



Educator performance and the strategic plan priorities of the Eastern Cape Department of Education

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Background: The Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDoE) is still experiencing skills shortages among its educators which poses critical challenges in performing their duties of improving learner performance in the province. Shortages of skills development programmes in the Eastern Cape has resulted in poor performance of both educators and learners in most schools. Although the ECDoE has clearly espoused its strategic objectives regarding training and development of educators, it is worrying that only a limited number of educators have received capacity development in critical performance areas.

Aim: The aim of this study is to explore the relationship between educator performance and the strategic plan priorities of the ECDoE.

Setting: Buffalo City Education District in Eastern Cape Province.

Methods: The study adopted a quantitative research strategy and uses a survey questionnaire to collect information from respondents. The sample size was made up of two hundred and seventy (270) participants. The survey questionnaire used a Likert scale ranging from one (1) (strongly agree) to five (5) (strongly disagree). The reliability of the survey questionnaires was determined by calculating the Pearson's coefficient, and internal consistency was measured using Cronbach's alpha scale.

Results: The study established that remediating the lack of training opportunities for educators was the direct objective of the ECDoE strategic plan priorities.

Conclusion: The article concludes that the ECDoE needs to carry out a skills and capacity audit, based on strategic plan needs analysis. The designing of human capital skills development and training programmes should be informed by the ECDoE's strategic plan and Integrated Quality Management System that align with educators' key performance areas.

Keywords: educator performance; strategic planning; training; Eastern Cape Department of Education; human resource development.

Introduction

Shortages of skills and capacity among educators is posing serious challenges to improving the performance of learners. Considering the low level of performance of schools in the Eastern Cape Province, Adams (2021:9) identifies a lack of adequate and necessary skills among educators as the major contributor to poor performance in schools. Kennedy (2022) similarly observes a misalignment between training outcomes, and needs of employees, leading to poor performance of educators throughout the province. Hartley (2017:20) further observes that many teachers in the Eastern Cape Province are failing to improve learner performance owing to the lack of pedagogical skills and content knowledge. Thus, teachers are expected to implement the curriculum, as envisaged in the strategic plan, but with very limited in-service training (Carl 2009:130). Limited participation in Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), in which clear curriculum standards and goals are spelt out, is often raised as a constraint to the implementation of the strategic plan of the Provincial Department of Education (PDE) (Matsepe & Maluleke 2019:186–189). The lack of skills and training opportunities is also witnessed in Limpopo and the Western Cape provinces where a limited number of educators have received training. Thus, while aligning human capital development to the strategic plan at the PDE, district and school are critically important as commitment levels, investment in the professional development of teachers remains low (Wolf & Floyd 2017:1762).

Ineffective service delivery in the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDoE) has been linked to a lack of coordination and synchronisation between Human Resource Development

(HRD) and strategic planning functions. This is hampering the administration capacity of the department at all levels and is thus negatively affecting the performance of educators. Adams (2021) mentions that many skills development analysts identify lack of investment in human capital development due to, among other factors, lack of understanding of the specific competences required to drive production as a major challenge to efficiency and productivity. Kennedy (2022) established that about 83% of South African industries report scarcity of relevant skills as a major hurdle in their recruitment processes. HRD is imperative when it comes to the development and upgrading of skills of workers in an organisation (Lim & Rager 2015:37; McChesney & Aldridge 2021; Wang et al. 2017:1167). Brymer et al. (2019:23) posit that in instances of lack of skilled labour, employers have a duty to orient their employees through providing various training and capacity building initiatives. Similarly, Boon et al. (2018) are of the view that the ECDoE needs to organise more training programmes, like on-the-job training, off-job training, learnership and internship programmes to equip employees with relevant skills to perform their duties effectively and efficiently at their workplaces. This article seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- explore how educator performance aligns with the strategic plan of the ECDoE;
- recommend how the ECDoE can improve educator performance in order to achieve the objectives of the Strategic Plan.

Literature review

The Eastern Cape Province is still suffering from a lack of skills necessary for economic growth and social development. Lack of capacity, skills and knowledge affect the performance of educators and learners' performance. As such, the ECDoE is encouraged to implement training programmes that would lead to improved performance and whole-school effectiveness in the province (Chadwick 2017; Stone & Deadrick 2015; Wright, Coff & Moliterno 2014). Thwala (2015:20) confirms that after the attaining of independence in 1994, the new government devoted much of its energy to employees' skills development, to improve organisational efficiency. The excitement that marked the new dispensation in 1994 has been characterised by incompetent service delivery, caused by shortage of relevant skills, capacity, competences and knowledge of how to deliver goods and services effectively and efficiently. David, Michael and Ho Kim (2018:362) submit that though the new dispensation has achieved a number of objectives, as compared to the pre-1994 government, poverty, corruption and service delivery protests have become the order of the day in many communities. Turfail (2017:11) blames deficiency of skills and capacity in the public sector as factors responsible for poor delivery of services in the public sector. Precisely, skills and capacity are significant drivers for improving the performance of employees. Scholars have also established that, efficient delivery of services is often affected by corruption, nepotism, maladministration, and lack of transparency in the public sector institutions (Bapna et al.

2013; Delery & Roumpi 2017; Stone & Deadrick 2015; Wilson 2016).

