

The role of career development in ensuring effective quality management of training



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Dates:

Received: 28 Sept. 2022

Accepted: 06 Dec. 2022

Published: 27 Jan. 2023

How to cite this article:

Els, R.C., & Meyer, H.W. (2023). The role of career development in ensuring effective quality management of training. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management/SA Tydskrif vir Menslikehulpbronbestuur*, 21(0), a2126. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajhrm.v21i0.2126>

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Orientation: It is widely acknowledged that career development needs to be viewed as a critical element by organisations to capacitate employees and contribute to organisational success. The role of career development in capacitating leaders to ensure effective quality management (QM) of training is not well known.

Research purpose: This research aimed to investigate officers in corps training units' perceptions regarding the role of career development in managing the quality of training in the South African (SA) Army.

Motivation for the study: Limited research exists concerning the career development of leaders responsible for the QM of training internationally and nationally. This study intended to fill the gap.

Research design and method: Qualitative focus group interviews were conducted using a sample comprising 49 officers at six SA Army corps training units.

Main findings: The appointment of unqualified and incompetent leaders in critical positions, lack of continuity in the staffing of personnel, the appointment of incompetent personnel in training positions and the lack of mentors and opportunities for mentoring of officers adversely affected the QM of training in the SA Army.

Practical/managerial implications: There is a need for leaders in the SA Army to ensure that career development strategies are adequately planned and managed in the training context. This will ensure that leaders with adequate potential are appointed and developed to guarantee high-quality training.

Contribution/value-add: This research provided an empirical description of the role that career development plays in the organisational system to ensure adequate QM of training.

Keywords: Career development; quality management; training; systems theory framework; officers.

Introduction

Career development (CD) has become a critical element for organisations and individual employees alike around the globe (Coetzee & Schreuder, 2015). Changes within the global environment, such as technology and economic and political transformation, influence the blend of knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics (KSAOs) required from personnel to achieve organisational objectives (Zacher et al., 2019). Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) has transformed how trainers and leaders prepare individuals and organisations. It has also influenced how individuals respond to these changes (i.e. a shift from contact workplaces to online technology-based workplaces) required to ensure effective CD (Yarberry & Sims, 2021). Apart from training and development, CD is essential for organisations to be able to invest in their human resources (Hughes & Byrd, 2015). Career development ensures that organisations have an adequate supply of people with the right qualifications and experience (Osibanjo et al., 2014). Career development also contributes to employee and organisational effectiveness (Coetzee & Schreuder, 2015). Career development is essential for leadership development to ensure that the training is aligned with job requirements. This will safeguard the achievement of organisational objectives. Erasmus et al. (2019) add that CD is most important for improving employees' competencies and attitudes toward their jobs. Equally so, a lack of CD strategies may affect employee performance and commitment to their jobs. Employers should provide opportunities for skills development, training and education and assistance with career management, such as coaching and mentoring (Werner, 2022). Bucar (2014) indicates that a leader's CD and training are essential for effective leadership development. Career development

should be the employee's responsibility, facilitated by the manager and supported by the organisation (Werner, 2022). Therefore, apart from the employee and organisation, leaders play an essential role in the CD of their subordinates. Adequately trained and staffed (placed) leaders (officers) may ensure the effective implementation of CD strategies for soldiers and competent soldiers to protect the country's (South Africa [SA]) borders.

Background and orientation

The SA Army is part of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF). The SA Army comprises the land forces that protect society against insurgencies from outside the borders of SA. The SA Army consists of different training units, called corps training units, responsible for soldiers' training and development. The word corps refers to an area of specialisation assigned to an individual soldier, for example, infantry, artillery, logistics, et cetera. The SA Army has six corps schools spread throughout SA, and the research was undertaken in these six corps training units. The SA Army consists of leader personnel grouped into three main categories: noncommissioned, warrant and commissioned officers. The investigation was concentrated on officers (which included warrant officers) who manage the quality of training provided to soldiers in these various corps training units responsible for training. Officers who participated in this research project include all junior (ranks of the second lieutenant to captain), senior (ranks of major to colonel) and warrant officers (ranks of warrant officer class 2 to master warrant officer) who manage their corps training units toward achieving quality training objectives set by the SA Army. 'Officers' also refers to top management (Formation and SA Army level). These officers were included in the research as they drive their own and facilitate their subordinates' (trainers, soldiers) CD. Leaders with adequate KSAOs should manage quality management (QM) to ensure that organisations achieve quality objectives (Chen, 2012).

