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Skills development for improved employee performance in South African municipalities

by

SARAH RODAH SIBIYA

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Supervisor: Prof. S. Vyas-Doorgapersad

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DECLARATION

I certify that the *dissertation* submitted by me for the degree *Master of Arts (Public Management and Governance)* at the University of Johannesburg is my independent work and has not been submitted by me for a degree at another university.

(Sarah Rodah Sibiya)

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If you want to go fast, go alone, if you want to go far, go together.

African Proverb

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ABSTRACT

This study centres on the phenomenon of skills development for improved employee performance in South African local government. Such is hinged on the need to train and develop human capital capable of improving public service delivery by municipalities. Municipalities are the local sphere of government nearest to the people and tasked with developing local communities and delivering goods and services for improved living standards. This study explores skills development for improved employee performance in South African municipalities. This study was motivated by the need to expedite local government service delivery, which has been hampered by municipal employees' poor capacity and skills over the years. A qualitative desktop study was adopted, and various secondary documents were analysed to gather information. The human capital theory was used as a framework for the study. The findings show that most local government employees' skills are not in tandem with the dictates of the current era. The study recommends interventions, among other things, improving local government skills development funding, adequately implementing monitoring and evaluation practices, developing soft skills for the current fourth industrial revolution era, and performing regular municipal skills audits.

Key Words: Employee performance, fourth industrial revolution, local government, service delivery, skills development, South Africa.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

4IR	Fourth Industrial Revolution
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADM	Amathole District Municipality
AGSA	Auditor-General South Africa
ALGA	Australian Local Government Association
GTZ	Gesellschaft fur Technische Zusammenarbeit
HCT	Human Capital Theory
HRD	Human Resources Development
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
KIC	Kigali Innovation City
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LGSETA	Local Government Sector Education and Training Authority
MA	Master of Arts
NDP	National Development Plan
NPC	National Planning Commission
NPM	New Public Management
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SALGA	South African Local Government Association
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
STEM	Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
WEF	World Economic Forum
WSP	Workplace Skills Plan

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The study's context and rationale are presented in this chapter, along with the problem statement, the guiding research question, secondary research questions, and study objectives. Also considered are the methodological approach's implications for the research design, research methodology, data collection and analysis techniques. In the chapter's final sections, the study's ethical issues, contribution and limitations are presented, along with the study's chapter layout to guide the proceeding chapters.

1.2 BACKGROUND, RATIONALE AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

This study centres on the phenomenon of skills development for improved employee performance in South African local government. Such is hinged on the need to train and develop human capital capable of improving public service delivery by municipalities. Municipalities are the local sphere of government nearest to the people and tasked with developing local communities and delivering goods and services for improved living standards. The local sphere of government is established in Section 152(1), Chapter 7 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996). It has various aims, which include: providing a democratic and accountable government for local communities; ensuring the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner; promoting social and economic development; promoting a safe and healthy environment; and encouraging the involvement of communities and community organisations in local government matters (Republic of South Africa (RSA) 1996:77). Furthermore, Section 152(2) of the RSA (1996) Constitution obligates municipalities to strive, within their financial and administrative capacity, to achieve the preceding objectives.

This study notes that for the above aims of local government to be achieved, municipality employees require a specific set of skills. Therefore, this study discusses skills development's meaning and implications for employee performance. Also, Munzhedzi (2021:213) notes that attaining the various goals of local government requires competent human capital with the requisite skills to undertake the various

tasks and duties. Furthermore, there is a solid link between the availability of skilled human capital and the timely delivery of quality public goods and services in local governments (Maphumulo & Bhengu 2019:7). Therefore, for the government to deliver on its constitutional mandate, there is an urgent need to sustainably strengthen human resources regarding the quantity and quality of capable municipal employees.

The study explores the skills development of municipal employees (focus) in South African municipalities (locus). It does not focus on one chosen municipality but looks at the situation holistically from a broader perspective. The nature of this study is possible as some MA minor dissertations are completed following the holistic approach. Some of these studies include factors influencing the implementation of the strategic framework for gender equality within the South African Public Service (Bangani 2020) and food security interventions to achieve Sustainable Development Goal Two in many countries if the world (Gil, Reidsma, Giller, Todman, Whitmore and Van Ittersum 2019:691), to state a few to make a case that this study could also be conducted using a macro-level approach.

The challenge of skills scarcity in the South African public service and the local sphere of government has reached endemic levels. Ndevu and Muller (2017:15) have pointed out how this lack of ample human capacity has affected the abilities of local government entities to deliver services effectively. Further, hordes of challenges have resulted from this scarcity of skills, including inter alia financial misconduct, poor performance, inability to deliver quality (basic) public services, unethical behaviour, corruption, nepotism, and political interference, all of which have dented the mandate and the reputation of municipalities in South Africa (Ndevu & Muller 2017:15). Local government entities, according to Munzhedzi (2017:7) are the custodians of service delivery and community development in South Africa, and this is made possible by the 278 municipalities spread across the entire republic. Since the dawn of democracy in 1994, efforts to fast-track the transformation of communities in South Africa have been hampered by challenges, including the lack of skills in the local sphere of government.

Municipalities are among the critical public entities for delivering public services in South Africa. The lack of skills in municipalities has also been compounded by post-apartheid practices of cadre deployment as used by the African National Congress (ANC) government, which primarily considers political affiliation and allegiance over

the competencies or skills of its appointees (Shava & Chamisa 2018:6; Masuku & Jili 2019:1935). Furthermore, the absence of a culture of meritocracy in the employment and deployment of human capital in local government has affected effective service delivery (Reddy 2016:5). As discussed in the previous section, skills training and development programmes and interventions in modern-day South Africa have been considered less effective.

The South African local government system has been plagued with various challenges related to the conduct of its officials. These challenges are blatant, rampant unethical behaviour, bad governance, corruption and nepotism, lack of transparency and maladministration (Madumo 2015:163). According to Munzhedzi (2016:198), local government corruption and procurement are the major challenges municipalities in South Africa face. Most "municipalities audited in 2012/2013 were not awarded clean audit outcomes due to findings around their set goals due to their failure to meet the public financial management requirements" (Matlala & Uwizeyimana 2020:2). In the "2014/2015 financial year, the financial health of 92 percent of the country's 278 municipalities remains a source of concern or requires intervention" (Matlala & Uwizeyimana 2020:2). Training and skills development, if implemented effectively, can decisively resolve challenges that affect the department. The study's central problem focused on scarcity and lack of skills among municipal employees, as seen in the various challenges highlighted in this section. Therefore, the study question the researcher sought to examine is as follows: **What are the challenges hampering the effective implementation of skills development programmes to improve employee performance in South African municipalities?**

1.3   RESEARCH QUESTIONS

A "research question is a question that a study or research project aims to answer. This question often addresses an issue or a problem, which, through analysis and interpretation of data, is answered in the study's conclusion" (Bouchrika 2022a:1). The study gathered literature, theoretical and empirical evidence to answer the following research questions fully:

- What are the conceptual frameworks of skills development and employee performance?

- Which are the theoretical, legislative, and institutional frameworks regulating skills development in South African municipalities?

- What are the causes of skills shortages in employee performance in South African municipalities?

- Which are the challenges hampering the effective implementation of skills development programmes in South African municipalities?

- Which strategies can be adopted and implemented for effective skills development practice in South African municipalities to improve employee performance?

- What recommendations can be offered to effectively address skills development for improved employee performance in South African municipalities?

1.4   RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

It is important to consider that research objectives divide the research aim into several parts and address each part separately. The research aim specifies 'what' needs to be studied and the research objectives comprise a number of steps that address 'how' the research aim will be achieved (Business Research Methodology 2022:1). The study objectives are to:

- Explain the conceptual frameworks of skills development and employee performance.

- Discuss the theoretical, legislative, and institutional frameworks regulating skills development in South African municipalities.

- Explore the causes of skills shortage on employee performance in South African municipalities.

- Describe challenges hampering the effective implementation of skills development programmes in South African municipalities.

- Discuss strategies that can be adopted and implemented towards effective skills development practice in South African municipalities to improve employee performance.

- Offer recommendations to effectively address skills development for improved employee performance in South African municipalities.

1.5   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A, "research paradigm is a method, model, or pattern for conducting research. It is a set of ideas, beliefs, or understandings within which theories and practices can function. The majority of paradigms derive from one of two research methodologies: positivism or interpretivism" (Abbadia 2022:1). It is also important to note that "every research project employs one of the research paradigms as a guideline for creating research methods and carrying out the research project most legitimately and reasonably" (Abbadia 2022:1). The study uses the interpretivism approach. The rationale is that "interpretivism has its roots in hermeneutics, the study of the theory and practice of interpretation. In hermeneutics, the text is the expression of the thoughts of its author, and interpreters must attempt to put themselves within the perception or thinking pattern of the author in order to reconstruct the intended meaning of the text" (Olsen WordPress 2022:1; also refer to internet source: https://www.intgrty.co.za). The interpretivism paradigm is used in qualitative studies because "precise, systematic and theoretical answers to complex human problems are not possible. They assert that every cultural and historical situation is different and unique and requires analyses of the uniquely defined, particular contexts in which it is embedded. Because of the specific social, political, economic and cultural experiences underpinning each study, the findings cannot be generalised; they do, however, provide greater clarity on how people make meaning of phenomena in a specific context, thus aiding greater understanding of the human condition" (Olsen WordPress, 2022:2). The qualitative and interpretivist approach to this study has been chosen since the research seeks to understand issues surrounding skills development and employee performance in municipalities in South Africa. For Wincup (2017:54), one main advantage of using qualitative methods is that they generate rich, detailed data and provide context for understanding behaviour, perceptions, attitudes, feelings, processes and the 'reasons why'.

