Module 2

Training needs assessment

Where are you in the process?

MODULE 1:
The context of Education, Training and Development Practices

MODULE 2:
Training Needs Assessment

MODULE 3:
Planning and Design of Outcomes-based Learning

MODULE 4:
Facilitating and assessing learning

MODULE 5:
Methods, media and technology in facilitating learning

MODULE 6:
Management and Evaluation of ETD practices

MODULE 7:
Continuous occupational expertise development

Module 2:
Contents

Learning outcomes.......... **5**

Aim of the module.......... **6**

Introduction to training needs assessment.......... **7**

Activity 2.1: What is training needs assessment?.......... 8
Defining training needs assessment.......... 9
Activity 2.2: Doing a training needs assessment.......... 10
What kinds of needs are there?.......... 12
What perceptions do people have of these needs?.......... 12
Personal development plans.......... 14

Doing needs assessments.......... **15**
Some guidelines on doing needs assessment.......... 15
Needs assessment methods.......... 17

Levels of training needs assessment.......... 20
Sectoral level needs assessment.......... 20
Organisational level needs assessment.......... 20

Task analysis.......... 21
Personal analysis.......... 21

Doing a task analysis.......... **22**
Activity 2.3: Task analysis: trainers.......... 23
The use of the term 'competency' in task analysis.......... 25

A training and development needs assessment model.......... 27
Plan to plan.......... 28
Training and development fields.......... 29
Activity 2.4: Establish training and development fields.......... 30
Develop competency charts.......... 31
Activity 2.5: Develop a competency chart.......... 33

Data gathering methods and procedures.. 34
Using questionnaires to collect data about training needs...................... 34
Qustionnaire design.. 35
Questionnaire maintenance...35
Activity 2.6: Develop a needs assessment questionnaire.......... 38
Develop training needs assessment cycle.. 39
Human Resource Development department and committee................... 40
Training Unit.. 40

Human Resources, Training and development committee members....... 40
Implementation... 41
Data analysis and plan development...41
Evaluation and feedback.. 46

Training needs assessment information system.. **47**

Activity 2.7: Review of Module 2... 48
Checklist for competencies... 50
Activity 2.8: Group discussion on applying your learnings........ 49
Evaluation of Module 2.. 51

References..**52**

Learning outcomes

After completing this module, you should be able to:

- Explain the concept of training needs
- Describe different types and levels of needs
- Explain the importance of identifying the necessary job skills through a task analysis
- Be able to construct a list of relevant job competencies (a competency chart) from task analysis data
- Decide on the use of particular methods to collect data on training needs
- Prepare a simple training needs assessment questionnaire
- Interpret the information using appropriate methods of analysis
- Report on the training needs assessment.

Aim of the Module

The aim of **Module 2** is to introduce you to the first stage of the training cycle, namely training needs assessment. Identifying the training needs is the necessary start for any programme or course planning. This module will take you through all the steps in assessing training needs.

Introduction to training needs assessment

Before training design issues are considered, a careful needs analysis is required to develop a systematic understanding of where training is needed, what needs to be taught or trained, and who will be trained. Unless such a needs assessment has been adequately performed it may be difficult to rationally justify providing training.Such a needs assessment should enable an explanation to be given on why the training activities should be done, and also show that training is, in fact, the best solution for the performance problem or development need.

A needs assessment can be an important tool for any trainer or organisation planning a programme or course. Accurate needs assessment can help develop a programme or course based on the real needs of the people that it is serving. As time is often limited in training programmes, courses which takes learners' needs into account can ensure that what is most useful for learners is covered.

Figure 2.1: General system model for people development (based on Swanepoel, Erasmus, van Dyk and Schenk, 2003, p. 454)

Phase 1 Needs Assessment	Phase 2 Training	Phase 3 Evaluation
Assesss training and development needs		Evaluation levels
Organisational and job/task analysis	Learning principles and training and development methods	Evaluation designs
Individual analysis	Conduct training	Value of training
Derive training and developmental outcomes to be achieved		Feedback

Activity 2.1: *What is training needs assessment?*

Every job, whether complicated, such as budgeting for a major programme, or just an ordinary task, such as filing some papers in a filing cabinet, requires you to have knowledge and skills appropriate to the task. If you are not skilled (or skilled enough) to do a job, it becomes difficult to do it (or may even be impossible). Once you realise that you cannot do a job properly, you are halfway to identifying your training needs.

Based on this introductory explanation, what would you say a training needs assessment is ('assessment' meaning to judge the quality or worth of something, usually by comparing it against some measure or standard).

Training needs assessment is …

Have you included in your thoughts on this issue elements like:

- ♦ measuring the elements of success in a job (how well a job is to be done)?
- ♦ mistakes made on the job, that indicate that the standard is not met?
- ♦ feelings of incompetence in doing a job?
- ♦ deficiencies (or gaps) in an employee's skills and knowledge base?

Include these elements in your thinking and see what type of definition for training needs assessment you can come up with.

Defining training needs assessment

A training needs assessment can be defined as determining the gap between what an employee must be able to do and what he or she can or is currently doing. A training needs assessment (also called a "training needs analysis") therefore identifies the gap between what the job expects an employee to do, on the one hand, and what the employee is actually doing, on the other. A training needs analysis discovers whether there is a discrepancy or conflict between what an employee ought to be doing and that which he or she can do.

How the job ought to be properly done
The gap
How the employee is doing or can do the job now

"Ought to be properly done" indicates what someone is expected to do (the standard or level of performance). "Is doing/can do" is the way in which someone is doing some job now (currently). If the way in which I am filing or budgetting is not on the level that it is supposed to be, then a gap is formed. The gap is the difference between what I am doing now, while working, and what is expected of me, that is, the way in which a good public servant ought to be working.

Any job requires a person to meet certain standards. Standards are levels of expertise or skills one has to comply with to do a job properly. Whenever one does not meet the required standards, the need for training arises. Training based on such a need (or needs) will then aim to address that need, and by eliminating it, will supply the employee with the skills to do the job properly (i.e., according to the standards set for that job).

Activity 2.2: *Doing a simple training needs assessment*

Write down four of the most important tasks your job description expects you to do. Write down not only these four tasks, but also the standard or level at which you ought to be doing them (to your own or someone else's satisfaction).