Quality management of training in the SA Army ensures that highly trained soldiers protect the country on land. Mosadeghrad (2015) indicates that leaders (officers) are core to drive QM in organisations (SA Army). If leaders (officers) do not adequately manage training, it may result in the ineffective implementation of QM of training, leading to poor-quality training (Mosadeghrad, 2015). Similarly, if the QM of training is not implemented effectively, it may result in the SA Army being unable to provide high-quality soldiers to conduct landward defence. An environmental analysis conducted in the training environment (including the SA Army corps training units) revealed that leaders (including officers in corps training units) were unable to meet the set aims and improve the quality management system. The latter analysis concluded that the development paths (leadership development) of all officers require urgent attention (South African Department of Defence, 2016). This furthermore points to a CD problem. A lack of CD in these officers may result in them not managing the quality of training as they should. Those soldiers who receive substandard training will

not be able to perform their jobs effectively, thereby yielding a poor return on training investment.

Although previous international research exists, limited research has been conducted on CD within a QM of training context. Previously, Bertoliono et al. (2011) (Italy), Anthony and Weide (2015) (United States), Charity (2015) (Kenya) and Semwal and Dhyani (2017) (India) conducted research on CD within a training context. Thangavelu and Kanagasabapathi (2019) (India) investigated the effect of CD and training on employee motivation and performance. Only one study (Shokri, 2019) (United Kingdom) linked CD with QM but not to QM of training. Authors such as Bacolod and Koenigsmark (2011) (Germany), Ghosh et al. (2019) (United States of America) and Mazari-Abdessameud et al. (2020) (Belgium) investigated career pathing and military veterans' readiness to make a career switch, that is, within a military context. Locally (in SA), Pillay et al. (2015), Chinyamurindi (2016) and Samuel et al. (2019) conducted research on CD. Mukwakungu et al. (2019) investigated leadership practices required to ensure adequate QM. Similar to the international research, no other local studies investigating CD related to QM of training within a military context could be located. Additionally, only two of the above studies (Anthony & Weide, 2015; Chinyamurindi, 2016) qualitatively explored CD within a training context internationally and locally. Consequently, these gaps in the international and national literature are addressed in this research.

Research purpose and objectives

The purpose of this research was to investigate officers' perceptions regarding the role of CD in ensuring effective QM of training in corps training units within the SA Army. The intention was to determine how officers perceive the role of CD and how they interpret and organise the role of CD to present meaningful experiences concerning adequate QM of training. The latter perceptions will assist the SA Army in selecting adequate CD practices that are conducive to ensuring that the management of quality in training contributes to high-quality soldiers.

The research aimed to expand on the systems theory framework (STF) by focusing on leaders in the SA Army. The aim was to explore the importance of viewing the framework from an intrapersonal system of the individual, the social system and the environmental-societal system concerning CD to ensure effective QM of training in the SA Army.

The research objective was to investigate officers at corps training units' perceptions of the role of CD in ensuring effective QM of training in the SA Army.

