

MXA Training Report 2008



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1.0 Background

McIntosh Xaba and Associates have in 2008 piloted the LED and IDP Qualification NQF level 5.

The IDP Qualification was offered through 7 different Skills Programs:

1. Introduction to IDP
2. Leadership and Management
3. Facilitation Skills and Approaches to Development Planning
4. Public Participation in the IDP Process
5. Institutional Arrangements for IDP
6. Strategic Planning and Implementation
7. IDP Implementation and Procedures

By successfully completing all of the above Skills Programs the learner would obtain the IDP qualification.

Ten learners registered for the full qualification at the beginning of 2008, in addition a number of other learners have attended one or more courses individually. On average we have had 14 learners attending each training.

Also, we have run the Introduction to IDP Skills Program at 3 other occasions for the respective municipalities; Nxuba Municipality, Mkhondo Municipality, and OR Thambo District Municipality.

The LED Qualification offered through 6 different Skills Programs:

1. Introducing LED
2. How to Develop an LED Strategy
3. Establishing an Enabling Environment for LED
4. Implement, Monitor and Evaluate LED Programs
5. Facilitation and Coaching in an LED context
6. Human Resource Management

By successfully completing all of the above Skills Programs the learner would obtain the LED qualification.

Four learners registered for the full qualification at the beginning of 2008, in addition other learners have attended one or more courses individually. On average we have had 10 learners attending each training.

2.0 Lessons Learnt

An evaluation report is compiled after each Skills Program outlining the background of learners, the workshop content and methodology, quantitative and qualitative feedback by the learners, as well as facilitators' observations and recommendations. Below is an overview of the quantitative feedback from the learners.

The learners are asked to rate different areas of the training from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent). While there is always room for improvement we are satisfied with the training when getting an average of 4 or more on each item (80% and above).

Participants' Evaluations 2008

workshop	Intro to IDP	Leadership	Intro to LED	Facilitation	Public Participation	LED Strategy	Inst. Arrangements	Intro to IDP	Enabling Environm.	Intro to LED	Strat. Plan	Implementation		
Relevance to work														
Relevance to work	92	82	90	92	77	92	83	92	97	95	82	87		
Applicability of skills	94	88	90	94	78	84	80	96	100	93	83	85		
Ability to pass skills on	94	85	87	92	80	92	83	94	88	93	82	83		
Methodology/Learning effect														
Teaching efficiency	96	82	83	80	73	84	78	72	80	98	76	78		
Materials	88	82	87	76	51	88	72	86	88	90	67	73		
Theory/practice	82	74	83	80	60	84	75	74	86	94	84	70		
Workshop overall duration	84	77	80	72	74	88	80	76	83	87	72	78		
Tutors														
Technical qualification	95	96	86	88	88	96	84	71	87	99	80	81		
Communication	97	95	87	90	89	96	87	72	91	100	81	83		
Participants														
Professional experience	86	84	84	86	77	84	84	92	80	88	80	81		
Information exchange	88	80	90	96	80	84	84	92	83	96	83	78		
Workshop atmosphere	84	88	90	100	80	88	86	92	86	93	82	78		
Objectives														
Have they been achieved	93	86	91	88	78	92	84	93	91	96	83	78		
Organisation														
Overall organisation	75	84	78	86	72	92	80	82	86	93	82	80		
Info received prior to training	92	95	92	94	74	92	81	84	83	81	87	86		
Overall approval														
Overall approval	88	83	86	82	75	88	78	88	83	95	83	78		

2.1 General Comments

As the table above illustrates, all LED Skills Programs are getting an average score of 80 or more on all areas evaluated by the learners. However, when looking at the IDP Skills Programs it becomes apparent that the learners have indicated more frustration. The material, balance between theory and practise and workshop duration all get lower scores in some of the IDP courses; we believe this is first and foremost due to the quality of some of the IDP manuals. In particular learners (and trainers / assessor) have pointed out that the manuals are not user-friendly, badly structured and often not well aligned to the unit standards. We strongly recommend the LGSETA to revise these manuals as soon as possible.