Guiding theory – Goal-setting theory

This research study is informed by the goal-setting theory which was developed in the mid-1970s by Locke and Latham (2002:3, 2013:9). It is premised on the assumption that motivating employees significantly increases organisational performance, the satisfaction of individuals and teams and employees' commitment and productivity (Latham & Locke 2007:11, 2019:9). Goal-setting theory is founded on the assumption that developing individual and organisational goals and ways of achieving them, is of critical importance in achieving the strategic plan objectives in many organisations (Skinner 2018:17). The theory is predicated on the assumption that the use of a longitudinal High-Performance Cycle (HPC) creates a framework for encouraging employees to work towards achieving goals as set in the organisational strategic plan (Lunenburg 2011:6; Skinner 2018:11). In the context of this study, the HPC forecasts, clarifies and influences employees' job performance and satisfaction, generating employees' commitment to the ECDoE (Howard et al. 2016:81). In terms of this theory, setting high goals contribute to high performance, contingent rewards and job satisfaction (Skinner 2018:23). Goal-setting theory, therefore, postulates a relationship between goals and the performance of employees that would lead to the achievement of institutional strategic plan objectives. The theory helps explain how performance and motivation are affected by goals. Therefore, it provides a lens for explaining the relationship between skills development, employee performance and the achievement of organisational goals and vision as set in an organisation's strategic plan (Locke & Latham 2019:12). Likewise, strategic plans, vision and mission of the ECDoE become planning tools, through which the department sets targets and performance indicators for educators so that their performance can be measured against those targets.

This theory is further premised on the assumption that the attainment of goals in the ECDoE's strategic plan brings satisfaction, whereas unaccomplished goals most likely trigger dissatisfaction and leave employees emotionally distressed (Borgogoni & Russo 2012:10; Locke & Latham 2019:13), given that goal attainment is inextricably linked to the Performance Management System and Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS). Thus, according to (Locke & Latham 2019:12) the goal-setting theory posits that the public sector can utilise planning tools and techniques such as Management by Objectives (MBO), high-performance work practices (HPWPs) and may do strategic planning that lead to the development of specific goals and functional outcomes. To achieve goals, as set out in the strategic plan, the ECDoE educators need to undertake training which empowers them with relevant skills and the capacity for ensuring high performance (Kian, Yusoff & Rajah 2014:9). As such, a goal-setting theory provides a theoretical lens, which allows this study to explore how the strategic plan informs educator performance, by specifying

measurable targets, outputs and outcomes. Performance management and appraisal continually feeds into task needs analysis (Latham & Locke 2007:10) and human capital development programmes and strategies, which will also have to be continually monitored and evaluated and aligned with the strategic plan of the ECDoE.

Conceptualising strategic planning

Several scholars have construed the concept of strategic planning differently, depending on the contextual meaning in a particular context. For Bryson and George (2020:11), planning is a senior management activity or process that involves determining where (the direction in which) an organisation is going over the next year or more, the means, steps and actions that it needs to take to get there and what it is meant to achieve. Several scholars, such as Joyce (2017:5), Cheon and An (2017:32), Bryson (2018:10), and Kools and George (2020:263), view strategic planning as a deliberative, disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organisation (or other entity) is, what it does, and why? This means that it determines the nature or structure of an organisation in terms of what the organisation does, why it does what it does and what it is that it does? (Bryson et al. 2017:256). The definition somehow demonstrates organisational task performance, from the objectives and goals to policy implementation, which is referred to as the actions to be taken. Furthermore, strategic planning must be viewed as a staged process that requires certain steps to identify the mission statement, long-term goals, environmental analyses, policy implementation, control and the formation of performance strategies (Giraudou & Mclarney 2016:10; Johnsen 2018:400; Joyce 2015:30; Wilden et al. 2013:19). What this entails, is that strategic planning is a process of identifying the main strategic dimensions, which are relevant when analysing organisational goals and objectives. For Drumaux and Joyce (2020:7) strategic planning results in a solid, good, complete, integrated, focused, measurable, achievable and balanced strategic plan attuned to various organisational departments.

Strategic planning is thus critically important in an organisation as it helps an institution to know its financial status or budget to achieve the set objectives. Giraudou and Mclarney (2016:24) affirm that strategic planning helps an organisation identify the required procedures to generate long-range objectives and evaluate alternative strategies for achieving those objectives. The authors further state that strategic planning plays a critical role in monitoring the strategies to be used by an organisation to achieve the set objectives and reviewing the outcomes with the expected results of an strategic organisational plan (Giraudou & Mclarney 2016:24). Thus, strategic planning involves significant activities like budgeting, performance assessment, the channelling of resources in a productive manner based on sound decisions made (Jacobsen & Johnsen 2020:16). More importantly, Hopkins and Rasso (2017:637) points out that strategic planning is a process of applying rigorous

investigation and systematic criteria to implement, formulate and control strategy. It can be documented formally by the organisation for clear traces and easy identification of strategic errors.