In any research study, "it is important when designing a research project to select those methods and techniques that are appropriate to the specific research goal and study objectives" (Mouton 1996:40). In other words, "different studies use different methods, and the selected method that is appropriate for the particular task at hand should be used. The researcher selects the methods and techniques and the methodological paradigm: whether it will be a quantitative design, a qualitative design,

or a combination of both" (Mouton 1996:40). In addition, Schurink (2009, cited in Auriacombe 2016; Bangani 2019:15; Nhlapo 2020:2619) also states that, "designing your study within a specific research paradigm means that you situate it within a specific framework with interrelated assumptions, concepts, theories, values and practices that comprise the way you think reality should be viewed (ontology) and studied (epistemology)." Schurink (2009, cited in Auriacombe 2016; Bangani 2019:15; Nhlapo 2020:2619) further states that when designing the research project, the focus should be on the research question. Moreover, there is a focus on the research methodology, design, techniques, and theoretical, conceptual, as well as the analytical framework that could best clarify the research purpose and perspective and, therefore, the study objectives formulated for the research project.

Research is a systematic inquiry process to obtain evidence to accurately represent or explain social phenomena under study (Mouton 1996:7). Therefore, the research design is a roadmap of how the researcher intends to carry-out their research (Punch 2009:114). Methodology in research is defined as, "the systematic method to resolve a research problem through data gathering using various techniques, providing an interpretation of data gathered and drawing conclusions about the research data. Essentially, a research methodology is the blueprint of a research or study" (Murthy & Bhojanna 2009:32; Bouchrika 2022b:2). In the same vein, Schwandt (2007:193) asserts that methodology includes the assumptions and values that serve as a rationale for the research and the researcher's standards or criteria for interpreting data and reaching conclusions.

A wide range of alternate research methodologies can be utilised to research and conclude social phenomena. These include both the qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Commitment to a particular methodological frame of reference will influence and inform the study in very specific ways (Schram 2006:9). Therefore, "there should be a synthesis between a researcher's conceptual framework and the methodology they choose to gather and analyse data" (Auriacombe 2008:21). Research designs, according to Webb and Auriacombe (2006:589), "look at different kinds of questions. Therefore, research designs are categorised according to different kinds of studies according to the types of questions the researcher expects the research project to answer". A research design, "consists of a clear statement of the

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research problem and plans for collecting, processing and interpreting the observations intended to answer the research question" (Webb & Auriacombe 2006:589).

This study uses a qualitative research approach. Auriacombe (2008:12) postulates that, "a qualitative research paradigm provides the researcher with the perspectives of target audience members through immersion in a culture or situation and direct interaction with the people under study (an 'insider' view)". Qualitative research methods include observations, in-depth interviews, focus groups and the analysis of personal and other documents and literature, gaining insight into the meaning of the subject or object under study. These, "methods are also designed to help researchers understand people's meanings to their innermost experiences" (Bryman & Bell 2003:480). In the "qualitative paradigm, the researcher becomes the data collection instrument, and results may vary greatly depending upon who conducts the research" (Bryman & Bell 2003:480). The researcher used literature and official documents to gather and analyse qualitative data. Fletcher (2017:184) argues that, "qualitative researchers mostly use inductive reasoning, arguing from the particular to the general".

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005:7), "qualitative research is interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and spreads across humanities, the social sciences, and the physical sciences". Therefore, "qualitative research could be seen as an umbrella term for different approaches, with each having its own theoretical background, methodological principles and aims" (Auriacombe 2009:97). The 'insider's perspective' that emerges from qualitative researchers allows them to find the best way to interact with their research environments, thus allowing for flexibility and pushing research findings towards validity and believability (Patton, Hong, Patel & Kral 2017:8).

This study, being qualitative, focuses on exploratory and descriptive approaches. When "a researcher has limited experience with or knowledge about a research issue, exploratory research is useful. It ensures that a more rigorous, more conclusive future study will begin with an inadequate understanding of the nature of the problem at hand" (Manerikar & Manerikar 2014:1, cited in Mutenga 2021:16). Usually, "exploratory research provides a greater understanding of a concept or crystallises a problem. Exploratory study is initial research conducted to clarify and define the nature

of a problem" (Manerikar & Manerikar 2014:1, cited in Mutenga 2021:16). Descriptive research, as highlighted by Moffat (2015:55, cited in Chiware 2021:20), "is concerned with conditions or relationships that exist; practices that prevail; beliefs, viewpoints, or attitudes that are held; ongoing processes; effects that are being felt; or trends that are developing."

The data is collected through literature and document reviews. A literature review "surveys books, scholarly articles, and other sources relevant to a particular issue, area of research, or theory. It provides a description, summary, and critical evaluation of these works concerning the research problem investigated" (Labaree 2009:1, cited in Ncamphalala 2019:16-17). Literature reviews "are designed to provide an overview of sources explored while researching a particular topic and to demonstrate to readers how research fits within a larger field of study" (Labaree 2009:1, cited in Ncamphalala 2019:16–17). According to Mogalakwe (2006, cited in Makhubu 2020:10–11), a document review refers to "the analysis of documents that contain information about the phenomenon one wishes to study".

The study's data analysis was executed through conceptual and documentary analysis methods. According to Furner (2004:233), "conceptual analysis is a technique that treats concepts as classes of objects, events, properties, or relationships. The method involves precisely defining the meaning of a given concept by identifying and specifying the conditions under which any entity or phenomenon is (or could be) classified under the concept in question". The "goal of using conceptual analysis as a method of inquiry into a given field of interest is to improve our understanding of how particular concepts are (or could be) used for communicating ideas about that field" (Furner 2004:233). The study employs conceptual analysis to draw the meaning of concepts related to skills development to see how they influence the performance of municipalities. According to Bowen (2009:27), "document analysis is a systematic technique for assessing or evaluating documents, both printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) material. Like other qualitative research methodologies, document analysis necessitates the examination and interpretation of data to extract meaning, gain insight, and develop empirical knowledge." Documents "contain text (words) and images that were recorded without the participation of a researcher. Other mute or trace evidence, such as cultural relics, is not included in this

debate" (Bowen 2009:27). This study employs documentary analysis to analyse official government documents and peer-reviewed and other expansive literature sources that inform skills development in local municipalities in South Africa.

Validity "is the extent to which a concept, conclusion, or measurement is well-founded and corresponds accurately to the real world. The validity of a measurement tool is considered the degree to which the tool measures what it claims to measure; in this case, the validity is equal to accuracy" (Auriacombe 2007:32, cited in Bangani 2019:13). Reliability, as explained by Golafshani (2003:52, cited in Bangani, 2019:14), "does not imply validity. That is, a reliable measure measuring something consistently is not necessarily measuring what needs to be measured." Lincoln and Guba (1985, cited in University of Miami 2020:2) used the, "trustworthiness' of a study as the naturalist's equivalent for internal validation, external validation, reliability, and objectivity. Trustworthiness is achieved by credibility, authenticity, transferability, dependability, and confirmability in qualitative research." In qualitative research, "researchers look for dependability that the results will be subject to change and instability rather than looking for reliability in qualitative research" (Lincoln & Guba 1985, cited in University of Miami 2020:2).

1.6   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Scientific research studies are required and expected to be carried out in morally acceptable and justifiable ways (Sugiura, Wiles & Pope 2017:192). This research abides by all the applicable principles of social research. It is a qualitative desktop study, and all documents consulted for the study are in the public domain.

1.7   SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study expands on the existing body of academic knowledge by bringing fresh perspectives to the challenge of poor performance and lack of skills in local government. This study contributes to ensuring that skills development becomes an integral part of local government transformation, highlighting the significance of skills development for employee performance to positively transform municipal service delivery. Secondly, the study explores skills development practices for local government by identifying skills gaps so municipalities can ensure that the persistent challenge of skill scarcity in local government can effectively be addressed. The study

links skills development and employee performance, motivating that trained human capital could contribute to improved municipal services. Overall, this study underscores the need for new strategies incorporating updating training programmes (such as ICT/4IR) to address this skills shortage challenge and improve how municipalities deliver services toward sustainable community development.

1.8   LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study offers a holistic approach to skills development for improved municipality employee performance. Hence interviews do not form part of the study and can be considered a limitation. Future studies may explore the topic in a chosen municipality and include interviews and observations to expand the literature and knowledge on the area under exploration.

1.9   CHAPTER LAYOUT

This study is divided into the following chapters:

Chapter One: Introduction and General Orientation: This chapter discusses the rationale and problem statement that is expanded to formulate research questions and objectives. Appropriate research methods, techniques, data collection and analysis methods are discussed. The study's limitations, significance, ethical considerations and chapter layout are provided to guide the research.

Chapter Two: Overview of Skills Development and Employee Performance: This chapter explores an overview of skills development and employee performance in the context of municipalities. The chapter links skills development to employee performance, explaining various challenges and the advantages of skills development to the efficacy of employees in South African municipalities.

Chapter Three: Theoretical, Legislative and Institutional Frameworks of Skills Development in South African Municipalities: This chapter discusses theoretical, institutional, policy and legal frameworks guiding skills development in the context of employee performance in South African local government.

Chapter Four: Skills Development Challenges Affecting Employee Performance in South African Municipalities: This chapter explores various skills development interventions to improve employee performance, especially at the municipal level.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations: This chapter summarises the preceding chapters and offers recommendations for improvement.

CHAPTER TWO

OVERVIEW OF SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

2.1   INTRODUCTION

The study assesses the effect of skills development on employee performance in South African municipalities. The opening chapter provided the study's foundation by setting the research scene. This chapter focuses on skills development and employee performance in the context of the local sphere of government. Specifically, the chapter conceptualises key terms and phrases such as skills, competency, performance, and employee performance. Furthermore, it discusses the potential that skills development has to improve the performance of local government employees. In the end, this chapter provides a comprehensive look at these two equally critical concepts and practices in the context of the need for improved employee performance in South African municipalities. The chapter concludes by discussing various challenges affecting the efficacy of local government employees and the advantages of skills development to the efficacy of South African municipality employees. The chapter answers the research question: What are the conceptual frameworks of skills development and employee performance? (see Chapter 1, Section 1.3).