Job Title:	
Job tasks:	**Required standard/level:**

If you struggled with this activity and thought about it for a while, we are sure that you would have come up with some interesting information. Well done!

Let me give you an example:

My job description requires me to build brick walls. But at what level of proficiency? How well am I expected to do this job?

The standard or level at which I have to do this indicates that I have to

- lay bricks in a straight line
- in laying these bricks, use a proper mixture of sand, cement and water to keep the bricks in place
- lay 250 bricks per hour
- submit an invoice to my client for the work completed.

After you have indicated your four tasks and their standard, answer the following personal question:

1. Which of these tasks you listed on the previous page do you feel, or know from experience, that you are **not** able to do according to the set standard? In other words, which of these tasks are you currently doing, but not to the satisfaction of yourself or your employer?
2. Provide one reason why you think you are not coping with a specific task.
3. What do you think you need to do the task(s) properly and to everybody's satisfaction?

You have just completed an elementary training needs assessment of yourself by identifying the gap between what you ought to be doing and what you are doing (or not doing) at this moment.

Look at the definition of a training needs assessment again. A training needs assessment is the process of finding out what an individual is supposed to do (the desired performance prescribed for the job) and what the individual can actually do (the actual performance, or what an individual is doing incorrectly, inadequately or not at all).

What kinds of needs are there?

The individual needs may be personal, performance-related or career-related, and will includeneeds, amongst others for:

- updating knowledge, skills and job-related competences;
- increasing job satisfaction and the fulfillment of personal goals;
- makingdecisions about career choices and career progression;
- identifying personal strengths and weaknesses;
- identifying and achieving work values and work targets;
- developing communication, personal effectiveness and life skills;
- improving qualifications;
- individual learning and self-development;
- building self-awareness, self-confidence and motivation.

What perceptions do people have of these needs?

Education and training needs, as opposed to a **basic** needs such as the need for food, are often difficult and complex things to understand – for example, looking at the list above, think how complex a set of needs are present in a person wanting to build self-awareness, self-confidence and motivation! A further complication is that people may not be aware that they are in need. Hence trainers often talk of four different types of educational and developmental needs:

- felt
- expressed
- normative
- comparative.

Felt needs are the needs that people perceive themselves. Felt needs are often defined as being what people really want and that they consciously feel. However, felt needs are often likely to be constrained by what people perceive as being possible and available. Employees are more likely to buy into training programmes if they are seen as meeting felt needs.

Expressed needs are felt needs that are outwardly and publicly expressed or demanded. Sometimes, however, needs are expressed in less obvious ways, for example, if an employee feels his or her needs are not being met he or she may resign or ask to be transferred without clearly expressing or demanding the meeting of the needs in the current job situation. People may also express needs without really feeling that they are essential.

Normative needs are those seen as desirable against an external standard proposed by the organization or institution and are sometimes expressed in formal standards. Such standards represents a minimum level of adequacy (as defined by the employer or authority). If employees are found are found below this standard they can be defined as being in need.

Comparative needs are when individuals and organisations are compared with others. Those found to be lacking are then defined as being in need. This is similar to normative needs in that the needs are defined by employers or experts 'from above'.

The existence of these different types of needs raises important questions about who determinesor ascertains training needs. Some of these questions include:

- What role does the trainer play in determining the needs?
- Do employees know what their needs are?
- Do employees know what their needs are but are unable to articulate them?
- Whose needs are most important?
- If needs are accurately identified, does this mean that the trainer must meet them?

One can immediately see what potential conflicts may arise in relation to needs.There may be conflicts between::

- the needs of different individuals;
- different institutional needs;
- individual and institutional needs.

In the public service, resolving such conflicts will be influenced by institutional priorities, budgetary constraints, national priorities for transformation, national priorities for education and training in the public service, local circumstances and strategic planning priorities. Clearly, decisions taken about meeting needs should be transparent and based on consultation with training committees, staff, unions and other relevant stakeholders.

Personal development plans

The introduction of a personal development plan system will help to ensure that the principle of access and entitlement of all staff to meaningful training and education opportunities becomes a practical reality. In particular it helps allow needs to be expressed and made visible.

Personal development plans will seek to identify in particular:

- the current competencies of staff (which will help to form the basis for an effective skills audit which will show which competencies need to be developed to enable staff to meet work and career targets);
- the work values of staff (e.g. career progression, helping others, creativity, being skilled and respected in one's work);
- the work and career targets of staff.

On this basis individually tailored programmes of staff development, training, education and support (including internships, apprenticeships and learnerships where appropriate) designed to enable staff to acquire the relevant competences and meet their work targets and personal and career objectives.

Personal development plans can be drawn up in a negotiated way between the line manager/supervisor and the individual staff member, regularly reviewed, and formally appraised and updated on an annual basis.

Generally, supervisors who draw up personal development plans will require training and ongoing advice and support, in particular from the organisation's human resources specialists, who will also be responsible, together with training committees, for monitoring and evaluating the general operation and effectiveness of the personal development plan system.

Doing needs assessments

A training needs assessment typically involves a three-step process that includes organisational, task and person analysis. However there are many ways of doing such a needs assessment/analysis. Lists of steps to follow and handy techniques for the assessor abound! Though such checklists are useful (and I will present some) I believe that what is more valuable is the attitude of the assessor, the way he or she asks questions and how well he or she really listens to what people are saying.

The approach you take in a particular situation will to some extent be dictated by the constraints and possibilities of that situation. For example, the method of collecting information in questionnaires clearly will be useful in some situations but not in others.

In this section, therefore, I will not start by giving you a set of steps to follow but rather what I believe are some important general guidelines for doing a needs assessment.

Some guidelines on doing needs assessment

The following are seven basic guidelines:

1. Assess whether **training** needs (rather than other needs) are a priority.
2. Determine **whose** needs are being expressed.
3. Collect your information from as **many sources**, from as wide a base, and in as **many and varied ways** as possible.
4. Be careful about putting words into employees' mouths.
5. Check (and recheck) your understanding with the employees!
6. Don't stop at a superficial understanding of needs. What are employees telling you? Probe and question why they feel they need something.
7. Determine who can reasonably be expected to meet the needs (if indeed they can be met). Tell employees whether you can or cannot meet their needs.

Is the training need a priority? Trainers often assume that training need is **the** priority (Well they would wouldn't they!).