Employee performance

Employee performance is the individual's capacity to execute their task effectively and efficiently (David et al. 2018:365). For the ECDoE to monitor the performance of its educators, it implements the IQMS. The IQMS is designed for the purpose of preparing an environment for teacher development and good performance. It is also meant to monitor the overall effectiveness of the ECDoE, evaluate the performance of the educators, identify specific capacity needs of educators for support and human capital development and to promote accountability among educators in their task performance (Brown & Hanlon 2016:401). With the introduction of the IQMS and Performance Management and Development System (PDMS) in the ECDoE, the department hopes to achieve the organisational goals, as set out in its strategic plan, mission and vision. The IQMS is tailored towards achieving effectiveness, efficiency and productivity among educators. The improved performance of an employee may lead ultimately to the achievement of an organisation's strategic goals, mission and vision. A critically important focus of performance in an organisation is goal achievement. In this regard, performance-oriented employees meet deadlines, perform their duties effectively and efficiently (Kennedy 2022). To achieve this, training of employees is important to strengthen and develop the necessary and relevant skills needed to achieve the objectives of the ECDoE strategic plan. As noted by Koukis and Jimoyiannis (2019), IQMS helps to track employees' performance and indicate whether they need extra support, can handle a higher level of training or deserve a raise. It is thus important to have a structured IQMS and a tracking process to maintain a high standard of performance among the ECDoE educators.

Overview of skills development programmes in the Eastern Cape Department of Education

Skills and capacity gaps among educators necessitate that the ECDoE embark on several training programmes to improve the performance of its educators. As noted by Hartley (2017:20), many educators in the Eastern Cape Province lack teaching skills and knowledge, resulting in the poor performance of learners. Notwithstanding such capacity challenges, educators are expected to implement the curriculum as envisaged in the strategic plan, but with very limited in-service training (Carl 2009:130). The ECDoE has been offering training programmes such as those in curriculum development and Primary School Reading Intervention Programme (PSRIP). However, such programmes only accommodate a limited number of educators, and falls short of ameliorating the capacity and skills gaps in the ECDoE. In its Annual Report (2020/21:151) the ECDoE noted with concern that only 94 educators from eight (8) districts were trained in the PSRIP with the focus on routines/time

allocation, core methodologies and Early Grade Reading Assessment. The Annual Report (2019/20:151) further indicated that in 2019 only 1000 educators in districts or circuits were trained in term 2 isiXhosa home language, Grade 1–3 Methodology content module, lessons plan, planners and trackers and merely 36 Grade 1 teachers and 8 subject advisors were also trained in Phonics.

However, as noted, such skills development programmes only accommodate a few educators, leaving a large population without receiving any training at all (ECDoE 2020:53). David et al. (2018:377) notes with concern that this is a problem, given that these statistics paint a gloomy picture of the state of educators' training, in which only 6807 out of the 55 768 educators in the ECDoE have undergone human capital development in the past year (South Africa Data Driven Dashboard 2021). This observation suggests that the ECDoE could be struggling to produce quality results due to inadequacies in skills development training programmes for upgrading the skills and knowledge of educators in order to improve both educator and learner performance in the province (Mukeredzi 2013:10; Rao & Hammza 2018:242; Richman 2015:123). It can thus be inferred that inadequate skills development programmes among the educators have detrimental effects on the achievement of the objectives and outcomes of the ECDoE strategic plan. The ECDoE's strategic plan is predicated on the need to develop high-quality education and learning outcomes through highly skilled and professional educators and to promote equal access to and utilisation of departmental resources. However, with limited rollout of capacity development programmes in the department, achieving the envisaged outcomes becomes a mammoth task.

Research methodology

The study sought to explore the relationship between educator performance and the strategic plan priorities of the ECDoE. The study adopted the quantitative research strategy and used the survey questionnaires to collect data from a sample of 270 educators who teach grades 10, 11 and 12 in the Buffalo City Education District. The Slovin formula was used to determine the sample size. From the calculation, a sample of 267.4 was obtained which was rounded to 270 educators. The survey questionnaire used a Likert scale ranging from one (1) (strongly agree) to five (5) (strongly disagree). The reliability of the survey questionnaire was determined by calculating the Pearson's coefficient, and internal consistency was measured using Cronbach's alpha scale (See Table 1). Items reflecting on the Cronbach's alpha scale ranging from 0.70 and these were deemed reflective of acceptable internal consistency of the survey questionnaire items.

TABLE 1: Validity and reliability tests.

Variables	Cronbach's alpha	N of items
Employee performance	0.977	6
The strategic plan of ECDoE	0.971	7
All the items	0.991	13

ECDoE, Eastern Cape Department of Education.

Hypotheses were developed to test the relationship between educator performance and the strategic plan priorities of the ECDoE. The quantitative analysis model SEM (Structural Equation Modelling) assisted by SmartPLS were used as data analysis tools. In order to test this association, the study employed the simple linear regression to determine the association between these variables, three separate simple regression statistical analyses of data were done. To safeguard the integrity of the inquiry and its outcomes, the researchers sought informed consent and the participants signed consent forms before completing the survey questionnaire.

Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance certificate number SIB011SZIN01 was obtained from the University's Inter-Faculty Research Ethics Committee (IFREC and the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC). Permission to undertake the study was sought and granted by the gatekeeper case study institution, the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDoE). This study was approved by the University of Fort Hare's Research Ethics Committee (UREC) 30 July 2020.

