

# An alignment of personal development plans with training and development of employees at SASSA



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**Orientation:** The success or failure of organisations depends on the quality of programmes designed and implemented for improving the performance and productivity of their staff members.

**Research purpose:** The purpose of this study is to identify and analyse the causal factors for the lack of alignment between the performance development plans (PDPs) with the training and development plans (TDPs) of the staff of the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) in the Gauteng Province from the period 2015 to 2020.

**Motivation for the study:** The study was based on the assumption that training and development aimed at equipping staff with skills and knowledge to perform better should be informed by PDPs.

**Research approach/design and method:** To investigate this relationship, the study used a qualitative research approach to collect data through in-depth telephonic interviews and digital platforms such as Zoom and document analysis.

**Main findings:** The study found that within SASSA the staff PDPs are not aligned with the TDPs of the organisation; hence, there is negative performance and underspending on the budget for training and development which renders PDPs ineffective.

**Practical/managerial implications:** This article proposes effective strategies that can be implemented from the 2024–2025 financial year going forward to enable SASSA to be an effective learning organisation and to ensure the alignment of PDPs with both staff and organisational TDPs.

**Contribution/value-add:** The study concludes that digital learning, training and development programmes and epistemologies aimed at improving individual and organisational performance and productivity must be adopted, developed and implemented.

**Keywords:** personal development plans; training and development plans; employees' performance; organisational performance; productivity.

## Introduction

South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) is a state organisation mandated to disburse social security grants to those qualifying South African citizens who are experiencing persistent and high levels of poverty and unemployment. South African Social Security Agency has been spearheading a comprehensive safety and social security net for South African citizens. It is a national department with its head office in the City of Tshwane that operates in the nine provinces<sup>1</sup> of the Republic of South Africa. South African Social Security Agency disburses more than R2 billion every year and cannot afford to be perceived as performing poorly because of the absence or ineffective implementation of the Performance Management Development System (PMDS) Policy. In 2016, SASSA developed and implemented its PMDS Policy as a tool to regulate the management of the performance of employees in order to align individual performance with the strategic objectives of the organisation.

The connotation of the word 'alignment' goes well beyond the mere description of the extent and/or direction of correlation between variables. Volk et al. (2017:28), for example, describe alignment as the 'link' or 'fit' between key organisational components such as strategy, culture, processes, people, leadership and information technology (IT) systems that are brought together for the purpose of achieving common goals, and it is widely agreed that alignment has a positive influence on corporate performance. According to the authors, there is a distinction between

1. Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Northern Cape, North West and Western Cape.

internal and external alignment, which brings greater clarity to the concept of alignment.

Internal alignment refers to aligning all internal processes, structures, systems and employees towards a common goal. Organisations aim to create a fit between corporate values, corporate culture, organisational identity and corporate strategy to ensure consistency and coherence.

In a global economy made worse by the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, employees and organisational performances have become a central issue not only for continuous organisational growth and development but also for the organisation to be responsive, effective and efficient in the manner in which they deliver services to customers. Digital learning, and training and development of employees have become something increasingly difficult to ignore. Performance management and evaluations through signing performance agreements by employees and their line managers have also become a necessity to ensure that organisations achieve their strategic goals and the targets set in their annual performance plans (APPs). In order to meet their developmental challenges, organisations need to train and develop their employees.

This study takes as a case study, the SASSA Ekurhuleni District Offices and Head Office in Tshwane, to investigate whether there is an alignment between personal development plans (PDPs) and training and development plans (TDPs). In this regard, firstly, the causes of poor implementation of the PDPs and the extent of the misalignment of the TDP to the PDPs of the employees in Gauteng Region at Ekurhuleni District and the national head office in the City of Tshwane from 2015–2016 to 2019–2020 financial years of SASSA were investigated. Secondly, the article investigated why the training and development programmes could not be considered effective strategic developmental tools to improve employees' and organisational performances, and how SASSA can do better in the post-COVID-19 periods. Lastly, strategies are developed to suit the SASSA environments and these are proposed to SASSA for adoption to enable it to align the PDPs with the TDPs of staff and with APPs in order to improve both the employees' and organisational performance. Recent developments in the public service have led to renewed interest in a continuous search for better ways to ensure effective and efficient delivery of public services that are supposed to be provided by staff in a *Batho Pele* way. Performance management and development systems are often used as a tool to assess individual performance and to identify the necessary training skills required for PDPs.