When doing a needs analysis it is easy to capture the needs expressed by the most vocal of the group being consulted. If you are doing a needs assessment in a workplace unfamiliar to you it is easy to listen to the needs expressed by the person or people who are most 'public' and most accessible (and who may appear to be the 'leaders'). It is not so easy to find out the needs of the quietest person in a group or of those who are less visible. You need to make sure that all the potential trainees in a group are able to express their needs - not just the assertive 'high-talkers'! I

Collect your information from many sources - a widespread base - and in a number of ways.

Among those who can be consulted during a needs analysis are :

- **the target group** that is going to be trained is usually the main focus of the exercise - with the proviso that the target group is not assumed to be homogeneous. It may well be made up of many different sub-groups.

- the **training provider** must also define the needs as they see or experience them. But be careful of their vested interest in discovering training needs!

- **key individuals** in the workplace, including those in management and supervisory positions, should be consulted.

- outside '**experts**', that is people who have knowledge of the training service that is being provided, could be consulted. Other departments or divisions with similar aims and objectives may well provide useful input.

If you get your information in one particular way it is important to check it against other sources as well. For example if you obtain your information through discussion with a group of employees it may be useful to balance it with observation and written documentation. Employees may express a lack of skills in a particular area, but observation, for example, may show that the lack is not as bad as they think.

Social science researchers often speak about the principle of **triangulation**. This term originally comes from navigation and surveying in which positions and distances can be found using the known properties of triangles. If you know the length of the base of a triangle and the two base angles you can find the position of the third point of the triangle and the length of the other two sides. Social scientists use this term to mean simply that if you gather your information from several different sources you are more likely to ensure that the information is accurate.

It is also important, when collecting data, to look for what doesn't fit the pattern that you have established. Look for this divergent data (data that differs from what you have already got). This can help ensure that your information is representative of all the members of the target group and prevents you from seeing them or their needs in a superficial way.

Also pay particular attention to data that seems to go against the interests of those who provided it or against the popular wisdom on a particular problem. Such data may be of immense value.

Needs assessment methods

There are many methods which can be used to collect information about needs. A distinction is often made between quantitative and qualitative methods.

Quantitative methods collect data that can be counted or measured – it may be specific statements, figures and numbers. Questionnaires and surveys are examples of methods often used to gather quantitative information.

Qualitative methods tend to be more context-bound and descriptive in nature. They collect data that is less easily counted or measured and often has a smaller area of focus. The perceptions and feelings of the people being interviewed often have an important place in qualitative methods and data. Informal interviews and observation are examples of qualitative methods.

Simplistic distinctions are sometimes made between the two groups of methods. Quantitative methods are sometimes called objective, value-free, number-centred, and 'hard' versus the subjective, people-centred and 'soft' qualitative methods! The two methods, however, are not exclusive; you could use a combination of the methods according to your purpose.

However, whatever methods you choose should be chosen because they are the most appropriate. A method should never be chosen because it seems 'easier'. Many people make the serious mistake of assuming that qualitative methods are 'easier' because they do not (seem to) require numerical or statistical skills. In practice good qualitative research requires an extremely high level of skill and sensitivity.

Table 2.2: Some methods of needs assessment

Method	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
Talking and listening to various people	Various forms including:		
	Individual interviews	Can lead to openness; achieving a sense of individual needs; more detailed information can be obtained; all voices can be heard	Emphasis on personal rather than general needs; can lead to over-high expectations that individual needs will be met; takes time
	Group interviews/ discussion	Save time; allows for rapid response	Some people may dominate discussion and other may remain silent
Formal interview	Preplanned interview, usually done with an interview schedule	A lot of information may be gained	Person being interviewed may be inhibited; takes time
Questionnaire	Formal survey questionnaire filled in by the respondent. May be distributed by mail or e-mail.	May save time for the assessor; standardisation useful in large-scale surveys	Off-putting to many people; time-consuming to fill in; coding responses for open-ended questionnaires may be time consuming and difficult; unusable for illiterates or the poorly educated; mailed questionnaires often have a low return rate
Workshop	Designed (educational) event at which needs are assessed	Can allow for a detailed and thoughtful response	Time consuming; attendance may be unrepresentative; needs good planning skills
Meeting	Usually a meeting called to discuss some problem facing the workgroup	May be possible to gain endorsement for a survey or programme	Attendance may be poor or unrepresentative; some people may be reluctant to participate and some people may dominate

Observation	Observation of the workgroup, target group, the provider in action	Information gained may be checked through other methods	Time consuming; what is observed may be difficult to interpret
Literature study	Read previous scholarly research and literature on this particular need or situation. Look at indicators relating to that area or issue, for example relevant research or statistics to help understand the target group's needs more.	Can provide useful background information and make the assessor aware of other needs that he or she was not previously aware of	The needs of the educator's own learners may be different from those described in the literature; may reflect the ideological bias of academic researchers
Documentation study	Read documents (e.g. reports, minutes, etc.) to help understand the type of work that is being done and the community that is being served.	May provide valuable information and a good source of questions	The most important information may not have been documented; documents are created by literate people and they may not contain the views of the poorly educated

The levels of training needs assessment

Needs assessment can be done at different levels as shown in the table below, though trainers typically are involved in needs analysis at the micro-level.

Table 2:3 Training needs assessment (after Coetzee, 2006)

Level	Type of analyses	Details
Macro-level	Sectoral analyses	Identification of key skills shortages and assessment of relative importance of identified shortages in the sector
Meso-level	Organisational analyses	Examines company-wide goals and problems to determine where training is needed
Micro-level	Task (job) analyses	Examines tasks performed and the knowledge, skills, atitudes and other behavioural aspects required to determine what employees must do to perform successfully
	Person analyses	Examines tasks performed and knowledge, skills, attitudes and other behavioural aspects required to determine what employees must do to perform successfully

Sectoral level needs assessment

This involves the identification of key skills shortages and the assessment of the relative importance of the identified shortages to the sector. Skills shortages may seriously endangers the successful operation of an important economic/social activity, and are then regarded as training priorities for that sector.

Organisational needs assessment

This examines organisational goals, available resources, and the organisational environment to determine where training should be directed. This analysis identifies the training needs of different departments or subunits. Organisational training needs analysis also involves systematically assessing manager, peer, and technological support for transfer of training or workplace application of training.