Results and discussions

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted in order to determine the difference in groups larger than two, such as the age groups, ethnicity, teaching level, work experience, highest qualification and number of trainings received. This test was used to measure variations in opinions of respondents based on employee performance and the strategic plan of the ECDoE. The Pearson correlation p -value ($p < 0.05$) was used as a standard measure of the statistical differences among these demographic groups. The F statistics state the direction and the strength of the effect of the difference between demographic variables. Table 2 displays the results of the variance analysis.

Table 2 indicates that there is no variation in terms of opinions from respondents that fall in different age groups. The measure of statistical difference p -value is greater than 0.05 on the two variables Employee Performance ($F = 1.737; 0.143$) and Strategic Plan priorities of ECDoE ($F = 0.776; 0.542$). This means that age has a negative influence on employees' performance and Strategic Plan priorities of ECDoE. When employees are getting older and older, their performance at work may decrease, thus making it difficult to achieve the objectives of the Department as stated in the Strategic Plan. With the increase in age, it becomes difficult to actively participate in training programmes, as new and modernised curricula are introduced in the education system and it may become difficult to master and grasp the concepts. This explanation is in line with a study conducted by Pineda (2018:45) in Tanzania which showed that when employees get older, their quality of understanding of concepts, methods and techniques, used in training sessions, and their level of performance at work may decrease as well. This showed that the level of understanding appears to decrease with the increased number of years of the educators.

TABLE 2: Analysis of variance.

Variables	Age		Ethnicity		Teaching level		Working experience		Highest qualification		Number of trainings received	
	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P
Employee performance	1.737	0.143	5.451	0.001	7.411	0.001	2.847	0.025	3.154	0.009	9.080	0.000
Strategic plan priorities of ECDoE	0.776	0.542	2.717	0.046	4.316	0.014	1.673	0.157	3.760	0.003	5.430	0.000

ECDoE, Eastern Cape Department of Education.

In terms of ethnicity, this table indicates that there is a positive variation in opinions from educators who fall in different ethnicity groups. The measure of statistical difference p -value is less than 0.05 on Employee Performance ($F = 5.451$; 0.001) and Strategic Plan of ECDoE ($F = 2.717$; 0.046). This means that ethnicity plays a pivotal role in determining employees' performance and the achievement of the Strategic Plan. This illustrates that some ethnic groups perform better than the others (Africans, white, Indians, coloureds). This is supported by social identity, social categorisation and similarity-attraction theories, which argue that when a workforce is ethnically diverse, it could result in psychological processes like in-group liking, in-group attraction, and worst of all, in-group favouritism. This could also bring about many negative outcomes like less communication, less cooperation, less cohesiveness and even conflicts (Tajfel & Turner 1986), thus making it difficult to achieve the ECDoE goals as indicated in the Strategic Plan.

Table 2 further indicates that there is a positive variation in terms of opinions from educators who are on different teaching levels. The measure of statistical difference p -value is less than 0.05 on Employee Performance ($F = 1.411$; 0.001) and Strategic Plan priorities of ECDoE ($F = 4.316$; 0.015). This means that the level one teachers also contribute to the achievement of the mentioned variables. The achievement of the Strategic Plan depends on the grade that an educator teaches. This is in line with a survey conducted by Mondy and Martocchio (2016:50) which showed that those educators who teach senior classes (grades 10, 11 and 12) have more knowledge, skills and capacity to perform their duties effectively and efficiently. Senior classes require more reading and research as these involve more challenging tasks and hard work that would improve learner's results leading to the achievement of the Strategic Plan.

This particular table also indicates that there is a significant association between work experience and an employee's performance ($F = 2.847$; 0.025), but there is no significant association with the Strategic Plan of ECDoE ($F = 1.673$; 0.157). Work experience increases productive employee performance and learners' performance in the ECDoE. In addition, when employees have more experience in performing their duties, this increases their performance and work productivity. This is in line with a study conducted by Delery and Roumpi (2017:439) on employees' performance. The study revealed that employees who were performing better and increased production in the organisation were those who had been employed by the organisation for more than five years as compared to newly employed employees.

More so, there is positive variation in terms of the number of training sessions in employees' performance and the strategic plan of ECDoE. The measure of statistical difference p -value is less than 0.05 on employee performance ($F = 3.154$; 0.009) and Strategic Plan of the variables ECDoE ($F = 3.760$; 0.003). This means that educators who have attended several training workshops have a greater knowledge, skills, and capacity to perform their duties as compared to those who did not attend at all. This finding concurs in alignment with a study conducted by Schneider, Avivi-Reich and Mozuraitis (2015:34) which showed that employees who attended several training programmes, gained more skills and improved their capacity, leading to the achievement of organisational goals as compared to those who did not attend. The number of trainings does occupy a central niche in improving employees' performance and organisational outcomes, thus contributing to the accomplishment of the Departmental goals as indicated in the Strategic Plan.

