1 INTRODUCTION
The Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) opened its doors for business early in 1984. During those first years the emphasis was largely on the basic bread-and-butter aspects of development work, viz getting an increasing number of particular development projects off the ground.

By 1987/88 it had largely succeeded in achieving this objective. Consequently other dimensions of its overall goal of 'investing in development in southern Africa' began to come to the fore. In particular, it was felt that in-service training for practitioners of development, i.e. change agents and/or development managers active in the field, both inside and outside DBSA, needed to be seriously addressed. As a result a special Development Training Unit was brought into being in May 1989.

The decision to go ahead with the development training initiative was preceded by a broad needs assessment undertaken inside the Bank, as well as in the national states and the development corporations. Although rather impressionistic in nature the large number of interviews conducted especially with middle and senior level government and development corporation officials during 1988 did produce some interesting results and insights. These are briefly summarised below. No claim is made that the list of issues is in any way an exhaustive one.

2 SOME MANPOWER AND INSTITUTIONAL PROBLEMS IN THE NATIONAL STATES AND THE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA

(a) The interviews attempted to focus on the need to promote a 'development perspective' or 'greater sensitivity and orientation towards development issues' in the day-to-day work that middle and senior level officials do. This proved to be quite difficult. First, the approach as such was rather new to most respondents and required some explanation. Second, while eventually agreeing with the idea, many felt that there were considerably more urgent training needs and problems elsewhere (apart from perhaps the Development Planning Divisions as such) and elaborated on these. The significance of this kind of response may well lie in a warning that attempts to inculcate a 'development perspective' among government and semi-government officials will fail unless a number of basic managerial and administrative problems are resolved first, or at least addressed at the

* Development Training Unit, Development Bank of Southern Africa.
same time. This observation, interestingly enough, was also found to be valid for the operations of the DBSA. These issues will be taken up again later in this paper.

(b) In many cases government officials in the developing states seem to work within a culture that is strongly orientated towards following instructions without questioning their validity or practicality. In other words, an approach often prevails which regards public administration rather narrowly as a predominantly routine activity. Especially in the self-governing states the 'accounting officer approach' appears to be dominant. This makes control by Pretoria easier, but is not in the best development interest of these states. In general the skills of fashioning policy alternatives or simply of devising different ways of doing things are often poorly developed. As one senior official put it, 'the absence of creative indigenous thinking about development administration is a serious weakness'.

(c) In a number of governments, senior civil servants – especially at secretary level – tend to get shuffled around quite often. Consequently many secretaries are unfamiliar with the work for which they are responsible and have to rely substantially on their subordinates. Such a situation leads to disruption and low productivity. Mistakes that occur are often the result of these management inefficiencies rather than of dishonesty or corruption. An important reason for this state of affairs appears to be the considerable sensitivity of many politicians to criticism or opposing viewpoints. In some cases, however, the shuffling process is indeed genuinely motivated by a need to find good top managers by trial and error.

(d) Management training was regarded throughout and almost without exception as of the highest priority. Such training should be aimed at the whole spectrum of officials, right from the top downwards, whether they be administrative, technical or professional personnel. These needs prevail especially in government but also in development corporations. One respondent suggested that ‘leadership training is badly needed to get out of the static thinking which predominates in the current bureaucratic climate in the public sector’.

(e) There is a great dearth of more specialised technical/professional skills in the various government and semi-government bodies, e.g. development planners from all professions, engineers, economists, doctors, accountants, artisans, etc. Reasons given were both the difficulty of obtaining suitably trained people in competition inter alia with the RSA, and seriously inadequate funds. Thus seconded officials from the RSA still feature very largely at senior levels in government, particularly just below that of secretary and deputy secretary.

(f) By and large national planning and programming is not well developed. In most cases ‘Five Year Development Programmes’ do exist, but little effective use is made of them. Apart from the abounding management problems, staffing is a serious difficulty. (In one instance there were 39 posts in the Development Planning Section of which only nine were filled.) Nevertheless, interesting and important work is being done in this sphere (for example in Ciskei and Gazankulu) which certainly deserves wider exposure.

(g) Intra-regional development is an important facet of development policy in all the national states. Sub-regional and community development initiatives, however, require much assistance on an ongoing basis which often does not occur in practice, largely because of serious man-power shortages in these spheres.

(h) In many development corporations
strategic planning has been slow to get off the ground. Management has therefore tended to be of an opportunistic or crisis nature. 'Budget chasing' was predominant. As strategic planning got under way greater functional decentralisation has resulted, but as yet there are few if any instances of well co-ordinated management and staff development programmes. The internal focus is often sharply on return on investment which has led to 'a very task orientated technocracy', as one respondent put it. At the same time management structures tend to be highly bureaucratic which engenders much frustration and the perception of a lack of career prospects. One observer noted that 'many development corporations have very good people but they produce at considerable personal cost'. There is also still an urgent need in the various development corporations to advance blacks internally, especially from middle management positions upwards.