Supervisor and peer support for training helps to motivate employees entering training and increases the likelihood that they will transfer newly acquired knowledge, skills, attitudes and other behaviours to the job. For example, if an employee is welcomed back after a training programme by a manager who says, “Now that you’ve got that out of your system, I hope you’re ready to get back to work”, the employee is not likely to be highly motivated to use the newly learned skills back on the job. Thus, it is critical to conduct an organisational analysis before developing a training programme so that appropriate support for training exists.

Task analysis

Task analysis examines what employees must do to perform the job properly. A job analysis identifies and describes all the tasks performed by employees in a particular job and the knowledge, skills, attitudes and other behaviours needed for successful job performance. If available, the results of a job analysis are very helpful in determining training needs.

Person analysis

This identifies which individuals within an organisation should receive training and what kind of instruction they need. Employee needs can be assessed using a variety of methods that identify weaknesses that training and development can address. For example, assessments of employee knowledge, skills and attitudes can be obtained from the performance evaluation system or from a 360-degree feedback system that provides input for training and development activities. Objective data on accidents and job performance are often examined as part of the needs analysis, and written tests are used to assess employees’ current job knowledge. Assessments of learner personality, ability, and prior learning experience are increasingly being used as part of the needs assessment process.

Doing a task analysis

A typical process of task analysis involves the following steps:

1. Identifying each task
2. Developing a task statement that accurately describes that task
3. Clustering groups of similar tasks (these clusters are usually more usable and manageable than myriads of individual task statements)
4. Identifying the more general knowledge, skills, attitudes and other behaviours required for the job
5. Developing training that is enhances critical knowledge skills and attitudes derived from the task clusters.

Below is an example of the results of a task analysis done on train drivers:

Table 2.4: Task Clusters for Train Operators (Landy and Conte, 2004)

1. Preoperation responsibilities	Preparing for operating the train for a given shift. This includes reporting for duty in a state of preparedness with proper equipment, and getting information from the bulletin board and/or dispatcher.
2. Preoperation equipment inspection	Checking the train for defects and safety, including checking brake system, gauges, and track under the train.
3. Train operations	The actual operation of a train in a safe and timely manner. This includes controlling the train in the yard or on the road, consideration of conditions such as weather, curves and grades, speed restrictions, and interpretation of warnings/signals.
4. Maintaining schedule	Activities associated with timely operations, including adhering to the timetable and communication with personnel to prevent disruption of service.
5. Emergency situation activities	Identifying and reacting to emergency situations, keeping customers safe, communicating with the control centre, and troubleshooting mechanical difficulties.

Activity 2.3: *Task analysis of trainers*

First, think of all the tasks of a trainer. In the same way that task clusters were developed in the example of train operators, identify a set of five key task clusters for trainers. Give a brief description of the various tasks identified in each of the five task clusters.

Job: Trainer	
Key task clusters	**Description of tasks**
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

Now give some examples of the typical training that could be designed for these trainers (based on this task analysis).

Training that needs to be designed for a trainer:

The use of the term 'competency' in task analysis

When engaging in a task analysis one often comes up against a range of terms about being able to do something: ability, skill, aptitude, competence, capacity, capability, proficiency, etc. These are often used loosely and interchangeably though they do have their specialised meanings. Over the last few decades the term 'competency', meaning having the power or ability to do something, has become popular for describing job related skills. Competency is a broader term than knowledge, skills or attitudes, as being able to do something usually includes a mix of these working together. Competencies are sets of behaviours that are instrumental in the delivery of desired results or outcomes. Competencies may be roughly divided into three types:

- **Foundational competence:** The knowledge, underpinning theory and principles that learners must acquire and apply to be able to do something (in simpler language it is the demonstrated knowledge and understanding of what one is doing and why);

- **Practical competence:** The mix of knowledge and skills that learners must be able to demonstrate in their work (that is, it is the demonstrated ability to apply one's skills in practice);

- **Reflexive competence:** The demonstrated ability of the learner to reflect on (assess and evaluate) his or her own learning and growth as well as the ability to reflect on how the acquired knowledge and skills can be transfered and applied in different contexts.

All of these together ─ the combination of foundational competence, practical competence and reflexive competence ─ form **applied competence** (the ability to put the acquired learning outcomes into practice in the relevant context) which is the core focus of outcomes-based training programmes. The training needs analysis is an important part of the process of identifying and developing applied competencies.

Organisations are increasingly trying to identify generic competences that are required for all jobs. For example, in South Africa the *Batho Pele* principles describe a core set of values and competencies that Public Sector employees need to demonstrate. Training programmes in the Public Sector need therefore to be designed to help employees adopt and demonstrate the *Batho Pele* principles in their behaviour.

Table 2.5: Examples of competencies (Grobler *et al*, 2006)

Management competencies	Individual competencies
Delegating responsibility Motivating employees Solving problems Project management skills Presentation skills Developing people skills	Job knowledge Technical knowledge Computer skills Time management Managing interpersonal conflict Customer care