2.2   CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

This section defines, describes, and discusses various concepts related to skills development in the context of the current study, starting with skills. These are then discussed as central terms and concepts that South African municipalities can consider in their quest to improve performance for effective service delivery.

2.2.1   Skills

The study is based on the development of skills for effective service delivery in South African municipalities. Skills refer to abilities for improved job performance as seen in the undertaking of an organised sequence of activities that are critical to the achievement of the predetermined goals of an organisation (Baaartman & Bruijn 2011:127). The said organisation includes public entities such as the municipalities in South Africa, which comprise the local sphere of government. For this study, skills are critical to the effective functioning of municipalities because these are the centres of

community development and public service delivery. From another angle, skills denote the knowledge about how to do something, 'know-how' (Bolisani & Bratianu 2018:11). Therefore, skills effectively equip employees with the expertise and knowledge to undertake various organisational tasks. In the context of this study, skills can include knowledge of people-centred public or municipal service delivery.

Since 1994, South Africa has been confronted by a skills crisis. Skills development has been acknowledged as a key component for its transformation (Tshilongamulenzhe 2012:30), leaving the state requiring a government-led skills revolution that can bring socio-economic transformation (Plant & Padotan 2017:35). Further to this, the scarcity and shortage of critical skills in South Africa correspondingly imply that there is the absence of competent public servants and key officials in all sectors of the economy (Plant & Padotan 2017:44). Kroukamp (2002:455) observes that the skills scarcity dilemma in South Africa is worsened by the half-hearted commitment by public officials and policy implementers to address the problem effectively, leading to its persistence. According to Matlala and Uwizeyimana (2020:2), the local sphere of government is not immune to this skills deficit, which has left municipalities in a quandary, with audit opinions from the Auditor General indicating that skills such as financial management are in short supply. Therefore, there is a need to use skills training and development interventions to equip local government with all the skills lacking. This is because municipalities are the centre of critical processes leading to community development and the post-1994 transformation agenda.

There are three central aspects to the skills debate in South Africa, as established by labour economists. First, skills shortages denote the acute absence of qualified labour to fill vacant positions (Hakansson & Bejakovic 2020:8). Second, skills mismatches occur when individuals seeking employment do not have the skills required for the vacant positions (Hakansson & Bejakovic 2020:8). Third, Taylor (2018:34) notes that there is information asymmetry that happens when potential employees or employers do not have information that could improve the matching of skills and available vacancies. The ability of employees to function and execute duties and responsibilities is related to their competencies and capacity to carry out those tasks. This capacity includes both individual and organisational aspects, which means that organisations

have to create an enabling environment for employees' productivity and performance. The study discusses the issues related to the competencies of employees in the context of skills development and the need for effective service delivery in South African municipalities.

2.2.2 Competency

For Mansfield (1999:25), "competency refers to an underlying characteristic of a person that results in effective or superior performance. Such an effective performance relates to the ability to deliver both quantitatively and qualitatively on the key result areas that employees have been given at the beginning of the performance period." It is important to note that a competent employee meets expected job demands through deliberate performance behaviour that synchronises with the organisation's goals. Masuku and Jili (2019:1947) argue that the skills scarcity in South Africa, as argued previously in this chapter has been a blow to the abilities and aptitudes of local government officials. In the end, this affects how economic, effective and efficient municipal service delivery is done, and how poverty and underdevelopment are addressed.

Competency has been historically conceptualised by scholars such as McClelland (1973:47), who first referred to competency as a critical differentiator of performance. From his argument, competency is the determinant factor that judges an employee as a low, moderate or high performer. As a result, for an organisation to carry out crucial procedures like training and development, it must evaluate and establish its competency requirements. Therefore, in the context of this study, municipalities must be aware of the levels of competency and employment status of their various employees to decide on training and development initiatives based on the best available evidence. From a different standpoint, competences can reveal if a company or municipality is under or over-utilising its human resources, which are both vital components of employees' motivation and productivity.

This section discusses the critical aspect of competency, which has been fully emphasised as a vital cog in the employees' skills and performance matrix. For South African municipalities to ensure that their employees function optimally, they must always be knowledgeable regarding their employees' various competencies. If these

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fall short, there is a need to upskill municipal employees through various skills development interventions. It can be argued that competencies are a critical aspect of both employee and team capacity and thus must be treated seriously, especially in South African local government. The following section discusses skills development in the context of the current study.

2.2.3   Skills development

According to Jonck, De Coning and Matseke (2020:30), skills development is "expected to encourage socio-economic transformation by compelling public servants to participate in the knowledge economy." Furthermore, such kinds of development are fostered by capacitating public office bearers with the skills to become knowledge workers (Jonck et al. 2020:30). According to Mchunu (2019:32), skills development within the public sector of South Africa is critical because public sector employees require the expertise to execute and implement programmes introduced to improve service delivery and the quality of lives.

The skills development process is linked to the upskilling of individuals to improve them and ensure that the job-to-individual match is enhanced. Attaining such a balance is dependent on human capital skill sets being updated regularly using both informal and formal processes or interventions. In the case of municipalities, there is need to ensure that the skills deficits that the post-1994 local government sphere faces are addressed through skills development and other related interventions. One such intervention is training and development of local government employees through the Local Government Sector Education and Training Authority (LGSETA) (Turner, Halabi, Sartorius & Arendse 2013:2). In the process of skills development, there is a marked improvement required in the area of education and knowledge of those that will be on the receiving end of such training, as discussed below.

Knowledge acquisition is a vital aspect of skills development. According to Bolisani and Bratianu (2018:19), the concept of knowledge is viewed as the condition of knowing created by the human brain (through cognition), which is then amplified and integrated into organisational knowledge by social interaction. Thus, in the context of this study, knowledge refers to the acquisition of skills by municipal employees and officials to execute their service delivery mandates in their respective communities

more proficiently. In the study's context, characteristics such as behaviour, empathy, personality, and leadership qualities, are used to enhance service delivery in the South African local government sector. Knowledge and education are closely related, which furthers the upskilling of workers-particularly municipal workers. According to Barrow and Woods (2008:6), 'education' refers to the deliberate acquisition of knowledge.

According to Rieckmann (2018:42), the process of education involves acquiring attitudes, aptitudes, and beliefs through the influence of the environment, leading one to develop a certain level of understanding related to certain phenomena. Therefore, "an educated person must be equipped with some body of knowledge and some kind of conceptual scheme to raise the abilities of knowledge above the level of a collection of disjointed facts" (Brottman, Char, Hattori, Heeb & Taff 2020:805). In the context of the current study, education is used as a focused intervention intended to educate municipal workers in South Africa. Education is essential for providing workers with the fundamental skills to do activities more efficiently and effectively, which is essential for attaining organisational goals. The failure of the South African educational system to provide municipal workers and other public servants with the necessary skills to perform their jobs effectively has been cited. As a result, towns need to implement education initiatives. Education must be seen to be working in collaboration with training, discussed as follows.

Training refers to the instructions that one receives towards their mastering of a certain profession or given discipline (Hall 2016:59). From the above definition, it is deduced that training seeks to make those being trained more proficient at their work to ensure they function more effectively. For Ongori and Nzonzo (2011:187), training is the process of upgrading employees' knowledge and skills to improve performance markedly. From the preceding discussion, the study deduces that the implication of training is to upskill employees to make them more productive. Elnaga and Imran (2013:140) note that the activity of training is further an intervention that normally comes when there are indications that employees are not optimally performing, hence the need to impart certain skills on them. It is clear that training seeks to augment basic-level skills with more astute abilities that are usually job specific and related. Overall, the objective of training in a job context is to enable an individual to acquire abilities to perform adequately in a given task towards realising their full potential and

achieving set goals (Daily, Bishop & Massoud 2012:635). Thus, the purpose of training is to ensure that each employee meets their employer's necessary proficiency requirements. According to Diamantidis and Chatzoglou (2014:152), training is the process of upgrading knowledge and skills, leading to attitude and behavioural changes, thereby improving performance. Furthermore, training seeks to transform individual behaviours related to job performance, carrying out tasks needed and, above all, achieving the entity's objectives. For South African municipalities, training is skills development and improvement interventions that seek to make employees more productive and motivated in executing allocated tasks.

This section presents essential concepts related to skills and employee productivity in organisations and public entities. From the comprehensive discussions, the research observes that skills development, training, education and knowledge acquisition are all equally critical activities, processes and interventions that seek to make municipal employees more productive. From the discussions, it is clear that in most instances, the absence of skills requires that organisations intervene to ensure employees are capable of carrying out activities. In the end, skills development is an important aspect of organisational success for entities. The following section discusses the concept of employee performance in the context of the need for improved performance in South African municipalities.

2.3   CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

This section unpacks the conceptual meanings and implications (to municipalities) of employee performance.

2.3.1   Performance as a concept

In this study, skills development is linked to employee performance as it is central to the success of local government entities. Furthermore, the study notes that optimal public service delivery depends entirely on the ability of those tasked with service delivery to conduct their community development tasks. The researcher argues that the transformative agenda of local government is directly credited to the ability of employers and employees to perform optimally. The study discusses the definition and implications of this concept hereafter. Iskamto (2021:143) defines performance as the "result of the work of an employee in carrying out the tasks assigned to him in

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accordance with his responsibilities and roles based on skills, experience, and sincerity as well as time accompanied by quality and quantity according to the rules laid down" (Iskamto 2021:143). Armstrong and Taylor (2020:136) note that as a concept performance "covers both what has been achieved and how it has been achieved". Performance "has to rely extensively on data-informed qualitative assessments of organisational capability or effectiveness in the pursuance of its set objectives" (Armstrong 2009:136). Vroom (1964), cited in Armstrong and Taylor (2020:142), notes that "the effects of motivation on performance are dependent on the level of ability of the employee, and the relationship of ability to performance is dependent on the motivation of the employee." It is noted that "Vroom also pioneered expectancy theory that, as developed by Porter and Lawler in 1968, proposes that high individual performance depends on high motivation plus possession of the necessary skills and abilities and an appropriate role and understanding of that role" (Armstrong 2009:143). In the same vein, enhancing performance refers to the deliberate act of increasing and augmenting the rate at which one delivers on their targets, that is, improving their output, quality, timeliness or quantity (Dobre 2013:55). Sandhya and Kumar (2011:1779) argue that the enhancement of performance can be through the upgrading of skills, improved rewards, training and development and human capital interventions related to improving employee loyalty. Thus, South African municipalities have to consistently and constantly strive to keep enhancing their employees' performance by intervening towards improving their skill set. That kind of culture of performance enhancements can ensure that no resources and time are lost to low productivity and poor competencies amongst municipal employees and officials. Such a practice and virtue can improve the productivity of individuals, teams and the organisation.