### **Implementing the performance management development system policy**

In terms of the Framework for Strategic Plans and Annual Performance Plans from Treasury (2010:12), the organisational APPs are a presentation of the institution's programme

performance indicators together with targets. Annual performance plans detail the specific performance targets that the institutions will aim to achieve in the budget year and in the next 2 years of the medium term expenditure framework (MTEF), in pursuit of strategic outcomes, oriented goals and objectives set out in its strategic plan. An annual performance plan sets out what the agency intends to do in the upcoming financial year and during the MTEF towards the implementation of its strategic plan. In developing the APP, the agency convened several strategic sessions for the identification of priorities so as to inform the allocation of resources aligned to the human resources (HR) priorities such as the budget for training and development to promote effective and efficient management and development of its human capital to ensure the achievement of its strategic goals and objectives in line with its mandate.

At the level of the employee, Beusaert et al. (2015:336) assert that a PDP can be described as an assessment tool embedded in a larger assessment cycle of development and performance interviews, used to gather and document information about the competencies the employee worked on and is planning to develop further. Moreover, Khan et al. (2016:33) define the job performance of an employee at the workplace as employee performance that deals with the accomplishment of tasks given to the employee by his or her line manager. The authors state that employee performance can also be defined as a fulfilment of a particular task calculated against already known standards such as accuracy, speed, cost and how accurately employees perform the task, which determines good performance. Also, organisations have some expectations regarding the performance of employees. Organisational and employee performance objectives can be expected to be achieved by way of continuous organisational performance improvement plans, and formal performance measurement and personal development (SASSA, 2016a:7).

In this regard, SASSA as an employer and her employee should enter into a performance agreement so as to work towards the achievement of set organisational goals. The introduction of PMDS at SASSA was aimed at measuring individual performance and identifying employees' skills gaps. South African Social Security Agency continued to implement its performance management and development policy to communicate the expected level of performance and assess the individual performance of its employees. Contrary to expectations, SASSA's performance reports towards the achievement of its performance targets in the last 5 years leave much to be desired, as shown in Table 1.

South African Social Security Agency received a qualified audit report during the financial years 2016–2017 and 2017–2018 because of incompleteness of irregular expenditure disclosure, which the auditors expressed as a concern. According to the Auditor-General's audit findings for the 2018–2019 Annual Report and

**TABLE 1:** South African Social Security Agency national annual performance in the past five financial years: 2015–2016 to 2019–2020.

Financial year	Total no. of APP targets	Targets achieved	Achieved (%)	Targets not achieved	Not achieved (%)	Audit outcome
2015–2016	38	21	55	17	45	Unqualified
2016–2017	42	19	45	23	55	Qualified
2017–2018	42	27	64	15	36	Qualified
2018–2019	39	29	74	10	26	Unqualified
2019–2020	35	26	74	9	26	Unqualified

Source: SASSA (2016b; 2017; 2018 and 2020)

Note: Please see the full reference list of the article, Saul, T.F., Binza, M.S., & Moeti, K. (2023). An alignment of personal development plans with training and development of employees at SASSA. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management/SA Tydskrif vir Menslikehulpbronbestuur*, 21(0), a2161. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajhrm.v21i0.2161>, for more information.

APP, annual performance plans; SASSA, South African Social Security Agency; no, number.

Budget Review and Recommendations Report (BRRR), SASSA acknowledged that the agency struggled to obtain a competent audit in the 2016–2017 and 2017–2018 fiscal years.

The negative audit result in the 2016–2017 fiscal year necessitated performance adjustments. Incomplete irregular expenditure receipts, which amounted to financial mismanagement, were the source of the problems in 2016–2017 and 2017–2018. Members of the Portfolio Committee stated that what got SASSA into this situation was a lack of planning and negligence, because people should have been paying attention to administrative detail, during a presentation to the Portfolio Committee on SASSA's Audit Action Plan for 2018–2019 and financial misconduct cases on 06 November 2019. The Committee needed assurance that the essential supply chain management (SCM) roles will be filled after the Auditor General noted that the majority of the irregular expenditure was attributable to SASSA's lack of SCM capabilities. Members also pointed out inconsistencies in the reporting. Retraining SCM and users at SASSA's head office and regional offices on SCM is one of the recommended control measures to put in place to minimise recurrences of fruitless and wasteful expenditures documented in all yearly audited reports from 2015 to 2020 and similar audit findings in the future. Furthermore, to drive the organisation towards creating an efficient social security agency to improve organisational effectiveness which, among others, should help reduce wastage of resources and ensure effective and efficient service delivery.

