Towards Improving Management Development by understanding

The Perceptions of Senior Managers of the Khaedu Action Learning Programme:

A Case Study in the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Administration

By

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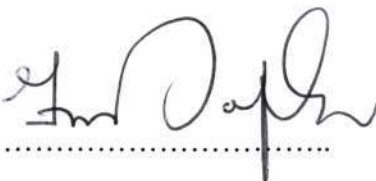
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DECLARATION

This research has not been previously accepted for any degree and is not being currently submitted in candidature for any degree

I declare that this Dissertation contains my own work except where specifically acknowledged

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ABSTRACT

The effectiveness of Senior Management in the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Public is essential to effective service delivery. This study addresses the area of management development. It is an attempt to improve management development by understanding the perceptions of Senior Managers of Action Learning as an approach to management development. One of the reasons cited for poor service delivery is the lack of management capacity. While management development is taking place its impact on individual and organisational performance is being questioned. The objectives of the research are to gather data on the perceptions of Senior Managers of action learning and to use the data to make recommendations on it as a management development approach.

A self administered questionnaire comprising forced choice, closed and open ended questions was development and used to gather data. The population for the study comprised Senior Managers who attended the Khaedu Action Learning Programme with the sample being fifty. Non-probability sampling was used, with the sample selected using purposive sampling. Thirty of the fifty questionnaires were completed and returned. The data was analysed using the MoonStats Statistical Package to determine frequency of responses only. Themes were identified in the data and linked to the theory of action learning. Based on the themes conclusions and recommendations were made.

The survey data reflected that Senior Managers have a positive perception of action learning as a management development methodology and that it contributed positively to their capacity and performance because of its practical learning by doing approach. The data also highlighted that it will have a positive impact on creating a learning organisation, teams and team learning and organisational improvement.

Perceptions about support and commitment to programme and whether the action learning recommendations will be implement were negative. The recommendations made seek to reinforce the positive perception and support the use of action learning as the core management development approach to revitalize management development.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

(xii)

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER ONE
STATEMENT OF PROBLEMS AND RESEARCH DESIGN

1.1 Introduction

Competent leaders and managers are critical to the success of both the public and private sectors. This is even more important in the current context of globalization, increased competition, liberalization of markets and the changing role of governments in the delivery of services. In its attempt to be effective and efficient the public service has engaged in a process of transforming itself by adopting private sector models in the spheres of people management, process design, systems thinking and performance management so as to improve service delivery by being flexible, productive and customer or citizen centered.

The KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Administration like the other eight provincial administrations has been engaged in a process of implementing governments transformation agenda aimed at improving service delivery. However, KwaZulu-Natal faces specific developmental challenges that call for urgent action from both the Provincial Government and Provincial Administration. According to the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Profile (2004) prominent among these are low levels of educational attainment with 1.8 million people who are illiterate; shortage of skilled professional personnel and infrastructure in the health and education sectors; people living in rural areas having limited access to basic services such as clean water and basic sanitation (which are major contributors to poverty); poverty is pronounced in the province and it is estimated that some 5 million people constituting 54% of the total population of the Province receive incomes below the poverty income level. In 2002 it was estimated that 1.75 million people in the Province were living with HIV and AIDS. According to the strict definition of unemployment 33% (986 850) of the labour force were unemployed in 2001 and according to the expanded definition 46% (1,681 406) of the labour force was unemployed, youth unemployment is a particular problem with three quarters of the

1

strictly unemployed under the age of 35 years. To overcome these challenges it is critical that the Provincial Public Service is staffed with a cadre of highly competent Senior Managers.

As a result there is a strategic focus on the identification, development and retention of senior managers both within the public and private sectors. A critical question is how can organisations best develop their managers taking into account the variety of management development approaches available. According to Dotlich and Noel (1998) traditional approaches to executive development are not suited to todays fast changing environment as they are based on case histories and methods relevant to a period characterised by slow and incremental change. The public service has continued to use traditional methods of management development and change management, despite evidence that these methods are not suited to the demands of a transforming public service. An alternate method that is being used successfully in management development is the action learning approach.

As has happened in other parts of the world, South Africa has also experienced changes that have required a re-orientation of the approaches used to develop managers. According to Hirschfield cited in Human (1991) there needs to be a shift in thinking aimed at ensuring that skills learnt can be effectively transferred to the work environment. The skills learnt must also be linked to the goals of the organisation. There needs to be a shift from training to learning, learning that has a specific purpose. Learning must not be seen as a separate *ad hoc* activity but one that is integrated into the strategy and culture of the organisation.

This shift in thinking is also precipitated, according to Meyer cited in Meyer & Boninelli (2004) by the loss of confidence in the leadership of organisations. This has lead, among others, to companies such as General Electric, Johnson and Johnson and Uniliver taking a strategic and holistic approach to management and leadership development. They are employing a blended approach that includes a variety of learning processes with action learning as the core of their programmes.

Consequently, the focus of this study will largely be on management development, with specific reference to action learning and how it is perceived by Senior Managers employed in the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Public Service who attended the Khaedu Action Learning Programme. While there are many approaches to management development, action learning, as an approach is being used more and more because of its impact on the individual, team and organisation as well as its contribution to change, transformation and the creation of a learning organisation.

1.2 Research Background

The Public Service in South Africa is divided into three levels, that is, National, Provincial and Local government. These three levels of government are staffed with employees ranging from lower level unskilled workers to Senior Managers/ Executives the equivalent of a Chief Executive Officer of a large corporate company in South Africa. The Public Service at the National and Provincial level employs more than 1,2 million personnel.

The focus of this study is on the development of Senior Management Service (SMS) members or Senior Managers at the level of Director and Chief Director in the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Administration, who have attended the Khaedu Action Learning Programme. The KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Administration employs 153 407 personnel in fifteen Provincial Departments (KZNPA HRP, 2004). A Department in the context of the Provincial Administration is very different from how a department is perceived in the private sector. A department in the Public Sector can be equated to a corporate company. The size and scope of Departments vary, with smaller departments employing plus/ minus 200 personnel and larger departments up to 64 000. The latter being equivalent to the size of some multi-national companies.

The development of managers in the Public Service is undertaken in terms of the SMS Performance Management and Development System. This study will deal specifically

with understanding the perceptions of Senior Managers who attended the Khaedu Action Learning Programme in order to contribute to the improvement of management development as a training and development approach in the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Administration.

The Senior Management Service comprises the administrative leadership of the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Administration which totals 614 (KZNPA HRP, 2004). Their spheres of management include general management, supply chain management, financial management, human resource management, marketing, policy development, planning, inter governmental relations and management in specialist functional areas such as health, social development, local government, housing, education and agriculture. The achievement of the vision, mission and strategic objectives of the Provincial Government and those of individual departments is the responsibility of these Senior Managers. In light of this, their competence to lead and manage is critical. So too is their continuous development in order to ensure that they have the competencies to achieve individual and organisational performance objectives.

1.3   Literature Review

The literature review for this dissertation will cover books, journals, magazines, reports and the internet. The topic is embedded in the spheres of human resource management and development, adult learning, industrial and organisational psychology, education, training and management. The literature review will be divided into primary literature sources and secondary literature sources. The primary literature sources will be information gathered from academic reports, legislation, government white papers and government reports. This will give a sense of management development within the transformation and reform process that government has embarked on. The secondary literature sources will be books, journals and the internet. The secondary literature sources will focus on the theory and principles of action learning.

1.4 Motivation for the Research

The Audit of Public Service Reforms, Ten Year Review (2004) identified the lack of effective management and leadership as a major barrier to the achievement of goals and objectives. One of the key messages from the 2004 National Cabinet Lekgotla was that leadership and management in the public service needs to be improved. The Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) in 2005 conducted a review of the readiness of departments in the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Administration to improve service delivery. One of the key findings in the report (DPSA, PMT Report: 2005) was the lack of effective leadership and management development.

Management capacity is critical to the success of the Public Service and its attempts to deliver services effectively and efficiently to the public. The motivation for this study is to generate information that will assist in improving management development by understanding the perceptions of managers of the action learning approach.

Lees (1992:89) states that the perception of management development "predominantly reflects the concerns of external professionals in their relationship with client organizations – their perceptions about the task of management, and their ideals and preoccupations with what development should and should not embrace. Largely overlooked has been the internal organisational perspective on management development – what it looks like to managers on the inside".

By assessing the perceptions of Senior Managers this study will address how management development and action learning looks like to managers on the inside. According to Bolt (1989) executive development is a key strategic tool to achieving organizational goals.

In order to transform the manner in which services are delivered to the citizens of the Republic of South Africa, the government introduced the White Paper on Transforming

Public Service Delivery (1997). The purpose of the White paper is to transform back office operational processes and systems in order to ensure effective customer service at the frontline or coalface. To achieve this transformation, Government introduced the 'Batho Pele' or 'People First' initiative. The rationale behind this initiative was to inculcate and develop a culture of service excellence and continuous service delivery improvement (Internet 1).

According to the Project Khaedu Report on the KwaZulu-Natal Programme (2005), a survey was conducted in 2003 on the effectiveness of Batho Pele. The findings reflected that some departments showed improvements in service delivery while many others were found to be treating Batho Pele as an isolated set of principles. In August 2004, Cabinet mandated that all SMS members should during each performance review cycle spend time observing and solving service delivery problems at the coal face. The State of Public Service Report (2006) indicates that senior managers seriously need the capacity to inculcate the Batho Pele principles' as the underlying ethos of the Public Service. The Khaedu Action Learning Programme was developed as an action learning programme to improve management skills for delivering Batho Pele as well as facilitating deployments to the coal face. The action learning approach was adopted for the Khaedu Action Learning Programme based on evidence from a United States Government analysis of training efficiency which showed that action learning is the most effective tool for building skills.

Figure: 1.1   Skills Absorption Success Rate: Analysis of Training Efficiency

Skills absorption success rate
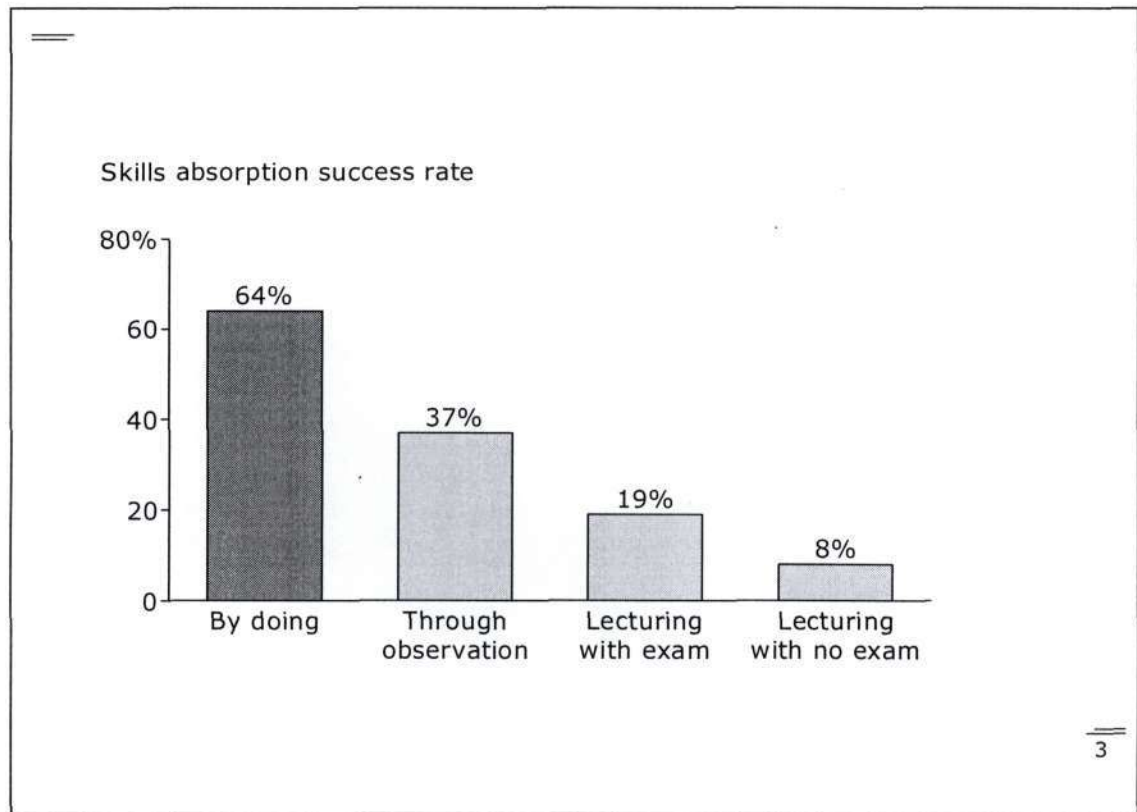
To be in a position to deliver services effectively to the public, the public service requires competent Senior Managers. The purpose of this research is to source information that will enable the researcher to develop a deeper understanding of the perceptions of Senior Managers of action learning with specific reference to the Khaedu Action Learning Programme and make recommendations on improving management development.

1.5   Value of the Project

The study will provide policy makers, decision makers and human resource development practitioners with reliable information on the Khaedu Action Learning Programme based

on the perceptions of Senior Managers. The information will help create a better understanding of action learning as a management development tool and the role of action learning in improving individual and organisational capability.

The Province is in the process of establishing a Provincial Public Service Training Academy that will be responsible for the training and development of all its personnel. Within the Provincial Academy, there will be a unit dedicated to executive management development to be known as the Centre for Public Sector leadership. The research findings will assist the executive and administrative leadership as well as the Board of the Academy to make decisions on the approach and methodology to take in respect of management development in the Provincial Public Service.

1.6 The Research Question

Management development is an important strategic tool in developing and leveraging the capabilities of managers and leaders. However, the approach adopted is important to the extent to which it actually develops the required capabilities. Management development takes many forms and this study focuses on Action Learning as a management development methodology. However, to ensure that this approach is suitable, information is required on the perceptions of Senior Managers of action learning. Based on the aforementioned the question for this research study is what are the perceptions of Senior Managers of action learning?

1.7 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to determine perceptions of Senior Managers of action learning and to use the information to make recommendations on improving management development.

1.8 Research Design

For the purpose of this study a self administered questionnaire will be used. The questionnaire will facilitate the collection of primary data. The questionnaire will be administered to Senior Managers employed in the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Administration. Senior Managers who have attended the Khaedu Action Learning Programme will form the population for the study. One hundred and sixty nine managers have attended the Khaedu Action Learning Programme. Fifty of these managers will form the sample for this study. The participants will be selected using purposive sampling.

The questionnaire will be piloted on 5 Senior Managers and will, thereafter, be distributed by hand to Senior Managers selected from the consolidated class list. The data will be analysed by identifying themes and linking the themes to the theoretical framework based on the action learning equation and twelve elements for successful action learning.

As the study will be conducted in the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Administration, permission will be obtained from the Director-General to administer the questionnaire. Consent will also obtained from the individual participants using a participant declaration form.

1.9 Limitations of the Project

Although the Khaedu Action Learning Programme is a National initiative, this study is limited to the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Administration. Not all members of the Senior Management Service have attended the programme thus the sample is limited to those who have attended.

1.10   Structure of the Study

This dissertation is organized into six chapters. The content of each chapter is as follows:

Chapter One gives a background to the study, the theoretical framework and the problem to be analysed as well as the research methodology.

Chapter Two contains key concepts that set out the definitions and information that supports understanding of the concepts

Chapter Three contains the literature survey which will cover the theory of learning, organisational development, management development and action learning. This section will also cover the current context of the Public service and the implications for management development. The chapter will also focus on action learning, the action learning equation and the twelve element action learning framework. The chapter will end with a discussion of the implementation of the Khaedu Action learning programme in the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Administration.

Chapter Four will cover the research methodology and describe how the field work was undertaken

Chapter Five information obtained from the questionnaire will be analysed and findings reported on in this chapter.