Table 2 indicates that there is a positive variation in terms of highest qualifications obtained by the educators. The measure of statistical difference p -value is less than 0.05 on educator Performance ($F = 9.080$; 0.000) and Strategic Plan of the variables ECDoE ($F = 5.430$; 0.000). This means that educators with the highest education qualifications have a better chance of understanding concepts, methods and techniques used in training than those with a college certificate. This explanation is in line with studies done by Enyekit, Ubulom and Onuekwa (2018:24) in Nigeria and Malawi in which employees showed some improvement in job performance after receiving some practical training from the workshops. In support of this, Maunganidze (2017:69) points out that the level of education employees acquire, helps them understand how their work impacts the overall success of an organisation and such employees are more likely to take actions that align with the organisational goals and ultimately help to achieve the goals of the Strategic plan.

Table 3 indicates the participants' view about employee performance. These results indicate that more educators strongly disagreed with all the itemised questions in the table about employees' performance.

Based on the results presented in Table 3, all the mean responses are sorted according to the mean scores in descending order. The mean scores from six items are less than 2.5 with the sub-variable 'I am committed to do my work as a result of improved skills acquisition through human capital development at work' presenting the highest score (mean = 2.31) and the sub-variable 'Does the Integrated Quality Management System contribute to the achievement of the goals,

TABLE 3: Employee performance.

Itemised statements	Frequencies					Descriptive	
	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neu-tral (%)	Agree (%)	Strong-ly Agree A (%)	Mean	Std deviation
1. My skills and knowledge at work have improved as a result of employing new teaching and learning methods.	38.26	23.04	13.91	20.43	4.78	2.31	1.294
2. Does the training you have received enable you to achieve the goals of the Strategic Plan?	37.39	23.91	19.13	13.48	6.09	2.27	1.260
3. My performance on the job has changed positively as a result of innovations acquired from the workshops I have attended.	38.70	23.04	17.39	14.78	6.09	2.27	1.279
4. The learners' results have improved after I have received training on media of instruction and curriculum development.	38.70	25.65	16.96	13.48	5.22	2.21	1.236
5. Does the Integrated Quality Management System contribute to the achievement of the goals, vision and mission as envisaged in the Departmental strategic plan?	40.00	23.91	15.65	16.52	3.91	2.20	1.239
6. The strategic objectives are measurable and can be monitored and evaluated.	42.6	24.8	17.4	11.3	3.9	2.09	1.184
7. The strategic objectives and strategies in the strategic plan are clearly stated.	41.7	24.8	20.9	10.0	2.6	2.07	1.123
8. The desired outcomes are clearly stated and understood in the strategic plan.	43.5	25.7	17.4	10.4	3.0	2.04	1.142

vision and mission as envisaged in the Departmental strategic plan' being the lowest (mean = 2.20). These findings showed that most of the educators do not see the impact of the skills development programmes on their performance and learner results. That is, more participants strongly disagreed with all the items on employee performance. Consequently, it is logical to generalise the conclusion by acknowledging that the training given to employees might not have been that effective to positively impact on the department's strategic plan.

Contribution of training to new teaching and learning methods

Training programmes should aim at bringing new skills and various teaching and learning methods to improve the performance of educators in the Buffalo City Education District. Item 4 in Table 3 was analysed to predict the perceptions of respondents regarding the development of new teaching and learning methods because of training received. The findings established that 63.91% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that reads; 'My skills and knowledge at work have improved as a result of employing new teaching and learning methods' (strongly disagree [38.26%] and disagree [25.65%]). The results suggest that most educators did not acquire any new teaching and learning methods from the training they had attended in 2021. In their study Rao and Hammza (2018:241) established that there was an outcry in several training workshops organised by the ECDoE: that the facilitators lacked knowledge and skills for equipping and upgrading educators with new skills in most of the workshops attended, thereby contributing to the poor performance of both learners and educators. Although the ECDoE strategic plan (2020–2025) clearly stipulates how training should be done, in most cases the HRD hires facilitators who are not fully equipped to spearhead the trainings, leading to poor performance of educators in schools. This is directly contrary to the strategic plan which advocates an improved quality of teaching and learning through a timeous supply and effective utilisation and development of teachers (ECDoE Annual Performance Plan 2021/22:11). Although the ECDoE has outlined that one of its

strategic objectives is to develop the skills of the Department workforce at all levels, it has done little of what is expected, as only a few educators have received training while the majority have been left behind.

The performance of educators has changed positively because of trainings received

Training and development programmes are avenues for greater performance and improvement of results in schools. This can only be achieved if teacher training aims to improve the capacity, knowledge and skills in the teaching and learning process. Results indicate that 61.74% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that reads, 'My performance on the job has changed positively as a result of innovations acquired from the workshops I have attended?' (Strongly disagree [38.70%] and disagree [23.04%]). This means that the training received by the educators may not have added much value to their skills and knowledge development, to capacitate them in improving both educator and learner performance in Buffalo City Education District. Educators were not capacitated with relevant skills that could assist the Department to achieve its goals, mission and vision as envisaged in the Strategic Plan. This could thus be suggestive of irrelevant and poor-quality training, contrary to the objectives of the strategic plan of the ECDoE, which advocate high-quality education and learning using highly skilled and professional educators. Thus, one persistent challenge confronting the ECDoE, is skills shortage, resulting from inadequate training and skills development programmes. It becomes prudent that the ECDoE continually rolls out training programmes to equip most educators with the much-needed skills and capabilities which improve their performance in critical strategic plan outcomes.