Ekurhuleni district office and Head Office of SASSA are located in Gauteng Province; therefore, it is important to share the APPs of the province. South African Social Security Agency Gauteng Region and Head Office in Tshwane are situated in Gauteng and the national office incorporates all performance reports of all nine regions. Table 1 is the summary of the performance of the organisation nationally. According to the Framework for Strategic Plans and Annual Performance Plans from Treasury (2010:1), the APPs should identify the performance indicators and targets that the institution will seek to achieve in the upcoming budget year and it is important that these performance indicators and targets are aligned across an institution's annual plans, budgets, in-year and annual reports. Training budgets as reflected in the annual audited reports of the SASSA from

2015 to 2020 were underspent throughout these financial years, which is a reflection of the misalignment or the lack of priority of the TDP of the organisation.

Despite the implementation of PMDS in SASSA, the performance and achievement of annual targets during the past five financial years have remained a setback. A number of persons indicated in their PDPs that they would need training but such was not conducted, perhaps because of the general undesirable performance of the organisation, among other factors. This brings into question whether there is correlation between personal development plans, and TDPs in SASSA. As Van De Wiel et al. (2004) state that PDP is an:

[A]ssessment tool entrenched in a larger assessment cycle of development and appraisal interviews which is used to gather and document information concerning the competencies of the employee and a plan to further develop. (pp. 181–206)

The aforementioned concerns raise the question of how training requirements for employees are determined. As a result, this problem statement was created as a result of the identified knowledge gap in the public sector regarding the alignment of employees' PDPs and TDPs with specific reference to SASSA.

### Theoretical perspectives of alignment of performance development plans with training and development plans

Performance Development Plans are an integrated and comprehensive development approach to harness human potential and further proliferate a total performance solution for an organisation to achieve its strategic goals driven by increasing the competencies of employees (Grobler et al., 2006:481). Beausaert (2011:28) states that a PDP is an assessment tool used by an employee to reflect on and document the competencies they have been working on and to use it as a comprehensive plan for further development.

#### Training and development

Training and development of employees, on the other hand, deals with the acquisition of understanding, know-how, techniques and practices. This is derived from employee assessment processes that lead to the development of PDP. Kadiresan et al. (2015:165) assert that training and development are concerned with enhancing and appraising the skills, erudition, proficiencies and understandings of employees by providing a succession of training and development courses. It is imperative to provide employees with the requisite abilities and proficiencies in the current situation, which is driven to develop efficiency, organisational effectiveness and execution of duties.

Opperman and Meyer (2008:66) maintain that many organisations use PDPs to identify training needs. These needs are jointly used by employees and managers to identify

employees' personal development needs and thereafter to agree on the expected outcomes and the date by which employees should be ready to perform at the desired level. In fact, training and development are one of the imperatives of human resource management as they can improve performance at individual, collegial and organisational levels. Human capital theories support the tendency towards investment in training and development because such investment is considered very beneficial for the performance and productivity of employees, and the performance of the organisation as a whole.

In many organisations, training and development contribute to ensuring competitiveness, maximisation of profit and enhanced service delivery. Additionally, training and development are essential intentional means for applicable individual and organisational performance, according to Falola et al. (2014:162). As a result, organisations are paying considerable sums for training and development with the conviction that it will earn them a viable advantage in the business world. According to Mulang (2015:190), training and development are beneficial not just for the organisation itself but also for the individual employees.

### Experiential learning theory in relation to training and development, and performance

The theoretical underpinning of this study is grounded in experiential learning theory. More specifically, Kolb's theory of experiential learning was selected, which propagates that training and development have a positive effect on the productivity of employees and on the performance of the organisation as a whole (Kolb et al., 2014:3–4). He further writes that the 'workplace is a learning environment that can enhance and supplement formal education and can foster personal development' through meaningful work and career development opportunities (Kolb, 2014:3–4). Rughani (2001) in support of Kolb et al.'s theory, points out that the learning cycle demonstrates how experiences lead to a cycle of reflection and change that results in learning. The author reflects on the experience of a general practitioner examining a child's heart:

'The doctor listens to the child's heart and hears a murmur, an experience that makes him uneasy and prompts him to reflect as to why this might be. The sense of unease alerts him to the fact that a gap exists between what he needs to know and what he actually knows.