Conceptual-theoretical framework

Systems theory framework for career development

The STF is used as the underpinning framework to understand CD in QM of training better. The STF was the first attempt to

present a comprehensive metatheoretical framework of CD using systems theory (Patton & McMahon, 2015). Systems theory is the basis for a metatheoretical framework that incorporates all CD concepts for theoretical and practical purposes. The STF is a holistic theory of everything (within CD), thereby accepting a wide range of approaches. The STF consists of interrelated systems, including the intrapersonal system of the individual, the social system and the environmental-societal system. The individual system includes various intrapersonal content influences such as personality, abilities and skills, gender and age, which intrinsically influence the individual. The social system includes contextual influences that may affect the individual extrinsically, such as family, friends, peers, the workplace and educational institutions. The last interrelated system, the environmental-societal system, includes influences such as geographic location, environment, political decisions, globalisation and employment market. These critical interrelated systems (individual, social and environment) in the STF do not stand in isolation and influence each other. Consequently, CD refers to the processes between these systems which are explained via the dynamic nature of interaction within and between them, taking into consideration change over time and chance (McMahon & Patton, 2018). Accordingly, officers (individual system) in corps training units (social system) within the SA Army's (environmental or societal influence) CD may be influenced by the individual and social forces that also form part of the environment or society (SA Army) within which they find themselves. In addition, inadequate CD practices may also influence the QM of training that includes part of the elements within this system (environmental-SA Army). Officers' perceptions concerning CD and QM of training may reflect aspects from the individual officers, social (corps training unit) and their environment. They may also influence officers' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to ensure that the QM of training is implemented effectively.

Quality management

Quality management entails all activities of the overall management function that determine the quality policy, objectives, strategies, responsibilities and implementation using a combination of managerial processes (Coetzee & Truman, 2019). Quality management provides an improvement tool to transform an organisation continuously to the deepest roots of its culture and values for enhanced competitiveness (Lagrosen & Travis, 2015). Therefore, a dynamically driven QM system is a competitive advantage for an organisation, which other organisations cannot imitate. In this research, QM should provide a management system for officers to direct and control the quality of training to ensure that high-quality, trained soldiers are developed with the required skills to protect the country and its people.

Training

Training aims to improve employees' attributes, competencies and performance in line with their jobs or tasks (Erasmus

et al., 2019). Training is therefore linked to QM, as both involve continuous improvement. Shabbir et al. (2016) argue that training is a powerful tool to promote a quality culture. Training embeds the values in employees necessary to maintain high QM standards. Quality management of training may be closely related to the successful management of CD and the effective implementation of QM of training in corps training units in the SA Army. If the skills of personnel (soldiers or trainees or leaders of training) are not developed adequately, it may result in a lack of knowledge, skills and attitudes (regarding military training) (Erasmus et al., 2019), which may lead to a lack of capacity to protect the country.

Career development

Career development is a process through which individuals and organisations manage various tasks, behaviours and experiences within and across jobs over time (Zacher et al., 2019). From a training perspective, CD allows personnel to grow through occupational training (McDonald & Hite, 2014). Therefore, CD is core to ensure that individuals and organisations form a partnership to enhance personnel's knowledge, skills, competencies and attitudes required for their current and future work.

Although individuals are responsible for their career, organisations must be involved (support) with individuals' careers to affect career satisfaction (Rehman, 2017) positively. Career development should be managed effectively through, for example, job matching (career pathing, skills inventory), the organisation's potential assessment processes (promotability ratings, succession planning) and developmental programmes (mentoring) (Werner, 2022) to support employees in their CD endeavours. Through CD, individuals can be aligned to the correct positions and developed for future roles that may become available in organisations. Leadership development focuses on leaders developing themselves to fill future positions that may become vacant (Kirchner, 2018). As many organisations realise the importance of gaining competent leaders, leadership development is embedded within most training routines to ensure leaders' continuous development.

Career paths refer to information the organisation provides regarding job opportunities for the internal labour market (Werner, 2022). Additionally, in conjunction with job profiles and job descriptions, career paths may be useful to communicate to personnel the possibilities for job movement. For example, to be appointed as an officer in command of a corps training unit in the SA Army, you should have progressed through a career path (in training) starting from an officer facilitator (junior officer). Promotability ratings may also be used to measure various dimensions (e.g. leadership attributes within the context of this study) and consist of an overall rating of an individual's (potential leader's) potential for progression (Werner, 2022). In this research, the SA Army may use promotability ratings to select appropriate leaders to fill key training positions, such as the officer in command of a corps training unit.