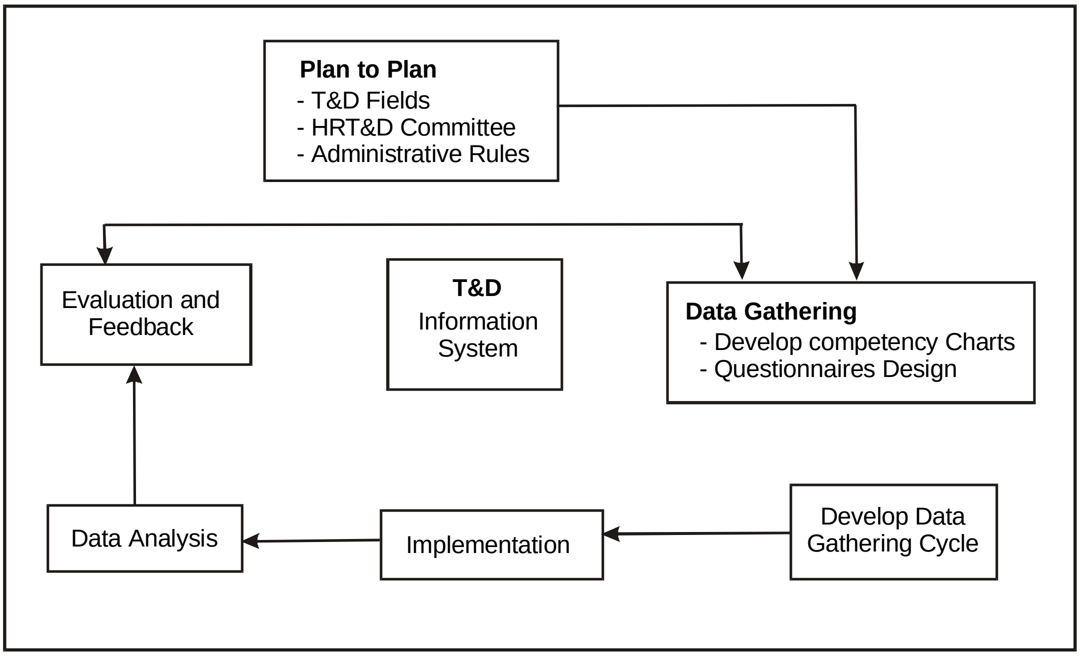
Competencies required for developing people
Communication • Understand verbal and non-verbal communications • Listen without evaluation/judgment • Give feedback to others that can be used • Encourage others to contribute • Facilitate communication across teams • Value diversity
Problem-solving • Identify problems with others • Gather data to diagnose • Propose and analyse alternative solutions • Implement solutions • Evaluate results
Developing self and others • Contracting and managing performance • Conducting performance appraisals • Providing challenging and stretching tasks and assignments • Holds frequent development discussions • Is aware of each person's career goals • Constructs compelling development plans • Cooperates with the development system in the organisation • Is a people builder • Develops self/engages in further development initiatives

A training and development needs assessment model

A training and development needs assessment model needs to makes explicit the:

- training programmes required and, to a large extent, their contents;
- training priorities;
- assumptions behind the choices and priorities;
- resources required;
- timing and implementation; and
- expected rate of progress and returns.

Figure 2.2: Training and Development Needs Assessment (Castley, 1996)



The above model includes the following main elements:

- **Plan to plan.** This includes all preparatory activities required in order to establish the Training and Development Needs Assessment system.
- **Data gathering methods and procedures.** Includes the development of tools and techniques for the collection of data and information pertaining to the training needs.

- **Develop data gathering cycle.** This reflects the start of the steps by which the process is going to be implemented. It involves the Human Resources Development department and all other departments.
- **Implementation.** This is the actual execution of the needs assessment process, which include, among other things, the allocation of resources, timing and scheduling.
- **Data analysis and plan development.** This activity relates to the use of suitable data analysis techniques that facilitate data interpretation and drawing conclusions. It also includes the development of a training and development plan for the department.
- **Evaluation and feedback.** The assessment process should explicitly indicate how the outcomes are being evaluated in terms of whether the actual training and developmental needs and not wants have been identified. It also includes the proper feedback activities required for information dissemination within the system.

Now we will look at the elements in Castley's model in more detail

Plan to plan

The first stage in the needs assessment process relates to preparatory activities leading to the establishment and institutionalisation of the Training and Development Needs Assessment system within the department. Rushing ahead without adequate preparation is inviting problems.

Three main activities are essential when planning to plan:

- Assessment of t**raining and development fields**
- Forming **human resources training and development committees**
- Establishing **administrative policies and procedures** to ensure proper management of the committees' activities.

This planning and data collecting is achieved through the Human Resource Training and Development Committee system. The latter, although primarily using questionnaires to identify the needs, is also an advisory and/or focus group available for the training manager in his/her endeavour. In addition, the members of the committees bring to the need analysis exercise direct information related to the employees' job performance, therefore helping not only in identifying needs but also evaluating the training outcomes. All these possibilities make this model dynamic enough to identify needs and produce effective training and development outcomes

Training and development fields

Organisations are established with different purposes and functions. These functions are related to various bodies of knowledge and disciplines. For example, an organisation that deals in automobile production is mainly concerned with the body of knowledge related to the science of electrical and mechanical engineering. Financial organisations, on the other hand, are primarily concerned with the financial field of enquiry. The Public Service is primarily concerned with delivering good service to the public.

The first step in the plan to plan phase is to establish the training and development fields according to an approximation of jobs found in the Public Service department. That is, various jobs are categorised as being in particular fields. Training and development programmes and activities are then designed and offered in each field.
Each training and development field comprises a set of related job and career paths normally found in the organisation operating within the same industry. For example, the training and development field of a loans company operating in the banking industry would include jobs such as “credit manager”, “loan officer trainee”, “junior credit officer”, “credit officer”, “senior credit officer”, and “manager of credit department”. That is to say, such a field represents an approximation of jobs found within similar divisions and/or departments across all member organisations within the industry.

The number of fields will differ from one industry to another depending on various factors, chief among them are the nature of the operations as well as the size and number of organisations in the industry. However, one has to note that too many fields (over seven or eight) are not advisable, since they could generate uncontrollable volumes of paper work, require greater effort of coordination, be time-consuming and costly.

It is also advisable to consider the following when establishing these fields:

- Avoid overlap between fields to the extent possible.
- Distinguish between an organisation’s operation and support functions in each field and avoid mixing them.
- Focus more on the organisation’s core operations than on support related training fields.
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Activity 2.4: *Establish training and development fields*

Give examples of typical training and development programmes for the identified training and development fields. For example, the field of Human Resource Development requires programmes of skills development facilitation, etc.

Public Service training and development fields	
Training and development field	**Examples of training and development programmes**
Human resource development	Skills development facilitation, human resource development, training of trainers

Developing competency charts

Competencies are the appropriate combination of knowledge, skills and attributes required for a job that should be possessed by an individual. A competency is linked to action and has to be identified and measured in the working environment. Often the line manager is the best person to identify the competencies required for the job in particular situation.

The information that needs to be collected involves identifying what are the competencies required for the particular jobs and then finding out how current employee performance matches these competencies and what can be done to build these comptencies through training.

Identifying comptencies usually involves committees finding out what general comptencies are required to perform particular jobs in the member organisations or departments. Once this is done, the Human Resources, Training and Development Committee should develop a competency chart for each training and development field (see Table 2.6 below).

Such a chart is simply a list of competencies required for an approximate of jobs in a particular field found in the member organisations or departments . The aim is not to develop a precise chart of each job in the organisation, but an approximation of the major competencies required to better perform jobs that normally fall under each field. Each department has, after all, different job designations and descriptions unique to its culture and management style.