Warner (2016:4) defines productivity as "the ratio of output to input (units of output per units of input)". In addition, "the goal of public entities is to ensure inputs do not exceed outputs, and there is quality assurance in production processes of public commodities" (Warner 2016:5). As a result, municipalities must generate more goods and services using fewer resources to be considered productive. This is an extremely important criterion because public resources are always finite. Bouckaert, Peters and Verhoest (2016:88) observe that "the delivery of goods and services by public entities is dependent mainly on government revenues that are ordinarily limited and must cater

for a whole load of demands for resources in the public sector." The researcher argues that performance is a good nexus between employees' motivation and skill levels, to which municipalities must pay attention. This brings the study to describe employee performance, defined as follows.

2.3.2 Employee performance

Employee performance is central to using skills development as a municipal service delivery intervention. This section discusses the meaning and implications of employee performance. On the other hand, Hermina and Yosepha (2019:71) note that employee performance refers to, "the work quality and quantity achieved by an employee in carrying out his function in accordance with the responsibilities given to him." Al Mehrzi and Singh (2016:835) posit that this definitional perspective brings aspects of work standards that are vital to successfully undertaking work duties and responsibilities. In the municipal setting, these standards encompass the need to ensure public participation, people-centeredness and the selfless promotion of public interest. According to Brhane and Zewdie (2018:72), the issue of employee performance is the total or aggregate output of individual employees' activities and actions in an organisation. Moreover, employee performance levels can be described as low, moderate and high. Low employee performance ratings in municipal settings can be equivalent to wasting resources and taxpayer money, in addition to being harmful to the delivery of public services. Employee performance in an organisation is often evaluated in light of an employee's contributions to accomplishing the organisation's goals.

This section discusses the crucial aspect of employee performance, which has been argued to be the ability of employees to perform and attain set or allocated tasks. Furthermore, the issues of capacity and competency are essential in employee performance. If these are deficient or absent, the intervention of skills training and development could be used to improve the performance of employees. The researcher argues that the aggregate individual performance is vital to the overall group, team, and organisational performance.

2.4   SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR IMPROVED EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

This section discusses the nexus between skills development and improved employee performance in South African municipalities. In the 21st century, it is imperative to note that employee training and development in the public sector enhance job performance as guidance is provided in the training session (Sun & Van Ryzin 2014:328). In their empirical study, Kanyane, Houston and Sausi (2013:136) write about the shortage of qualified staff to ensure services are delivered effectively. Therefore, upskilling, training, and development are corrective responses to transform the functioning of the modern public sector.

Van der Walt, Thasi, Chipunza and Jonck (2016:176) note that, "the Republic of South Africa's public service has been branded as having skills scarcity and deficiencies that can be traced to historical practices of racial segregation in human capital development practices." The scarcity of critical skills in South African is a major socio-economic challenge to the state and the various public entities (Bruwer & Smith 2018:50). In addressing these skills disparities, the post-1994 government enacted corresponding statutes. It implemented policies promoting skills development as an intervention to promote the abilities and proficiencies of public servants. As confirmed in a study by Boadu, Dwomo-Fokuo, Boakye and Kwaning (2014:515), skills training is a critical step towards improving management training in organisations whilst concurrently departing from the subject-based training and focusing on developing critical skills.

Skills development is not new in the South African public sector as it has been used over the years to provide demand-driven knowledge on sustainably enhancing public sector performance (Ramulumisi, Schultz & Jordaan 2015:531). As Curtis and McKenzie (2001:20) notes, training and development practices are regarded as an old concept that organisations have always used to improve the productivity capacity of their employees. Various legislative frameworks are in place to promote and maintain good human capital development practices as one of the basic values and principles guiding the South African public administration. In the local context, municipalities in South African must appreciate that "capacity development can assist to equip all local government officials with relevant and upgraded skills, knowledge and competencies required to perform their duties effectively in pursuit of a new vision and mission for

the public service" (Luthuli, Nyawo & Mashau 2019:122). Morethe, Swarts and Schultz (2020:2) note that upskilling and developing employees can help build a competitive advantage for the organisation while concurrently empowering and engaging employees in ways that can build good and consistent performances within the organisation. Ultimately, this research deduces that skills investment primarily benefits the organisation over the employees. The study also considers that there is a need for the skills development agenda to be emphasised in South African municipalities, especially to ensure that the leaders appreciate the need to improve employee competencies, capacity, ability and performance sustainably, as discussed below.

- ***Lack of skills hampering employee performance:***

Principally, skills development shortfalls are a huge hindrance to achieving the developmental state economic growth rates. A World Economic Forum (WEF) Global Competitiveness Report (2019), which ranks 141 countries on competitiveness, ranked South Africa number 72 regarding the quality of the workforce, 119 for quality of vocational skills and training, 102 for graduates' skill sets, 126 for digital skills among the economically active population, and 98 for the ease of finding skilled people. In terms of the skills of the future workforce, South Africa is ranked 95 for critical thinking and 109 for the teacher-to-pupil ratio in primary education (WEF 2019). It is difficult to measure unemployment since there is disagreement over what constitutes skills. This dismal scenario represents the skills gap and how it affects local communities' provision of public goods and services. Therefore, it makes sense for local government agencies to aid in South Africa's skills transformation revolution. This bleak situation led Motala and Dieltiens (2010:104) to contend that "the conventional explanation of skills shortage in South Africa is biased and insufficient."

Several factors affect the conceptualisation and implementation of skills development policies. The major political factors include a lack of state capacity and political will, poor administration, corruption, vested interests, and poor institutions (Saltman 2016:13). Furthermore, cognate critical components include governance, funding, organisation, quality assurance and human resources to sustain the skills development. The researcher deduces that the negative impact of skills shortages, scarcity, and the associated issues impede the effective delivery of public goods and services in South Africa. Such happens through dwindling competencies of municipal

employees, poor abilities and attitudes to grasp emerging job demands, especially during the fourth industrial revolution (4IR) era, where globalisation has changed how public entities operate, and poor perceptions by organisations towards training. The study further regards this culture as detrimental to the transformation of post-1994 communities and societies.

- *Skills development improving employee performance:*

This section discusses how skills development improves the execution of employees' duties and responsibilities in South African municipalities. Maduka, Edwards Greenwood, Osborne and Babatunde (2018:698) state that employees are more likely to be productive and perform optimally when their competencies have been improved, hence enabling the attainment of set goals of any particular organisation or public entity. Mabe, Makamu and Juta (2018:718) strongly argue that skills training and development is a cardinally important tool used to enhance employees' performance in every organisation, whether public or private. In addition, according to Sokoh (2019:9), a vital cog in employee skills development and training is that of career development orientations that ensure that employees see themselves as valued and, hence, become more productive.

Some leading examples of the policy thrust are discussed hereafter. According to Gleason's (2018:113) study of Singapore's developmental state polity, a key success factor for the state was a push towards establishing a knowledge-based society through skills development. Moreover, a study by Chenoy, Ghosh and Shukla (2019:113) on India's push towards becoming a manufacturing hub is anchored on deliberate 'skill India' and 'digital India' policies. Essentially the skills component is focused on developing the right skills to address the growing demand skills gap in various manufacturing sectors. South African municipalities can learn from these examples to solve their own skills predicaments.

A solid link between community underdevelopment and skills has not been established. However, a study by Wallenborn (2009:553) in Tajikistan suggests that vocational education and training play a crucial role in poverty alleviation by producing more productive graduates, increasing incomes and improving products and services. This can be said to create a repository of skills for that country's public service.

According to a study by Fleckenstein and Lee (2019:169), South Korea's success in reducing unemployment and delivering a developmental state was made possible by using robust industrial and skills development policies. However, their study notes that the successful model has shown 'cracks', resulting in labour market dualisation, over-education and rising inequality. In support of this, a study by Ashton, Sung and Turbin (2010:24) on Singapore, Taiwan, and South Korea indicates that government structures and institutions in education and training were entirely able to provide the industry with an endless supply of skilled personnel that spurred economic development. Therefore, skills development positively impacts employee performance and hence must be sustained in the context of South African municipalities.

- ***Strong institutions and structures supporting skills development:***

There are institutional arrangements that can lead to the effective use of skills development in public entities. Clayton, Jonas, Harding, Harris and Toze (2013:35) note that "these include the skills development facilitators who are well knowledgeable experts that organisations engage in the process of upskilling their employees". Skills development facilitators have positively impacted South African public sector organisations by scanning the market for relevant skills and ensuring that organisations concentrate on adding skill sets to their human capital (Jonck & De Coning 2020:5). This comprises municipally based local governmental entities. Senior managers are the knowledgeable representatives inside a public entity, such as a municipality, who must establish and uphold an organisation-wide culture of skill development and excellent employee performance. Therefore, the primary priority of skills development in public organisations should be ensuring senior managers understand the importance of skills. This is because any subpar or unsuccessful employee performance inside the organisation may be immediately attributed to the ineffectiveness of top managers' leadership and training efforts.

Jonck and De Coning (2020:6) advise that organisations must have skills and abilities targets determined by the training committees tasked with mapping out the training needs and advise management on the best strategies to ensure employee performance is continually augmented through on-the-job training. Training committees are critical to municipalities since they are institutionally and technically mandated to address skills deficiencies and ensure that a skilled and competent

human capital base is always present. Such a situation allows for the effective delivery of public goods and services (Jonck & De Coning 2020:6).

