

Barriers to the measurement of return on investment (ROI) for training interventions in the South African higher education context

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ABSTRACT

This article aimed to investigate the barriers to the measurement of return on investment (ROI) for training and development interventions provided to academic staff in the South African public higher education context. The study adopted an interpretivist philosophical stance, and it was grounded on qualitative approach. Purposive sampling was used to select 14 participants who were interviewed. The participants represented various cases (institutions) and these included six universities, and government institutions comprising the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI), and the Education, Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority (ETDPSETA). Thematic analysis was applied via ATLAS.ti to analyse the interview data. The complexity of the process, lack of capacity, lag between training and improved performance, lack of will, financial constraints, lack of processes, fragmentation of training and development interventions, interventions yielding non-financial benefits, and lack of adequate data were found to be the factors that are barriers to the measurement of ROI. The study contributed to the body of knowledge of Human Resource Development and practice by highlighting the barriers to the measurement of ROI and it also provided recommendations for practice and future studies.

Keywords: Return on investment; Training and development; Higher education sector; Public universities; Academic staff; Training evaluation.