

Real-world necessity for workplace integrated learning

The purpose of skills development is to facilitate access to mobility and progression within career paths through high quality education and training. As the skills development arena continues to evolve, the reality of the skills crisis is becoming evident. Skills development is becoming a Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) scorecard conversation - yet 7,2 million South Africans are still illiterate, with new forms of illiteracy developing with every new workplace innovation.



Mark Orpen

The industry is hard-pressed to perform, with uncertainty about SETAs, the proliferation of professional bodies and increasing internal short courses, the value of education becomes ever more essential. According to Mark Orpen, CEO at The Institute of People Development (IPD), the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS) III has been extended to March 2018. “The proposed landscape is a significant evolution in the institutional landscape and one which requires significant consideration and discussion amongst stakeholders.”

To facilitate this, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) published a draft proposed for a new National Skills Development landscape on 10 November 2015, to take effect on 1 March 2018. “Skills are required to fulfil company visions and strategies in the real world,” adds Orpen. “Skills audits and needs analyses are of particular importance to design and implement the correct solutions, whether through training, coaching or mentoring. With effective workplace application, learning can result in improved performance and greater successes.”

Particularly in Africa, there is a huge need for scarce and critical skills, as organisations and industries search for qualified and experienced people to fill particular roles or specialisations within the labour market. “With absolute demand for these scarce skills, suitably skilled people simply are not available. In some instances, candidates have the necessary skills but they do not meet employment criteria – this is known as relative demand,” advises Orpen.

The reality is that learning must address dual challenges – ensuring candidates have both the critical skills needed to deliver in demanding roles, and the necessary experience required to function effectively in the real-world workplace. “To achieve this, knowledge must be turned into action, with workplace integrated learning,” confirms Orpen. “Constructive workplace learning shifts the individual from competence to proficiency. It is the highly individual foundation-stone of life-long learning, and results from engagement in practice.”

The result of effective education and work-integrated learning is workplace readiness. “Work readiness is the transitional process from education or unemployment to valuable engagement in work processes,” states Orpen. “A work ready individual possesses the foundational skills needed in order to engage in work processes, and develop the specific skills to become job fit.”

To create a skills development landscape that meets real-world needs, the focus must be on bringing the ideals of the NSDS III, BBBEE and workplace requirements together. “For a productive, successful future, learning must be foundational, practical and reflexive,” concludes Orpen.

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