A brief perspective

While certainly cause for concern, the above problems, substantial as they are, appear to be fairly typical in the developing world. The World Bank, for example, has found that a widespread weakness of development institutions, particularly in the public sector, is the shortage of qualified managers at the middle and upper echelons and of experienced specialists such as accountants and engineers. Indeed the capacity for public management is among the scarcest of development resources. This situation is furthermore regarded by the World Bank as a general characteristic of under-development that can change only gradually.

3 SOME COMMENTS ON THE ABOVE FINDINGS

The extensive and wide-ranging discussions with officials and development managers in the DBSA, the national states and the regional development corporations have led to many useful insights and a deeper understanding of the many issues involved. Three of these issues deserve some further attention:

- the considerable perceived need by respondents for management training;
- identifying the real problems constraining (development) performance at the institutional level;
- defining essentials of the DBSA approach to fulfilling its broad development function in southern Africa.

3.1 The great perceived need for management training in the national states

To an extent there appears to be some confusion of terminology in the needs expressed. Where the word 'management' was used it often implied 'public administration' in the sense of administering all the functions of government, including public finance and administration. 'Administration', on the other hand, seemed for many senior civil servants to involve only rather narrow matters of procedure and control. Nevertheless, the basic thrust of the needs expressed came through clearly enough: There is a considerable need for managerial development in its own right, for example in terms of the well-known Louis Allen approach of planning, organising, motivating, co-ordinating and controlling.

It is of interest in this context to note that the World Bank usually defines 'institutional development' as increasing the ability of institutions to set clear development objectives and utilise their human, financial and other resources effectively in working towards such objectives. If the word 'development' should be taken out of the above statement, what remains would in fact be a good definition of management in general. It is there-
fore not surprising that the expressions ‘institutional’ and ‘managerial’ development are often used quite interchangeably by the World Bank.

It remains only too true that the outcome of development projects and of development activities generally is heavily dependent on the quality of the institutions responsible for them. This applies not only to the organisations that design and implement projects/programmes, but especially to the government institutions that affect their success, e.g. ministries, semi-public bodies, development corporations and the like.

Measuring the above proposition against conditions on the ground is not encouraging. In the developing world generally, as in the South African national states, institutions in agriculture, education, health, water and sanitation, etc., and especially in the public sector at large, typically suffer from

- serious shortages of managerial and technical skills;
- a large number of untrained staff;
- overloaded services and facilities;
- inadequate wages and salaries.

This situation contrasts sharply with the typical performance of institutions in the First World.

It is ultimately this reality that provides the pragmatic basis for the viewpoint that one of the most useful targets of training for development is the sphere of strengthening institutional/managerial capacity. Much development experience has shown that teaching individuals (on or off the job) a variety of skills useful for development work is not enough. The managerial environment within which they have to work is also highly pertinent. Without institutional development, specialised skills training is likely to have only limited utility and could lead to a considerable waste of resources and much frustration.

The conclusion is clear: As a general rule, training for development should be closely co-ordinated with managerial development programmes at the institutional level. Skills training should not be undertaken on its own. Given the considerable emphasis placed by respondents on the need for management training, this approach should not prove too difficult to implement in practice.

3.2 Identifying the real causes of poor institutional/managerial performance

The issue of correctly identifying ‘the real problems(s)’ constraining development performance at the institutional level is of considerable practical importance. The experience of the World Bank and many management consultants indicates that managerial problems often tend to be identified in rather superficial terms which makes the search for real solutions more difficult. For example:

- poor (project) performance is easily described as ‘due to weak management’;
- financial control problems are often regarded as caused by ‘a lack of computerised accounting facilities’;
- inadequate staff performance is readily ascribed to ‘a lack of training’.

If the solutions inherent in these diagnoses should be implemented, the results may accomplish little more than to uncover the next layer of problems. This is, however, an unnecessarily expensive way of doing so. To refer again to the above examples:

- Good managers are certainly essential. But managers may not in fact be so much incompetent as faced with conflicting job requirements and inadequate authority. Such a situation will cause frustration and poor performance, no matter who happens to hold the position.
Likewise, if the real problem is not computerising accounts and budgets but rather the flow and accuracy of information, computers would at best only be useful once other measures have been put in place (such as, for example, simplifying and accelerating reporting procedures, and systems for evaluating more clearly the consequences of different types and levels of expenditure). In short, the entire information system may need to be restructured first before real progress can be made.