The role of the officer sitting at the top echelons of the organograms in public entities must not be neglected in the arguments of this study. Executives and top management are the leaders responsible for the overall functioning of the entire organisation. These are top executives who must formulate skills development plans that meet all the departmental goals, visions and missions, moreover, they are tasked with making sure that skills development plans are carried out accordingly and that that the workplace skills plan is well implemented (Machika 2014:34). Hence, their strategies, resourcing, policymaking, and advisory roles are critical to the effective functioning of the entity. The entity's ability to function effectively depends on its tactics, reserves, and consultative functions. When acquiring skills for raising employee performance, institutional and other arrangements must speak with one voice. Municipalities in South Africa, which have had issues with performance, competencies, and overall service delivery, will benefit from such a mandate.

- *Compliance with legislation regarding employee performance:*

The skills development and employee performance agenda of post-1994 South Africa is rich with various robust statutes, policies and regulations that drive skills development. These include the White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service (1997), the Skills Development Act (No. 97 of 1998), the Skills Development Levies Act (No. 9 of 1999) and the national skills development strategy (2001–2010). There is also the White Paper on Reconstruction and Development (1994), the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (1996) blueprint, the South African Qualifications Authority Act (No. 58 of 1995), White Paper on Public Service Training and Education (1998), and National Qualifications Framework Act (No. 67 of 2008). The list demonstrates how dedicated the South African government and policymakers are to putting education, skills, and competency at the centre of the post-apartheid state's reform strategy. Nearly three decades after the beginning of democracy, the skills shortage is still a common tendency in public institutions, despite the robust legal and policy frameworks. Thus, the study asserts that it is necessary to investigate if municipalities comply with these standards. Education, skills development, and sound

career management practices are mentioned as part of the essential labour rights for all South Africans in the supreme legislation of the Republic.

Foremost, there is a common trend of the absence of due compliance with the skills development and employees' performance policy frameworks. According to Mokhethi and Oladele (2013:98), "public entities such as municipalities have been culpable in the lack of compliance with skills development frameworks." This is sometimes blamed on the same scarcity of skills that affects the basic understanding of stipulations and how corresponding laws, policies and compliance measures can be adopted and implemented (Mphahlele & Zandamela 2021:159). Therefore, a less skilled officer will be tasked with building a reliable and capable skills and competency repository for a public entity. Thus, such a setup is a recipe for failure regarding skills development-led consistent employee performance improvement. Furthermore, "the political intersections of management and administration in public entities have seen the use of political deployment in the local government of officials based on affiliation rather than abilities and capabilities of skills" (Ndevu & Muller 2017:16). These appointees are politicians who are sometimes elected representatives who at times suffer from a lack of expertise regarding employee and organisational performance.

Matlala and Uwizeyimana (2020:2) argue that the regular audit reports of the South African Auditor-General have laid bare the issues of ever-recurring poor reports on municipalities with no skills development interventions to make sure that municipal financial management is improved. Therefore, despite its detrimental effects on employee performance and the provision of local government services, the abnormal skills shortage has become the standard in local government entities. According to this researcher, public organisations must carefully implement the legislative requirements for skills investment and the need to improve employee performance. Those caught falling behind must bear the consequences.

- ***Weak understanding of human resources development plans:***

Lussier (2017:32) argues that, at times, the success or failure of skills development interventions is hugely dependent on employees' abilities to comprehend what their entity's skills development plans seek to achieve and how they are part and parcel of that agenda. Therefore, "it is critical for an organisation to ensure that the employees

for the key stakeholders in their attainment of objectives is key and has a grasp of the human resources development (HRD) plans" (Lussier 2017:36). In this regard, this study considers that the success of any organisation or public entity's human resource development (HRD) strategies depends on the buy-in of its workforce. Training committees, senior management, and executives of public organisations such as municipalities must constantly be aware of this crucial need for employee knowledge to build skills for increasing employee and organisational performance. For Wood and Wall (2007:1336), HRD is concerned with fully unleashing (individual) human capacity for individual and organisational success. Therefore, it is considered that the improvement of employees' performance must be viewed within the wider context of HRD, which is broader than conventional human resource management. One merit is that it values employee elements in the organisation's plans as a necessary tool for improving performance. Nonetheless, in the context of this study, municipal employees must be immersed in the HRD plans to be intimately involved in the continuous improvement agenda of learning public sector organisations.

- ***Lack of departmental skills plans as a deterrent for employee performance:***

Malesa and Maleka (2021:801) state that for skills development for improved employee performance to bring the needed improvement, there are certain issues that public entities must always get right. These include having a skills development committee to develop training policies aligned with legislation. Moreover, this committee should comprise external experts such as academics, labour and employees exposed to skills development (Malesa & Maleka 2021:801).

- ***Limited stakeholder support on employee performance:***

The study further values the perspective on the need for stakeholder support to develop employee skills for improved performance. These include the various hierarchical levels and officers within a public entity, such as senior management. Anand, Kothari and Kumar (2016:16) posit that, "there is also the fact of labour representatives such as trade unions and their roles in making sure that the skills development trajectories are improving the employee career progression." This is firmly linked to the need for the motivation and meeting of individual career goals as a way of effectively building appropriate employee engagement and empowerment for

organisational success (Osborne & Hammoud 2017:61). This study argues that the half-hearted dedication by various stakeholders has affected how employees can improve their performance. One can argue that the muted voices of trade unions on the skilling of employees in organisations, as a conduit to them earning more rewards and remuneration, is a cause of great concern (Anand et al. 2016:29).

Furthermore, the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) has not done enough to ensure that local government entities' skills are sustainably improved (Kroukamp & Cloete 2018:75). The SALGA must ensure that its mandate and agenda also include the skill capacities and competencies of employees. Another stakeholder neglecting the active improvement of employees' performance is the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs). South Africa's ability to tackle social challenges is contingent upon the extent to which SETAs and the government play a pivotal role in that process (Kidd 1980:3). SETAs "are responsible for the disbursement of training levies payable by all employers and are required to develop and implement an appropriate skills development plan for their sector" (Turner et al. 2013:2). SETAs "were established by section 9(1) of the Skills Development Act (No. 97 of 1998) and came into operation from 1 April 2000" (Turner et al. 2013:2). Additionally, "the Local Government Sector Education Training Authority (LGSETA) was created with the goal of promoting and coordinating skills development initiatives and strategic sectoral training interventions" (Yes Media 2021, cited in Vyas-Doorgapersad & Mothabi 2022:365).

2.5   MERITS OF SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

Various merits are linked to skills development for improved employee performance intervention or phenomenon. Firstly, as argued in various sections of this chapter, skills development leads to more employee (in this case, municipal officials) motivation, empowerment and engagement. By this, Osborne and Hammoud (2017:60) mean employees will feel more valued as major stakeholders of their particular entity and therefore feel inherently motivated to be more productive. Secondly, "skilled employees will be more competent, and thus this can reduce the wastage of resources" (McKinnon, Flothmann, Hoberg & Busch 2017:74) since these employees will be well-acquainted with the need for economic effectiveness and efficiency in the delivery of services. Since resources drive public service delivery,

reducing waste leads to quality production of public commodities and thus more value for money for the residents and citizens (McKinnon et al. 2017:77). Thirdly, skills development and skilled and highly performing employee contingents enable the municipality to enjoy a good reputation amongst its valuable stakeholders (Bashir & Gani 2020:11). Fourthly, Butler (2017:49) notes that skills development helps the South African government, and state in general, by accelerating the post-1994 agenda that skills deficiencies have hampered. This implies that the challenges of poverty, inequality and poor living standards can be effectively resolved, and everyone, regardless of race or creed, can enjoy the fruits of independence. Fifthly, according to Eldor (2016:323), skilled and developed employees function optimally and, above all, achieve their own career goals while concurrently attaining the set goals of their public entity. Such an achievement is good because it attains the goals of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), which calls for promoting good career management practices. Overall, skills development for improved performance is a motivator, productivity enhancer and a goal-getting strategy that South African municipalities must always use.

2.6   SUMMARY

This chapter discussed this study's conceptual framework, including conceptualising terms and phrases such as skills, competency, skills development, education, knowledge and training. In these discussions, the researcher observed that skills development is critical to an organisation such as the South African municipalities because it improves their abilities and attitudes towards pursuing employees' personal career goals and the overall organisational objectives. With South Africa facing an acute shortage of critical skills needed for the effective delivery of services and the transformation of society post-apartheid, education, training, and skills development must be used fully to achieve the intended goals. The chapter further discussed some pertinent issues in the skills development for improved employee performance matrix, including skills shortage, the need for workplace skills plans and training committees. The merits of skills development were discussed in this chapter. The researcher thus underscored the need for South African municipalities to have the right attitudes, leadership, and institutional and resource arrangements that are adequate for effective employee skills development for good service delivery. The chapter realised the

following research objective: To explain the conceptual frameworks of skills development and employee performance (see Chapter 1, Section 1.4).

The next chapter covers theoretical, legal and policy frameworks.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL, LEGISLATIVE, AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS OF SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH AFRICAN MUNICIPALITIES

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Employee performance in local government is critical for effective service delivery. This is because employee productivity translates directly into public goods, services and processes, on which local government service delivery and community development are anchored. The purpose of this study is to assess the impact of skills development on employee performance in South African municipalities. The first chapter of this dissertation provides the introduction and background as a synopsis of this study. Chapter 2 discusses the conceptual framework of skills development and employee performance. From these preceding chapters, it is understood that there is a need for skills development to be the core of employee-focused local government service delivery. In addition, the study establishes the need for the various municipalities to entrench cultures of skills development in their governments as a way of transforming public service delivery. This chapter discusses the theoretical, institutional, policy and legal frameworks guiding skills development in the context of South African local government employee performance. This chapter is vital to this minor dissertation because it provides an equally important discussion of the policies and theoretical statements that inform skills development for improved local government service delivery. This chapter answers the research question: Which are the theoretical, legislative, and institutional frameworks regulating skills development in South African municipalities? (see Chapter 1, Section 1.3).