Promotability ratings may also indicate when personnel are high-potential leaders, and then they may be developed for possible vital positions in the future. Additionally, developmental programmes could provide personnel with the opportunity to obtain new ideas and skills that may prepare them for future positions, such as leadership development and mentoring. After personnel with potential have been identified for future key positions, they should be included in training programmes that embed leadership development. In addition, mentoring should be integrated to develop leaders. Mentoring refers to a relationship between junior and senior personnel in an organisation that contributes to the CD of both (Banerjee-Batist et al., 2019; Scrine et al., 2012). Both younger and older personnel seek different prospects – one wants to establish themselves (junior), whereas the other wants to remain productive at work (senior). Consequently, a mentoring relationship could serve younger and senior needs, leading to job satisfaction and organisational commitment.

Research design and methodology

Research design

A qualitative research design was used in the study. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), qualitative research refers to investigating and understanding the significance of a social issue among the participants. The rationale for using qualitative research was to obtain rich and thick data on leaders' perceptions regarding the role of CD in QM of training in corps training units within the SA Army.

Research strategy

A case study research strategy was used. This strategy allowed for a detailed understanding of officers' perceptions of the role of CD in ensuring effective QM of training within corps training units in the SA Army, as suggested by Nieuwenhuis (2016).

Research method

An interview schedule was used that focused on factors that may have created an awareness of perceptions of the role of CD to ensure effective QM of training in corps training units. As suggested by Nieuwenhuis (2016), focus group interviews were used to generate rich and detailed data that were difficult to generate using other research methods (such as surveys). Corps training units are geographically dispersed throughout SA. The researcher had to travel to each of these corps training units and could spend up to 1 day at each corps training unit collecting data. Therefore, focus group interviews were the most viable option for data generation. A group of participants (five to nine) was interviewed immediately within 1 day of moving to the following corps training unit.

Study population

The study population consisted of 401 officers (senior, junior and warrant) in six corps training units based on their

specialised duties related to training and QM within the SA Army. The other corps training units in the SA Army were excluded based on their tasks, which were more support services and preparation for career responsibilities (officer training and SA Army promotional training programmes). Therefore, they offered different types of training and were excluded from this study.

Sampling

The researcher invited all participants (officers) to participate in the qualitative study. A purposive sample of 49 officers was selected from all willing participants for the focus group interviews. Purposive sampling is choosing cases that best aid the researcher in understanding the highlighted issue (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 185). The best candidates should be selected depending on the researcher's perspective and background (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). Focus groups are interviews that a researcher conducts with participants (5–12) (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). The researcher held a focus group interview at each of the six corps training units. To ensure diversity, the researcher selected, for each focus group interview (from the willing participants), three senior officers (major to colonel), three junior officers (second lieutenants to captain) and three warrant officers. Senior officers manage training at the corps training unit level; junior officers plan and administer training at the subunit level (section). Warrant officers provide coaching to trainers on technical aspects of training.

The following criteria were used to select participants for the study: participants employed in corps training units and with adequate knowledge and experience (minimum 2 years) regarding QM of training. The reason is that officers (leaders) play a critical role in implementing and maintaining the QM of training. Each focus group contained between seven and nine participants. Table 1 shows the profile of the participants. Table 1 shows that a large qualitative sample ($N = 49$), as suggested by Creswell and Creswell (2018), was selected to minimise validity threats. The qualitative sample was diverse and consisted of three levels of officers (leaders) in corps training units in the SA Army, with different race groups, and represented by both men and women.

Ethical considerations

The researcher obtained ethical clearance from the university under whose auspices the study was conducted. The Department of Defence Intelligence and the Chief of the SA Army provided permission to conduct the research. Each participant provided informed consent before the study. Participants were assured of their responses' confidentiality and that their names would not be mentioned in the final report or ensuing publications.

Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness and credibility of this research were established through peer scrutiny (agreement of coders with

TABLE 1: Profile of participants' demographic information.