Contribution of integrated quality management system to the achievement of the departmental strategic plan

To achieve its vision, mission and objectives as envisaged in the strategic plan, the ECDoE utilises the IQMS to monitor the performance of educators in the province. Results from Table 3 indicate that 63.91% of educators disagreed with the statement that reads, 'Does the Integrated Quality Management

System contribute to the achievement of the goals, vision and mission as envisaged in the Departmental strategic plan?' (Strongly disagree [40.00%] and disagree [23.91%]). In their study, Hanafizadeh and Rvasan (2017:34) found that most organisations fail to achieve their strategic goals due to the performance of their employees not being adequately monitored. The development and implementation of IQMS is seen as a positive move towards improving, monitoring and strengthening the education system and at the same time promoting accountability (Jay & Miller 2016:15; Maharaj 2014:49; Republic of South Africa 2014:18). The measurement of each individual educator's performance against the stipulated performance of IQMS standards, should be done continually in order to analyse the performance of educators in relation to individual needs analysis. Individual needs analysis help the ECDoE to identify the skills gaps of each educator and implement relevant training programmes to address the skills deficit of educators.

Improvement of learners' results after receiving training

Over the past years, the ECDoE has been experiencing low pass rates in its matriculation classes, which forced the Department to organise more training to equip educators with more skills, capacity and knowledge to assist them in carrying out their duties and improving learners' performance. Training programmes should aim to equip educators with relevant skills to perform. Results indicated that 64.35% of respondents disagreed with the statement that reads, *'The learners' results has improved after I have received training on media of instruction and curriculum development'* (strongly disagree [38.70%] and disagree [25.65%]). Thus, most educators lacked opportunities to attend training programmes on media of instruction and curriculum development to improve learners' performance. Hussein (2015:19) espouses that organisations must focus on strategies that prioritise improving workforce performance by leveraging on optimised training programmes and the achievement of strategic goals. To do this, organisations need to invest in human resources, ensuring the acquisition of skills, knowledge and competences needed to achieve strategic outcomes. However, as indicated by Felton and Stickle (2018:21), media of instruction play a significant role in building a bridge between trainees' knowledge and learning objectives. Media of instruction help in building trainees' retention of knowledge, motivate interest in the subject matter and provide clarity of concepts. Instructional media are vital in the training process, since they enhance the ability to learn, influencing trainees to participate actively in training programmes (Wang et al. 2017:1171).

Training and the achievement of the strategic plan

The ECDoE aims to achieve its mission, vision and goals as stated in the strategic plan. For the ECDoE to meet its vision, mission and objectives as articulated in the strategic plan, all employees need to co-operate and be dedicated when executing their duties. Based on the results, there are mixed

reactions towards the training received by the educators and the achievement of the strategic plan. About 61.3% of the participants disagreed with the statement; *'Does the training you have received enable you to achieve the goals of the Strategic Plan?'* (Strongly disagree [37.39%] and disagree [23.91%]). This may be suggesting that the training received by educators did not quite meet the expectation of capacitating the participants to effectively achieve the departmental targets and outcomes as envisaged in the Strategic Plan. This may be inclusive of training programmes which the ECDoE has been offering, such as those in curriculum development and PSRIP. In essence, these programmes have been accommodating a limited number of educators, incapable of ameliorating the capacity and skills shortages in the ECDoE. Additionally, the ECDoE Annual Report (2020/2021:151) reports that in 2019 the ECDoE trained only 1000 teachers in districts or circuits in isiXhosa home language, Grade 1–3 Methodology content module, lesson plans, planners, and trackers and merely 36 Grade 1 teachers and 8 subject advisors in Phonics. Given this state of affairs, it becomes difficult for the Buffalo City Education District to achieve the goals of the Department's Strategic Plan.

The dearth of requisite skills among the educators requires the ECDoE to embark on several training programmes and workshops to enhance the capacity and performance of educators to benefit learners. Hartley (2017:20) confirms that many educators in the Eastern Cape Province lack pedagogical skills and content knowledge. This inevitably affects educators' performance leading to poor learners' results. The conundrum is thus, teachers are expected to effectively implement the curriculum as envisaged in the strategic plan, with limited skills and capacity, as well as limited empowering in-service training programmes (Carl 2009:130).

Measurability of the strategic objectives

The process of creating a measurement strategy requires looking at the Department's objectives and ensuring that all goals contribute to that objective, as well as all the other performance metrics that the Department is interested in tracking and reporting. The strategy also makes sure everyone is clear on the key performance indicators of success. Based on the results, 67.4% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that reads, *'The strategic objectives are measurable and can be monitored and evaluated'* (strongly disagree [42.6%] and disagree [24.8%]). It is important that the strategic objectives should be measured and performance checked against set standards. Giraudou and Mclarney (2016:24) affirm that strategic planning fundamentally helps an organisation identify the required procedures to generate long-range objectives and evaluate alternative strategies. As pointed out by Bryson and George (2020:12), measuring of the strategic objective is critically important for monitoring the strategies used by an organisation to achieve set objectives and for reviewing the outcomes against the expected results of an organisational strategic plan. As such, strategic planning involves significant

activities like budgeting, performance assessment and channelling of resources into target results, outputs and outcomes in an organisation (Jacobsen & Johnsen 2020:16).