Chapter Six conclusions will be drawn and recommendations will be provided to reinforce where action learning has had a positive impact and set out remedies to improve the implementation of action learning as a management development approach in the Provincial Administration.

1.11 Conclusion

From the background and motivation for the research it is clear that management development is an important intervention that needs investigation and improvement. An important aspect of this research is that it will gather data that will provide an internal perspective of management development. The findings will be useful in re-orientating the current efforts at management development in the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Administration

CHAPTER TWO
KEY CONCEPTS

2.1   Introduction

The literature review undertaken for a research project enables the researcher to analyse and provide a commentary on the available literature in the chosen area of study. This demonstrates that the researcher is familiar with what is known about the research topic. A detailed literature analysis will be covered in chapter three. However, in order to develop an understanding of the chosen area of study it is necessary to define the key concepts that emerged during the literature review. Although the chosen area of study is wide the key concepts discussed in the paragraphs that follow are important to developing an understanding of the main areas that will be covered in the study.

2.2   Action Learning

Action learning is a process that brings together a group of people with the specific purpose of analyzing a work based problem and developing an action plan to solve it. The level of skill and experience of the people that comprise the group varies. The groups or sets work together on strategic organisational problems. In addition to solving the problem, they learn from the change or solution that is implemented and where necessary they make mid-course corrections. An important facet of action learning is learning by doing. The action learning approach facilitates both individual and organisational development **(Internet 2)**.

Action learning according to Dotlich & Noel (1998) is a learning process that integrates and focuses on delivering a cognitive, emotional and business focused experience. It recreates the individual by changing how he or she views the world and how the individual acts in it. It addresses the whole person while other approaches only address parts of the whole.

According to Coghlan, Dromgoole, Joynt & Sorensen (2004) work-based learning or learning-in-action is being accepted as important to the continuous development and survival of organisations. Work sites in organisations are used by managers as locations for learning and not the training room which is distant from the actual work environment. By using work sites it allows for the learning to be an integral part of the strategic, operational and managerial activities of the organisation.

2.3   Adult learning

Adult learning is known as andragogy, meaning the art and science of helping adults learn. According to Craig (1987) adults engage in more intentional learning outside of formal instruction than in organised programmes and are in fact highly self-directed learners. His andragogical model is based on the following assumptions about adult learners:

a) Adults have a need to know why they should learn something

b) Adults have a deep need to be self-directing

c) Adults have a greater volume and different quality of experience than youth

d) Adults become ready to learn when they experience in their life situation a need to know or be able to do in order to perform more effectively and satisfyingly

e) Adults enter into a learning experience with a task-centered (or problem – centered or life-centered) orientation to learning

f) Adults are motivated to learn by both extrinsic and intrinsic motivators

Experience is an important factor in the adult learning process. This has important implications for action learning which is the core focus of this study. Regarding the role of experience in adult learning, Craig (1987) indicates that the experience that adults bring to a learning situation is a source of learning for both themselves and others who are part of the learning situation.   In adult learning there is a greater focus on the use of experiential learning techniques that tap into the experience, knowledge and skills of adult learners.   Therefore, suitable techniques for adult learning include discussion

groups, problem exercises, simulation exercises and field experiences. These techniques provide learners with opportunities to learn while utilizing their experience to analyse problems.

2.4 Competencies

The concept of competencies is important to this study because of the methodology used for the Khaedu Action Learning Programme. The core skills part of the programme includes topics which are aligned to the Senior Management Services Competency Framework. According to Potgieter & Van Der Merwe (2002), competencies are commonly described as knowledge, skills and attitudes/values that an individual possesses to perform a task effectively. Mbokazi, Visser & Fourie (2004) indicate that the concept competency was introduced by Boyatzis, who described competencies as an underlying characteristic possessed by an individual that is utilized for successful performance. According to Vorster and Roodt (2003), competencies can be applied to various human resource processes, namely, recruitment and selection, training and development, performance management, career and succession planning.

Ulrich (1997: 68) states that, "competencies represent the knowledge, skills, and abilities that exist among and across employees and groups of employees". Armstrong & Murlis, (1998), indicate that competence and competency refers to the ability of personnel to be able to perform effectively in their present job and be prepared for their future jobs.

2.5 Experiential learning

Experience plays a critical role in adult learning. According to George & Singh (2000) adults have vast amounts of experience which can form the basis on which they learn and how they relate to new learning. In adult learning, techniques that are experiential are preferred as these techniques use the past experiences of learners to reflect on new learning.

Pfeiffer cited in Van Dyk, Nel, Loedolff & Haasbroek (1997) suggests that in experiential learning, experience precedes learning and that learners give meaning to the learning experiences they undergo. Learning takes place through a process of discovery during the experiential learning process

George & Singh (2000) also indicate that experiential learning occurs when learners engage in an activity and then critically reflect on the activity. Through the process of reflecting learners extract useful insights which results in learning that can be put into practice. This learning is an inductive process and is based on the learning activity being a structured experience within which the inductive process can be finalized. Based on this the more effective training methods will include discussions, simulations, practical exercises, field experience, project work and other participatory action learning techniques.

2.6   Groups

An important facet of action learning is placing managers in groups to solve real business related problems. For action learning to be implemented successfully the coordinators and facilitators of and participants in action learning need to understand groups and group behaviour. According to Robbins and Decenzo (2004) a group is a set of two or more individuals who work together to achieve a particular objective. Groups that are established or form in organizations can either be formal or informal. The formal groups which are generally established by the organisation have specific assignments and established tasks. The behaviour in formal groups is stipulated by and directed toward the goals of the organization.

The use of groups brings together in the case of action learning, managers from divergent backgrounds with divergent knowledge, skills and attitudes. For the group who has to solve business related problems it is critical that the group learns to work together as early as possible and throughout the task they are allocated. Robbins and Decenzo (2004) state that groups which are cohesive are more effective than groups that are not cohesive.

2.7   Learning organisation

According to Senge (1990:3) a learning organisation is an organisation "where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together."

Gephart, Marsick, Van Buren and Spiro (1996) indicate that a learning organisation is characterized by a superior capacity to learn, adapt and change. In such an organisation learning processes are continuously analysed, monitored and aligned to the improvement and innovation strategies of the organisation.

There is an important link between the learning organisation and action learning. This can be seen in what Carvin cited in Maria (2002) describes as five activities learning organisations are skilled at, namely:

    I. Systematic problem solving
    II. Experimentation with new ideas
    III. Learning from own experience and past history
    IV. Learning from experiences and best practices of others
    V. Transferring knowledge quickly and efficiently throughout the organisation

Robbins and Decenzo (2004) describe a learning organisation as having the capability to change and adapt continuously based on the active role played by all personnel in identifying and solving problems as a means of continuous improvement.

The performance management and development system for the Senior Management Service is based on the concept of continuous learning and has its foundation in the learning organization. One of the transformation initiatives of government is to convert the Public Service into a learning organization. Senior Management commitment and involvement is critical to becoming a learning organization.

2.8 Organisational Change

Action learning by its very nature brings about change in organisations. According to Porras and Silvers cited in Van Tonder (1994) organisational change is an activity that aims to alter organisational processes and in doing so influences individual behaviours, which then impact on organisational processes. Van Tonder (2004) states that organisational change is a process that alters the state or condition of an organisation over a period of time.

2.9 Organisational development

Action learning and organisational development are complementary approaches as both seek to find solutions to people, process, systems and performance problems that organisations face. It is, therefore, critical that there is a clear understanding of what organisational development is and how it interfaces with learning and development.

Robbins & Decenzo (2004:211) define organisational development as "an activity designed to facilitate planned, long-term organisation wide change that focuses on the attitudes and values of organisational members; essentially an effort to change an organisations culture".

According to French and Bell (1999) organizational development as is an activity that is led and supported by senior management with the aim of collaboratively improving the organisations culture by focusing on visioning, empowerment, learning and problem solving processes with specific emphasis on using team approaches to achieve organisational excellence. Organisational development uses behavioural science techniques to achieve planned organisational change.

In defining organisational development Varney cited in Craig (1987:538) states that there are at least four well-accepted definitions, namely:

- Organisational Development is a planned change effort evolving the total system managed from the top to increased organisational effectiveness through planned interventions using behavioural science knowledge. (Richard Bechhart)
- Using knowledge and techniques from the behavioral sciences, organisational development attempts to integrate individual needs for growth and development to organisational goals and objectives in order to make more effective organisations. (National Training Laboratories Institute)
- Organisational Development is a process of planned organisational change which centers around a change agent who in collaboration with a client's systems attempts to apply valued knowledge from the behavioural sciences to client problems. (Warren Bennis)
- Achieving an idea of corporate excellence to strive toward and perfecting a sound system of management which can convert driving into action. (Blake and Mouton)

In essence the Khaedu Action Learning Programme supports the change initiative of improving service delivery through the Batho Pele Initiative. The Khaedu Action Learning Programme is an organisational development intervention. It exhibits the four factors of organisational development cited by Varney in Craig (1987) which state that organisational development is a long range effort to bring about planned change based on a common understanding of the change required; it involves the whole organisation or specific parts thereof; its aim is to improve effectiveness and performance; and it intervenes in the processes and systems of the organisation, thereby facilitating learning and setting new strategies.

2.10 Organisational learning

Organisational learning according to Fiol & Lyles (1995) refers to the process of improving the functioning of the organisation through better knowledge and understanding. Nevis, DiBella & Gould (1995) state that organisational learning is the capacity or process that enable an organisation to maintain and improve performance

Argyris & Schon (1978:29) state that "organisational learning occurs when members of the organisation act as learning agents for the organisation, responding to changes in internal and external environments of the organisation by detecting and correcting errors in organisational theory-in-use, and embedding the results of their inquiry in private images and shared maps of the organisation"

An important foundation to organisational learning is developing a learning culture. To achieve a learning culture it has to be embedded in the value and belief system of the organisation. According to Hirschfield cited in Human (1991) an organisation demonstrates a learning culture when change is not viewed as a threat but an opportunity to learn and develop; where personnel accept the need to become lifelong learners; learning takes place at every opportunity provided by the work environment, for example, learning from peers and is not limited to the attendance of formal training; learning is provided by internal experts who are well placed to do so because of their knowledge and expertise; blockages to learning are identified and removed; trainers change from course presenters to become facilitators of learning; and managers play an active role in coaching, facilitating learning and creating a learning culture.

2.11   Perception

This study is centered on the perceptions of Senior Managers of action learning. Hellriegle, Jackson, Slocum, Staude & Associates (2002) define perceptions "as the meaning ascribed to a message by either the sender or receiver. Perceptions are influenced by what people see, by the ways they organize these elements in memory, and by the meanings they attach to them".

According to Robbins & Decenzo (2004) perception entails organizing and interpreting verbal and non-verbal stimuli and attaching meaning to it. By doing so they give meaning to the environment in which they are operating. People may look at the same thing and perceive it differently.

Porter, Lawler & Hackman (1981) describe perceptions as an active process, where an individual selectively absorbs different aspects of his/ her environment and evaluates this in terms of his/ her past experiences, needs and values. With a one individuals past experiences, needs and values differing from those of another so will their perceptions.

2.12 Performance Management

In addition to improving service delivery the introduction of the Khaedu Action Learning Programme is also an attempt to improve individual and organisational performance. According to Armstrong (1994) performance management is a process that supports the achievement of better results from the individual, team and organisation as it allows for the management of performance based on agreed goals, objectives, standards of achievement and levels of competence. Important to this process is establishing a shared understanding of what is to be achieved and developing the capability of personnel that will increase the probability that the agreed goals and objective will be achieved.

Bailey cited in Layton (2002) indicates that performance management uses positive reinforcement as a means of maximizing performance. Positive reinforcement refers to using the system in a positive, non-threatening manner. According to Layton (2002) performance management at the individual level is integral to performance management at the organizational level. Organizations are inanimate and passive whereas employees are dynamic, it is only by working together that organizational objectives can be achieved.

Rudman (2003) describes performance management as a total approach to managing people and performance. It includes setting performance objectives for the organization, business unit, work groups and individuals. According to Lansbury in Rudman (2003:9) performance management is the "process of identifying, evaluating and developing the work performance of employees in the organization, so that the organizational goals and objectives are more effectively achieved, while at the same time benefiting employees in

terms of recognition, receiving feedback and catering for work needs and offering career guidance".

The central ideas of the definitions above are the integrated, total approach to managing people. Furthermore, the outcome of effective performance management is the achievement of organizational goals and objectives, as well as employee reward. The definitions highlight that performance management is as stated by Rudman (2003) a process for integrating organisational performance with the management of the people.

2.13   Single and Double loop learning

Argyris & Schon (1978:29) state that "in organisational single-loop learning, the criterion for success is effectiveness.   Individuals respond to error by modifying strategies and assumptions within constant organisational norms.   In double-loop learning, response to detect error takes the form of joint enquiry into organisational norms themselves, so as to resolve their inconsistency and make new norms more effectively realizable".

Double-loop learning is relevant for action learning as it seeks to change organisational functioning through a process of joint enquiry is aimed at creating new organisational norms.   Double-loop learning requires the development of maps or ideas that provide a different perspective of the problems that organisations or action learning sets want to correct.   Double-loop learning describes the transformational power of learning as it involves the context in which the problem arises.

According to Argyris (1982:106) "such a learning process should decrease dysfunctional group dynamics because the competitive win/lose, low-trust, low-risk-taking processes are replaced by cooperative, inquiry oriented, high-trust and high risk dynamics".   In the action learning equation $L = P + Q$;   where 'Q' represents questioning inquiry which is critical to action learning.

2.14 Team learning

Team learning is a process in which knowledge is generated and shared within a group in a environment that encourages creativity. There is willingness within the team to undertake in-depth exploration of problems. According to Senge (1990) the collective IQ of a group is much higher than the IQ of an individual, if the group can work together it can use each other as a catalyst to understand and solve a specific problem. He highlights the ability to think insightfully about complex issues; the ability to take innovative, coordinated action and the ability to create a network that will allow other teams to take action as three dimensions of team learning that are relevant to problem solving within action learning.

2.15 Transformation

Transformation according to Nelson and Quick (2003), is concerned with a radical move of an organization to a different and sometime unknown future state. The move affects the mission, culture, goals, structure and leadership of the organization. Since 1994 the public service has in essence been going through a transformation process that has had an impact on what Kotler (2000) refers to as the elements that make up the McKinsey 7 – S framework. The framework includes elements of organisational functioning such as style, staff, structure, systems, strategy, skills and shared values.

According to Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson (1996) transformation could be differentiated from other types of changes by substantial and discontinuous change that takes place in the shape, structure and nature of the organization. They emphasise that the change is not incremental and that it is often caused by external factors; that it is deep and pervasive, resulting in decentralization, downsizing, geographical relocation of functions and structural relationships; and that it requires different sets of actions by members of the organization rather than more or less of existing behaviours, patterns, norms and core values. Consequently, the process of transformation has had serious

22

implications in terms of management and leadership capability to lead in this constantly changing environment, including management development.

2.16 Transformative learning

According to Mezirow cited in Khun & Marsick (2005:41), Transformative learning, particularly perspective transformation "is arguably the underlying engine of breakthrough thinking and strategic innovation. This theory of learning involves the examination and transformation of deeply-held assumptions, mental models, paradigms and other blind spots that impede divergent thinking and strategic innovation via a process of critical reflection involving deep questioning, reflection and dialogue. Critical reflection, questioning and dialogue in action learning programs can be instrumental in bringing mental models and perspectives into awareness so they can be examined, reframed and transformed."

According to Pedler cited in Khun & Marsick, 2005, transformative learning can be facilitated by the 'Q' in the Action Learning Equation. The 'Q' represents the Questioning Insight element of the of action learning process. It contributes to transformative learning when its primary focus is directed towards strategic innovation.

