills and changing attitudes are communicated to employees in order to raise awareness of their current knowledge and skills. These researchers point out that, as employees undergo training, their confidence can be increased and their value can be confirmed as well. Literature reveals that effective employee training leads to an increase in quality as a result of potentially fewer mistakes. Consequently, accuracy, effectiveness, good work, safety practices and quality customer services can be expected. Effective development programmes allow the organisation
to maintain a workforce that can adequately replace employees who may leave the company or who are moved to other areas. It also allows for employees to cope with newly developed technology, and ensures that adequate human resources are available for expansion into new areas. Findings reveal that employees should be granted the responsibility to make decisions regarding their training. Employers must provide their employees with opportunities to improve their foundational skills so as to enable them to cope with more complex situations. Findings from the literature disclose that the failure of training and development programmes stems from the training objectives not being aligned with the business needs. One of the reasons for a training programme being unsuccessful is the inability of the company to recognise non-training solutions. Findings from the literature reveal that if conditions are not conducive to the transfer of learning, the training efforts will have been in vain. Training will also fail if the line management does not support it.

Findings from the primary research

The study findings reveal that participants agreed that training provided in the organisation is aligned with business objectives. The majority of the participants agreed that there are clear directions provided during training. They also agreed that training improves employee behaviour in the organisation. However, only a few participants agreed that working conditions in the organisation are conducive to allowing the transfer of learning. The study also revealed that management is always available to give support after employee training. In this study there were a small number of participants who agreed that feedback is provided after training. Moreover, only a few participants agreed that lack of resources affects training, which essentially means that most participants believe that lack of resources does not affect training. Hence, the study findings reveal that training improves employee performance. Only a few participants agreed that employees gain new knowledge after training, although the majority of participants agreed that training increases employee confidence while performing his/her task after training. In addition, the study findings reveal that training improves employee morale, and the majority of participants agreed that training motivates employees to enhance their performance. Participants also agreed that training helps employees to adapt to new developments. The study findings also divulge that respondents believed that training improves the quality of products produced by the employees and because of that; they are making fewer mistakes after training. However, only a few of the participants stated that employees require minimal supervision after training. The majority of participants agreed that training reduces mistakes as well as defects in products. Moreover, the study revealed that respondents felt that training reduces the cost of recruitment and the training of new staff members. Consequently, if training is provided effectively in the organisation there will be a reduction in staff turnover. The majority of participants agreed that training increases organisational productivity through employee performance. The study findings also reveal that respondents believe that training increases opportunities for career development.

Conclusions

Companies whose investment perspective is on human resource management view training as an opportunity to increase long-term productivity. Investing in training and development is imperative for any organisation, which will certainly realise a return on its investment in training and developing its workers. Workers are essentially assets to an organisation and should therefore be treated as human capital. The more that is invested in them, the more that
can be expected from them in terms of performance behaviour which can give the organisation its competitive edge. The evaluation process that follows training is very important as there may be deficiencies in the training programme; therefore feedback is essential if management is to address issues that may have to be revised and/or enhanced. Effective employee training leads to an increase in quality as a result of potentially fewer mistakes. Moreover, effective development programmes allow for the organisation to maintain a workforce that can adequately replace employees who may leave the company or who are moved to other areas. On the individual level, the employee must carry out self-assessment, where he/she is expected to identify his/her opportunities and needs for improvement.

**Recommendations**

In terms of the study findings, the following recommendations are made:

- Working conditions in the organisation should be improved so that they become conducive to the transfer of learning.
- The provision of feedback to employees after training is recommended in order for employees to become aware of areas where they can improve their performance.
- The employer should provide sufficient resources for training so as to improve the training programmes provided.
- The employer should improve training programmes so that employees acquire new knowledge during training.
- The employer should have compulsory training programmes for all employees in order to improve the knowledge and understanding of annual business strategy and objectives.
- Employees should be provided with effective training in order to reduce the time spent by managers on supervising employees.
- Employees should be provided with more training programmes in order to reduce the cost of recruiting and training new staff members.
- If training is provided effectively in the organisation there will be a reduction in staff turnover.

**Further research areas**

As this research study was limited to ESCON, further studies could be done in other companies around the country, to find out whether other areas need similar attention. A qualitative research study could be conducted to look at the impact of training and development on employee performance. Qualitative methods would allow the researcher to use interviews to collect data from the respondents, as in-depth interviews give more information compared to questionnaires.

**NOTE:** The principal author submitted this dissertation to the Regent Business School, Durban, Republic of South Africa in 2013 for the award of the Master of Business Administration Degree (MBA). The dissertation was supervised by Richard Cowden an academic at the school. The study was edited by Professor
Anis Mahomed Karodia for purposes of producing the study as a research article.
The entire bibliography is cited. The references used within the article are contained within the cited bibliography.

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