Clarity – The strategic objectives in the strategic plan are clearly stated

Objectives are the mileposts which guide the Department and its employees regarding the strategic intentions. They define and articulate visions into clear-cut measurable targets. Through clear objectives, employees find guidance in what they are expected to achieve and when. In this study results indicate that 66.5% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that reads, 'The strategic objectives and strategies in the strategic plan are clearly stated' (strongly disagree [41.7%] and disagree [24.8%]). There were mixed reactions regarding the clarity of the strategic objectives among the educators in Buffalo City Education District. For performance to be measurable, strategic objectives and operational strategies should be clearly stated and explained to all employees including the educators. Strategic goals optimise the vision and mission of an organisation. They must be measured against strategic planning intents. Stakeholders must engage in meetings to discuss the progress of the plan (Cole & Karl 2016:193). Strategic objectives assist in monitoring the vision and mission of the organisation as envisaged in the strategic plan (Bryson 2018:53; Klijn et al. 2017:1400).

Objectivity – The desired outcomes are clearly stated and understood in the strategic plan

Clear objectives allow the Department to monitor policy implementation and track results, against key performance indicators and provide feedback, for input, activities, output adjustments and strategic plan review. When the Department knows what it needs to accomplish, it is possible to track results and identify barriers to achieve those objectives. Results indicate that 69.2% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that reads, 'The desired outcomes are clearly stated and understood in the strategic plan' (strongly disagree [43.5%] and disagree [25.7%]). This indicates that the participants expressed different feelings towards the objectivity of the strategic plan. However, in practice the desired outcomes should be clearly stated and easily measurable against the strategic plan. During the development of the Implementation Plan, the stakeholders need to agree on the objectives to be used for accomplishing the strategic goals, and a detailed action plan must be developed for each goal area or key result area (Bryson & George 2020:39; Kools & Stoll 2016:19). The action plan must include metrics, actions, timelines, responsible persons, and resources necessary to monitor and achieve each objective and key result area. As such, organisations must implement strategies through creating programmes and policies to meet financial budgets, human resource needs, management and operational goals (Elliott 2020:21).

Simple linear regression and hypothesis testing

Although there is a common understanding that human capital development programmes do add value to trainees,

regardless of the level of strategic planning involved, to some extent the nature of the training and the value addition rely on the nature of the plan being used to guide the human capital development programme. As a result, it is important to seek statistical confirmation, instead of basing it on the assumptions and theoretical literature alone. In order to test this association, the study employed the simple linear regression to test these relationships (Employee performance and Strategic plan of ECDoE). In order to determine the association between these variables, three separate simple regression statistical analyses of data were done. The summary of the first model of the simple linear regression is presented in the following section.

Hypothesis 1

H₁₀: There is no relationship between Employee performance and Strategic plan of ECDoE.

H₁₁: There is a relationship between Employee performance and Strategic plan of ECDoE.

Table 4 focuses mainly on the adjusted *R* square when assessing the authenticity of the linear regression model on the given data. Based on the results that are presented in Table 4, it is clear that the model fits the data perfectly. In principle, the 'adjusted *R* square is used to determine how well a regression model fits the data' (Ajao, Oyeyemi & Olayinka 2016). In model one (1), both $R^2 = 0.698$, and the adjusted *R* square = 0.697. This suggest that our independent variable 'Strategic Plan of the ECDoE' explain over 69% of the variability in our dependent variable 'Employee Performance'. In addition, the Durbin-Watson test for multicollinearity is essential to validate the linear regression model. According to (Montgomery et al. 2013), a value of Durbin-Watson between 1 and 10 suggest that there is no multicollinearity. In the Table 4, the Durbin-Watson is 1.517 suggestive of the nonexistence of multicollinearity. As a result, it is safe to conclude that the model was appropriate for hypothesis testing. Although the model fits the data, it is necessary to also test whether the regression model statistically and significantly predicts the outcome variable technological disruptions. Therefore, the ANOVA table presented in Table 5 was extracted.

TABLE 4: Model summary.

Model	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> square	Adjusted <i>R</i> square	Std. error of the estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	0.836	0.698	0.697	0.686	1.517

ECDoE, Eastern Cape Department of Education.

^aPredictors: (constant), strategic plan of the ECDoE.

^bDependent variable: employee performance.

TABLE 5: Analysis of variance statistical significance.

Model		Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	<i>F</i>	Sig.
1	Regression	248.857	1	248.857	528.155	0.000
	Residual	107.430	228	0.471	-	-
	Total	356.287	229	-	-	-

ECDoE, Eastern Cape Department of Education.

^aDependent variable: employee performance.

^bPredictors: (constant), strategic plan of the ECDoE.

The results presented show that the regression model used in this analysis predicts the dependent variable (Employee Performance) significantly well. In the 'Regression' row under the 'Sig.' column, the p -value is less than 0.05. Therefore, we can conclude that 'model one 1' F (528.155) with a mean square of '248.857', and a $p = 0.000$; the sig or p -value is less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$) is a significant fit to predict the dependant variable employee performance. To conclude the existence and significance of the relationship, the coefficients are presented in Table 6.