2.17 Conclusion

The key concepts in this chapter are important for the rest of the study as they form the basis for discussions in the chapters that follow. While many of the concepts have been used extensively in the academic field and the private sector, many others because of the introduction of action learning and concepts such as the learning organisation are new and represent new terminology in the area of management and human resource development in the Public Sector. Some of these key concepts are transformative learning, team learning, single and double loop learning. The intension in this chapter was to briefly define the key concepts. More detail on some of the concepts will be provided in chapter three.

CHAPTER THREE
LITERATURE SURVEY

3.1   Introduction

Just as Senior Managers are considered to be the competitive edge in the private sector, senior managers are also critical to the effectiveness of the public service and socio-economic development of the country.   There is a clear recognition that the leadership and management of both public and private sector organisations are a critical resource and central to achieving the visions, missions and objectives they strive towards.   It is, therefore, imperative that if organisations are to survive and continuously improve they need to strategically focus on the identification, recruitment, development and retention of good managers.

Management roles according to Rothwell & Kazanas (1994) are subject to and affected by powerful competitive forces which require that organisations respond much faster than they would have done previously.   The ability to respond in a changing and competitive environment is dependent on the quality and level of development of management and leadership in both public and private sector organisations.

This chapter will review literature of the concepts that are central to this study, in order to demonstrate the importance of the area of study and the need to improve the understanding of management development and the role of action learning.   The chapter will cover management development, give an overview of management development in the context of the South African Public Service and explore approaches to management development.   This will be followed by discussions on action learning as a concept and practice and the Khaedu Action Learning Programme that has been implemented in the Provincial Administration.

3.2 Management Development

One of the key concepts in this study is management development. The study will gather data that will contribute towards improving management development in the Public Service. It is, therefore, necessary at the out set to define and develop a understanding of the concept based on available literature.

Management development according to Rothwell & Kazanas (1994) is a planned effort to educate, train and develop personnel who aspire to become managers or are already in management or senior management positions. It also helps in maintaining skill levels in an environment that is competitive and dependent for success on the management talent available.

According to Eastburn in Craig (1987) management development is the process of preparing and educating managers to manage both their people and the achievement of the strategies and goals of their organisations. It also deals with preparing managers for growing responsibilities and more complex tasks.

Joy-Matthews, Megginson & Surtees (2004:238) state that management development enables managers to clearly understand how they want to be developed. This is done through a process of diagnosis and reflection. Management development must be appropriate for both the career development of the individual as well as the work environment.

According to Milkovich & Boudreau (1991) the skills that executives and managers need are mostly taught to them on formal training programmes. Many skills are also learnt on-the-job. As the skills learnt through job experience are less observable, managers bear a greater responsibility for developing them.

The Senior Managers who are the focus of this study are the management and leadership in the Provincial Administration. Literature on both management and leadership is

25

widely available and supports the view that there is a need for both and each can be practiced based on the factors such as the environment, readiness and maturity of followers and level of growth of the organization.

An important factor within the Public Service is that during the process of transformation managers continued to manage when they should be leading. Senior Management development continues by and large to be transactional by focusing on traditional management concepts such plan, lead, organize and control, instead of being transformational by focusing on concepts such as systems thinking, learning organisations, transformational leadership, change, transformation and organisational development.

According to Robbins & Decenzo (2004) management is the process of getting things done, effectively and efficiently through and with other people. Warren Bennis & Burt Nanus cited in Armstrong, (1994:173) state that "Leaders articulate and define what has been previously implicit or unsaid; then they invent images, metaphors and models that provide a focus for new attention. By doing so, they consolidate or challenge prevailing wisdom. In short, an essential factor in leadership is the capacity to influence and organise meaning for members of the organisation".

The debate regarding the difference between management and leadership is important for this study as it impacts on a person's orientation to leading or managing. This leads to a debate on what development managers should be exposed to, both in their view and that of the organization. In this regard Charlton (1993) points out that the debate on leadership and management is not an either/or. Both are necessary especially if organisations are going to develop and survive in a changing environment.

An important question is whether current programmes are training effectively. According to Charlton (1993) there is a perception in industry that formal management training contributes minimally to business success. The quantitative analysis and linear approach used by providers has also been criticized, due to its lack of focus on people

competencies. The difference in what is provided and what is needed by managers is an important point of departure. In light of this, the perceptions of Senior Managers in this study will be important to any recommendations on approach and learning design.

In spite of the perception that formal management training contributes minimally to business success, management development according to Filipczak cited in Rothwell and Kazanas (1994) continues to be the most widely supported and best funded performance improvement activity sponsored by organisations.

In order to develop a deeper understanding of management development it is necessary according to Hale & Margerison (2004) to reformulate the way we view management training and development in terms of what is effective and not effective management training and development. Effective management training and development is characterised by continuous evaluation and what happens before, during and after training interventions; facilitation is undertaken by learning specialists; senior executives take ownership of training and development; training and development is continuously adapted to business needs; managers and leaders are challenged in terms of what constitutes success and are also required to verify and demonstrate what they have learnt has been applied.

In contrast management training and development is not effective when it is characterised by what happens during formal training interventions only because the only evaluation is at the end of the course; the interventions are owned by trainers and human resource professionals; programme design is fixed and adhered to rigidly, return on investment formulae are force-fitted into personal development plans and content is standardized.

3.3 Management Development in the Context of the South African Public Service

3.3.1 The Republic of South Africa Constitution

The Constitution sets out the type of public service the country should have and the type and quality services that it should provide. From this the public service gets its ethos and overarching mission. Within the context of this study, senior managers in the Public Sector are seen to bear the responsibility of ensuring that the aims and objectives of the Constitution are achieved. Section 195 of the Republic of South Africa Constitution Act, 1994 states that the Public Service is responsible for:

- "Promotion and maintenance of a high standard of professional ethics
- Promotion of efficient, economic and effective use of resources
- Provision of services impartially, fairly and equitably and without bias
- Responding to the people's needs and encouragement of the public to participate in decision making
- Ensuring that public administration is accountable
- Fostering of transparency in the provision of services that are timely, accessible and reflect accurate information
- Cultivation good human resource management and career development practices in maximizing human potential
- Ensuring that public administration is broadly representative of the South African people, personnel practices that are based on ability, objectivity, fairness and that they redress imbalances of the past."(Republic of South Africa Constitution Act (1994)

3.3.2 White Paper on Transformation in the Public Service

The purpose of the White Paper on Transformation in the Public Service (1995) was to reshape the Public Service so that it could fulfill its appointed role as determined by the new political dispensation. Moerdyk and van Aardt (2003:197) state that "in step with

changing international trends regarding governance the White Paper identified ridged organisational structures (bureaucracy), the persistence of a rule bound culture, resistance to and fear of change, and a lack of a clear and well communicated vision for change as challenges and constraints for transformation".

In response to these challenges the White Paper on Transformation in the Public Service (1995) set out priority areas for transformation which included 'Rationalization and Restructuring' to create a lean and effective service; 'Building Institutional and Management Capacity' to enhance accountability, responsiveness and performance; . 'Transforming Service Delivery' to improve the delivery of services and customer service; 'Democratisation of the State' to ensure the public service was democratic and accountable; 'Human Resource Development' to ensure that public servants are developed to their fullest capacity and 'Improving Employment Conditions and Labour Relations' by introducing equitable pay and employment conditions as a means to address the challenges of recruiting the right people into the service, low morale and the brain drain.

The White Paper on Transformation in the Public Service (1995:10) states that "for the Public Service to fulfill its new vision and mission effectively, it will be necessary to ensure that the creation of a leaner service is complemented by changes in management philosophy and practice, as well as organizational structure and culture, designed to enhance the performance, responsiveness and accountability of state institutions, thereby enabling them to build for themselves a reputation for excellence among the clients and communities they serve".

It was acknowledged immediately that this will only be achieved by empowering and motivating managers at all levels to be leaders, visionaries, initiators, effective communicators and decision makers capable of responding to the challenges of the change process, rather than acting as the administrators of fixed rules and procedures. In response to this a series of white papers and regulations were introduced to support this process.

3.3.3   Public Service Regulations (PSR)

The Public Service Regulations (PSR: 2001) introduced two important practices. In Chapter 1 – Part III of the regulations the concept of Strategic Planning is introduced as a requirement and each Head of Department is required to prepare a strategic plan that is aligned to his/her departments budget. Furthermore, the strategy has to be supported by a human resource plan, skills development plan, employee assistance plan, performance management plan, labour relations plan and employment equity plan. Suddenly Senior Managers who used to practice autocratic and top-down approaches had to engage in participative management using teams.

In Chapter 4 – Part 1 of the Public Service Regulations (2001), the Senior Management Service (SMS) was established to ensure according to the Regulations (2001:46) that "only the finest candidates shall be appointed to those posts and steps shall be taken to retain and develop persons appointed as a corporate resource"

In terms of the Public Service Hand Book: Senior Management Services (2001:11) the performance management and development Framework was introduced "to ensure the continuous improvement of the capacity of the Public Service to develop and implement policy in the public interests and provide mechanisms for assessing, reviewing and accounting for what is actually achieved".

This framework has important implications for this study as it allows the Minister of Public Service and Administration to determine what training and development interventions are needed for Senior Managers. It introduced concepts such as performance contracts, key performance areas, personal development plans, learning, formative and summative assessments. More importantly the Policy on the SMS Performance Management and Development System introduced a competency framework of 11 competencies to be used for managing performance and determining training and development needs.

3.3.4 White Paper on Public Service Training and Education (WPPSTE)

The White Paper (2000:15) states, amongst others, that training and education should be "strategically linked to broader processes of transformation, institution building and human resource development in the public service; demand-led, needs based and competency based; and capable of promoting positive learning outcomes which add value to individual and organisational capacity".

In terms of determining the number and type of management development interventions required there are several sources. The Skills Development Act, 1998 requires that workplaces such as Provincial Departments complete Workplace Skills Plans which provide for the identification of management development needs. Public Sector needs are aggregated in the Public Service Sector Skills Plan: 2000 to 2004 (2000). In the Sector Skills Plan for the Public Service, management development or general management was rated in the top 10 priorities for the Public Service. The Human Resource Development Strategy for the Public Service 2002 – 2006 (2002) identifies the management echelon as one of the strategic/critical occupations and views interventions in this area to be inadequate. In the aforementioned strategy strategic objective 3 and activity 3.5 have as their target the design and implementation of Public Service Management Development Programmes (2002). The Department of Labour report on the State of Skills in South Africa (2004) identified management, in its indicative list of skills, as being in short supply in the Private and Public Sectors.

Kraak & Perold (2003) identified that there is a gap of 45 percent in supply and demand of managers which has important implications for organisational management development. There is increasing pressure on suppliers of managerial education to have their programmes accredited with Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETA's) and the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). The development of managerial capacity is critical to the economic prosperity of South Africa.

According to Ryan (1999) based on the reinventing government movement, governments worldwide have been taking on the role of setting policy and letting others deliver services. This has resulted in increased outsourcing, with governments adopting a business mindset. The public service once viewed business as an unfit partner, but now it sees business as a role model. Managers in government who once treated private sector managers as outcasts now share their language and mindset. Just a sign of the change, management and managers in the public service are undergoing.

According to the Public Service Handbook (2001) the fundamental priority of Government remains improved service delivery and for this it requires a Public Service that is modern, people-centered, flexible, creative, innovative, prepared to work collaboratively and in partnership with all stakeholders. To achieve this it requires leadership and management that is capable and committed with an array of hard and soft skills to manage in a complex policy and organisational environment. Recognising the critical role of leadership and management the senior management development programme was introduced and is a key element of the Senior Management Service.

The Public Service acknowledges and is serious about developing the capability of its Senior Managers. Notwithstanding this there is sufficient evidence to show that attempts to do this have not necessarily yielded the desired results and it is envisaged that the data from this research study will provide an insight into why this is so and what needs to be done to change this.

3.4 Approaches to Management Development

This section is important to this study as the study focuses on a specific approach to management development that is the action learning approach. This approach was introduced in 2005 as the Khaedu Action Learning Programme. One of areas the study will explore is the perceptions of senior managers of both traditional classroom based management development programmes and action learning based management development programmes.

According to Craig (1987:584) "a narrow, academic behavioural science approach to training and development has meant that business and competitive issues have too frequently been ignored. This limits the effectiveness of development and hurts its image. After all, the managers being trained have to cope with the behaviour of their staff and with business problems. In the real world it is difficult to separate the two; however, many training and development programmes do just that. This makes it difficult for managers to translate what has been taught into action on the job. Before long training programmes are perceived as meaningless academic exercises"

This has resulted in the search for new approaches to management development that will ensure that training and development is embedded in real business problems. According to Meyer and Boninelli (2004) the great difficulty that is experienced when the traditional model is applied to management training and development is that the learning has no link or anchor to the real world of work making it difficult to transfer the learning and applying it to real business related problems. Learners leave training interventions with conceptual knowledge and when appointed to senior management positions are unable to bridge the gap between conceptual knowledge and applying the learning.

Meyer and Boninelli (2004) maintain that the advantage of the action learning approach is that the concrete experience provides the anchor and context for learning making it relevant to the real world of work. This approach creates a link between abstract concepts and the practical reality of the workplace which assists in accelerating the learning process.

3.5   Action Learning

Action learning (AL) is learning that involves working on real work related problems in teams, with learning integrated into the problem solving process and developing solutions that can actually be implemented. In other words it is a form of learning by doing. It is a

methodology that links learning to the real world of work and equips people to handle difficult situations more effectively (Internet 3).

According to Mintzberg (2004), Revans in his book 'The ABC of Action Learning', criticized learning in the abstract and argued for learning by doing. Revans also went on to state that there can be no action without learning and no learning without action. In stating this Revans had a specific type of action in mind and this included getting managers to tackle real problems particularly those that are difficult to solve.

Revans states that " A man may well learn to talk about taking action simply by talking about taking action (as in classes at a business school) but to learn to take action (as something distinct from learning to talk about taking action) then he needs to take action (rather than to talk about taking action) and to see the effect, not of talking about taking action (at which he may appear competent) but of taking the action itself (at which he may fall somewhat short of competent) (Internet 4)

Action learning according to Michael Marquardt cited in Meyer & Boninelli (2004) is an activity that takes place in a group with the aim of solving real problems. The process focuses on acquired learning and the implementation of system wide solutions. It facilitates accelerated learning and equips people to master and handle difficult situations. It equips organisations to respond more effectively to change as people apply the knowledge, skills and solutions to their normal work and other functions and processes.

Action learning is a process of inquiry; beginning with the experience of not knowing what to do next and finding that answers are not available through current expertise. When expertise fails to provide the answer, collaborative enquiry with fellow learners who are undergoing the same questioning experience is always available. To be effective, this partnership in learning needs to be both supportive and at the same time challenging, deeply caring yet questioning. Such partnerships actually create themselves when different people with different ideas engage whole-heartedly with each other to resolve each others problems. Action learning is gaining in popularity as a way to

improve performance, promote learning and position organisations to adapt better in turbulent times. It is also seen as a way to develop the capabilities of individuals, teams and overall organisations (Internet 2)

According to Dotlich & Noel (1998) unlike other approaches, action learning takes place at all levels of the business environment. At the business and organisation level it can be used to influence change and strategy. At the team level it enhances team learning and team work. At the individual level effectiveness is enhanced due to mentorship and coaching throughout the process. By using action learning people are forced to think out of the box and re-examine what they are as managers, leaders and individuals.

Pedler (2005:58-59) states that action learning includes the following principles:

i. "The requirement for action as the basis for learning

ii. Profound personal development resulting from reflection upon action

iii. Working with problems (no right answers) not puzzles (susceptible to expert knowledge)

iv. Problems being sponsored and aimed at organisational as well personal development

v. Action learners working in sets of peers ('comrades in adversity') to support and challenge each other

vi. The search for fresh questions and 'q' (questioning insight) takes primacy over access to expert knowledge or 'p' ".

Action learning can be used to address complex problems that cannot be easily resolved and find solutions to the root causes of problems. It can generate new ideas and determine new strategic direction or maximize new opportunities (Internet 2).