Corps training unit	Senior officers	Junior officers	Warrant officers	Black people	White people	Men	Women	Total sample per corps training unit
A	3	3	3	9	0	5	4	9
B	2	2	3	6	1	6	1	7
C	3	3	2	5	3	7	1	8
D	3	3	3	5	4	7	2	9
E	3	3	3	6	3	9	0	9
F	2	2	3	5	2	5	2	7
n = 49	16	16	17	36	13	39	10	-
Percentage	33	33	35	73	27	80	20	-

Source: Els, R.C. & Meyer, H.W. (2022). Leaders' attitudes towards, and commitment to quality management of training within the military. *The TQM journal*, 34(7), 1–17. <https://doi:10.1108/TQM-09-2021-0259>

one another), as Nieuwenhuis (2016) suggested. Data collection, analyses and interpretation of findings were discussed and scrutinised with peers (the study leader and examiners) to ensure credibility. Field notes were kept to ensure an audit trail concerning each step of the research process. Therefore, an outsider can audit the entire research process if requested.

Data generation

The researcher utilised focus group interviews to generate data. Focus groups allow participants to provide rich data to answer the research question, as suggested by Nieuwenhuis (2016). The researcher contacted each corps training unit beforehand and verbally invited participants upon arrival. The interviews were conducted between September 2017 and October 2017. The researcher posed three open-ended questions to participants about their understanding, their perception and the role of CD in QM of training. All focus group interviews were recorded (with participants' permission). Video or digital recordings lasted between 45 min and 60 min each and were password protected according to the university's ethical policy. As Anderson et al. (2020) suggested, observations were expected to reinforce the explanations provided by the participants and produce a clearer understanding of the phenomenon being studied. During interviews, in all corps training unit sessions (A, B, C, D, E, F), if a participant explained something in good faith (which was mostly the case), their powerlessness appeared, resulting in frustration. As a result, participants (corps training unit officers) may have found that they could do nothing to address the issues they identified, leading to a lack of trust in their superiors. Therefore, this was reflected in the frustration participants had to face daily. Also, some participants were frustrated by the ignorance of upper management and exhibited nonverbal language (head shakes, frowns) that indicated that they felt that the top management made it challenging to implement QM effectively. During interviews, most participants in the corps training units agreed that the personnel (officers) involved in QM of training did not have sufficient qualifications (competence) to fill the positions (key training positions).

Data analysis

A constant comparative method to analyse the data was used. A five-step qualitative data analysis process was applied to analyse the focus group interview data, as

suggested by Creswell and Creswell (2018). The coding of data followed a three-stage process. The first stage was open coding, which involved going through the data, examining and comparing all the different parts to start generating categories, as suggested by Thomas (2016). Coloured highlighters were used to mark these temporary categories. The second stage, axial coding, is where one starts to make sense of open coding, fitting ideas with each other, determining how they are connected and then labelling these codes. During the final stage of the analysis, selective coding was used to determine where the main themes were drawn, to select the core categories and systematically relate them to other categories (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). Then, the relationships between these themes and categories were validated, refined and developed. Later, data belonging to these different categories were assembled for preliminary analysis, and if necessary, the existing data were recoded. The findings from the empirical investigation are presented in the next section.

Findings

This section presents the perceptions of officers in corps training units. Four themes emerged from the data analysis: (1) unqualified and incompetent leaders appointed in critical positions, (2) a lack of continuity in the staffing of personnel in corps training units, (3) appointment of adequate personnel in training positions and (4) lack of mentors and opportunities for mentoring. Table 2 summarises these themes identified with coding frequencies to identify which occurred to a more or lesser extent.

Unqualified and incompetent leaders appointed in critical positions

Eight participants explained that officers at corps training units must have the necessary competencies to manage the quality of training. Two participants from corps training unit B reported that their organisational structure (organigram) lacked equipped leaders capable of managing QM. This was expressed by a warrant officer as follows:

'[...] you must have a properly structured organisation that is staffed with relevant people able to manage QM of training, and this is not the case.' (LWO1B/warrant officer/04 October 2017 @ 08:45)

In corps training unit F, one participant (a senior officer) explained that officers responsible for QM of training are not

TABLE 2: Perceptions of officers regarding the role of leaders' career development in quality management of training.

