

Focus on South Africa

Funding for training, backed by government requirements and a growing economy, augurs well for future development.

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Training in South Africa has undergone a great deal of change since the first democratic election in 1994, when all South Africans voted a new government into office. After years of apartheid when developmental opportunities were subject to classification and job reservation, it was necessary to change the face of labor legislation to provide people previously disadvantaged by the system with access to training and development. This gave rise to a variety of interrelated laws designed to redress the discrimination of the past and to open doors for people who had been excluded under apartheid. These laws include:

- The Employment Equity Act, which focuses on affirmative action and takes into account skills shortages but requires that steps be taken to redress the situation.

- The Skills Development and the Skills Levy Acts, which are designed to promote a wide range of training and development and recognition of qualifications and prior learning, and to bring large organizations into the funding of training and development. This law also provides for the establishment of SETAs (Sectional Educational Training Authorities), which help to standardize and accredit training provision.

- South African Qualifications Act (SAQA) is the National Qualifications Framework.

- The Higher Education Act, which merged the many universities and Technikons (now Universities of Technology) of the old era to provide a more integrated approach to education and training.

Today, organizations in South Africa place a strong emphasis on developing skills to deal with the paradox of high unemployment and a skills shortage. Organizations are required to conduct skills surveys to determine the education levels and the potential for development in their people, and to put skills development plans in place. Money companies pay into the Skills Levy (to the Receiver of Revenue) can be claimed back when suitable training is implemented.

Many organizations also are focusing on succession planning. People identify their strengths and

potential development areas, and then comprehensive development programs are designed based on assessment findings and organizational needs. Assessment of potential for learning and development does not tap into education levels but rather into thinking skills and problem-solving styles. The assessments need to be non-verbal to eliminate language bias, which is another challenge in this country of 11 languages.

Leadership development is another target in many organizations such as those in the FMCG sector, where young and talented people are selected and then given comprehensive training both in-house and through external courses. In addition, government funding and mentorship assistance is provided to people establishing small businesses where basic business skills training is offered. SETA accreditation of training aims to ensure quality is in progress, although the processes are not yet well aligned and have been cumbersome. A possible restructuring is likely to take place within the next two years.

TRAINING PRICES

TRAINING	IN U.S. DOLLAR EQUIVALENTS
Funded training	\$270/day
Commercial training seminars	\$1,350/person/day
Custom and standard training	\$200-\$2,700/day (for a class)

Overall, the focus on training in South Africa is strong, and all nine provinces have targeted development areas in sectors such as the call center industry. The South African English pronunciation is regarded as understandable by most people and, therefore, suited to an international industry. The strong inclination toward technology supports these initiatives. **T**

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