Table 2.6: Sample of a competency chart for a marketing and business field (Castley, 1996)

A. Product development and management
Managing product development process
Evaluating new product ideas and plans
Corrective skills
Time and product entry strategies

B. Pricing related competencies
Costing products and services
Planning and controlling cost of performance
Pricing strategies

C. Marketing strategy related competencies
Negotiation skills
Networking
Methods for competitive marketing strategies
Methods and techniques for analysing the industry
Calculating market share
Market segmentation and product and service positioning

D. Service quality related competencies
Assessment of service gaps
Measuring service quality standards
Managing service quality team

Activity 2.5: Develop a competency chart

Review the competency chart in Table 2.6. Think now about the competencies of a trainer. Develop a competency chart for a trainer.

Competency chart for a trainer:

Data gathering methods and procedures

The prime purpose of this component or step in needs assessment is to develop the data gathering methods that will be used in collecting information about the actual training and development needs. A variety of methods can be used (see Table 2.2) though questionnaires are particularly common. Whatver methods are used they should be manageable, time- and cost-effective..

Using questionnaires to collect data about training needs

Usually a comprehensive questionnaire should be designed for each training and development field. The Human Resources Training and Development Committee will be responsible jointly with the Human Resource Department for administering the questionnaires in what is commonly referred to as a 'skills audit'). In order to ensure full and proper responses from employees, the line manager might consider an interview with the staff to facilitate adequate answering of the questionnaires.

A standard format for such needs assessment questionnaires uses the particular competency chart already developed for that field. Typically the questionnaire is divided into four sections (see Table 2.7):

Employee profile data
Professional knowledge and skills
Cross functional knowledge and skills
Other comptencies

The **employee profile data** section of the questionnaires should include questions related to the personal and professional information of the respondent. Usually this may be quite simple (e.g. name, department, title, years of experience, etc.) but for some purposes may need to be comprehensive (including age, language, socio-economic status, education levels, qualifications, previous experience with different learning media, prefered learning styles, levels of experiemce, levels of motivation, special needs, etc.). The section is usually the same in all questionnaires.

The **professional knowledge and skills** section of the questionnaire is designed to measure an employee’s level of knowledge and skills in relation to the technical aspects of his or her job. For example a credit officer in a bank is usually expected to perform activities related to financial, credit, cash flow analysis, etc. This second section of the questionnaire differs from one training committee to another.

The **cross-functional knowledge and skills** section of the questionnaire is to measure an employee’s level of understanding of competencies related to the non-technical aspects of his or her job. The assumption here is that there are various skills that are common and required in any job regardless of its area of specialisation or departmental unit (that is why this section is identical in most questionnaires). For example, though a credit manager needs skills in credit operations, he or she also needs such things as good leadership and planning skills, marketing skills, computer skills, knowledge of the laws and legal aspects related to the job. Each committee needs to identify the non-technical knowledge and/or skills required for the job under their training field.

The final section on **other comptencies** ensures the comprehensives of the questionnaire. The respondent is given the chance to indicate any other training needs that might not have been included in the rest of the questionnaire. Here one has to be warned about a very important issue in any training assessment activity, that is, the difference between an employee’s training needs and wants. The training needs are skills required to effectively perform the job, but are lacking in the employee, whereas training wants are skills that an employee believes they need and are not necessarily related to the job. For most employers training needs rather than wants are the priority and the latter are usually deferred.

Questionnaire design

Questionnaires are usually criticised as being time-consuming, lengthy, and complicated. To avoid such drawbacks, a unified approach to forming the questions and a measuring scale is a must. As indicated in the example of a questionnaire in Table 2.7, each section of the questionnaire starts by asking the respondent to rate his or her level of familiarity with the listed competencies. A unified scale of six points is given to the respondent to rate him or herself. A “not applicable” box is designated for each question to be used if the knowledge and/or skill does not relate to the employee’s job. Such uniformity of the questions and scale should minimise the time to respond, possible errors, and should increase possible accuracy.

Questionnaire maintenance

The questionnaire must be reviewed and updated every training year. This task should be accomplished in a participative manner with the involvement of the Human Resources Department and other departments, and the Human Resources Training and Development committee members.

Table 2.7: Sample questionnaire on marketing and business development (based on Castley, 1996)

Section 1. Profile data

Name: ____________________________ Current job: ______________________________________

Since: ____________________________ Supervisor: ______________________________________

Brief of job description:

____

____

Previous training courses attended:

____

____

Rate all the following categories from Unfamilar (=1) to Familiar (=6) or as Not Applicable (NA)		Unfamiliar <-------------- > Familiar					
	NA	1	2	3	4	5	6
Section II. Professional competencies							
A. Product development and management							
Managing product development process							
Evaluating new product ideas and plans							
Corrective skills							
Time and product entry strategies							
B. Pricing related competencies							
Costing products and services							
Planning & controlling of cost performance							
Pricing strategies							
C. Marketing-strategy related competencies							
Negotiation skills							
Networking							
Methods of competitive marketing strategies							
Methods & techniques for analysing the industry							
Calculating market share							
Market segmentation and product positioning							
D. Service quality related competencies							
Assessment of service gaps							

Masuring service quality standards							
Managing service quality tea							
Section 111: Cross functional competencies Rate your knowledge and skills in the areas listed below							
A. general management skills							
Goal setting							
Steps of the planning process							
Setting priorities and scheduling							
Leadership skills							
Creative thinking							
B. Computer skills							
Spreadsheet applications							
Word processor applications							
Database applications							
Windows							
Others (please specify)							
Section IV: Other competencies In the space below please indicate other training needs (competencies/knowledge and skills not mentioned above):							

Activity 2.6: *Develop a needs assessment questionnaire*

Review the sample questionnaire provided in Table 2.7. and look again at the competency chart you developed for a trainer in Activity 2.5. Now design a sample questionnaire for assessing the training needs of a trainer.