3.6   The Action Learning Equation

The action learning model is based on the work of Professor Revans who introduced and coined the term "action learning" in the coal mines of Wales and England in the 1940s. He interpreted the purpose of action learning to be two fold. Firstly, to promote local action and learning and secondly, to bring about organisational change by viewing the enterprise as a learning system. (Internet 2).

Figure 3.1: Action Learning model
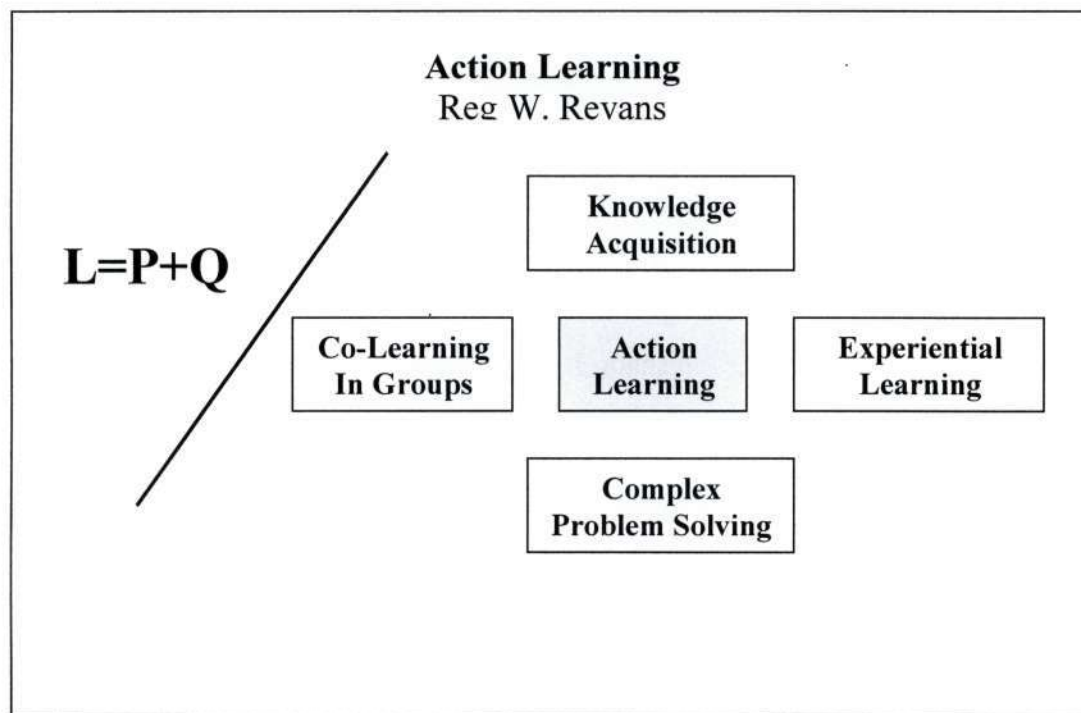
Source: Internet 2

Action learning has its foundation in the basic learning "equation" $L = P + Q$, where "L" is learning, "P" is programmed (or expert provided) knowledge and "Q" is insights from inquiry or powerful questions about our own experiences. In describing the equation it is argued that far too much emphasis is placed on learning from "P" learning alone, which is learning from experts. Due to the emphasis on "P", the challenges in life and work are

seldom addressed through "P" alone. As a result, the role of questioning or "Q", is critical to the Action Learning process. Traditional classroom based methods focus on teaching "P" through the use of experts, by focusing on "Q", people can learn from inquiry into their own experiences. "Q" does not cumulatively build our knowledge, but rather helps us re-organise our knowledge and view it from a new perspective. Participants in Action Learning learn from generating insights, rather than from collecting knowledge and advice. Action Learning seeks at least a balance of "Q" and "P". (Internet 5)

In support of the learning equation traditional instruction or programmed knowledge is appropriate when we are faced with routine problems that have a right answer. However, when we are faced with complex problems that have no right answers-we need critical reflection or questioning insight. Action learning encourages such reflection by providing the support to enable people to learn from challenges as well as from themselves and others. The benefits of learning on all these levels is that the knowledge is easily transferable to other situations and participants can engaged in double loop learning where they receive feedback on their actions, and also find their underlying assumptions and mental models tested. (Internet 2)

3.7   Twelve-Element Action Learning Framework

Dotlich and Noel (1998) set out a twelve-element framework that describes the distinct actions and processes that are important to the success of any action learning process. The twelve elements are described hereunder:

3.7.1 Sponsor

For action learning programmes to succeed it is essential that they have the backing of a sponsor. The sponsor plays a critical role in the learning process and the more powerful the sponsor is the more committed the organisation is to the action learning programme. Organisations that have a management that is not focused and a culture that does not

support learning and change may feel threatened by the results of an action learning programme. The role of the sponsor is critical in dealing with such a situation.

3.7.2 Strategic Mandate

Strategic business imperatives drive action learning. The process usually starts with management deciding what strategic issues are affecting the functioning of the organisation and that there are insufficient processes in place to bring about change or improvement. The strategic issues form the core focus of the action learning projects

3.7.3 Learning Process

It is important that the entire action learning process is described from start to finish setting out timeframes, outputs, roles and responsibilities. In instances were action learning is new and unfamiliar the sponsor will need to understand and support all the elements in the process.

3.7.4 Selecting Participants

The selection of participants is based on the strategic mandate, resulting work project and impact the participant will have on the process. The participants should be diverse in terms of background, function and level of responsibility as this lends itself to learning. Action learning has also shown itself to be suited to accelerated leadership development and should also include emerging and talented leaders.

3.7.5 Forming Learning Teams

Action learning groups, unlike most other teams, contain people from different backgrounds, functions, business units and hierarchical levels. While there is no set formula for setting up action learning teams the overarching goal should be to get a good mix of functions and perspectives.

3.7.6 Coaching

Coaching is critical to the success of action learning. Coaches must understand how groups work as the coach will intervene in team situations where emotions run high and individuals are vulnerable. Coaching in action learning is a distinct process. It must take the mode of action coaching in order to accelerate learning

3.7.7 Orientation to the Issue

All action learning programmes have a traditional educational component. The purpose of this is not to add to the participants exiting knowledge but to get participants to rethink and reframe the issue at hand. To do this specific people are invited to provide stimulus that will challenge, provoke and shock the participants into thinking differently.

3.7.8 Data Gathering

With action learning, gathering data form from both internal and external sources is crucial to the solutions that will be proposed. This can entail interviewing customers, vendors, analysts, employees, academics, industry leaders and benchmarking companies. The data gathering process has an important impact on each participant's perspective and how they view the issue and the possible solution.

3.7.9 Data Analysis

Data analysis is important as it forms the basis on which proposals and solutions are going to be articulated. Discerning what is relevant and critical is important. Usually when participants return from their data gathering trips, they are energized and are eager to share and apply what they have learnt to their action learning project. This can lead to discussions that are heated, intellectually rigorous and confrontational. This is heightened by the competition among teams to excel and win.

3.7.10 Draft Presentation

The presentation is the performance element of the Action Learning Programme. Preparing the presentation is like being in rehearsal. Participants are usually excited about the information they have gathered and the ideas they have gathered. It is likely that their analysis may lead them to conclude that they have discovered something significant. During their benchmarking, they may have identified an innovation or best practice they want to propose for implementation to resolve the issue they are faced with or a solution to some other organisational issue. This is not a haphazard process and action learning forces participants to think systematically, politically and realistically. The goal of this phase is not just to create a presentation but it is to create one that has a good chance of being successful. Anticipating, understanding and managing internal political dynamics is a valuable lesson for participants

3.7.11 Presentation

The final presentation is significant because it may be the only opportunity the team may get to make a formal presentation to the sponsor who could be the Chief Executive Officer or Business Head. It is where the knowledge gained from weeks of action learning is put to the test. Presentations are short and to the point and designed for teams to communicate their recommendations concisely and convincingly. The goal is to secure a commitment from the sponsor to implement the team's recommendations.

3.7.12 Reflection (Debriefing)

An important element that distinguishes action learning from normal training and development interventions is self-reflection or debriefing. This provides an opportunity to think about and share the impact and influence of the action learning experience. This is done by getting participants to answer questions such as, what do you wish you would have done to make it better? or pair participants to give each other one-to-one feedback or ask each participant to focus on the one behavioural change they would like to make or

ask each participant to write an observation of another team member on a post-it-note and put it on the wall for everyone to read.

In order to understand the perceptions of Senior Managers who attended the Khaedu Action Learning Programme the action learning equation, action learning model and twelve element action learning framework will be used to develop themes from the data gathered.

3.8   Action Learning in the Public Service

The Khaedu Action Learning Programme is the first official attempt at using action learning as a means to link   learning to change, transformation and   performance improvement (both individual and organisational) and to facilitate implementation of the transformation and organisational development agenda of the South African Public based on the principles of Batho Pele or People First. Khaedu means "challenge" in Tshivenda.

The programme targets senior managers and is linked to the Senior Management Services Competencies and Performance Management and Development System. The Cabinet of the Republic of South Africa has determined that SMS members must during each performance cycle be deployed to the coal face to expose them to service delivery problems and to develop their ability to solve problems. The Department of Public Service and Administration facilitated the development and introduction of the Khaedu Action Learning programme to improve management skills to implement change.

In the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Administration, the Khaedu Action Learning Programme is coordinated by the Directorate: Human Resource Development in the Branch: Public Service Transformation. It is linked to the strategic objective of transforming public service delivery. The sponsor is the Honorable Premier Mr. S. Ndebele, as this is a province wide initiative. The action learning teams on the programme are tasked to deal with improving service delivery by identifying bottlenecks and developing solutions. A schedule of dates for the core skills programme is compiled

and distributed to Heads of Department who select and nominate senior managers to the programme.

The programme is made up of a 5 day core skills programme and 5 days of deployment to the coal face. The core skills development is a five day practical case based course with the objective of building core skills. During the course participants develop their problem solving and analytical skills in the following areas:

- Process design, problem solving and business mathematics
- Creating effective organisations and strategies
- People and Change Management and building a 'Win-Win' with staff unions
- Financial Management
- Communication for results

During the core skills development phase special attention is placed on using information technology as a problem solving tool, solving practical case studies, working in teams and under pressure, developing and making presentations using the format situation, complication and solution. At end of this phase participants should be prepared to undertake a deployment to the coal face.

The deployment to the coal face or service delivery site is a supervised deployment, where participants are put into teams and are expected to analyse service delivery problems using the skills learned on the core skills development course. The deployment lasts for 1 week. The teams or learning sets comprise of Senior Managers from varying backgrounds and experience. On the first day the team presents itself to the management team at the site and conducts an interview with the management to ascertain some of the key challenges they face. Based on this they agree on the problems to be targeted during the deployment. The rest of the week is spent gathering data from primary and secondary sources. Stakeholders, staff and customers are interviewed and other sites that are part of the supply chain are visited, for example, if a team is deployed at a hospital the team will visit clinics that fall under the hospital. The team has to write

up a report that sets out the situation, complications and resolutions. The reports are presented to the management of the department, unit or institution so that it becomes part of the overall change effort.

3.9   Conclusion

It is abundantly clear that management development is a critical intervention in terms of guaranteeing the continued availability of managers to strategically lead and manage organisations. Management development continues to receive support both in the public and private sectors despite the fact that some of the literature reviewed indicated that current approaches have not yielded the desired impact and are not linked to what happens in the real world of work. In essence management development has not evolved to meet the changing needs of the individual and the environment in which organisations operate. There has been a continued use of traditional classroom based learning with content focusing on transactional management.

Action learning as an approach, it would seem, is perhaps one methods of overcoming some of the limitations of the current approach. However, action learning itself will not be successful if implemented haphazardly. It has to be planned and integrated with other strategic initiatives and implemented in a manner that follows the twelve-element framework for a successful action learning programme.

CHAPTER FOUR
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1   Introduction

Research is an essential and critical activity in the process of gathering and generating information for use in solving problems. Research according to Welman & Kruger (2001) involves the use of scientific methods to broaden knowledge in a particular field. This is supported by Saunders et al (2003) who indicate that research is undertaken to gather information and data in a systematic way. The information gathered is used to increase knowledge. Important concepts that emerge from these definitions are that research is a systematic process with the aim of gathering specific information to solve specific problems or expand existing knowledge.

Using this as a basis, research in the sphere of business and management would then refer to a systematic process of gathering information to solve business and management problems or add to the existing knowledge in this sphere. However, Easterby-Smith cited in Saunders et al (2003) indicates that there are three things that make business and management a distinctive focus for research. Firstly, managers use information and knowledge developed by other disciplines. Secondly, managers because of the busy nature of their work will only participate or agree to research if they see that it will have personal or business benefits and thirdly, the research must have some practical consequences to the business.

The research process comprises multiple stages. For the purposes of this project the process included, clarifying the problem, formulating the topic, reviewing the literature, choosing and designing the research strategy, collecting and analyzing data, presenting the findings and making recommendations.

4.2 Formulating and Clarifying the Topic

Senior Managers within the public service are tasked with the responsibly of leading and managing the delivery of effective services to citizens of South Africa and the efficient functioning of their departments. However, one of the main reasons cited for the lack of service delivery is the lack of capacity within this cadre. This has raised questions about the approaches and impact that management development was having on developing the capacity of senior managers. In response to the aforementioned challenges the Khaedu Action Learning Programme was introduced as a management development intervention that would develop the capacity of individual senior managers as well as improve service delivery.

The use of action learning as a learning and development approach is a distinct departure from the current traditional classroom based approach to management development. This approach was adopted based on evidence that action learning is most effective at building skills. The topic for this project was formulated specifically for the purpose of understanding the perceptions of senior managers of action learning with a view to using the information gathered to improve management development. Hence the topic Towards Improving Management Development by Understanding the Perceptions of Senior Managers of Action Learning: A Case Study in the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Administration.

4.3 Literature Review

The topic and research questions are based on a critical review of previous research in the sphere of management development and action learning. One of the gaps identified in reviewing previous research particularly of action learning is that it focuses mainly on action learning in an academic environment and the private sector.

45

With the research topic located within the public service acts, white papers, regulations, handbooks, strategy documents and government reports were reviewed. These were obtained from the records maintained in the Directorate: Human Resource Development Library and Resource centre in the Office of the Premier in KwaZulu-Natal as well the www.gov.za and www.dpsa.gov.za websites.

Journals and books were sourced from the University of KwaZulu-Natal and University of South Africa Libraries. Both these University websites were used to source online academic journals.

4.4 Research Design and Strategy

4.4.1 Survey Instrument

According to Coldwell & Herbst (2004) a survey refers to a combination of questionnaires and interviews. In this study a survey questionnaire was used to collect data. Saunders et al (2003) states that a questionnaire includes all techniques of data collection in which each person is asked to respond to the same set of questions in a predetermined order. A self-administered questionnaire was developed as the survey instrument. It was designed to gather information to answer the research projects questions. The questionnaire was structured into three sections. Section A was designed to gather background or biographical information such as title of post, post level, length of service, number of years in senior management position, gender, age, and level of qualification. Section B consisted of thirty five items which included scaled and forced choice questions. Section C comprised seven open ended questions. The structure of the questions in sections B and C were based on the need to gather information that can be assessed against the action learning equation, action learning model and the twelve elements action learning framework.

According to Saunders et al (2003) the purpose of a pilot test is to refine the questionnaire so that respondents will have no problems in answering the questions and

there will be no problems in recording the data. The questionnaire was pilot tested on 5 senior managers. The purpose of the pilot test was to detect possible flaws in the questionnaire such as ambiguous instructions and unclear or ambiguously formulated items. Participants were also requested to indicate how they interpreted the questions. By interacting with the selected participants in the pilot test I was able to observe non-verbal behaviour. The respondents were interviewed to determine if the questionnaire accurately captured their responses and to ascertain what their opinions were of the questionnaire. They found the questionnaire easy to understand and complete.