3.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK REGULATING SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Burkholder and Burbank (2019:15) describe a theory as an abstract idea on certain social phenomena used to prove or disprove a hypothesis or guide a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. Theories use assumptions to presume certain kinds of conditions that are considered to be operating within a certain realm and are commonly assumed to be true or false in those circumstances (Burkholder & Burbank 2019:16). In the case of the current study, the theoretical framework aids in the understanding of skills development, and employees' performance and service

delivery. Therefore, this study uses the human capital theory as the central theoretical framework to assess skills development for improved employee performance in South Africa's local government.

This chapter of the dissertation discusses human capital and looks at the human capital theory and its applicability to this study. This is because understanding the theory used in this study depends on the initial and overall understanding of the phrase 'human capital'. Drucker (1999), cited in Annett (2019:16), states that human capital is increasingly considered the company's most valuable asset. This implies that public and private organisations must give special attention to this resource since it significantly affects attaining their predetermined goals. By conceptualisation, Boon, Eckardt, Lepak and Boselie (2018:35) regard human capital as a phrase that refers to a blend of individual aptitudes such as knowledge, skills and capabilities of individuals that have economic value to an organisation. Kucharcikova (2011:65) argues that the scope of human capital includes the natural ability, innate and acquired skills, knowledge, attitudes, experience, talent, and inventiveness. These can further lead to an entity creating a good rapport with its stakeholders, creating a good reputation in the short, medium and long term.

From a historical perspective, the theory of human capital was proposed by Schultz (1961) and developed by the Nobel Prize-winning economist Gary Becker in his seminal work on the economics of employer-provided training (published in 1962 and 1964) (Becker 1964:15). The theory advocates for the use of education or training to effectively impart useful knowledge and skills to workers that in turn, increase their productivity and incomes (Becker 1964:15). Further to this, Gary Becker distinguishes between specific human capital and general human capital. Specific human capital includes expertise acquired through education and training which is specific to a particular firm (organisation-specific or context-specific skills) (Yarrow 2022:229). Context-specific skills include abilities that are job-specific and technical. Furthermore, Yarrow (2022:230) adds that general human capital (general skills), on the other hand, is knowledge gained through education and training which is valuable across the board (for instance reading and writing proficiencies). These are skills that municipalities and other public entities will need to ensure that their employees are productive. Their absence is detrimental to employee productivity. Therefore, Flabbi and Gatii (2018:8)

advise that organisations invest in capable human capital through processes such as education, training, and development. Hence, human capital must be viewed as an asset rather than a procedure, thus giving human resources an equally critical weighting in ranking organisational assets that drive the pursuance of goals. In the same vein, human capital includes both natural traits and those imparted through interventions such as organisational training and development to improve performance and productivity (Boon et al. 2018:36). The researcher argues that natural traits have little impact compared to skills imparted through training and development. Furthermore, that human capital is an ever-critical resource for organisations, including municipalities in South African local government.

Moreover, factors such as globalisation, technological change, market complexity and stiff market competition in all sectors of any economy have apportioned a relatively high premium on human capital development because it is a critical part of organisation's efficacy in delivering on its mandate (Fugar, Ashiboe-Mensah and Adinyira, 2013:465). This implies that the value of human capital has increased, and its impact on entities' successes or failures has been magnified compared to previously. With reference to the public sector, the emergence of new public management (NPM) practices, such as internal competition amongst public entities (Lapuente & Van de Walle 2020:468), underscores this need for capable human capital to drive this competitive urge-seeking motive of entities such as local government entities. Further to the above, this internal competition focus has the potential to significantly improve the quality of goods and services that entities, such as municipalities, render to their communities (Lapuente & Van de Walle 2020:468). From the preceding, human capital is seen to anchor municipal or organisational success because it is the key factor that gives organisations competitive advantages and an impetus to deliver services and transform lives within communities sustainably. The following section delves into the details of the human capital theory used in this study.

According to Hartog and van den Brink (2007:23), the human capital theory succinctly argues, "how education enhances a person's skill level and thereby his or her human capital, with a higher skill level in the workforce, increasing the production capacity." Such production capacity is initially linked to the particular individual and refers to

organisational settings when seen as a collective. Hence organisations must improve their human capital capacity to reap the benefits of skills and abilities in the form of productive employees (Hartog & van den Brink 2007:25). A productive employee refers to an employee who can perform well in their job capacity to produce quality public goods and services that satisfy the consumers, citizens or residents in the context of local government.

It is also important to note that the focus on soft 4IR skills and the science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) is a testament to the re-configuration of the human capital theory to erase the now obsolete argument of general education, leading to more productivity and earnings, as highlighted by Makgato (2019:1). A study by Mok and Qian (2018:346) shows how many higher education graduates in China find themselves unemployed, earning less and are less productive, referring to it as the broken dream of the human capital theory. In the context of South Africa's local government, this researcher argues that the skilling, training and development agenda has also been confronted with the need to upgrade the skill sets timeously to ensure that employees acquire 4IR and 21st century compliant skills. This study adopts and applies the human capital theory due to its strong assumption and success stories, where it has been used to explain motives behind education, training and skills development across the world for almost a century. Therefore, the theory highlights the need to educate, train, and develop human capital that can be key to expanding the various local government policies and programmes towards sustainable community and social development. The criticisms levelled across the theory are discussed hereafter.

Despite its success stories and trajectory, the human capital theory has not been immune to criticism. Above all, the key assumption that the monetary return and productivity improvement will increase with the length of education has been challenged by empirical research over the past decades (Mok & Qian 2018:345). The research avers that the theory fails to consider the influence of the political or economic environment on these earnings, and other motives that are not monetary, as drivers of skills development. Similarly, Becker (1976:19) propounds that human capital theory is based on "the rational choice theory that suggests that individuals seek to maximise their own interests by making optimal decisions in the entire domains of their

lives". However, "not all individuals will seek education to maximise their earnings or make it in a rational manner" (Tan 2014:425). Not all entities, practitioners and scholars who will bring emerging and current trends into the theorisation of human decisions, skills development, earning and organisational success will always rely on the human capital theory. The current study exemplifies a setting where the theory has been used to fruition.

Discussed in this section of the dissertation is the theoretical framework that the research used to theorise the study. From the deliberations in this section, the human capital theory was best suited to the current study of the relationship between individual skills acquisition and organisational success. The researcher thus understands that municipalities can use this theory to understand why human capital investments must always drive their service delivery models and practices. Over and above, employee performance is directly and intimately related to their human capital as denoted by abilities, knowledge, skills, aptitudes, proficiencies and education. Therefore, skills development must be built from a human capital theory premise for the South African local sphere of government.

3.3   LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORKS REGULATING SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

The section discusses the legal and regulatory frameworks that inform skills development in the South African context.

- *Section 195(1)(h) of the Constitution of South Africa 1996:*

In Section 195(1)(h), the Constitution of South Africa stipulates that good human-resource management and career-development practices, to maximise human potential, must be cultivated (Republic of South Africa (RSA), 1996:101). In line with this, the study notes the impact and influence this particular section has on the skills development practices within the Republic. Such include the skilling and development of municipal employees whose capacity is essential to public service delivery. Therefore, the fundamental values and principles governing public administration are vital to this study because good human resources and career development practices signal a collective and concerted effort to ensure employees are skilled and competent at all times to maximise their potential.

- *South African Qualifications Authority Act, No. 58 of 1995:*

This is another key legal framework informing skills development and employee performance. According to Nel, Kirsten, Swanepoel, Erasmus and Poisat (2008:434), this Act was enacted because "there were numerous qualifications and training courses that were introduced in the market, and this makes it difficult for learners to evaluate which courses are relevant and which ones are irrelevant." Furthermore, there was a great difficulty before the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) for all entities, private or public, to rate and determine the weighting of the qualification of existing and new employees (Parker & Walter 2008:73). In order to deal with this problem of evaluating the credibility of training courses, the SAQA was established (Parker & Walters, 2008:73). Principally, the SAQA serves to control the quality of all qualifications that are introduced in the South African labour marketplace as well as promoting the quality of the qualifications and to ensure relevance and recognition of all qualifications that are offered by different institutions in South Africa (Kowo 2013:45). This study thus regards the SAQA Act as being at the core of ensuring quality skills and employee training and development initiatives and interventions for career progression and performance enhancement. This includes public entities such as the municipalities that comprise the local government in South Africa.

- *Skills Development Act, No. 97 of 1998:*

One piece of legislation intimately linked to skilled development and performance enhancement is the Skills Development Act (No. 97 of 1998). Naong (2009:115) cites that the aims of this Act (which are all skills development related) include inter alia, developing the skills of the South African workforce through the improvement of the quality of life of workers and their productivity in the workplace for improved public service delivery. From another angle, the Skills Development Act (No. 97 of 1998) provides for "an institutional framework to devise and implement strategies to develop and improve the skills of the South African workforce" (Davids & Esau 2012:89). Davids and Esau (2012:89) state that "this statute provides for the establishment of inter alia, a National Skills Authority (which serves to advise the Minister on policy and strategy); and Sector Education and Training Authorities (responsible for the development of sector skills plans within the national skills development strategy context)." Lastly, the "Act comes into play through its creation of the National Skills Fund (to finance

meaningful skills and occupational competence), and the Skills Development Planning Unit and Labour Centres" (Kitching 2003, cited in Naong 2009:117). From the above, the researcher notes the Skills Development Act being the pillar onto which local government's skills development to enhance employee performance agenda rests. Moreover, this legal framework must be used as a starting point to design corresponding interventions by individual municipalities.