Sample skills audit questionnaire for a trainer in the Public Service	
Section I: Profile data	
Section II: Professional competencies **(review Activity 2.5)**	

Section III: Cross-functional competencies	
Other	

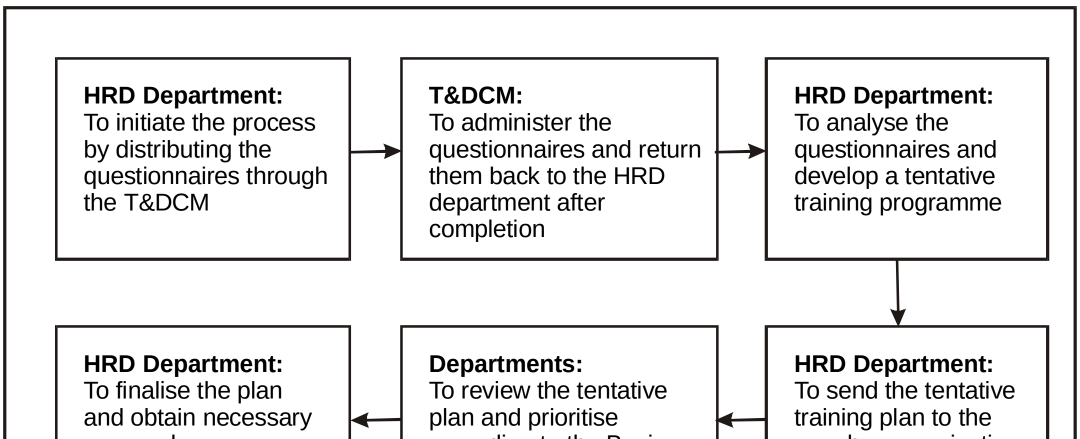
Develop training needs assessment cycle

Once the questionnaires are finalised, or during questionnaire development, the department, in cooperation with the HRD department and the Training aned Development committee, should start developing an effective training needs assessment cycle.

Figure 2.3 below depicts a simple process that starts with the Human Resources development (HRD) department initiating the activity by sending the questionnaires to the Human Resources Training and Development (HRT&DC) members. In the second step these members administer the questionnaires, preferably through structured interviews. The questionnaires are then returned to the HRD department for analysis. The results are discussed with the HRT&DC members and a tentative list of programmes that covers the training needs of the various departments is developed. This tentative list is sent to the HRD department for study and prioritisation according to the workplace skills plan of each department. The list is then forwarded to the HRD department for final plan preparation and approval.

The HRD department should coordinate with both the training unit and the HRT&DC members to implement the training assessment process. The responsibilities of each of the parties involved in the process is shown in Figure 2.3 and as described in more detail on the following page.

Figure 2.3: Example of a training and development needs assessment cycle (Castley, 1996)



Human Resources Development (HRD) department

Will retain the questionnaire, initiate the training needs assessment process, send the questionnaires to the Training and Development committee members, collect back the questionnaires, analyse the data, prepare the results with the committee members and communicate the outcome to the training unit. On the basis of their feedback the HRD department develops a final plan for necessary approval.

Training unit

The training unit within a department is responsible for receiving the tentative plan from the HRD department, studying it and making necessary prioritisation according to the business plan and workplace skills plan of the department.

Training and Development Committee member

Provides assistance in the development and updating of the questionnaire, administering the questionnaire in his or her department, which includes explaining the training assessment system to other managers/supervisors and helping them administer the questionnaire, collecting questionnaires, sending them to HRD department and discussing final results in order to develop the tentative training plan. To be able to perform this role, the member may need to be trained in order to develop a better understanding of training concepts and acquire the necessary skills, especially those related to training needs assessment, planning and evaluation.

It should be noted however, that the role of committee members must be designed not to conflict with the training units, but to complement them and provide necessary professional and technical advise and support.

Implementation

This is the actual execution of the training needs assessment exercise. The detailed role and responsibility of each party involved in the process is defined within the training and development assessment cycle. However, a high level of coordination must exist between parties in order to succeed in the implementation phase. No single or two parties can operate in isolation of the other. The implementation phase will produce a lot of paper work that needs to be carefully handled. Other essential considerations include:

- The HRD department must take a leading and central role in the process.
- Sufficient time must be given for implementation, especially, if the departments are going through seasonal or peak operations (salary weeks, strategic planning exercise etc.) or holidays.
- Instruction sheets must be attached with the questionnaires in order to secure adequate responses.
- Confidentiality of the responses and the results must always be emphasised.

Data analysis and plan development

In this stage, the questionnaires and/or other sources of data are analysed in order to determine the training needs of departments. Analysis starts with identifying the skills and topic that were most frequently chosen by respondents as requiring attention – that is, the respondents indicate that they have a low level of familiarity (either of knowledge or skill) with them. These skills and topics are then logically and coherently integrated into a formal training and development programme, course or event.

When a familiarity rating scale is used (as in the questionnaire in Table 2.7) it is important to tabulate the actual point on the scale that respondent's choose (the so-called training need point). Those with a very low score on an item (1 or 2) lack sufficient knowledge or skill in this area and therefore need training. Those items with middle range scores (3 or 4) are of medium priority and those with high scores (5 or 6) are of low priority.

These range scores need to be looked at both on an individual and group level. At an individual level the scores willindicate what needs to be built in, by way of training, into an individualspersonal development plan. The average (mean) score achieved by a group of employees will indicate whether there is need for a substantial training course or programme run for a whole group of people.

The training need point serves as a mechanism to identify the priority of the training activity. It should be annually reviewed and readjusted according to changing circumstances and events.

The data analysis, accurately compiled into a report, feeds into the development of the final training and development plan of the department. Typical questions that have to be asked once the data has been analysed include:

- Will performance in the job situation improve if these needs are satisfied?
- Will the performance problem be solved if the needs are satisfied?
- How important are the needs (in terms of frequency of use, and critically or importance)?
- Is there a need for the job to be redesigned?
- Should any of the tasks be re-allocated?
- Should some of the employees be transferred instead of undergoing training?
- Is On-The-Job Training challenges an option instead of formal training?
- Who will be the beneficiaries of the identified training and development interventions?
- What assistance could the Human Resources Department provide in terms of sourcing the training and development interventions?
- What is the availability of the learners?
- What is the biographical and demographical profile of the learners?
- Are there any possible barriers to their participation in training?
- What other constraints need to be considered which may influence decisions with respect to training?

In addition, periodical investigations need to be made during implementation by verbally asking people who are involved about inadequacies related to the execution period, the size of paper work generated, the clarity of the questions, etc. In some cases further questionnaires or interviews will need to be administered.