4.4.2 Sampling

According to Saunders et al (2003) sampling techniques provide a range of methods which enable the researcher to reduce the amount of data that needs to be collected by focusing on data from a subgroup instead of all possible respondents. The sampling technique used in this research study was non-probability sampling. This method according to Babbie and Mouton (2002) is reliant on available subjects. This method was used due to constraints on the time and availability of managers.

Welman & Kruger (2001:63), state that "purposive sampling is the most important kind of non-probability sampling. Researchers rely on their experience, ingenuity and/ or previous research findings to deliberately obtain units of analysis in such a manner that the sample they obtain may be regarded as being representative of the relevant population". This view is supported by Saunders et al (2003) who indicates that purposive or judgmental sampling enables the researcher to use his or her own judgment in selecting the sample which enables him or her to best answer the research question or questions to meet the objective of the study.

One hundred and sixty nine senior managers had attended the Khaedu Action Learning Programme during 2005. This represents the total population for this study. Fifty senior managers were selected as the sample. Based on the researches involvement in the Action Learning Project and senior management development, the sample was selected

purposefully from the consolidated class list of all senior managers that attended the Khaedu Action Learning Programme. Only senior managers who have attended both the core skills programme and deployment to the coal face completed the questionnaire.

The Khaedu Action Learning Programme is a programme that targets senior managers in all the Provincial Departments. It is coordinated by the Management Development Unit in the Directorate: Human Resource Development in the Office of the Premier. Permission was therefore sought from the Director-General of the Province, by way of a minute, to undertake the study in the Provincial Administration and administer the questionnaire on the fifty senior managers. The Director-General duly granted permission to undertake the study as requested.

4.4.3 Data Collection

The questionnaires were distributed by hand to the identified senior managers. In cases where senior managers were not available the questionnaire was handed to their personal assistants/secretaries. The questionnaire was accompanied by the letter of approval from the Director-General, the respondent consent form and letter explaining the purpose of the study and instructions. A period of seven days was provided for the completion and collection of the questionnaires. Senior Managers have schedules that require them to be out of the office to attend meetings, workshops and planning sessions. The latter for the New Year. As a result not all the completed questionnaires were received within the seven days. This required constant telephonic follow-up and liaison with the senior managers or their personal assistants. Some senior managers were out of the office for long periods that went way beyond the period set for the collection of the questionnaires. Few senior managers indicated that they were too busy to complete the questionnaire. Consequently, of the fifty questionnaires distributed thirty questionnaires were completed and returned.

4.4.4 Setting up Data for Analysis

Saunders et al (2003) states that data includes facts, opinions and statistics which are collected and recorded for reference and analysis. Data analysis according to Saunders et al (2003:476) is a "process for the collection and analysis of qualitative data that involves three concurrent sub processes of data reduction, data display, and drawing up and verifying conclusions". For the purpose of this study the data analysis will entail as stated by Terre Blanche & Durrheim (1999:47) "identifying themes in the data and relationship between these themes".

The data collected comprised ordinal and nominal data. All the responses from the thirty questionnaires were coded. The MoonStats statistical package was used to analyse the data to obtain bar charts, histograms, pie charts and frequency tables. Although the data was reduced, it was only used as a guide to support the emerging themes set out in chapter 5.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to describe the research method and procedure used during the study. The next chapter will cover the analysis of the data and results.

CHAPTER FIVE
DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

5.1   Introduction

Data analysis was a critical step in determining the results of the survey that was conducted for this research project. This chapter will focus on the analysis and results of the data gathered from the completed questionnaires that were returned by the respondents. For the purpose of this study the analysis will be based on identifying specific themes that emerge from perceptions expressed in the questionnaires and to link the themes to the theory of action learning specifically the action learning equation, action learning model and the twelve-element action learning framework for successful action learning proposed by Dotlich & Noel (1998).

The questionnaire was structured in three sections. Section A to source biographical data, section B comprised statements linked to theoretical principles in the action learning equation, action learning model and the twelve-element action learning framework for successful action learning and section C open ended questions.

The main purpose of the study is to ascertain the perceptions of senior managers of action learning based on the experience of managers who attended the Khaedu Action Learning Programme that has been introduced to develop the capacity of managers and at the same time solve management and service delivery bottlenecks being experienced by departments in the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Administration. Fifty questionnaires were distributed and thirty were completed and returned. The findings of the study are contained in the sections that follow.

5.2   Section A: Background Information

5.2.1   Title of Post and Post level

The Senior Management Service comprises senior managers who are employed at levels 13, 14, 15 and 16. The description of the levels is as follows:

- Level 13   -   Manager/Director/Senior Manager
- Level 14   -   General Manager/Chief Director
- Level 15   -   Senior General Manager/Deputy Director-General
- Level 16   -   Superintendent General/Director-General

Level 16 was not included in the questionnaire as no one on level 16 had attended the Khaedu Action Learning Programme.

Table 5.1 Title of Post and Post Level

Value	Number	Percentage	Cumulative %
Manager – Level 13	27	90.00	90.00
General Manager – Level 14	3	10.00	100.00
Senior General Manager – Level 15	0	00.00	100.00
TOTAL	**30**	**100.00**	**100.00**

Missing or invalid cases: 0

For question one, 90 % of the respondents hold the position of Manager/ Director/ Senior Manager (although the post titles are different they are at level 13) and 10% hold the position General Manager/ Chief Director at level 14. The Khaedu Action Learning Programme is aimed at all the Senior Management Services Levels. The responses from the sample show a trend that more managers at the level 13, which is the first level of the SMS framework, are attending the programme than Senior Managers at the other levels. If this trend continues the impact of the programme will be limited to the entry level of

the SMS framework. Understanding of the need and role of action learning will not permeate all levels of Senior Management. This is supported by views expressed such as, my manager should attend and that there is a lack of opportunities to implement what was learnt on the programme.

5.2.2   Length of Service in the Public Service

Table 5.2 Length of Service in the Public Service

Value	Number	Percentage	Cumulative %
1-5 yrs	6	20.00	20.00
6-10 yrs	7	23.33	43.33
11-15 yrs	4	13.33	56.67
16-20 yrs	4	13.33	70.00
More than 21 yrs	9	30.00	100.00
TOTAL	30	100.00	100.00

Missing or invalid cases: 0

In terms of the length of service in the Public Service, 30% of the respondents have more than 21 years of service with 23% having between 6 to 10 years of service. Experience is an important factor both in adult learning and action learning. Length of service is an indication that respondents are experienced. This experience can be used in the process of action learning.

5.2.3   No. of Years in SMS Position

Table 5.3 No. of Years in SMS Position

Value	Number	Percentage	Cumulative %
1-5 yrs	23	76.67	76.67
6-10 yrs	6	20.00	96.67
11-15 yrs	1	3.33	100.00
16-20 yrs	0	0.00	100.00
More than 21 yrs	0	0.00	100.00
TOTAL	30	100.00	100.00

Missing or invalid cases: 0

In contrast to the responses to the question on the length of service in the public service, the question on the number of years in the SMS position showed that 76 % have been in the SMS position between 1 to 5 years showing that experience at the Senior Management level is limited, with respondents just reaching the required level of maturity in their positions. While this may limit the extent of knowledge sharing it does provide for the development of a Senior Management cadre who will be exposed to a critical organisational development tool which they can embed in the culture and style of the organisation. This also provides opportunities for the development of emergent leaders and will enhance career development.

5.2.4 Gender

Table 5.4 Gender

Value	Number	Percentage	Cumulative %
Male	20	66.67	66.67
Female	10	33.33	100.00
TOTAL	**30**	**100.00**	**100.00**

Missing or invalid cases: 0

In terms of government's transformation agenda the target is to have 50% women at the Senior Management level in the public service. Women are also to be specifically targeted for development. The responses show that fewer women have attended the Khaedu Action Learning Programme. It is important that this be corrected so that development is equitable in terms of gender.

5.2.5 Age

Table 5.5 Age

Value	Number	Percentage	Cumulative %
25-35 yrs	7	23.33	23.33
36-45 yrs	11	36.67	60.00
46- 55 yrs	9	30.00	90.00
Older than 56 yrs	3	10.00	100.00
TOTAL	**30**	**100.00**	**100.00**

Missing or invalid cases: 0

A total of 66.87% fell into the age category 36-45 years and 46-55 years. This means that the sample is made up of middle aged, mature people who can be used effectively on the Action Learning Programme in terms of making it part of the organisational culture.

5.2.6 Qualification

Table 5.6 Qualification

Value	Number	Percentage	Cumulative %
Matric	0	00.00	00.00
Diploma	4	13.33	13.33
Degree	9	30.00	43.33
Honours	10	33.33	76.67
Masters	7	23.33	100.00
PHD/Doctorate	0	00.00	100.00
TOTAL	**30**	**100.00**	**100.00**

Missing or invalid cases: 0

All the respondents have a tertiary qualification and should have a good theoretical base that can be built on through interventions such as the Khaedu Action Learning Programme.

5.3 Section B: Analysis of Scaled and Force Choice Questions

5.3.1 Theme One: Personal Development Planning

In terms of the Senior Management Services Performance Management and Development System all Senior Managers are required to enter into a performance agreement for each performance cycle. The performance cycle runs annually from 1 April to 31 March. The performance agreement includes a personal development plan for the performance cycle, based on the development needs of the Senior Manager. The performance agreement must be compiled in collaboration with the Senior Manager's supervisor. It is compulsory for Senior Managers to undertake one deployment in each performance cycle

and this must be included in the personal development plan. Analysis of questions 1, 2, 3 and 4 in section B provided the data for the theme, personal development planning.

Table 5.7 Assessment of Personal Development Needs

Value	Number	Percentage	Cumulative %
1 - Undertaken annually	14	51.85	51.85
2 - Not undertaken annually	13	48.15	100.00
TOTAL	27	100.00	100.00

Missing or invalid cases: 3

In terms of question one, assessment of personal development needs, 51.85% of the respondents indicated that their personal development needs were undertaken annually with 48.15% indicating that their personal development needs were not undertaken annually.

Table 5.8 Personal Development Plan

Value	Number	Percentage	Cumulative %
1 – Have a personal development plan	21	70.00	70.00
2 - Do not have a personal development plan	9	30.00	100.00
TOTAL	30	100.00	100.00

Missing or invalid cases: 0

For question two which deals with whether or not SMS members have a personal development plan, 70.00% of the respondents indicated that they have a personal development plan and 30.00% do not have a personal development plan.

Table 5.9 Assessment of Needs

Value	Number	Percentage	Cumulative %
1 – Yourself	13	43.33	43.33
2 – Your supervisor	1	3.33	46.67
3 - Jointly by yourself and your supervisor	16	53.33	100.00
TOTAL	30	100.00	100.00

Missing or invalid cases: 0

The responses for question three indicate that 43.33% of respondents development needs are assessed by Senior Managers themselves, 3.33% by their supervisors and 53.33% jointly by the Senior Manager and his/her supervisor. Needs in terms of the Senior Management Performance Management and Development System should be undertaken jointly, therefore 46.66% of the respondents are not complying.

Table 5.10 Meeting of Development Needs

Value	Number	Percentage	Cumulative %
1 - Met in the annual performance cycle	6	20.69	20.69
2 - Not met in the annual performance cycle	23	79.31	100.00
TOTAL	**29**	**100.00**	**100.00**

Missing or invalid cases: 1

The responses for question four, show that 79.31% of the respondents indicated that their development needs are not met in the annual performance cycle, with 20.69% of the respondents needs being met in the annual performance cycle.

The responses above indicate a high degree of non-compliance to the Public Service Handbook. It has serious negative implications for a planned approach to Senior Management development and the development of the public service as a learning organisation. It also shows a lack of understanding of the system; its implementation, and roles and responsibilities.

In the paragraphs Motivation for the Study (paragraph 1.5) and Management Development in the Context of the South African Public Service (paragraph 3.3) it is clear that there is a lack of management capacity and that not enough is being done to develop this capacity. An essential cog in improving performance and service delivery is the Performance Management and Development System. Poor implementation of the system means that the envisaged creation of a Senior Management cadre, that is the best and fully competent will not be realised

5.3.2 Theme Two: Perceptions of Traditional Classroom Based Learning

During the literature survey, literature showed that the traditional classroom based approach to management development was not effective and not yielding success in the business environment. The action learning equation provides for "P", that is, programmed knowledge. The action learning model provides for knowledge acquisition and the twelve element action learning framework provides for an intervention termed orientation to the issue, all of which suggest that some form of classroom based learning is necessary. Data for this theme was sourced from the responses to questions 5 and 6.

Table 5.11 Traditional Classroom Based Management Development

Value	Number	Percentage	Cumulative %
1 - Highly effective	5	16.67	16.67
2 - Moderately effective	3	10.00	26.67
3 – Effective	12	40.00	66.67
4 - Mildly effective	9	30.00	96.67
5 - Not effective	1	3.33	100.00
TOTAL	**30**	**100.00**	**100.00**

Missing or invalid cases: 0

In terms of how the participants' perceived traditional classroom based management development programmes, 40 % of the respondents found the programmes to be effective and 30% mildly effective. However, respondents qualified their responses with the following comments:

- Most of the information is lost if not applied immediately, while the theory is beneficial there is no opportunity to practice;
- The programmes are generic and not customized;
- They do not talk to the reality on the ground and have too much theory;
- There is little application to work situation;
- Effective in a sense that it provides understanding of management concepts but lacks tangible practical training;
- Although theory is proven practice, traditional classroom based management development programmes are far removed from the practice of where things are happening;
- There is a difference between pedagogy and andragogy, a more focused practical method would be more appropriate for adults in the field.

While there is support for classroom based management development programmes, such programmes have to be needs based and practical with opportunities to practice the skills learnt.

Table 5.12 Traditional Classroom Learning – transferable and Applicable to Workplace

Value	Number	Percentage	Cumulative %
1 - Agree Strongly	1	3.33	3.33
2 – Agree	12	40.00	43.33
3 – Uncertain	5	16.67	60.00
4 - Do no agree	10	33.33	93.33
5 - Strongly disagree	2	6.67	100.00
TOTAL	**30**	**100.00**	**100.00**

Missing or invalid cases: 0

In terms of question six, 40% agreed that learning which takes place on a traditional classroom based management development programme is easily transferable and applicable to the workplace. Some of comments provided for this question include the following:

- Provided that space is provided to do so;
- This is based on development programmes I have attended which I am able to transfer to the workplace;
- This will take place in a enabling environment only;
- This is dependent on the drive of the individual to implement what is learnt;
- The degree of practicality may determine the implementation of the knowledge to the workplace;

The 33.33% of respondents who did not agree made the following comments:

- The programmes that are delivered are far fetched and cannot be translated into everyday management;
- Information is not always packaged for immediate implementation and if not applied the majority of the knowledge is lost;
- One does not really get a chance to practice what one has learnt in the classroom;
- Not that easy but could be better enhanced by practical, on the field engagement;
- There is no motivation to transfer it. Sometimes resisted by people who have not attended hence there is need for integration so everyone is on par.

There is a fair split between respondents who agree and those that disagree that learning on a traditional classroom based management development programme is easily transferable to the workplace. As is indicated by the comments, the degree to which learning is transferable is dependent on relevance and practical nature of the content. The key findings are that firstly, there is support for classroom based learning; however, the impact of such programmes is dependent on the design, content, approach and relevance to the real world of work. Secondly, there needs to be an enabling environment which allows for the application of learning.

5.3.3   Theme three: Perception of the Relevance of the Core Skills Programme

The core skills programme was a departure from the traditional classroom based programme in that the presentation of theory was minimal. Presentations covered key concepts which were explained using practical real life examples and tested by means of case studies based on previous action learning deployments experiences. A large amount of time was spent on preparing the participants for the deployment phase by focusing on how to conduct organisational diagnosis, problem solving, data gathering, data analysis and presenting solutions. The data for this theme are drawn from the responses to questions 7, 8, 9 and 12 .