- ***Skills Development Levies Act, No. 9 of 1999:***

The purpose of the Skills Development Levies Act (No. 9 of 1999) is to provide for the imposition of a skills development levy (RSA 1999). Hobo (2016:94) notes that "the Act was introduced to fully encourage employers to increase training expenditure that directly contribute to the skilling and development of the skills of their workforces." Furthermore, "the Skills Development Levies Act aims to eradicate the problem of organisations which do not provide adequate training for its employees in general" (Swanepoel, Erasmus & Schenk 2008:39). This study, thus, commends arrangements by the South African government through this Act, because the developing of skills needs funds that are readily available for use by public entities like municipalities.

- ***Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, No. 32 of 2000:***

According to the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act (2000), a municipality must develop its human resource capacity to a level that enables it to perform its functions and exercise its powers in an economical, effective, efficient and accountable way (RSA 2000:16). For this purpose, municipalities must comply with the Skills Development Act (No. 97 of 1998) as well as the Skills Development Levies Act (No. 9 of 1999). Therefore, a municipality which does not have the financial means to provide funds for training programmes in addition to the levy payable in terms of the Skills Development Levies Act (No. 97 of 1999), may apply for such funding from the LGSETA established in terms of the Skills Development Act (1998) (RSA 2000). This study notes that the South African local government must be in control of its own destiny regarding employee skills, capacity, training, and development. In this regard, this Act and its provisions for human resource development practices are crucial.

- *National Qualifications Framework Act, No. 67 of 2008:*

Training and skills development that is devoid of standardised measures of skills is destined to cause confusion and problems, hence the necessity of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) (RSA 2008). Overall, the motive of NQF Act (No. 67 of 2008) is to provide for the further development, organisation, and governance of the NQF, which are level of skills proficiencies in exit qualification offered in the local and foreign education systems (RSA 2008). The NQF Act covers qualifications offered by education institutions, skills development providers, and professional designations (RSA 2008:3). The Act further aims to smoothly facilitate access to, and mobility and progression within, education, training, and career paths; enhance the quality of education and training; and accelerate the redress of past unfair discrimination in education, training and employment opportunities (RSA 2008:6). The researcher argues that the NQF Act brings harmony in the skills and training fraternity by categorising qualification into levels where certain proficiencies are certified to be bestowed on the holder of such certificates. For example, a PhD qualification is NQF Level 10. The NQF also aids if a skill is sourced from a foreign accredited authority, and the bearer of such skills wants to work in South Africa (Singh & Duvekot 2013:66). This can help municipalities to objectively design job positions, organograms, job advertisements, personnel specifications and other related hiring processes to attract the right skills sets for improved public service delivery.

- *White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service (1997):*

This is one of the ground-breaking policy documents that emphasised training and development in the new South Africa. This policy document was meant to reinforce and operationalise the provisions of the Public Service Act, No. 103 of 1994, which was the key transformative statute that the government had enacted in 1994 (RSA 1997:6). Another of its key agendas was to drastically change the way human capital was managed to catalyse the transformation of the public service itself (RSA 1997:6). Lastly, the policy was also anchored on the need to facilitate the development of human resource management practices that support an effective and efficient public service, geared for economic and social transformation (RSA 1997:6). According to Swanepoel et al. (2008:45), this one policy identified the skills shortage in the majority of South African entities, making their skilling part of the transformative agenda of the post-

apartheid government. Municipalities were not spared the legacy of apartheid, some of which found themselves reeling from the acute skills scarcity, thus the need to transform the public service from a human capital perspective.

- *White Paper on Public Service Training and Education 1998:*

The transformation agenda of the South African public would not be complete before the government put into motion a policy aligned with the training and education focal agenda (Ensor 2003:330). The goal of this White Paper was to give provision to public sector skills development that meets the time and resource demands of the sector (Swanepoel et al. 2008:49). The goal of this strategy was to establish a system of training and skill development for the public sector that was strategically linked to larger transformational, institutional, and human resource development processes. Furthermore, Ensor (2003:333) posits that the policy seeks to seamlessly link training and education to the NQF and SAQA frameworks and to the Department of Labour's proposals for a new skills development strategy as well as promoting access by all individuals to meaningful training and education opportunities, including those from the previously disadvantaged groups. The legislative frameworks discussed above touch on the key and equally vital regulations of skills development in municipalities. The emphasis here is to ensure a learning culture of skills training and development. For South African municipalities, the challenge is not understanding the stipulations of these laws, but implementing them, which is further affected by the scarcity of skills. Senior management services in the municipalities are short on the skills needed to operationalise the skills development agenda. This can lead to a continuous cycle of failure to address local government skills shortages.

3.4   INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS REGULATING SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

This section presents the institutional framework regulating skills development practices in South African local government.

- *National Skills Authority:*

The need for a holistic intervention regarding skills development in the public sector has seen the establishment of various institutional frameworks, such as the National Skills Authority. The National Skills Authority was created through Section 4 of the Skills Development Act of No. (97 of 1998), and it is critical to the skills development

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agenda in public entities. For Van Dyk, Nel, Van Loedolff and Haasbroek (2002:38), "the functions of the National Skills Authority are to always provide advice to the Minister of Labour on various issues relating to skills development in the Republic." In addition, "the National Skills Authority further liaises with SETAs on the national skills development policy, national skills development strategy and report to the Minister of Labour on progress made in the implementation of the national skills development strategy as well as conducting cognate investigations arising out of the Skills Development Act (No. 97 of 1998)" (Machika 2014:24). Therefore, this research regards this institutional body as being cardinally crucial to the skills development of municipalities because of its various important roles, as argued above.

- *Sector Education and Training Authorities:*

SETAs are responsible for the disbursement of training levies payable by all employers and are required to develop and implement an appropriate skills development plan for their sector (Turner et al. 2013:2). SETAs were established by section 9(1) of the Skills Development Act (No. 97 of 1998) and came into operation from 1 April 2000 (Turner et al. 2013:2). Municipalities are under the jurisdiction of the Local Government Sector Education and Training Authority (LGSETA), which has not done enough to ensure that municipalities develop their employees' skills and abilities. The LGSETA's objectives include the creation of an entity that is central to the success of enhanced skills development strategies and the development of local government and the overall social and economic upliftment of local communities through the delivery of basic services (Vyas-Doorgapersad & Mothabi 2022:366). The continued absence of competent human capital in South African municipalities is a sign that the effectiveness of the LGSETA has been affected by the broader human capacity challenges that affect the country at a national level (Peters & Van Niewuwenhuyzen 2012:291). Therefore, this researcher infers that because of the poor service delivery across local government in South Africa, less productive employees and poor-performing municipal employees, the LGSETA has not effectively ensured that competent employees serve in municipalities.

- *South African Local Government Association:*

Another institutional body in the skills development matrix is the South African Local Government Association (SALGA). Rogerson and Rogerson (2012:51) state that the

SALGA is tasked with implementing "capacity building programmes to make municipal councillors and officials competent as well as reviewing and implementation of capacity building programmes in collaboration with inter alia the LGSETA and the National Treasury". This includes "skills development and training on local economic development, financial management, lobbying and advocacy all of which are vital for effective human capital for improved service delivery in local government" (Rogerson & Rogerson 2012:52). Despite these aims and mandates, the SALGA has not been effective in delivering on these. Therefore, the SALGA has not done enough to ensure that local government entities' skills are sustainably improved (Kroukamp & Cloete 2018:75). The researcher argues that the SALGA must ensure its mandate and agenda also include the skill capacities and competencies of employees. From the look of things, this is one of the most significant and potentially game-changing bodies, which, if used well, can transform local government skills training and development in tandem with municipal service delivery across the entire Republic.

This section discusses the institutional arrangements for skills development in local government. From these discussions, the researcher notes that these are significant and vital arrangements that seek to equip local government with the relevant competent skills for effective service delivery. From the National Skills Authority, the SALGA to the LGSETA, the study notes the anomalies between mandates and actual practice that is far from pleasing in the context of the South African local sphere of government. These gaps in implementing these institutional bodies' objectives are cause for concern because municipalities are the 'grassroots government' and must always be equipped with competent human capital. In the end, the individual municipalities must use these institutional arrangements to improve the skills development interventions they currently use to upskill their employees.

3.5   SUMMARY

The theoretical, institutional and policy frameworks for skills development in the context of employee performance in local government were discussed in detail in this chapter. The human capital theory was presented as the theory of this study due to its many arguments that skills development has individual and entity-based motivations. Furthermore, the chapter argued that the theory has been criticised but remains applicable to this study because human capital skills ate at the centre of improved

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productivity that benefits both the employees and their municipalities (in the case of the current study). This chapter also presented the statutory and policy frameworks for skills development. It was ascertained that the legal framework for skills development in South African local government is comprehensive. It is only their compliance and implementation that are deficient. Also discussed was the institutional framework for local government skills development, including the National Skills Authority. The chapter realised the research objective: To discuss the theoretical, legislative, and institutional frameworks regulating skills development in South African municipalities (see Chapter 1, Section 1.4).

The next chapter explores the various skills development challenges affecting employee performance in South African municipalities.

CHAPTER FOUR

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES AFFECTING EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN SOUTH AFRICAN MUNICIPALITIES

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This study explores skills development as an intervention for employee performance in the South African local sphere of government. This is because many municipalities struggle to fulfil their service delivery obligations because of the scarcity, absence, and dearth of the requisite skills. This chapter discusses, among other things, the various municipal employees' skills development interventions and initiatives used by South African municipalities and the skills development implementation gaps found in local government. The essence of this chapter is to expose the gravity of the skills development and various employee performance challenges of South African municipalities. This chapter answers the research questions: What are the causes and implications of skills shortage on employee performance in South African municipalities? Which are the challenges affecting the efficacy of existing skills development initiatives and programmes in South African municipalities? Which strategies can be adopted and implemented towards an effective skills development practice in South African municipalities to improve employee performance? (see Chapter 1, Section 1.3).