Theme	Description	Senior officer, N = 16	Junior officer, N = 16	Warrant officer, N = 17	Total frequency, N = 49
Theme 1	Unqualified and incompetent leaders appointed in critical positions	1	2	5	8
Theme 2	A lack of continuity in the staffing of personnel in corps training units	4	2	3	9
Theme 3	Appointment of inadequate personnel in training positions	2	3	2	7
Theme 4	A lack of mentors and opportunities for mentoring	2	5	4	11

qualified or equipped and lack knowledge and commitment concerning QM:

'I have seen that they send people to come and supervise and conduct quality management, then the person is not equipped with what is happening there.' (LSO1F/senior officer/19 October 2017 @ 09:30)

A lack of continuity in the staffing of personnel in corps training units

Nine participants felt that the lack of consistency in the staffing of personnel resulted in a high personnel turnover rate. Additionally, this may have caused gaps (knowledge and expertise) within training, which may also have contributed to the ineffectiveness of QM of training. This was articulated by a senior officer from corps training unit B as follows:

'[...] there needs to be continuity so that in the long run, we will have well-equipped members [*personnel*] who will know their job in and out. Because of the chop and change and lack of members [*personnel*] on the ground because of consistency. There are some things that are out of our control that as the very high turnover of staff [*personnel*].' (LSO1B/senior officer/ 04 October 2017 @ 08:45)

Participants felt that the lack of continuity in the staffing of personnel working within the corps training units resulted in the ineffectiveness of QM of training. One participant (senior officer) in corps training unit A verbalised this as follows:

'With the next placement he is out, they get someone else in ... That is also a big problem, the consistency and continuity of personnel.' (LSO2A/senior officer/27 October 2017 @ 09:30)

Appointment of inadequate personnel in training positions

Adequate personnel to conduct training are essential to maintaining the QM of training. Seven participants felt that training personnel appointed by leaders at higher headquarters and corps training units were inadequate. Therefore, one participant (junior officer) from corps training unit B verbalised it as follows:

'To my opinion, many of the trainers here do not want to be here, I can use myself as an example, I am qualified as a technical person, but that was not my career choice, and that also influence the quality of training.' (LJO1B/junior officer/04 October 2017 @ 08:45)

Three participants, furthermore, felt that leaders did the staffing of training personnel at a higher level, which resulted

in inadequate job fit. Another participant (junior officer) from the same corps training unit (B) indicated:

'The issue of job fit because he says he is technically orientated. He was taken and put in a training environment, so I think job fit and people placement comes from top management [*leaders at a higher level*] who place the people.' (LJO2B/junior officer/04 October 2017 @ 08:45)

One participant (warrant officer) in corps training unit F felt that individuals who are required to conduct QM activities because of, for example, age constraints result in evaluation and monitoring of training not being performed properly; therefore, the right people were not staffed in positions:

'The other thing that I would like to highlight is the age group. Currently, I am presenting training on tracking, we are trackers, and so when we track, we are in the field, and we walk every day, so you find that the major brings two sergeant majors, and the only thing he must ask me is a battle jacket with water, and he must check if we are doing the right thing, but they say no, I will see you when you are back, and then I will mark you, but they must evaluate you because they can't take your pace because of the type of training, bringing me back to the right people in that position.' (LWO3F/warrant officer/19 October 2017 @ 09:30)

A lack of mentors and opportunities for mentoring

Eleven participants in corps training units perceived that inadequate mentoring of leaders harmed quality improvement, resulting in ineffective QM. Participants felt that inexperienced officers should be mentored to ensure effective QM of training.

