

Making the other half work too?

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'No man is an island' often quoted by the same people who say 'he was a self-made man.' The truth is, no one ever got to the top on their own. We all needed someone to show us the way, to support us in times of difficulty and to guide us through the many crossroads on the path of life.

To redress historical disadvantage, however, most South Africans still need access to the privilege of coaching, mentoring and broader skills development. One concept of workplace-based routes for learning under the banner of 'learnerships' was recently initiated by the Department of Labour through various sector education & training authorities. Learnerships gained some momentum across a number of industry sectors during the past year, however, many expected difficulties and forecasted problems were experienced and assessment processes and results had regularly been verified as unsatisfactory.

Improving the guidance and support systems to participating learners logically followed and some success was made through integrating two key processes. Firstly, by appointing experienced coaches to guide learners toward job-related performance the secondly, ensuring these coaches gathered specific



supporting evidence of learners' competence on-the-job. Evidence collected was according to instruments and guides forming part of the training providers assessment management system.

Much of the existing local and international research around effective learning delivery models, including learnerships, again confirm the Institute of People Development (IPD) range of strategies for solutions to making outcomes-based education and training work.

According to Mark Orpen, CEO of the Institute of People Development, the four main areas of concern to improve future learnership projects include:

- Clearly mapped experiential workplace learning pathways.
- A detailed project delivery plan outlining an integrated assessment system and how evidence gathering and coaching should be done.
- Effective, competent and supportive workplace coaches / evidence gatherers.
- Integrating learning outcomes and job outputs in both the training and the assessment.

"'Make the other half work too!' is often the plea of the training provider, but it is in the understanding of the relationship between assessment, gathering & presenting of evidence, coaching and the very daily work that the coach/evidence gatherer/assessor does, that will enable training providers and workplaces to get to whole to work.

Orpen continues: "Accredited training providers with experienced subject matter expert trainers and assessors are out there and they make up the first half of the equation. Suitably selected and prepared learners are, of course, the other half of the equation. Workplace coaches/evidence gatherers are therefore the catalyst that calibrate the training providers' curriculum and workplace learning requirements and who guide and support the learners along their experiential learning paths. Trainers and assessors guide and support around the subject matter related learning. Clearly it's people who are the key to implementing the learnerships system, not necessarily the system itself."

"Companies who are serious about nation building and redressing access to occupation-directed education and training will look amongst the ranks of their staff for those higher performing employees who want to make a difference and to put a little back. It is these employees that they should train to become coaches/evidence gatherers for budding learnership participants."

The IPD has therefore developed a fit-for-purpose 2-day coaching/evidence gathering program aimed at those committed men and women who want to make a difference through coaching learners in the workplace. The training provider is recommended to accompany the training group to review or develop the instruments and guides to be aligned to delivering the learnership project.

Companies serious about nation building & making a difference will train workplace coaches/evidence gatherers and support learnerships