He realises that the cause of his discomfort is his inability to differentiate between an innocent murmur and a pathological one in a child of this age and he, therefore, defines his educational need as learning how to make this distinction. Therefore, in order to learn, he has to identify not only what he needs to learn but also how he wishes to address that need, and on the basis of this, he decides to attend a course on community paediatric assessment. Having improved his skills, he is now able to apply his learning so that the next time he examines a child's heart and hears a murmur, he feels good because he is able to recognise it as being innocent, to reassure the parents

and thus avoid causing distress through an unnecessary referral.' (Rughani, 2001:7–8)

Mabe et al. (2018:730) writes that organisations that are on a path from good to great must be able to identify the needs for training and development and select techniques suitable for these needs to be included in the PDPs, plan how to implement them and thereafter evaluate so that the performance outcomes can be achieved. South African Social Security Agency can learn from experiential learning theory by adopting and committing to the effective implementation of the tool to improve the productivity and performance of both the organisation and staff members. The experiential learning theory can help SASSA to improve its system of governance to ensure the efficient and effective implementation of PDPs as a strategic developmental tool for employees and organisational performance. In terms of effective PDPs, Stone (2008:299) asserts that performance improvement comes about by building strengths and overcoming weaknesses. He argues that it is the manager's job to remove negative effects on employee performance and to help each employee to grow and develop (Stone, 2008:299). Globally, PDPs have become a central issue for training and development in order for organisations to meet their strategic, business and operational goals. With regard to challenges in the implementation of PDP, Lejeune et al. (2021:1086–1112) point out that today's world of work is forcing companies to change their approach to learning. Their talent strategy needs to foster self-directed learning (SDL), which is possible during and post the times of COVID-19 through the development of digital learning epistemologies to enable the staff to access training and development anywhere and anytime. Digital learning would assist SASSA to enhance job performance and effective competencies of staff, which will support effective competence development, such as PDPs.

### Research methods and design

The study used a qualitative research approach that allowed the respondents to be interviewed using a semi-structured questionnaire. In employing qualitative modes of enquiry, the researcher has the opportunity to interact and gather data directly from the research participants to investigate the alignment between PDPs and TDPs in the Gauteng region at Ekurhuleni District and the head office in Tshwane. In this case, a constructivist paradigm formed the basis with which to understand the training of human resources. Qualitative data was gathered through in-depth telephonic interviews and digital platforms such as Zoom and document analysis.

Kumar (2018:16–23) points out that a qualitative approach is embedded in the philosophy that follows an open, flexible and unstructured approach to enquiry. The approach aims to explore diversity rather than to quantify and it emphasises the description and narration of feelings, perceptions and experiences rather than their measurement. A qualitative approach communicates findings in a descriptive and

narrative rather than an analytical manner, placing no or less emphasis on generalisations. The interview schedule was sent to 72 participants before COVID-19 was declared a pandemic in September 2020, some of whom agreed to be interviewed face-to-face and others through focus groups. The data collection was undertaken in 2021 during the COVID-19 lockdown, and as a result, not all 72 sampled members of the population were available to participate, only 39. Of 16 managers, seven are from the head office, nine are from the Ekurhuleni District office and there were 23 office administrators from the Ekurhuleni District office. This sample of 39 participants was then approved to be sufficient to conduct the research without prejudice. The researchers conducted in-depth telephonic interviews and digital platforms such as Zoom and document analysis. To limit discrepancies in the document analysis, the researcher used policy documents relevant to PMDS to validate the information obtained from the interviews. The questions of the interview schedule were structured to focus on four thematic areas:

- Training and development.
- Employee and organisational performance and productivity.
- Organisational performance and productivity in SASSA.
- Alignment of PDPs with TDPs.

The interview questions used allowed the respondents to respond in a standard direct way that was unbiased and objective. The sample population comprised office administrators and managers from various directorates of SASSA in the Ekurhuleni District and the head office in the City of Tshwane.

## Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis, which is a process of making sense of data (Merriam, 2018), was used to transform qualitative data into meaningful accounts and to interpret and draw conclusions from the mass of collected data so as to make sense. As the primary purpose of the research was to produce data that could help answer research questions, data analysis entailed the process of reducing, consolidating, interpreting and describing the data in the light of the purpose of the study and the process of re-organising data to facilitate conceptual understanding relevant to research questions under investigation. In the case of this study, the first stage was to capture the diversity of experiences of respondents by allowing the unique patterns of each layer of respondent information to emerge (Eisenhardt, 2008). Descriptions of data formed the basis for interpretation and were carried out reflecting the important connection between the flow of events and the context within which such events were situated. The goal of the cross-case analysis was to identify specific variables that describe each category of respondents in order that a meaningful contrast and comparison could be made (Gartner, 1985). Data collected was organised and classified into themes that, inductively derived from the information, were coded to identify emerging critical themes

emerging from the raw data, also illustrating broad patterns and linkages.

Dey (1993:78) has outlined coding as 'a method of reorganising data by making an explicit distinction between different categories of data, segmenting and re-grouping data into conceptually relevant categories that facilitate comparison between and within cases'. As such, thematic coding was used to assess elements and group them into conceptually relevant themes to facilitate comparison. The purpose of coding was not only to describe but more importantly to acquire an understanding of a phenomenon of interest, to obtain a general sense of the information, identify patterns and to reflect on the overall meaning or make sense of the data. In coding the raw data, the researcher allocated specific meanings to the specific part or categories of data to expose the most salient qualities and to make the dataset manageable and sensible.

Results from interviews and document analysis were 'examined for specific meanings that they might have in relation to the case' (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001:150). Data were also analysed during the data collection process by considering and selecting information relevant to the research questions. That is, data analysis was done simultaneously with data collection as there was a significant overlap between the data collection and analysis phases. The researcher could not wait until all data were collected as this:

[I]s to lose the opportunity to gather more reliable, relevant and valid data or could have amassed a huge amount of data, some of which may not have been relevant to the research. (Merriam, 2018:14)

Therefore, analysis was done simultaneously with the collection of data to reduce the problem of data overload. It was also done to prevent the researcher from losing sight of the original research purpose and questions.

## Ethical considerations

Faculty Committee for Research Ethics – Humanities (FCRE-HUM). The study investigates the alignment between personal development plans and the training and development plan in the South African Social Security Agency. It is not an ethically sensitive topic. The Ethics Checklist and Ethics Declaration have been submitted and are in order. The Information Leaflet and informed consent documentation have been submitted and are in order. Interview schedule has been submitted. A letter giving permission to conduct the research has now been provided.

## Results

There are various plausible reasons for the findings. Imran and Tanveer (2015:22) report that the findings of a study conducted with employees working in Pakistani banks revealed that training and development had a beneficial impact on their job knowledge, work quality and quantity,

functional skills, motivation, and loyalty, and these are all linked to their performance either strongly or moderately but in a supporting direction. The findings from the interviews in this study reveal that training and development were positively correlated and show a significant relationship between employee and organisational performance.

### **Findings 1: Training and development**

An analysis of SASSA policy documents and reports indicates that training and development are central to SASSA's effective service delivery, as they address business needs related to learning, behaviour change and performance improvement, and accord with the earlier observations that showed that PDPs need to be implemented to avoid further poor performance. However, the research findings show that reflections from the respondents articulate how training and development implemented by SASSA from the 2015–2016 to 2019–2020 financial years were not relevant to the identified needs or skills gap of the employees. The respondents also mentioned that the training was not communicated adequately to employees for them to participate in the design of the training and attend the training sessions.

### **Findings 2: Employee and organisational performance and productivity**

An assessment of policy documents in relation to the interview findings reveals that the PMDS for employees on salary levels 1–12 was not given the appropriate attention by management, which resulted in poor organisational performance and productivity caused by poor individual staff performance (SASSA, 2016). Given the above, it becomes necessary to determine the alignment between PDPs with TDPs to continuously improve the quality of employee performance and productivity within SASSA. As such, despite the implementation of PMDS in SASSA, the performance and achievement of annual targets during the past five financial years remained a problem. During the interview process, a number of persons indicated that they would need some training on their PDPs, but such was not conducted. This might be attributed to the generally poor performance of the organisation, among other factors.