In corps training unit A, one participant (junior officer) felt that the number of mentors available was insufficient, negatively impacting quality improvement:

'It comes back to mentoring, having more mentors to have quality facilitators, does not matter which rank you are, whether you are a C.O. (candidate officer), a captain, a lieutenant or whatever, so I believe more mentors will ensure more quality for quality improvement of training to take place.' (LJO3A/junior officer/27 September 2017 @ 09:30)

Two participants (junior officers) from corps training unit B indicated the importance of providing proper mentoring to ensure training quality assurance. This was expressed as follows:

'This all comes down to training your instructors properly and mentoring to ensure quality assurance, and if you do that properly then the information will get through.'

In corps training unit D, three participants (a senior, junior and warrant officer) felt that people required to mentor instructors (trainers) concerning training could not do so because of other commitments. Furthermore, time to provide adequate mentoring to new personnel is limited, thereby placing tension on training personnel to uphold the required standard as stipulated within the policies A junior officer verbalised this as follows:

'Sometimes you also have to ensure that new members [*personnel*] are up to date for presenting courses on equipment pieces; however, the time is also limited, and this makes cadre training very difficult. There is no training taking place, the policies and everything are in place. Nobody sits with you and explains and shows you there is no mentoring taking place.' (LJO2D/junior officer/12 October 2017 @ 08:45)

In the next section, the findings will be discussed.

Discussion

This research investigated how officers perceived the role of CD in ensuring effective QM of training in corps training units within the SA Army. In this section, the key findings are discussed in terms of the conceptual and theoretical framework concerning officers' perceptions regarding CD's role in QM of training. The outcomes of this research are also discussed to extend existing literature and offer implications for practice.

The perceived role of inadequate career development

The findings revealed that leaders are not knowledgeable and adequately equipped to manage the quality of training. The appointment of incompetent leaders in critical positions has resulted in the ineffective implementation of QM training in corps training units. This perception corresponds with previous research conducted by Mosadeghrad (2015) (in the health sector) that leaders unable to direct an organisation may be a barrier to effective QM implementation. Conversely, this research also indicated that leaders found it problematic to maintain consistency and continuity with personnel placement in corps training units. Consequently, appointed personnel lacked the necessary knowledge and expertise concerning QM of training, which may explain officers' perceptions of incompetent leaders in critical positions. Therefore, through inadequate appointments, the organisation (support and organisation or management-environmental/social system) contributed to problems in the individual system because of leaders who lack knowledge and skills. Consequently, leaders' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation may be adversely affected in driving QM in training effectively, resulting in poor quality training. Sharif (2005) similarly found, in a study conducted in the manufacturing sector, that personnel wrongfully placed in QM positions adversely affected the success of QM implementation.

This research also revealed that other personnel (leaders at higher headquarters) with an inadequate training profile also adversely affected QM of training. Similar to previous research (Mumford et al. 2015) conducted in the education sector, training officers also experienced that the quality of leaders (inadequate profile) impacted personnel initiatives, activity and cooperation. The findings in this research also confirmed that both the individual and environmental or social systems influence each other. When the environment or social system (organisation, workplace) appoints leaders

with an inadequate training profile, personnel (individual system) may be affected adversely, including leaders' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to drive QM of training effectively. Officers' perceptions regarding the placement of personnel (leaders and training personnel) with an inadequate profile may point toward ineffective CD practices in the SA Army.

Perceived effect of a lack of mentoring as a career-development practice

Officers perceived a lack of suitable mentors to mentor younger, inexperienced leaders. A lack of mentors created difficulty in ensuring good practice and operational efficiency concerning QM of training. Previous research also revealed the importance of mentoring young people to ensure good practice and efficiency (Scrine et al., 2012). In the workplace, more youthful, inexperienced employees expect a mentor to help them strengthen their abilities and complete their job tasks successfully.

These findings point toward CD's vital role in ensuring effective QM implementation of training. In line with the system theory framework, leaders should consider organisations (environment) and personnel (individual leaders) to provide effective QM of training (within corps training units).

