

Principles to Ensure Successful Skills Development Programs



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**There is a direct correlation between
company performance
and the education levels of your staff**

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Principle 1: What Is Skills Development?

In terms of the National Skills Development Act, employers have a duty to ensure the professional development of their staff.

Considering the Consumer Protection Act's implications, all employers have a duty to ensure that their staff is adequately trained for their role or function in a business.

Considering the implications of the Labour Relations Act, employers cannot deny employees access to the levels of training needed by the employee to adequately perform his/her role in a business.

Principle 2: Not All Skills Development Programs Are Inferior

At the very least, skills development programs should result into measurable learning outcomes.

Programs linked to a qualification are preferable over short learning courses that are not linked to a qualification

Programs linked to qualifications and linked to external professional exams set by professional bodies or by external quality assurance partners ensure high program standards.

All skills development programs at our institution are assessed by external examiners at a professional body or by external quality assurance partners.

The required pass mark of our programs are set by professional bodies or by external quality assurance partners.

Students must meet all requirements set by above external examining bodies.

Principle 3: Start with a Professional Development Plan

Make sure you understand the aspirations of all your employees.

Unless you plot out a clearly defined career path for your employees and unless you link that career path to specific skills and qualifications that you expect them to have, your staff will remain mediocre.

Make sure you document each employee's professional development plan because such a plan is an essential component to the overall performance expectations you have of each employee.

Principle 4: Professional Development Plans Are Not Negotiable

Your company's sustainability is directly linked to the proficiencies of your employees. Skills and the ability to do things well, using a well educated staff is no longer a competitive advantage. It is an important hygiene factor. Customers not only expect quality service or quality products, they also expect that products and services are supported by highly competent employees.

Principle 5: Create a Supportive Environment

Anyone who has studied while working can testify that it is difficult to keep a balance.

The Skills Development Act requires that employees have access training mentors, who are preferably experienced and who can provide guidance on how to cope with work stresses and study stresses.

Workplace mentors are also responsible to identify students who do not perform. Mentors should report nonperformance and assist in the implementation of remedial access to ensure that each employee has a chance to pass his/her exams.

In the ideal world, workplace mentors also guide employees to understand the concepts that they study. In the real world, however, workplace mentors do not have time to provide the required guidance.

That is why we have access to a team of retired subject matter experts that can fulfil the role of a workplace mentor (specific terms and conditions apply).

Some employers insist that employees work long hours and that they do not have to attend classes. Some expect employees to write exams after they finished a night shift.

Not creating an environment for success leave only you to blame for a skills development program's failure.

Principle 6: Make Use of Qualified Skills Development Facilitators

The primary function of a Skills Development Facilitator (SDF) is to ensure your company's Skills Development Compliance.

SDF's are the primary link between:

- Employers
- Employees
- SETA or QCTO
- The training provider

The SDF function requires a knowledge of:

- The Skills Development Act and Regulations
- Policies of SETA or QCTO
- Labour Relations
- Basic principles associated with training programs

Since the SDF function requires levels of speciality, you have to ensure that the assigned SDF can perform all tasks expected from him/her.

Employing and SDF on a full time basis can be costly. That is why we have a number of proficient SDF's available to render assistance in your company.

Principle 7: Understand the Tax Implications

There are significant tax benefits associated with Skills Development. Ensure that your tax consultant is thoroughly familiar with all relevant regulations regarding skills development.

Tax rebates are based on the full headcount of persons on a Skills Development Program. These rebates do not differentiate based on any form of demographics.

Principle 8 Fairness and Ethics Reign Supreme

You cannot deny anyone access to a Skills Development programs based on demographics. The Labour Relations Act considers such denial as an unfair labour practice.

There has not yet been a test case regarding discrimination based on the Skills Development Act. It is not worth the risk to become the first of such test cases.

There have been a number of rulings by the CCMA where an employer was considered to discriminate regarding Skills Development.

The sustainability of your company depends on how well your staff is equipped to keep you competitive.

Principle 9: Choose High-Potential Employees First

You will be surprised how many employees with high potential do not have post-school qualifications or do not form part of the management team.

Assuming that only managers have high potential is the wrong assumption.

Many employers do not know their staff well enough to spot those rough diamonds that wait to sparkle.

Consider a policy that encourages people to become achievers.

Training providers are often blamed for employees' failure on Skills Development Programs. All those who fail are those who are mediocre to low performers in your company and who should not have been on a program in the first place.

Principle 10: Work WITH Your Training Provider and not against Your Training Provider

Many companies simply want to tick a few compliance boxes and not consider the consequences if an employee fails on a program.

Many training providers have been involved in difference levels of education for many years. They can immediately spot which employee is likely to succeed and which employee is likely to waste your money.

Listen to the advice given to you by your training provider.

Listen to the feedback provided to you by your training provider.

For the duration of a skills development program, regularly meet with your training provider to discuss and resolve any issues that may exist.

Principle 11: Insist On Performance

You can only hold people accountable for their actions when you fully understand the situation.

Principle 10 stated that you should partner with your training provider at all times. How else can you gauge the success of your Skills Development expenditure if you do not work as a partner.

Your performance as an employer is just as important as the performance of the employee or of the training provider.

There are at least three parties to any Skills Development Program:

1. The training provider
2. The employer
3. The employee

If anyone of the three shows a casual attitude to the success of the program, take immediate action.