Table 5.13 Attendance of Action Learning Programme other than Khaedu

Value	Number	Percentage	Cumulative%
1 – Yes	8	26.67	26.67
2 – No	22	73.33	100.00
TOTAL	**30**	**100.00**	**100.00**

Missing or invalid cases:0

From the responses received for question twelve, only 26.67 % had attended an action learning programme other than Khaedu, whilst for 73.33 % stated that this was their first experience of action learning.

Table 5.14 Topics and Content of 5 Day Core skills Programme

Value	Number	Percentage	Cumulative %
1 – Highly relevant	21	70.00	70.00
2 – Moderately relevant	4	13.33	83.33
3 – Relevant	5	16.67	100.00
TOTAL	**30**	**100.00**	**100.00**

Missing or invalid cases: 0

For question seven, 70% of the respondents indicated that the topics and the content of the five-day Core Skills Training on Khaedu Action Learning Program were highly relevant, while 16.67% found them to be relevant and 13.33% moderately relevant.

Table 5.15 Use of Expert Presenters, Case Studies and Report Backs – 5 Day Core Skills Training

Value	Number	Percentage	Cumulative %
1 – Highly effective	19	63.33	63.33
2 - Moderately effective	6	20.00	83.33
3 – Effective	5	16 67	100.00
TOTAL	**30**	**100.00**	**100.00**

Missing or invalid cases: 0

For question eight, 63.33% of respondents indicated that they found the use of expert presentations, case studies and report backs on the 5 day core skills training on Khaedu Action Learning programme to be highly effective, while 20% found this to be moderately effective and 16.67% to be effective.

For question nine, the respondents rated the topics on the core skills programme as follows:

Table 5. 16   Topic 1– Process design, problem solving and business mathematics

Value	Number	Percentage	Cumulative %
2 – Mildly important	1	3.33	3.33
3 - Important	1	3.33	6.67
4 – Moderately important	9	30.00	36.67
5 - Highly important	19	63.33	100.00
TOTAL	**30**	**100.00**	**100.00**

Missing or invalid cases: 0

For this question, 63.33% of the respondents rated Process design, problem solving and business mathematics to be highly important and 30% moderately important.

Table 5.17 Topic 2– Creating effective organisation and strategies

Value	Number	Percentage	Cumulative %
1 - Not important	1	3.33	3.33
2 - Mildly important	1	3.33	6.67
3 – Important	3	10.00	16.67
4 - Moderately important	7	23.33	40.00
5 – Highly important	18	60.00	100.00
TOTAL	**30**	**100.00**	**100.00**

Missing or invalid cases: 0

For this question 60% of the respondents rated Creating effective organisations and strategies to be highly important and 23.33% moderately important.

Table 5. 18 Topic 3 – People and Change Management and Building a Win-Win with staff unions

Value	Number	Percentage	Cumulative %
3 – Important	7	23.33	23.33
4 - Moderately important	9	30.00	53.33
5 - Highly important	14	46.67	100.00
TOTAL	**30**	**100.00**	**100.00**

Missing or invalid cases:0

For this question 46.67% of the respondents rated People and Change Management and building a 'Win-Win' with staff unions, 30% moderately important and 23.33% important

Table 5. 19 Topic 4 – Financial Management

Value	Number	Percentage	Cumulative %
1 - Not important	1	3.33	3.33
3 – Important	8	26.67	30.00
4 - Moderately important	7	23.33	53.33
5 – Highly important	14	46.67	100.00
TOTAL	**30**	**100.00**	**100.00**

Missing or invalid cases:

For this question, 46.67% of the respondents rated Financial Management as highly important, 26.67% important and 23.33% moderately important

Table 5.20 Topic 5 – Communication for Results

Value	Number	Percentage	Cumulative %
2 - Mildly important	1	3.33	3.33
3 – Important	6	20.00	23.33
4 - Moderately important	6	20.00	43.33
5 – Highly important	17	56.67	100.00
TOTAL	**30**	**100.00**	**100.00**

Missing or invalid cases: 0

For this question, 56.67% of the respondents rated Communication for results to be highly important, 20% important and 20% moderately important.

The perceptions of the respondents of the core skills programme are positive. They found the topics and content to be highly important and relevant. They also found the methodology adopted to be effective. The methodology focused on some of the key elements in the twelve element action learning framework, namely, coaching, orientation to the issue, data gathering, data analysis, presentation of findings and solutions,

5.3.4 Theme Four: Perceptions of the Deployment phase of the action learning Programme

According to the theory of action learning in the abstract is criticized and learning by doing encouraged. According to Mintzberg (2004), Revans states that there can be no action without learning and no learning without action. Also that learning essentially takes place by working on real work related problems. This theme also seeks to understand perceptions of the deployment phase against the "Q" questioning insight in the learning equation; experiential learning, complex problem solving and co-learning in groups in the action learning model; and data gathering, data analysis, presentation and reflection in the twelve element action learning framework. Data for this theme was sourced from the responses to questions 13, 14, 20, 29, 30 and 34.

Table 5. 21 Effectiveness of 5-day Core Skills programme without the deployment phase.

Value	Number	Percentage	Cumulative %
1 - Highly effective	1	3.45	3.45
2 - Moderately effective	4	13.79	17.24
3 – Effective	4	13.79	31.03
4 - Mildly effective	12	41.38	72.41
5 - Not effective	8	27.59	100.00
TOTAL	**29**	**100.00**	**100.00**

Missing or invalid cases: 1

For question thirteen, 41, 38% of the respondents indicated that the 5 day core skills programme without the deployment phase will be mildly effective, 27.59% not effective, and 13.79% indicating that it will be effective and moderately effective. Respondents are in agreement that theoretical training has to be reinforced by practical experience. In the case of the Khaedu Action Learning Programme the deployment phase was the practical part of the programme. Some of the comments received from respondents that support an integrated approach include:

- You need to accommodate both the theory and the practical, the practical parts adds more value as you get to experience the real situation;
- Need to experience real life to obtain full value;
- Learners come from different disciplines and hence the deployment to the coal face allowed them the opportunity to interact first hand with all role players.
- The experience strengthened the knowledge gained during the classroom learning phase;
- Practical training is crucial as one is exposed to the complexities and dynamics of the an organisation which impacts on the theoretical principles of management;
- Practical experience and the challenges in relationships cannot be taught in the classroom.

Table 5.22 Promotes experiential learning

Value	Number	Percentage	Cumulative %
1 – Agree strongly	18	62.07	62.07
2 – Agree	10	34.48	96.55
5 – Strongly disagree	1	3.45	100.00
TOTAL	**29**	**100.00**	**100.00**

Missing or invalid cases: 1

For question fourteen, 62.07% of the respondents agree strongly that the action learning in the deployment phase promoted experiential learning, with 34.48% agreeing and 3.45% strongly disagreeing. This is in keeping with the theory of action learning which highlights that experiential learning is essential and an important aspect of adult learning during which past experience is used to reframe issues and problems.

This supports the view of George and Singh (2000) that adults have vast amounts of experience which can form the basis on which they learn and how they relate to new learning. In adult learning, techniques that are experiential are preferred as these techniques use the past experiences of learners to reflect on new learning. It reinforces the role of "Q" questioning insight in the action learning equation.

Table 5. 23 Asking Searching Questions

Value	Number	Percentage	Cumulative %
1 – Agree strongly	14	50.00	50.00
2 – Agree	14	50.00	100.00
TOTAL	**28**	**100.00**	**100.00**

Missing or invalid cases:2

For question twenty, 50% of the respondents agree strongly and 50% agree that exposure to unfamiliar situations and problems during the deployment phase triggered fresh ideas and thinking which in turn enabled them to ask more searching questions to management and staff at the deployment site. The deployment phase takes people out of their traditional work environments and because it is team based learning it triggers innovative and divergent thinking leading to more in-depth questioning. This also reinforces the role of "Q" in the learning equation, complex problem solving in the action learning model and data gathering in the twelve element action learning framework

Table 5.24 Enabled Learning by doing

Value	Number	Percentage	Cumulative %
1 – Agree strongly	14	48.28	48.28
2 – Agree	13	44.83	93.10
3 – Uncertain	2	6.90	100.00
TOTAL	**29**	**100.00**	**100.00**

Missing or invalid cases: 1

For question twenty nine, 48.28% of the respondents agree strongly that the deployment phase of the action learning programme as an active learning process has enabled them to learn by doing, with 44.83% agreeing and 6.9% uncertain. The majority of respondents are in agreement that action learning provided them with opportunities to learn by doing. Learning by doing is an important methodology linked to the theoretical principles of adult and experiential learning

Table 5.25   Development of ability to generate, analyse and present information

Value	Number	Percentage	Cumulative %
1 – Agree strongly	15	51.72	51.72
2 – Agree	13	44.83	96.55
3 – Uncertain	1	3.45	100.00
TOTAL	**29**	**100.00**	**100.00**

Missing or invalid cases: 1

For question thirty, 51.72% of the respondents agree strongly that the deployment phase of Khaedu Action Learning Programme developed their ability to generate, analyse and present information, 44.83% agree and 3.45% uncertain. 28 of the 29 respondents are in agreement which is important because according to Dotlich and Noel (1998) data gathering, analysis and presentation are essential elements for a successful action learning programme.

Table 5. 26   View Service Delivery Problems Differently

Value	Number	Percentage	Cumulative %
1 – Agree strongly	19	65.52	65.52
2 – Agree	9	31.03	96.55
3 – Uncertain	1	3.45	100.00
TOTAL	**29**	**100.00**	**100.00**

Missing or invalid cases: 1

For question thirty four, 65.52% of the respondents agree strongly that because the deployment placed them in an environment out of their comfort zone it allowed them to view service delivery problems from a different lens and propose out of the box solutions, 31.03% agree and 3.45% are uncertain. This aspect is linked to the concepts of team learning and transformative learning which are essential components of action

learning. Both these concepts indicate that action learning encourages deep questioning, creativity and innovation.

In terms of the perceptions of the deployment phase or action learning phase the following are key findings:

- Theoretical training must be supported by action learning
- Action learning provides opportunities for experiential learning and learning by doing
- Action learning develops abilities to generate, analyse and present information which are core competencies for Senior Managers.
- Action learning encourages one to see problems from different perspectives

5.3.5 Theme Five: Teams and Team Learning

An essential aspect of action learning is that it is an approach that uses teams to analyse and solve business related problems. Hence the ability to work in teams is critical. By working in action learning teams, skills in teamwork are enhanced either by learning from the team or from the action learning coach.

According to Senge (1990) the collective IQ of a group is much higher than the IQ of an individual, if the group can work together it can use each other as a catalyst to understand and solve a specific problem. He highlights the ability to think insightfully about complex issues; the ability to take innovative coordinated action and the ability to create a network that will allow other teams to take action as three dimensions of team learning that are relevant to problem solving within action learning. The data for this theme was drawn from responses to questions 17, 18, 21, 31 and 32

Table 5.27 Developed Skills of Working in a Team

Value	Number	Percentage	Cumulative %
1 – Agree strongly	14	48.28	48.28
2 – Agree	13	44.83	93.10
3 – Uncertain	1	3.45	96.55
4- Do not agree	1	3.45	100.00
TOTAL	**29**	**100.00**	**100.00**

Missing or invalid cases:1

In response to question seventeen, 48.28% agree strongly that the deployment phase of the Khaedu Action Learning Programme developed their skills of working in a team, 44.83% agree, 3.45% are uncertain and 3.45% do not agree. This finding is important when considered in the context of the transformation agenda of the public service which proposes the introduction of working in teams to enhance organisational effectiveness. If the skills of Senior Managers in working in teams are being enhanced through action learning it could have a multiplier effect on the wider operational environment of the provincial public service.

Table 5.28 Improved Understanding of Team Learning

Value	Number	Percentage	Cumulative %
1 – Agree strongly	13	44.83	44.83
2 – Agree	16	55.17	100.00
TOTAL	**29**	**100.00**	**100.00**

Missing or invalid cases:1

Team learning has to do with the group sharing and transferring knowledge in ways that encourage creativity and the deep exploration of complex problems, followed by innovative and coordinated action. For question eighteen, 44.83% of the respondents agree strongly that they have a better understanding of team learning and 55.17% agree. This is significant in a sector where the use of teams is relatively new. Similar to the findings in question 17, a better understanding of the concept of team learning could have positive implications for improving operational efficiency and the creation of a learning organisation. This also supports the element of co-learning in groups contained in the action learning model.

Table 5.29 Learning Stimulated

Value	Number	Percentage	Cumulative %
1 – Agree strongly	16	53.33	53.33
2 – Agree	13	43.33	96.67
3 – Uncertain	1	3.33	100.00
TOTAL	**30**	**100.00**	**100.00**

Missing or invalid cases: 0

The diversity of groups according to action learning theory stimulates learning largely due to divergent thinking, knowledge and experience. For question twenty one, 53.33% agree strongly that working with people form dissimilar backgrounds stimulated learning, 43.33% agree with 3.33 % are uncertain. The responses support the theory.

Table 5.30 Breaking down Barriers across Functional Lines.

Value	Number	Percentage	Cumulative %
1 – Agree strongly	15	51.72	51.72
2 – Agree	8	27.59	79.31
3 – Uncertain	6	20.69	100.00
TOTAL	**29**	**100.00**	**100.00**

Missing or invalid cases: 1

One of challenges the Public Service faces is that it continues to be bureaucratic and in many instances functions in silos. This impacts negatively on operational efficiency, service delivery and customer service. It is critical that the barriers across functional lines be broken to deliver a seamless service. For question thirty one, 51.72% agree strongly that working in teams during the deployment phase contributed towards the breaking down of barriers that normally exist across functional lines, 27.59% agree with 20.68% being uncertain. This is significant in terms of transforming the current culture of functional silos because service delivery value chains cut across provincial departments.

Table 5.31 Network for sharing ideas, support and feedback

Value	Number	Percentage	Cumulative %
1 – Agree strongly	17	58.62	58.62
2 – Agree	12	41.38	100.00
TOTAL	**29**	**100.00**	**100.00**

Missing or invalid cases: 1

For question thirty two, 58.62% of the respondents agree strongly that the deployment teams provide a network for sharing ideas, support and feedback and 41.38% agree. This again supports the concept of co-learning in groups and that this approach lends itself to more practical and innovative learning

The findings under the theme teams are significant and show overwhelmingly that action learning plays an important role in embedding the concept and practice of teams, teamwork and team learning. This concept is a central element of a transformed Public Service and Senior Managers who have attended action learning can be used to implement the concept of teamwork.

5.3.6   Theme Six: Contribution to performance

The goal of action learning is both to develop individual capability and improve organisational performance by solving business problems. Although the focus of action learning is problem solving an important question is whether or not it contributes positively to individual performance. Data for this theme was sourced from responses to questions 15, 22, 23, 24 and 25.

Table 5. 32 Positive Improvements in Performance

Value	Number	Percentage	Cumulative %
1 – Agree strongly	10	33.33	33.33
2 – Agree	15	50.00	83.33
3 – Uncertain	5	16.67	100.00
TOTAL	**30**	**100.00**	**100.00**

Missing or invalid cases:0

In response to questions fifteen, 50% of the respondents agree that the Khaedu Action learning programme contributed positively to their level of performance, 33.33 % agree strongly with 16.67% being uncertain. Over 80% indicate that they agree that there has been a positive contribution to their performance. While this is an individual perception it is significant in that the programme is achieving both its goals. This, however, needs

testing and could be the subject to further research, but is accepted as positive contribution of the programme.