2.2 Facilitators and Participants

Our facilitators are repeatedly getting high scores on their competency, facilitation and communication skills. This illustrates how our participatory facilitation techniques are highly appreciated by the learners. Our training method includes short lecture inputs, discussions, groupwork, homework, learner presentation etc.

The participants further also rate their own experience, information exchange and workshop atmosphere highly. This can be seen in relation to having good trainers who can facilitate for these processes to take place.

2.3 Written test and workplace assignments

While the majority of the learners pass the formative assessment (knowledge test) many participants struggle to complete their workplace assignments within the originally specified period and only complete them after extensions have been granted. Some participants find it difficult to complete their work-place assignments in addition to their normal work requirements.

2.4 Central training versus on-site (district) provision

MXA has undertaken training for LED and IDP both at its venue in Durban as well as within local or district municipalities. MXA has found advantages and disadvantages in both approaches.

Advantages of central venue provision:

- It has been possible to roll out the qualifications by offering training at a central venue as sufficient demand has not yet been generated to be able to roll out full qualifications at a local or district level. We have only been able to run individual modules on this basis. Based on our experience, this lack of demand stems from the fact that the need and importance of these trainings have not been sufficiently communicated to municipalities by central government departments. Also, in our experience municipalities

- have struggled to obtain reliable information about which service providers are accredited for what and also to obtain funding for these qualifications.
- Participants also value being taken away from their work environment where they might otherwise be drawn back into local work crises.
 - Relationships and interactions have taken place between officials from different parts of the country which has added value to the training experience.

Advantages of district-based provision:

Those occasions where we have delivered training for a local or district municipality:

- it has been possible to customize the training to meet the specific needs of local and district municipalities;
- the interaction between officials addressed directly as part of the training process – since different officials from the same group of municipalities are participating in the training.

Way Forward

MXA will be rolling out the two NQF 5 level qualifications at its venue in Durban in 2008. Although we will also include the LED qualification at NQF level 6 in our extension of accreditation application, we don't believe that the demand exists for this at this stage.

In addition to this we believe we can assist relevant LED and IDP authorities on the basis of our piloting of the learnerships in 2008.

Upgrading of IDP materials

Firstly, the IDP material desperately needed to be updated based on our feedback from the training that has been undertaken. We would be in position to assist in this regard given the detailed feedback we have from each of the modules that have been delivered.

Taking qualifications to the districts/locals

Although it has not yet been possible to roll out IDP/LED training on an extensive basis within the districts/locals, we believe that it is important to place more emphasis on a 'district-based', 'action learning' approach.

In the case of both the LED and IDP qualifications it is possible to align the learnership modules in line with the particular IDP and LED processes taking place at a district and local level. As an example, one would ensure that the module on development strategy/plans would take place when such plans are due to be developed or amended. It would also be possible to ensure that the workplace assignments coincide with the particular tasks required by the municipality – whether a public participation process, an M&E exercise or whatever.

In undertaking six or seven modules over the course of a year and combining all relevant officials from the locals and the district and possibly some of the provincial support personnel, the following advantages would be anticipated:

- Officials would obtain relevant qualifications (which they would in any other learnership process);
- There would be an intensive application of the learning materials to the specifics of the district and the locals within it;
- The workplace assignments would, where suitable, not involve additional work, but involve properly doing the work required for the municipal LED/IDP process.
- Since actual work performed for the municipality is assessed and there is ongoing reflection as part and parcel of the different modules, this format effectively has a mentorship process built into it;
- Since such training would involve officials from the locals the district and the province, the process would in itself deal with the unravelling of IGR issues which currently plague our municipalities;
- District/ action based learnerships should reduce ongoing dependence on consultants; and
- The availability of funds from the LGSETA at R15000 per learner means that minimal additional funding would be required to roll out this system on a national basis.

We believe that this proposed approach to IDP and LED training would complement the other types of capacity building interventions that we have seen previously including:

- Crisis interventions by consultants (which may get the job done but often leave little behind in terms of local capacity)
 - Placements and
 - Ad hoc training initiatives.
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