Assuming a prediction (probability) of, $p < 0.05$, such predictions suggest that there is a significant relationship between the dependant variable and the independent variable. Considering the readings from the previous table, under the 'strategic plan of the ECDoE' row and 'Sig.' column, the reading shows that the relationship between 'strategic plan of the ECDoE' and 'Employee Performance' is statistically significant at prediction (probability) $p < 0.05$, that is ($B = 0.927$, $p = 0.000$). The positive Beta of '0.927' for 'strategic plan of the ECDoE' suggests that 1-unit proportional improvement and/ or alignment to the 'strategic plan of the ECDoE' leads to a 92.7% increase in 'Employee Performance'. Therefore, we can conclude that the 'strategic plan of the ECDoE' has a significant and positive influence on 'Employee Performance'. The visual display of the relationship is presented in Figure 1.

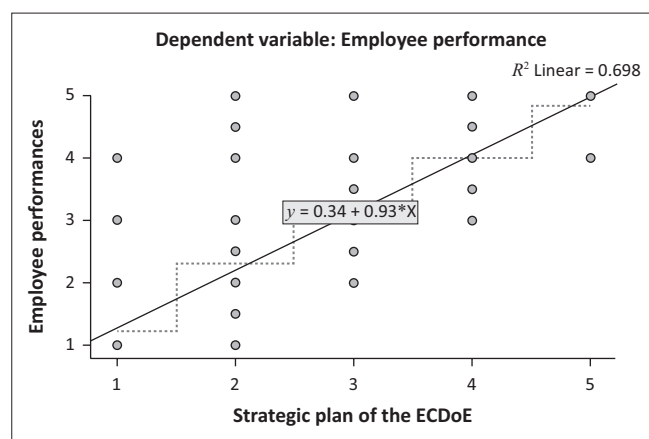
These results are consistent with a study conducted by Ajao, Oyeyemi and Olayinka (2016) on employee performance and the strategic plan. The results revealed that effective strategic planning indeed has a positive impact on performance. Although formal planning alone may not bring about better

TABLE 6: H1: Regression model coefficients.

Model	Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	0.338	0.095	-	3.546	0.000
Strategic plan of the ECDoE	0.927	0.040	0.836	22.982	0.000

ECDoE, Eastern Cape Department of Education.

*Dependent variable: employee performance.



ECDoE, Eastern Cape Department of Education.

FIGURE 1: Scatterplot strategic plan of the Eastern Cape Department of Education and employee performance.

performance, effective implementation will suffice. This means that employee performance acts as a catalyst in achieving the goals in the Department's Strategic Plan. In addition, strategic planning plays a crucial role in monitoring the strategies to be used by an organisation or employees to achieve the set objectives and reviewing the outcomes with the expected results of an organisational strategic plan (Jacobsen & Johnsen 2020:16). By doing this, the employees would be able to achieve the goals, mission and vision of the Department. The results confirm that H_0 , stating that there is no relationship between employee performance and strategic plan alignment in the ECDoE, was rejected, while H_1 was confirmed.

Limitations of the study

The design and other technical factors associated with this study, significantly weaken the generalisability of study findings. The quantitative research strategy, used in the study, means that the findings and attendant inferences are based on the objective views of study participants and the specific documents consulted. As such, findings in this paper may not be applicable outside of the specific context of the inquiry, or generalised to the whole population. Given the foregoing limitations, it is recommended that future researchers should focus on understanding the impact of Continuous Teacher Development programmes in improving learner performance.

Conclusions and recommendations

Skills development equips workers with the relevant skills and knowledge needed to carry out their duties. Turfaal (2017:21) notes that organisations need to embrace skills development to improve the capabilities or knowledge for resourcing human capital. Through the implementation of skills development programmes, the ECDoE could achieve its organisational goals set in the strategic plan, mission and vision. Thus, the researchers recommend that the ECDoE needs to carry out a skills and capacity audit, based on the strategic plan needs analysis. The designing of human capital skills development and training programmes should be informed by the ECDoE strategic plan and the Performance Management System that align with educators' key performance areas, whole-school improvement, and school-effectiveness goals. Skills development programmes make it possible for ECDoE's mission, vision and strategic plan outcomes to be achieved (Kramar 2014:1071; Lim & Rager 2015:16; Wolf & Floyd 2017:1762). More importantly, as Hakooma (2017:50) notes, a poor skills profile is mainly caused by low relevance of much publicly funded training and the low level of investment by organisations in training. It can thus be concluded that inadequate skills and capacity inhibit employees' performance in the ECDoE, and that new skills and knowledge capabilities are needed to improve the skills and capacity of educators, to achieve the strategic intents of the ECDoE. It is also critically important that the public sector design training programmes for employees based on informed employee needs analysis, to improve the

performance of the public sector institutions and to attain the objectives, and key result targets and outcomes envisaged in their strategic plans.

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Competing interests

The authors have declared that no competing interest exists.

Authors' contributions

B.Z. conceptualised the study, the methodology, conducted the investigation, analysed the data and wrote the original draft. M.M.S. wrote the manuscript, reviewed and edited the manuscript and supervised B.Z.

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Data availability

As the data that support the findings of this study are sensitive, e.g. involving human beings, data are not freely available, but only from the corresponding author, B.Z., upon reasonable request in a controlled access repository when and where relevant.

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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