Table 5. 33 Developed expertise in process mapping, time, capacity, value analysis and best demonstrated practice development

Value	Number	Percentage	Cumulative %
1 - Agree strongly	11	36.67	36.67
2 – Agree	19	63.33	100.00
TOTAL	**30**	**100.00**	**100.00**

Missing or invalid cases:0

Table 5.34 Developed Expertise in Organisation Effectiveness

Value	Number	Percentage	Cumulative %
1 - Agree strongly	8	27.67	26.67
2 – Agree	20	66.67	93.33
3 – Uncertain	2	6.67	100.00
TOTAL	**30**	**100.00**	**100.00**

Missing or invalid cases: 0

Table 5.35 Developed Expertise in People Management

Value	Number	Percentage	Cumulative %
1 - Agree strongly	8	26.67	26.67
2 – Agree	19	63.33	90.00
3 – Uncertain	3	10.00	100.00
TOTAL	**30**	**100.00**	**100.00**

Missing or invalid cases:0

Table 5.36 Developed Expertise in Budgeting and Control

Value	Number	Percentage	Cumulative %
1 - Agree strongly	9	30.00	30.00
2 – Agree	17	56.67	86.67
3 – Uncertain	1	3.33	90.00
4 - Do not agree	3	10.00	100.00
TOTAL	**30**	**100.00**	**100.00**

Missing or invalid cases:0

In terms of questions 22, 23, 24 and 25 over 80% of the respondents agree strongly/agree that the Khaedu Action Learning Programme developed their expertise in the specified topics covered on the 5 day core skills programme.

5.3.7 Theme Seven: Organisational Improvement

One of the deliverables at the end of the deployment phase is the presentation of a report identifying the problems and proposing solutions to the Senior Management at the deployment site. The aim of the report is to assist the management to effect changes that will lead to organisational improvement. Data for this theme was sourced from responses to questions 16, 19,27,28,33 and 35

Table5.37 Contribution to Organisational Improvement

Value	Number	Percentage	Cumulative %
1 - Agree strongly	9	31.03	31.03
2 – Agree	11	37.93	68.97
3 – Uncertain	8	27.59	96.55
4 - Do not agree	1	3.45	100.00
TOTAL	**29**	**100.00**	**100.00**

Missing or invalid cases: 1

For question sixteen, 31.03% of respondents agree that the reports produced will contribute to organisational improvement, 37.93% agree, 27.59% are uncertain and 3.45 do not agree. While there is overall agreement that the reports will lead to organisational improvement one needs to take into account the 27.59% who are uncertain. The uncertainty is based on the fact that the implementation of the report is dependent on how it is viewed by the management at the deployment site and how seriously they take it. The comments received to this question provide some interesting insights into how respondents perceive the impact of the reports. Some comments to this question include:

- It depends, if they took the recommendations seriously their organisation should improve;
- The suggestions/recommendation would greatly improve service delivery if implemented;
- If what we recommend is taken seriously it could make a difference.
- All of us are concerned about issues of efficiency and effectiveness.
- Certain gaps were identified which when implemented will enhance improvement;

71

- Not to ones immediate organisation but to the organisation used as a case study;

- While there is no doubt that organisational improvement is bound to ensue the attitude element of the implementing management towards the programme has a role to play;

- No indication of acceptance or application of recommendations, but recommendation would assist to deal with problem areas.

Table 5.38 Creating a Learning Organisation

Value	Number	Percentage	Cumulative %
1 - Agree strongly	9	30.00	30.00
2 – Agree	15	50.00	80.00
3 – Uncertain	6	20.00	100.00
TOTAL	**30**	**100.00**	**100.00**

Missing or invalid cases: 0

While action learning is primarily targeted at problem solving or developing innovative strategic solutions it also facilitates organisational learning by identifying and developing best practices. In addition the action learning teams become communities of learning. 30% agree strongly that the Khaedu Action Learning programme will contribute to the creation of a learning organisation, 50% agree with 20% uncertain. In this case cognisance has to be taken of the 20% uncertain responses. Some comments to this question included:

- I have not seen any commitment from top management to see the programme work;

- Provided that some space is provided for the learning to be implemented

- It encourages the organisation /employees to strive for the best based on proven best practices;

- Managers will develop a common approach towards addressing issues as learnt at the learning programme. This will foster a culture within the organisation whereby managers are constantly adapting and learning;

- Because it allows organisations especially senior managers to learn from one another. Therefore, it allows sharing of best practices;
- The sharing and merging of various ideas lead to common understanding and manner of resolving problems.

Table 5.39 Enabler in the Change Process

Value	Number	Percentage	Cumulative %
1 – Agree strongly	14	46.67	46.67
2 – Agree	15	50.00	96.67
3 – Uncertain	1	3.33	100.00
TOTAL	**30**	**100.00**	**100.00**

Missing or invalid cases: 0

The action learning programme has it foundation in a report that found that 'Batho Pele' which is the main thrust of the Public Service change initiative was not institutionalised and being implemented in an *ad hoc* manner. The Khaedu Action Learning Programme was introduced to capacitate managers to implement Batho Pele and improve service delivery. For question twenty seven, 46.67% agree strongly that the programme can be a major enabler in the change process, 20% agree with 3.33% being uncertain. The programme is in a position to rejuvenate government's efforts of transforming public service delivery

Table 5.40 Apply and Transfer of Knowledge to Workplace

Value	Number	Percentage	Cumulative %
1 – Agree strongly	6	21.43	21.43
2 – Agree	14	50.00	71.43
3 – Uncertain	4	14,29	85.71
4 - Do not agree	3	10.71	96.43
5 - Strongly disagree	1	3.57	100.00
TOTAL	**28**	**100.00**	**100.00**

Missing or invalid cases: 2

The deployment phase was used to practice and reinforce the theory learnt on the 5 day core skills programme. The next phase would be the application of the theory and practice in the participants own workplace. According to the theory of action learning, learning by doing facilitates easier application of what is learnt. For question twenty eight, 21.43% of the respondents agree strongly that they were able to apply and transfer the knowledge gained in the workplace, 50% agree, 14.39% are uncertain, 10.71% do not

agree and 3.57% strongly disagree. The findings that the majority of respondents, 61.43% strongly agree/agree is important because one of criticisms of traditional training is that it is not transferable to the workplace and gives support to the action learning approach.

Table 5.41 Effect Changes by applying Skills learnt

Value	Number	Percentage	Cumulative %
1 - Agree strongly	8	26.67	26.67
2 – Agree	12	40.00	66.67
3 – Uncertain	8	26.67	93.33
4 - Do not agree	2	6.67	100.00
TOTAL	**30**	**100.00**	**100.00**

Missing or invalid cases: 0

For question thirty three, 26.67% of respondents agree strongly that they have been able to effect changes to their current work environment by applying the skills learnt on the Khaedu Action Learning Programme, 40% agree, 26.67% are uncertain and 6.67% do not agree. This supports the findings in question 28 and reinforces the theory that working on and learning from work based assignments develops skills that can be applied easily.

Table 5.41 Deployment Reports   Accepted

Value	Number	Percentage	Cumulative %
1 - Agree strongly	8	28.57	28.57
2 – Agree	16	57.15	87.71
3 – Uncertain	2	7.14	92.86
4 - Do not agree	2	7.14	100.00
TOTAL	**28**	**100.00**	**100.00**

Missing or invalid cases: 2

The findings in question thirty five must be viewed in conjunction with the findings in question 16 in which there was agreement that the deployment reports will contribute to organisational improvement. However, in the comments it was clear that the respondents who were uncertain commented that this was dependent on the seriousness of the site management. For this question, 28.57% of the respondents agree strongly that their reports were well received by the management teams at the deployment sites, 57.14% agree, 7.14% are uncertain and 7.14% do not agree

5.3.8 Theme Eight: Reflection

Reflection is an important element that distinguishes action learning form normal training and development. Through reflection one gets to think about the leaning experience and commits to continue with what was experienced as being positive and change what did not work. This provides an opportunity to think about and share the impact and influence of the action learning experience which leads to individual development and educational growth.

Table 5.43 Reflection during Deployment

Value	Number	Percentage	Cumulative %
1 – Agree strongly	9	31.03	31.03
2 – Agree	20	68.97	100.00
TOTAL	**29**	**100.00**	**100.00**

Missing or invalid cases:1

For question twenty six, 68.97% agree strongly that the reflection during the deployment of what was learnt on the core skills programme had a positive effect on their development and educational growth and 31.08% agree.

5.4 Section C: Analysis of Open Ended Questions

The questionnaire comprised 6 open ended questions and 1 general comment questions. In this section key themes or ideas will be identified and related to the findings in section B of the questionnaire

5.4.1 Differences between Traditional Classroom Based Management Development Programme and the Khaedu Action Learning Programme

According to the responses the traditional classroom based management development programme focuses on theory, rules and knowledge. It is removed from the reality and challenges of the workplace and at times out of touch. Interaction is limited to the group that is being trained. There is tendency to theorise about the workplace without the facts. There was support for classroom based management development if it is linked to action

learning as was the case with the Khaedu Programme where the 5 day core skills programme was followed by a week long deployment giving participants the opportunity to apply what they have learnt. It also does not teach the skill of how to apply skills that are learnt. There is little room for application.

Action learning on the other hand was found to be practical and provided opportunities to apply what was learnt. It offers first hand experience of the challenges and problems being faced at different workplaces. Participants on the action learning programme learnt and solved problems at the same time. In the Khaedu Action Learning Programme the guidance of the facilitator/ coach made it easier to apply the skills learnt. Reflection which forms part of the action learning process enhanced the impact on self-development. Working in teams to solve practical problems stimulates robust debate that results in creative and innovative solutions. Action learning provides opportunity for experiential learning and the identification of good practice and common issues that need common interventions.

5.4.2 Impact of the Khaedu Action Learning Programme on Capability and Performance

Respondents have reported that the Khaedu Action Learning Programme impacted positively on their capability and performance in the following ways:

- Improved their levels of confidence specifically of working with others and making presentations;
- Their ability to analyse situations has been enhanced. The programme places strong emphasis on problem analysis;
- Improved their ability to view problems, situations and challenges from different perspectives;
- Improved their ability to map processes, diagnose processes, identify bottlenecks and root causes to problems;

- Has lead to participants engaging in more creative and innovative approaches when dealing with problems by thinking out of box;
- Led to participants becoming more results driven in strategy development and implementation;
- Improved their ability to undertake quick assessment of issues using the tools from the programme and developing solutions;
- Improved their ability to plan and execute work.

While the respondents indicated that the programme has improved their capacity, they were not clear about its impact on performance. They cited the fact that it is important for the workplace to provide opportunities to implement what has been learnt and for more people to attend so that the Khaedu Action Learning language and approaches are understood by all.

5.4.3 Important lessons learnt from the Khaedu Action Learning Programme

The respondents provided a variety of responses and the following are the general themes that emerged:

- There exists a gap in the ability of public servants to analyse and provide implementable solutions;
- The people learn most by doing;
- The public service is facing common service delivery challenges;
- Problems of bottlenecks at service delivery points are not properly understood and are generalized;
- It is important to match theory with practice;
- Teamwork and use of technology are necessary and important;
- Process design is critical to planning and successful execution of plans;
- Exposure to other sectors in the Public Service broadens understanding and knowledge;
- Cross-pollination of ideas is important for integrated service delivery;

- The public service is not as rigid as it is made out to be, it allows for creativity.

5.4.4 The Khaedu Action Learning Programme has the necessary support to succeed

According to Dotlich and Noel (1998), for an action learning programme to succeed it must have the support of senior executives and specifically a sponsor. It must also focus on a strategic mandate which must also have the support of the sponsor. The responses to this question were as follows:

- Support for the programme is limited only to senior managers who have been exposed to it;
- No support from the whole management in specific departments;
- No support from some of the managements at some deployment sites. Not sure if recommendations will be addressed;
- Needs top management commitment and willingness to make changes were necessary;
- Senior management and political support is needed for the programme to make a difference;
- Management in some departments do support the programme;
- It will have the support as long as managers are prepared to implement what they have learnt and commit themselves to service delivery improvement;
- Programme must be mandatory for Heads of Departments and Chief Directors;
- The Director-General and Deputy Director-Generals' must play a part in the programme.

It is clear that there is concern and uncertainty on the level of support the programme has. The implication of this is that it may detract from the fact that participants are positive about the programme and the reports being produced are good. The entire programme

must be reviewed using Dotlich and Noel's (1998) twelve element framework for action learning to correct this situation.

5.4.5 Changes suggested for the Khaedu Action Learning programme

The purpose of this question was to obtain inputs on how the programme can be improved. Some of the key responses include the following:

- Introduction of follow-ups to the deployment sites to evaluate whether the proposals made were implemented and what value was added in terms of service delivery;
- Deployment must be compulsory and a refresher course on department specific issues to be held 6 months later;
- Khaedu to be a standing item on the Cabinet agenda;
- Presentation to highest level of management who have the authority to implement recommendations;
- Deployment to sites within departments where delegates come from;
- Develop strategy to enforce the implementation of recommendations;
- Increase the time spent at the coal face;
- Constitute deployment teams within departments so that they can then use the skills in their own departments.

5.4.5 Impact of the Khaedu Action Learning Programme on Service Delivery

There is a general feeling that Khaedu will have a positive impact on service delivery. It needs to be applied across the Public Service with more personnel being introduced to it. There needs to be a pooling together of skill, expertise and competencies in delivering strategies for service excellence. The programme needs political and budgetary support if it is to be sustained. The recommendations of the deployment teams must be implemented as these are focused on improving service delivery. Personnel on Khaedu

need to be redeployed annually to service delivery points to re-inforce what they have learnt.

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter the data was analysed and findings identified. The purpose was to give a sense of what the perceptions of the respondents were. These were then related to the theory covered in chapter two and chapter three of the study. Broadly, the findings are that the perception of action learning is positive and that it has contributed to both individual performance and organisational performance. However, of specific concern is the support the programme has for it to successful in the long term. Based on the findings in this chapter the next chapter will deal with conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will cover the conclusions and recommendations for this study. These are based on the findings in chapter 5. Management development is and will continue to be a key strategy for public service transformation as it strives to achieve excellence and improve service delivery. The South African Public Service because of it's transformation agenda faces very specific challenges relating to having a fully capacitated Senior Management cadre. The continuous and targeted development of existing, emerging and newly recruited managers is central to ensuring that it continues to function effectively.

It is important for planners, policy makers and human resource development practitioners to recognize the management development efforts will not be successful if undertaken in isolation of other strategic change, learning and organisational development initiatives. The performance management system on the one hand and the training and development system are interrelated and interdependent. Implementation of both in a complementary manner is a must. Management development policies and plans must be introduced and should include clear guidelines on the number of training days a manager should undertake in a performance cycle and stipulate mandatory programmes. The concept of development must be broadened beyond the classroom to all activities, both formal and informal which will contribute to capacity building.

In chapter 5 the analysis revealed specific themes and the findings were captured according to the major themes. The similar pattern is followed in this chapter with conclusions being made per theme followed by recommendations on the theme.

6.2 Personal development planning

6.2.1 Conclusions

The performance management and development system is not being implemented as stipulated in the Public Service Handbook (2001) impacting negatively on the continuous and need directed development of the senior management cadre. Supervisors are not fulfilling their roles and responsibilities and commitment to the training and development of Senior Managers is lacking. This could have serious implications for the continued implementation of the skills acquired on the Khaedu Action Learning Programme as SMS members are required to undertake one deployment in each performance cycle.

6.2.2 Recommendation

It is recommended that a comprehensive audit be undertaken to ascertain the level of compliance of the implementation of the performance management and development system. This must be supported by a training programme that will train all SMS members on the Performance Management and Development System.

6.3 Traditional Classroom Based Management Development

6.3.1 Conclusions

There is a relatively fair split between Senior Managers who find traditional classroom based management development highly or moderately effective and those who find it mildly or not effective. However, Senior Managers find this approach to be theoretical with little or no opportunity for practice; they find it difficult to transfer learning to the workplace; the information is not reinforced and lost; and the content is not relevant to the reality of the workplace. Nevertheless, there is a place for traditional classroom based management development in terms of introducing and creating an understanding of

management concepts. The transfer of learning to the workplace is also being hampered by the lack of an enabling environment where skills learnt can be practiced.