On the next pages are some examples of checklist and questionnaires designed to assist in the analysis of data and in prioritising the needs that have emerged from the process if data collection.

Table 2.8: Can training correct a performance defficiency? A quick reference checklist (Swanepoel, Erasmus, Van Wyk and Schenk, 2003, p. 457)

What is the performance discrepancy?
- What is the difference between what is being done and what should be done?
- What is the evidence and is it reliable?

Is the discrepancy important?
- What is it costing?
- Will the problem grow?
- Is it worth fixing?

Is it a skill or knowledge lack?
- Could they do it if their lives depended on it?

Did they know how to do it in the past?
- Have they forgotten?
- Is the skill often used?
- Do they get regular feedback on how they are doing?

Is there a simpler way?
- Can the job be simplified?
- Could job aids be used?
- Can they learn by being shown instead of training (On-the-job training methods?)

Do they have the potential to do the job well?
- Are they physically fit?
- Do they have the mental potential?
- Are they over/under qualified?

Is the correct performance being punished?
- Do they perceive performing correctly as being penalized?
- Is not doing the job rewarding?
- Is there some reward for non-performance (less work, worry or tiredness, or do they get more attention?)

Does correct performance really matter?
- Is there a favourable outcome for performance?
- Is there any status/job satisfaction connected with the job?
- Are they any obstacles to performing?
- Are the resources available (time, equipment, tools, space?)
- Are there any other barriers (policy, culture, ego, systems, authority, conflicting time demands?)

What is the best solution?
- Are there any solutions which are unacceptable to the organisation?
- Are the solutions beyond the resources of the organisation?

Table 2.5: Example of a needs assessment questionnaire with selected

questions (Grobler *et al*, 2006)

Instructions: Please read the list of training areas carefully before answering. Circle **Yes** if you believe you need training in that skill, either for use in your current job or for getting ready for promotion to a better position. Circle the question mark (**?**) if uncertain. Circle **No** if you feel no need for training in that area.

1. How to more effectively manage my time	Yes	?	No
2. How to handle stress on the job	Yes	?	No
3. How to improve my written communication skills	Yes	?	No
4. How to improve my oral communication skills	Yes	?	No
5. How to improve my listening skills	Yes	?	No
6. How to improve my customer relations	Yes	?	No
7. How to improve my service to customers	Yes	?	No
8. How to deal with customer complaints	Yes	?	No
9. How to improve my personal productivity	Yes	?	No

Table 2.5: Example of questionnaire for prioritising training needs (Grobler *et al*, 2006)

Position: **Clerical**	
Employee:	Department:
Supervisor:	Date:

Instructions:

In column A, rate the skills necessary for the employee to perform the job. Use the following ratings:
1 = not important; 2 = moderately important; 3 = very important

In column B, rate the need for training for each skill area which received a rating of 3 or 2 in column A. Use the following ratings:

1 = no need for training; 2 = moderate need for training; 3 = immediate, critical need for training

	A **How important is the skill?**	**B** **Employee's need for training?**
Ability to read and comprehend rough draft material		
Typing speed		
Typing accuracy		
Proofreading skills		
Ability to use office machinery		
Filing skills		
Ability to compose letters and memos		
Oral communications		
Ability to organise daily routine		
Human relations skills		
Customer service skills		

The final training plan will include a list of training programmes required, the contents and the selection of appropriate curricula, the standards set, groups tragetted and programme duration.

The annual training and development plan should be a detailed statement of the training that will be implemented over a specific period. The plan results from a reconciliation of priority training needs, the training and development policy, the workplace skills plan, and the resources (including budgets available.

Evaluation and feedback

No training assessment system is complete without an evaluation element. The main objective in this phase is to find out whether the actual training and development needs, not wants, were detected. It is also an attempt to pinpoint inadequacies in the needs assessment system, provide feedback to the concerned parties and to suggest corrections.

The HRD department must develop an evaluation system that appropriately detects deficiencies.

For example, a set of related questions can be included in the final questionnaire given to the trainee at the end of the programme. These might include questions such as:

- To what extent is the content of the programme related to your job?
- Is the content of the programme based on an appropriate standard(s)?
- To what extent did the programme meet your actual training needs?
- What topics of the programme were irrelevant to your job?
- Were learners assessed in terms of learning outcomes?
- Did learners have the opportunity to apply the skills in the workplace?
- Were learner support structures established?

Training needs assessment information system

Undoubtedly the efficiency of this proposed training assessment system cannot be maximised without a rigorous information system. The latter should serve, among other things, the following:

- integration of the processes into a productive system;
- facilitation of a reliable flow of information among involved parties;
- minimisation of excessive paper work; and
- facilitation of follow-up activities

The information system might easily be integrated with the training and development system. Employees' records will become more comprehensive since they will include not only the training programmes attended, but also employees' training needs and thus enable both the department, as well as the Hum Resources Development department, to trace the employees' career development.

Activity 2.7: *Review of Module 2*

Review what you have learned against the outcomes of the module.

What were the significant learnings for you?

What will you apply?

How will the be the first practical steps you take in applying them?

Activity 2.8: *Group discussion on applying your learnings*

In groups discuss how you will apply what you have learned in this module in your own training activities and workplace and what further actions you can take to increase your knowledge, understanding and skills regarding training needs assessment?

Actions I can take	Who can assist me?	When should I review my progress?	Comments

Checklist for Competencies

Module 2: Training needs assessment

Name: ____

Assess your own skills by indicating with a ✓ how you rate yourself on each aspect mentioned.

I can ...	*Poor*	*Fair*	*Excellent*
Explain the concept of training needs			
Describe different types and levels of training needs			
Define a skills gap			
Explain the importance of identifying the necessary job skills through a task analysis			
Conduct a task analysis			
Construct a list of relevant job competencies (a competency chart) from task analysis data			
Analyse current and required skills and develop a skills profile of a group of employees			
Establish skills priorities			
Decide on the use of particular methods to collect data on training needs			

I can ...	*Poor*	*Fair*	*Excellent*
Prepare a simple training needs assessment questionnaire			
Interpret the information using appropriate methods of analysis			
Report on the training needs assessment.			

Evaluation of Module 2

What did you like about the module?

____

____

____

What did you not like?

____

____

____

What would you like to change?

____

____

____

Any other comments

____

____

____

____

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