In similar fashion a lack of training, while unquestionably important, may sometimes be a relatively minor cause of inadequate staff performance. Factors such as poorly designed financial and work incentives, unclear delegation of authority and accountability, and inadequate opportunities for career development may feature much more prominently. Experience has indicated that the effectiveness of training often depends on changes in the structuring, content and career prospects of the job to which the trainee is subsequently assigned. Without such changes, training may lead to even greater frustration and could in fact turn out to be a singularly expensive and wasteful investment.

In addressing the development training needs and problems in the national states this issue of correctly identifying and resolving the real managerial/institutional problems responsible for poor performance should be firmly kept in mind.

3.3 Essentials of the DBSA approach to promoting development

From a teaching point of view, it is clear that inculcating what has been termed 'a development perspective' for all students/practitioners in the field is a necessary condition. But it is not a sufficient one. A fully fledged programme of education/training for development will have to go a good deal further. In this context different institutions of learning may quite legitimately concentrate on different dimensions of the development issue, depending on their own objectives and the teaching environment within which they normally function.

For present purposes the vantage point of DBSA is relevant. The central activity of the Bank is investing in development. In doing so it also aims to assist its developing member states to manage their own investment resources wisely and more efficiently. (DBSA financial assistance is after all only a relatively small part of the total resources available for investment in development.) This broad objective of the Bank's activities rests on a basic proposition that could be formulated as follows: 'The character of development, its direction and pace as well as the way people at large share in its benefits are mainly determined by how a state/country manages its investment resources.' Such a management orientated view would accord fully with the approach to promoting development carved out by the World Bank over a period of many decades.

In practice the relationship of DBSA to its member clients takes many forms:

- broad advice on development strategy and policy;
- conducting research and special studies on a variety of development issues;
- providing and/or funding technical assistance to clients on various aspects of the development process;
- engaging in the 'nuts and bolts' of project lending, including the use and supervision of outside consultants.

The practical approach to development utilised by the DBSA to fulfil its function as a broad development agency in southern Africa revolves around the concept of
‘the project approach’. There is, however, a danger that this expression may be misunderstood. The project approach to investment requires to be put in the wider context envisaged and promoted by the Bank.

The proper framework of project work is investment planning and management at national, regional and sectoral level. The World Bank has recently emphasised that it is an important lesson of experience that project work must be approached as a continuum, extending from the formulation of a public investment programme and the macro-economic policy framework; through the analysis of policies, issues and investment priorities of particular sectors; to detailed work at the project level involving the identification, preparation and implementation of specific projects. There is a continuing process of interaction among these three levels with plans and analyses developed at one level feeding into and affecting those at the other levels. In its proper context ‘the project approach’ therefore involves the entire process of managing a country’s investment resources wisely and well.

The above does not imply that the broadly based project approach is all that is utilised by the Bank. Recently more attention has also been given to newer approaches such as integrated rural and urban development, decentralisation, basic needs provision, community development and participation, and so on. Insights obtainable from these models can substantially enrich the basic project approach employed by the Bank. A gradual process of assimilation is indeed under way.

A major objective of development activity is widely recognised to be the sustainability of projects and, in a larger sense, of development itself. To be brief, sustainability cannot be achieved unless the capacity of beneficiaries and their institutions are also strengthened in the process of (project) development. Generally this emphasises the need in a Third World environment to have beneficiaries participate as actively as possible in promoting development. In particular, it focuses attention again on the difficult but important issue of institutional/managerial strengthening at all levels in the development process. The DBSA has been aware of these needs for some time and is gradually giving increasing attention to addressing them appropriately.

What the various levels of promoting development – the national, regional, sectoral, institutional and project level – have in common is the element of management. Thus the management of development resources in one context or another becomes the core activity in promoting development.

4 THE DBSA DEVELOPMENT TRAINING UNIT

The newly established Development Training Unit at the Bank has adopted this focus as its point of departure. In other words, it is felt that some knowledge and understanding of both the discipline of management and of societal development as well as a range of implementation skills in these spheres are necessary in order to perform effectively and efficiently as change agents/managers. The appropriate ‘mix’ would in practice depend on organisational levels, job categories and particular positions.

It is as yet early days at the DTU. At present our focus is on the professional staff of the DBSA. Much time has been spent in conceptualising, structuring and integrating the work of the Training Unit with the management and organisational development programmes in the Bank. This is regarded as essential if training is to be truly result-orientated and driven by real training needs.
It should be firmly realised that in the in-service context the true customers of training are not the trainees but upper-level management, who wants to see results. They want to see behaviours changing on the job. This perspective gives rise to a number of implications of which a major one is that in-service developmental/managerial training should become much more closely integrated with performance management and organizational planning, as opposed to operating in the traditional manner of being a separate staff function whose main output is 'hours of training'.

It is envisaged that some time next year the DTU will expand its operations to focus also on its client states. By that time what we have learnt inside the DBSA will hopefully be put to good use in these spheres. It is a challenge that we at the Bank are all looking forward to.