Recommendations

This research makes the following recommendations to ensure that leaders in the corps training units within the SA Army are prepared to provide effective QM of training:

- Involve training directors to scrutinise and provide inputs regarding employment practices to ensure that CD practices do not create organisational barriers. Career development practices should support the development of individuals and the organisation's requirements. The career paths of officers and training personnel should be reviewed to ensure they are related to tasks, responsibilities and training experiences. The latter may address officers' perceptions of leaders appointed with inadequate profiles. Involving training directors in career pathing may assist leaders in providing more inputs and reaching logical job movements in organisations (Werner, 2022).
- The SA Army could implement promotability ratings to ensure qualified personnel with the necessary competencies are selected and appointed to key training positions. The SA Army should also evaluate the promotability of leaders, specifically leaders at higher levels (formation and corps training unit headquarters). In addition, higher-level leaders in the SA Army should conduct succession planning to identify lower-level personnel to develop leaders before appointment in key positions. For example, a corps training unit's commanding officer identifies an appropriate individual (commander) from one of the training wings as a possible successor. Scrine et al. (2012) alluded that a

mentoring programme should be adequately resourced, with good 'practice' structures and support in place. Mentoring should be integrated with leadership development, regarding on-the-job-related aspects. The SA Army should also maintain these relationships over a suitable time that involves regular contact to create operational efficiency. The SA Army should also integrate mentoring to strengthen and support succession planning and leadership development. The SA Army's human resource policies should include mentoring to obtain and create awareness that requires possible participants and senior leaders to accept and actively support mentoring.

Practical implications

From a practical standpoint, the suggested recommendations could assist corps training units within the SA Army to improve their CD practices, particularly leaders, to ensure effective QM of training. Leaders at all levels may better understand the needed CD practices to adopt. Rather than focusing on inadequate training and development programmes, the SA Army may ensure that leaders with adequate potential are appointed and developed to ensure their success using appropriate CD practices. Globally, there is research available on CD, but limited knowledge about the role of CD to capacitate leaders to ensure effective QM of training. As this world becomes increasingly global, dynamic, complex, interrelated and competitive, one must understand the importance of CD practices to advance QM of training internationally.

Limitations and directions for future research

The study used a qualitative approach; therefore, findings cannot be generalised to all training units within the SA Army. This study extends the literature on the role of leaders' CD to ensure effective QM of training. The findings also aid in understanding the effect of inadequate CD practices from a leader's perspective on QM of training. Future research in other training units with larger samples would allow for the generalisation of findings to the rest of the SA Army. Studies including leaders at higher levels (formation, SA Army headquarters) may also provide an exciting understanding of the role of CD in the QM of training.

Conclusion

This qualitative research investigated officers' perceptions regarding the role of CD in ensuring effective QM of training. In conclusion, officers perceived that inadequate CD practices harm QM of training. Career development played a pivotal role in ensuring effective QM of training. The extrinsic motivation of officers was adversely affected because of the perception of an inadequate social contextual influence (inadequate placement of leaders in critical positions by higher headquarters). Leaders with inadequate knowledge

and experience (individual or content variables) also adversely affected the social system (SA Army and corps training unit). The role of CD in ensuring effective implementation of QM in training has reflected aspects from particularly the individual (leaders) system, social (corps training unit) system and environment. Consequently, this research revealed that leaders' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to ensure effective QM of training was adversely influenced. Therefore, further research into the role of CD in ensuring effective QM of training within other contexts should also be conducted.

Acknowledgements

The research was conducted while Dr Renier Els was a PhD student at the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences at the North-West University, South Africa. Dr Renier Els thanks Prof. Helen Meyer for her excellent guidance and support during his PhD study. The authors are grateful to all interviewees who participated in this study.

Competing interests

The authors have declared that no competing interest exists.

Authors' contributions

Both authors designed the study; R.C.E. conducted the focus group interviews and R.C.E. analysed the results with assistance from H.W.M. H.W.M. was the main study leader of R.C.E. during the PhD and contributed to the writing of the manuscript.

Funding information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

Data availability

Data that support the findings of this study are available upon reasonable request from the corresponding author, R.C.E.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the authors.

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