6.3.2 Recommendations

Traditional classroom based management development programmes must be reviewed in terms of increasing the practical content and making provision for practical work based assignments and action learning. The programmes must be aligned with the reality of the workplace. The approach should form part of a blended approach to learning by having the classroom based programme as one part and the action learning as another part of the programme. The programmes must be linked to the needs of the individual and the job.

6.4   Relevance of the Khaedu Core Skills Programme

6.4.1   Conclusions

Action learning is a new approach to Senior Managers in the Provincial Public Service with the majority of respondents experiencing it for the first time by attending the Khaedu Action Learning Programme. The content on the core skills programme was highly relevant and is an indication of the core competence areas that need to be developed for Senior Managers. The topics that received the highest rating, process design, problem solving and business mathematics; and creating effective organisations and strategies are not topics that are generally found on management development programmes. This is an indication of their concern with poor process design and value chains in the Public Service and ineffective organisational structures. The delivery approach which included expert presentations, analysis and presentation of solutions to case studies relevant to the public service and report backs was found to be highly effective.

6.4.2   Recommendations

All management development programmes should have a core skills part and the same delivery approach should be adopted, namely, expert presentations, use of relevant case studies to be worked on in groups and exposure to tools for implementation in the workplace for problem recognition, analysis and resolution. The core content of all management development programmes must include systems thinking, process mapping, time, capacity and value analysis, best demonstrated practice development and organisational effectiveness.

6.5   The Deployment Phase of the Khaedu Action Learning Programme

6.5.1   Conclusions

Both the 5 day core skills programme and deployment phase are necessary and compliment each other. The core skills programme serves as an important orientation to issues of service delivery and some theoretical principles important for organisational development and undertaking internal consultancy. The experiential learning during the deployment phase served to reinforce learning and gave respondents exposure to the complexities and challenges faced at the coal face. This phase of the programme lends itself to innovative and divergent thinking, learning by doing, developing skills for generating, analyzing and presenting information and out of the box thinking,

6.5.2 Recommendations

This is the core phase for action learning and should be maintained in its current form and be replicated on all management development programmes and not limited to Senior Management programmes. It should be introduced into the junior and middle management development programmes to inculcate the culture of action learning and problem solving. Deployment must be expanded beyond the Khaedu Action Learning Programme and be used more regularly as a tool for dealing with organisational

bottlenecks and development of strategies to improve organisational efficiency. A list of common challenges should be identified annually by the Honorable Premier and action learning teams be constituted to develop solutions to these challenges. Heads of Department should create action learning teams within their departments to solve departmental specific problems.

6.6   Teams and Team Learning

6.6.1   Conclusions

The action learning during the deployment phase contributed positively to developing the skill of working in a team, made of people from different backgrounds and positions within the public service, it stimulated learning as a result of the energy and synergy of working with people from dissimilar backgrounds, it also broke down functional barriers and created a network for sharing ideas, support and feedback. Most importantly it has demonstrated to Senior Managers the value of teams in an organisation.

6.6.2   Recommendations

The experience of working in teams gained by Senior Managers should be shared and replicated at all levels of management. Action learning teams must be set up and trained to become part of the organisational culture of the organisation. The team approach must be introduced as a strategic initiative for the entire provincial public service.

6.7   Contribution to Individual Performance

6.7.1   Conclusions

Based on the responses set out in the findings the programme has contributed positively to individual performance and also developed expertise in the areas of process mapping,

time capacity and value analysis, best practice development, organisational effectiveness, people management, budgeting and control.

6.7.2 Recommendations

As already indicated, the delivery and learning approach adopted by the Khaedu Action Learning programme should be adopted and replicated for all management development programmes including the content. Further research should be undertaken in this area to test the perceptions expressed by the respondents

6.8 Organisational Improvement

6.8.1 Conclusions

The analysis undertaken at the deployment sites and the reports presented to the management of the sites or institutions will have a positive impact on organisational improvement. However, there is a degree of uncertainty which is based on not knowing how seriously the recommendations are taken, whether they have been accepted and the attitude of management at the site towards the programme.

Action learning can also be a major enabler of change and respondents were in agreement that the deployment enabled them to transfer the knowledge gained to their workplaces and they have been able to effect changes at their workplaces

6.8.2 Recommendations

The reports should be presented to the site management with a member from the Service Delivery Improvement team from the relevant department and the Office of the Premier in attendance. The site management should be given a specified period to indicate that they accept the report and prepare an action plan to implement it, with the action learning team visiting the site at agreed time periods. Consolidated reports per

department should be presented to Heads of Department and Executive Committees. Province wide reports must be presented to the Provincial Cabinet which is chaired by the Honorable Premier who is the Sponsor of the Programme. Monitoring implementation should not be the responsibility of the Action Learning team but by the members from the Service Delivery Improvement Units.

An important aspect of action learning is that it generates data, information and solutions all of which contribute to the creation of a learning organisation. It also identifies best practices which can be used for organisational improvement. However, large amounts of knowledge generated in organisations is not shared or used effectively. It is, therefore, critical that the knowledge generated is managed to the benefit of the organisation. To achieve this learning network should be hosted regularly to share the information and best practices generated through the action learning. Reports should be placed on Provincial Government websites for easy access and where best practices have been identified, benchmarking must be facilitated.

6.9 Conclusion

The chapter covered the conclusions and recommendations emanating from the research and data analysis. The purpose of the recommendations is to improve both management development and action learning as an approach to capacity building. The recommendations are presented according to themes that emerged during the data analysis phase and broadly cover traditional classroom based management development programmes, core skills training, the deployment phase of the Khaedu Programme, teams and team learning, creation of a learning organisation, individual performance improvement and organisational performance improvement.

7.   Recommendations for Further Research

Further research is recommended on the implementation of the Senior Management Service Performance Management System as it is critical to improving individual and

organisational performance. The data used for the theme Personal Development Planning highlighted gaps in compliance.

Research is also recommended into the learning styles of senior managers and the link this has to the types of interventions best suited for the different styles.

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QUESTIONNAIRE

TOWARDS IMPROVING MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT BY UNDERSTANDING THE PERCEPTIONS OF SENIOR MANAGERS OF THE KHAEDU ACTION LEARNING PROGRAMME A STUDY IN THE KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION

This survey is being carried out to gather information/data that will help determine the perceptions of senior managers in the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Administration of the Khaedu Action Learning Programme. Your responses will be treated as confidential. **This questionnaire must only be completed by Senior Management Services members who have attended both the 5 day Khaedu Core Skills Programme and deployment to the coal face.**

SECTION A
BACKGROUND INFORMATION

INSTRUCTIONS

Please complete Section A: **Biographical data (please place a tick in the appropriate block)**

1. **Title of Post:**

2. **Post level:** 13 ☐ 14 ☐ 15 ☐

3. **Length of service in the Public Service:** 1-5 yrs ☐ 6-10 yrs ☐

   11-15yrs ☐ 16- 20yrs ☐ More than 21yrs ☐

4. **Number of years in SMS position:** ☐

5. **Gender:** Male ☐ Female ☐

6.   **Age: 25-35** ☐   **36-45** ☐   **46-55** ☐   **Older than 56** ☐

7.   **Highest Qualification**

      Matric ☐   **Diploma** ☐   **Degree** ☐   **Honours** ☐

      Masters ☐   **PHD/Doctorate** ☐

INTRUCTIONS

Please complete the following questions. Circle the response that best describes how you feel. Where necessary complete the spaces provided.

1.   **The assessment of your personal development needs is**

    a.   undertaken annually
    b.   not undertaken annually

    Other:

    _____

    _____

2.   **In terms of the SMS Performance Management and Development System all SMS members should have a personal development plan. You currently**

    a.   have a personal development plan
    b.   do not have a personal development plan

3.   **Your needs are assessed by**

    a.   yourself
    b.   your supervisor
    c.   jointly by yourself and your supervisor

4.   **All your development needs are**

    a.   met in the annual performance cycle
    b.   not met in the annual performance cycle

5. **You have found the traditional classroom based management development programmes you have attended to be**

  a. Highly effective
  b. Moderately effective
  c. Effective
  d. Mildly effective
  e. Not effective

State why

_____
_____
_____
_____

6. **Learning that takes place on a traditional classroom based management development programme is easily transferable and applicable to the workplace.**

  a. Agree Strongly
  b. Agree
  c. Uncertain
  d. Do not agree
  e. Strongly disagree

State why

_____
_____
_____
_____

7. **The topics and content of the five-day Core Skills Training on the Khaedu Action Learning Programme were**

  a. Highly relevant
  b. Moderately relevant
  c. Relevant
  d. Mildly relevant
  e. Not relevant

8. **The five-day Core Skills Training on the Khaedu Action Learning programme used expert presentations, case studies and report backs. You found this to be**

    a. Highly effective
    b. Moderately effective
    c. Effective
    d. Mildly effective
    e. Not Effective

    State why

    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

9. **The following topics in Table 1 were presented on the 5 day Core Skills Programme. Rate the topics in accordance with how important you found them to your development. Use the following scale.**

    5 - Highly important
    4 - Moderately important
    3 - Important
    2 - Mildly important
    1 - Not important

    Table 1: Topics on Core Skills Programme

TOPIC	RATING
Process design, problem solving and business mathematics	
Creating effective organisations and strategies	
People and Change Management and building a 'Win-Win' with staff unions	
Financial Management	
Communication for results	

10. **What other topic/s would you recommend for inclusion on the 5 day Core Skills Programme?**

   - _____
   - _____
   - _____
   - _____
   - _____

11. **List the most important skill/s you have learnt from the 5 day Core skills programme:**

   - _____
   - _____
   - _____
   - _____
   - _____

12. **Have you attended any other action learning programme other than Khaedu?**

   a. Yes
   b. No

13. **The Khaedu Action Learning Programme comprises the 5 day Core Skills Programme and 5 day deployment to the coal face. The five-day core skills programme without the deployment phase would have been**

   a. Highly effective
   b. Moderately effective
   c. Effective
   d. Mildly Effective
   e. Not Effective

   State why

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

14. **The action learning in the deployment phase promoted experiential learning.**

    a. agree strongly
    b. agree
    c. uncertain
    d. do not agree
    e. strongly disagree

State why

_____

_____

_____

_____

15. **The Khaedu Programme has contributed positively to your level of performance.**

    a. agree strongly
    b. agree
    c. uncertain
    d. do not agree
    e. strongly disagree

16. **The reports you produced after the deployment phase of the Khaedu Action Learning Programme will contribute to organisational improvement.**

    a. agree strongly
    b. agree
    c. uncertain
    d. do not agree
    e. strongly disagree

State why

_____

_____

_____

_____

17. The deployment phase of the Khaedu Action Learning Programme developed your skills in working in a team.

   a. agree strongly
   b. agree
   c. uncertain
   d. do not agree
   e. strongly disagree

18. After attending the deployment phase of the Khaedu Action Learning Programme, you have a better understanding of team learning.

   a. Agree strongly
   b. Agree
   c. Uncertain
   d. Do not agree
   e. Strongly disagree

19. The Khaedu Action Learning Programme will contribute to the creation of a learning organisation.

   a. Agree strongly
   b. Agree
   c. Uncertain
   d. Do not agree
   e. Strongly disagree

   State why

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

20. The deployment phase of the action learning programme exposed you to unfamiliar situations and problems which triggered fresh ideas and thinking. This enabled you to ask more searching questions to the management and staff at the deployment site.

   a. Agree strongly
   b. Agree
   c. Uncertain
   d. Do not agree
   e. Strongly disagree

21. **The energy and synergy generated by working with people from dissimilar backgrounds stimulates learning.**

    a. Agree strongly
    b. Agree
    c. Uncertain
    d. Do not agree
    e. Strongly disagree

    State why

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

22. **The Khaedu Action Learning Programme developed your expertise in process mapping, time, capacity, value analysis and best demonstrated practice development.**

    a. Agree strongly
    b. Agree
    c. Uncertain
    d. Do not agree
    e. Strongly disagree

23. **The Khaedu Action Learning Programme developed your expertise in organisational effectiveness.**

    a. Agree strongly
    b. Agree
    c. Uncertain
    d. Do not agree
    e. Strongly disagree

24. **The Khaedu Action Learning Programme developed your management expertise in people management.**

    a. Agree strongly
    b. Agree
    c. Uncertain
    d. Do not agree
    e. Strongly disagree

25. **The Khaedu Action Learning Programme developed your expertise in budgeting and control.**

   a. Agree strongly
   b. Agree
   c. Uncertain
   d. Do not agree
   e. Strongly disagree

26. **Reflection is an important part of the learning experience. The reflection during your deployment of what you learnt during the core skills programme has had a positive effect on your development and educational growth.**

   a. Agree strongly
   b. Agree
   c. Uncertain
   d. Do not agree
   e. Strongly disagree

27. **The Khaedu Action Learning Programme can be a major enabler in the change process.**

   a. Agree strongly
   b. Agree
   c. Uncertain
   d. Do not agree
   e. Strongly disagree

   State why

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

28. **The deployment has enabled you to apply and transfer the knowledge you have gained to your workplace.**

   a. Agree strongly
   b. Agree
   c. Uncertain
   d. Do not agree
   e. Strongly disagree

29. **The deployment phase of the Khaedu Action Learning Programme enabled you to learn by doing.**

    a. Agree strongly
    b. Agree
    c. Uncertain
    d. Do not agree
    e. Strongly disagree

30. **The deployment phase of the Khaedu Action Learning Programme developed your ability to generate, analyse and present information.**

    a. Agree strongly
    b. Agree
    c. Uncertain
    d. Do not agree
    e. Strongly disagree

31. **Working in teams during the deployment phase contributed towards the breaking down of barriers that normally exist across functional lines.**

    a. Agree strongly
    b. Agree
    c. Uncertain
    d. Do not agree
    e. Strongly disagree

32. **The deployment teams provide a network for sharing ideas, support and feedback.**

    a. Agree strongly
    b. Agree
    c. Uncertain
    d. Do not agree
    e. Strongly disagree

33. **You have been able to effect changes to your current work environment by applying the skills you have learnt on the Khaedu Action Learning Programme.**

    a. Agree strongly
    b. Agree
    c. Uncertain
    d. Do not agree
    e. Strongly disagree

34. **The deployment placed you in an environment out of your comfort zone which allowed you to view service delivery problems from a different perspective and propose out of the box solutions.**

   a. Agree strongly
   b. Agree
   c. Uncertain
   d. Do not agree
   e. Strongly disagree

35. **Recommendations made in the deployment reports were well received by the management teams from the deployment sites.**

   a. Agree strongly
   b. Agree
   c. Uncertain
   d. Do not agree
   e. Strongly disagree

INSTRUCTIONS: This section consists of open ended questions. Please answer as concisely and precisely as you possibly can in the space provided

1. **What do you think are the main differences between a traditional classroom based management development programme and the Khaedu Action Learning Programme?**

    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

2. **What impact has the Khaedu Action Learning Programme had on your capability and performance?**

    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

3. **What are the most important lessons you learnt from the Khaedu Action Learning Programme?**

    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

4. **Does the Khaedu Action Learning Programme have the necessary support for it to succeed?**

    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

5. What would you like to see changed in the approach used by the Khaedu Action Learning programme?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

6. What impact do you think the Khaedu Action Learning Programme will have on service delivery?

_____

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7. General comments

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Thank you for taking time to complete this questionnaire

UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL

7 DECEMBER 2006

MR. FMA SAFLA (201509514)
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

Dear Mr. Safla

ETHICAL CLEARANCE APPROVAL NUMBER: HSS/06865A

I wish to confirm that ethical clearance has been granted for the following project:

"Towards improving management development by understanding the perceptions of Senior Managers of the Khaedu Action Learning Programme: A study in the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Administration"

Yours faithfully

MS. PHUMELELE XIMBA
RESEARCH OFFICE

cc.   Faculty Office (Christel Haddon)
cc.   Supervisor (Dr. M Dent)