Also, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a reduction in the budget for training and development as organisations had to adjust budgets (SASSA, 2020). The *Mail & Guardian* (2021-06-19) stated that SASSA had commenced with plans to 're-engineer' the organisational structure by trimming top management positions and giving the remaining managers more responsibilities. This was done to address the SASSA's existing ineffective structure, which would lead to better accountability. This move would reveal how many managers SASSA required to operate efficiently.

### **Findings 3: Organisational performance and productivity in South African Social Security Agency**

An assessment of signed audited reports from the SASSA for the 2015–2020 fiscal years and the PMDS policy documents in relation to the interview findings reveal that management did not give the PMDS for employees on salary levels 1–12 the appropriate attention, which contributed to the poor organisational performance brought on by unmotivated individual staff members (SASSA, 2016). South African Social Security Agency received a qualified audit report during the financial years 2016/17 and 2017/18 because of the incompleteness of irregular and wasteful expenditure disclosure, which the Auditors expressed as a concern. According to the Auditor-General's audit findings for the 2018/19 Annual Report and BRRR, SASSA acknowledged that the agency struggled to obtain a competent audit in the 2016/17 and 2017/18 fiscal years. The negative audit result in the 2018/19 fiscal year necessitated performance adjustments. Incomplete irregular expenditure receipts, which amounted to financial mismanagement, were the source of the problems in 2016/17 and 2017/18.

### **Findings 4: Alignment of performance development plans with training and development plans**

The most striking result to emerge from the data is that the training implemented was not in line with the PDPs submitted by supervisors. These findings suggest that the training implemented was not fit for purpose, something which attributed to the generally poor performance of the organisation, among other factors. Comparing the results from managers and professional and general staff (i.e. non-managers) who are doing the actual work, it became apparent that there was no alignment between training and the organisation's development plans, taking into consideration the underspending of the budget allocated for training. Imran and Tanveer (2015) agree that training and development have a beneficial impact on employee job knowledge, work quality and quantity, functional skills, motivation and loyalty. Another finding is that because of the non-implementation of PDPs and irrelevant training and development programmes, SASSA may not have an effective alignment of PDPs with the TDPs of staff.

These findings have important implications for developing organisational goals and achieving performance targets; hence, it is important to appropriately align PDPs with the TDPs. During the document analysis, it was observed that the Auditor's Annual Reports showed a negative performance recurring for the past 5 years of the SASSA strategic plan, which reflected a concern for a negative performance (Auditor-General South Africa, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020) including underspending of the budget allocated for training for the Gauteng Region and the head office in Tshwane.

The failure of the organisation to spend on and implement the PDPs and TDPs is a result of dependence on the non-functional ability of SASSA's SCM Policy. The misalignment

of PDPs to the organisation's TDP is a result of the lack of accountability by the supervisors and/or management of the organisation for their staff development. As such, the above-mentioned might be the contributory factor in the negative performance of the organisation.

## Conclusion

The study recommends that effective training programmes and carefully set development plans should be provided to all employees to enable them to enhance their skills and upgrade their knowledge. Foreseeable future research can be conducted to cover other variables such as the impact of the budget on the implementation of Performance Development Plans (PDPs) and training and development, which might affect the performance and productivity of the organisation. The study concluded that PDP and training and development impact employee and organisational performance and productivity.

From the foregoing discussion, it is evident that there should be alignment between PDPs and TDPs as an organisation will be successful if its employees are trained according to their needs. Gaps that need to be addressed should be identified and appropriate PDPs should be formulated with the manager and expounded throughout the period in question. The onus is on the supervisor to monitor, explain and motivate where necessary as employees cannot be expected to achieve what they intend to achieve without the appropriate training. Consequently, it is imperative to align the PDPs with training and development because the significance of aligning PDPs cannot be disregarded. Taking these findings into consideration would benefit SASSA as it is pointless having PDPs and training and development if they are not aligned.

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### Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

### Authors' contributions

T.F.S., M.S.B. and K.M. contributed equally to this work.

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### Data availability

Data available upon reasonable request from the corresponding author, T.F.A.

### 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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