4.2 SKILLS DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES IN SOUTH AFRICAN MUNICIPALITIES

South Africa has struggled with critical skills for its local government transformation agenda (Madzivhandila & Musara 2020:262). This scarcity of critical skills in municipalities can be traced back to the state-sanctioned discrimination under apartheid, where different standards of education and service delivery were provided to black people in South Africa (Davis & Esau 2012:83). In the same vein, Mohlala, Phago and Mpehle (2014:217) expand on the preceding by arguing that, transforming municipal management training and development is an important aspect in government, as municipal management is statutorily mandated to ensure improvement of basic service delivery in the local tier of the South African government. Nonetheless, municipalities are failing to achieve this clear mandate because of various factors. Chief to these inhibitors is what Nengwekhulu (2009), cited in Mohlala

et al. (2014:218), notes as a shortage of quality skills that directly and detrimentally impact, among other things, the managerial capacity in municipalities.

Davids and Esau (2012:86) advise that, in South Africa, local government entities are not only anticipated to establish and transform institutions, but they must simultaneously invest in human capital in the wake of the various obstacles confronting municipalities and service delivery today. Thakhathi and Kanyane (2019:53) bemoan the enormous investment that municipalities put into skills development for limited returns on that investment, which leaves municipalities and other public entities facing the same challenges of poor employee performance or productivity as before. The researcher argues that such a lack of transformation frustrates local government service delivery, which is the site of grassroots development in South Africa.

It is important to note that a municipality must always thrive to ensure that there is the attainment of universal minimum living standards through putting in place all needed apparatus for effective local community development (Nkhabu 2021:17). These apparatuses include capable and competent human capital. Therefore, it can be claimed that the incapacity of South African towns to increase personnel development and training as a means of improving resident outcomes is an indication of poor local government. Shah (2005:49) further argues that the public service orientation of local government must be visible, and municipalities must ensure that they promote public interest over individual interests. Further to the above, "municipalities must promote public value, which refers to measurable improvements in social outcomes or quality of life" (Moore 1996:25).

4.2.1 Influences of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR)

Chu, Reynolds, Tavares, Notari and Lee (2021:8) note that the 4IR era requires skills development interventions that, unlike any other period that preceded the contemporary one, are characterised by the ever-growing influence of technologies. According to Tschang and Almirall (2021:647), in the current environment of entities both private and public, automation has increasingly taken over the place of the human workforce in tasks that involve routine cognitive and manual input. Therefore, municipalities that fail to acknowledge that the need for soft skills is critical for this dynamic world are more likely to fail in delivering on their local government service

delivery mandates. Additionally, Sonmez (2015:56) construes that, due to these demands and changes for municipalities, the labour force is now hiring people for jobs that require more analytical thinking, digital skills, and sophisticated communication skills, something that is very different from the times before the emergence of the 4IR. According to the Asian Development Bank (ADB) (2007:15), in the 21st century 4IR local government system, entities must impart skills linking to the broader world challenges that communities face together with the capacity to negotiate the complexities inherent in the contemporary knowledge-driven-economy. South African municipalities must move with the times and ensure that they appreciate current trends in skills development and focal areas for employee training for improved municipal performance. According to Trilling and Fadel (2009:74), the 4IR skills that local government entities must consider are three key knowledge domains: innovative and critical thinking, information and digital literacies, and life and career skills. Hence, the South African municipalities falling behind by not taking advantage of the many soft skills that can improve their service delivery need to embrace these and improve the efficacy of their training and development interventions for improved community development.

Heymans (2006:83) notes that South Africa's ambitious local government reform programme (which includes employee performance improvement through training and development) requires ambitious management, but more than that, it demands skills. Unfortunately, South Africa's local government transformation agenda has been affected by the absence of dedicated management capacity to sequence, plan, introduce and drive employee training and capacity building, thereby exposing municipalities to the problem of public or municipal service delivery failure (Heymans 2006:82). According to Mbandlwa, Dorasamy and Fagbadebo (2020:1647), the Msunduzi Municipality is one of the local government entities affected by the challenges of poor skills in the leadership, i.e. the top management. This is a local municipality where funds are being misspent, the skills development of municipal employees is not prioritised, and the service delivery is generally poor (Mbandlwa et al. 2020:1647). Therefore, this points to the patterns of local entities who deliberately flout procedures and get away with poor employee performance and overall slow community development. This challenge is also rampant in other local government entities, a sign that skills development is not embraced and robustly implemented.

In the end, the transformation agenda of the post-1994 government becomes stifled by the absence of good leadership and management skills to promote and intensify the service delivery agenda effectively (Masuku & Jili 2019:1936). Arguably, this agenda requires an 'all hands-on deck' approach through synchronised short-, medium- and long-term approaches to local government and public service skills development (Masuku & Jili 2019:1940). The researcher argues that the issue of ready and capacitated leadership for employee skills development in the local government tier is a major issue hugely determinant on municipalities' abilities to equip the requisite skills for service delivery within living standards. These services include water, sanitation, infrastructure, safety and other community amenities.

4.2.2   Status of local government employee performance

This section discusses the sad reality of South African municipal performance. According to damning assessments from the Auditor General of South Africa (AGSA), a financial watchdog monitoring public entity compliance and performance, local government entities lack the necessary capabilities. This section mentions several studies and their damning findings regarding the municipality's performance. For example, in the case of the Msunduzi Municipality in the KwaZulu-Natal Province, the AGSA established that during the 2016/2017 financial year, the entity incurred irregular expenditure, cumulatively R150 million and R11 million in unproductive and wasteful expenditure (Mbandlwa et al. 2020:1650). These humongous figures show losses to the public in South African local government. This study finds this to be absurd and a consequence of poor skill sets in those who make key decisions, and their commitment to skills training is also questionable. This poor decision poorly impacts the municipality's financial condition. Still, within the poor leadership and decision-making, the Msunduzi Municipality had fraudulently awarded tenders to service providers (amongst them, directors and shareholders) who were in the municipality's service, something that the AGSA indicated to be a flagrant disregard of local government laws and guidelines.

Moreover, the 2019/2020 Consolidated Local Government Audit Report by the AGSA laid bare the challenges caused by the absence of a skills development culture in municipalities, such as the Amathole District Municipality (ADM) in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. These have mainly been manifested in the financial

management practices deemed poor by the AGSA (AGSA 2019/2020). Poor municipal financial management affects effective public service delivery. Regarding the ADM, outstanding creditors represented one-third of the next year's budget of R1.6 billion, which will now be used to pay creditors instead of funding new service delivery priorities (AGSA 2019/2020). In addition, the financial health of the ADM came into the spotlight in the AGSA report for the 2019/20 financial year, which states that the ADM was unable to recover money from consumers for services rendered, which compounded these financial difficulties and resulted in delays in paying their creditors (AGSA 2019/2020:70). The AGSA report (2019/2020:115) indicates that the absence of robust employee skills development practices in South African municipalities leads to them incurring fruitless expenditure and failing to curtail lavish expenditure that left their financial books in the red. Moreover, the Amathole District Municipality is one of the municipalities that the AGSA has caught wanting in many of the performance shortcomings in the audit report. It is a sign that good governance, effectiveness, efficacy and economy are not being exercised with the due diligence they deserve. A superficial perusal of the AGSA's municipal audit outcomes and recommendations for the 2017/2018 and 2019/2020 financial years, one may perceive that the majority of municipalities in South Africa are operating without established workplace skills plans.

A study by Matlala and Uwizeyimana (2020:2) shows that slightly above 299 of the 338 municipalities audited in the 2012/2013 financial year were not awarded clean audit outcomes due to findings around their predetermined objectives by the ASGA. Matlala (2018:66) further observes that these outcomes were chiefly because of the anomalies related to non-compliance with the Public Financial Management Act (No. 1 of 1999) requirements, whereas, for the 2014/2015 local government report by the ASGA, a major finding was that the financial health of 92% of South Africa's 278 municipalities remained troubling and needed to be rectified. Such a large percentage is worrisome for South African local government, which is the core of community development and post-1994 transformation. A study by Mamokhere (2019:376) shows that in 2014 the Greater Tzaneen Local Municipality awarded a company an R38 million road-surfacing tender without following due process for the tender as stipulated in municipal statutes, procedures and policies. This further proves that employee skills, especially in financial management, are deficient in South African local government. Matlala and Uwizeyimana (2020:8) further note that the AGSA (2017/2018:25) showed

that "local government regular expenditure rose to R28.4 billion in the 2016/2017 financial year in contrast to R16.2 billion the previous year, showing an enormous 75% rise."

In addition to the preceding, the same AGSA report states that out of the 257 municipalities audited for the 2017/2018 financial year, a paltry 18 received clean audits, showing a deterioration from the 33 municipalities that had received a clean audit in the preceding financial year (Matlala & Uwizeyimana 2020:8). Geldenhuys (2019:19) notes that another shocking example of poor municipal performance and decision refers to the wasteful and fraudulent R208 million payment by the eThekwini Municipality mayor to service providers for services that were never delivered. This study argues that these instances show gross negligence and a disregard for local government regulations, a sign of the lack of skills for municipalities to make good decisions. It should be further stressed that the outgoing synopsis of the various auditors general reveals that local government malpractice is indicative of a tier of government that is in 'dire straits' when it comes to championing community development and transformation. This raises the need for robust adoption and implementation of comprehensive employee training and skills development programmes or initiatives as helpful interventions for effective local government service delivery.

Additionally, the recorded wastage of public funds is worrisome since these are resources that could have been used to deliver essential and critical public goods and services to the people of South Africa. As discussed above, the 2017/2018 financial year saw the overall performance of municipalities rapidly decline. In the 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 financial years, this researcher argues that audit outcomes might be worse, especially considering how the COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted service delivery and the administration of municipal entities in South Africa. This situation gives birth to another exponentially rising challenge in local government, that of public service delivery protests.

According to Mpehle (2012), service delivery protests are the only avenue citizens have to register their displeasure with their government entities. This is due to the fact that millions of residents in post-apartheid South Africa live under appalling conditions and do not enjoy the fruits of democracy. The chosen few alone enjoy it through

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corruption, nepotism and fraud, among others. Therefore, the constitutional right to protect must be exercised to ring the alarm on the municipal governments (Mphele 2012:224). These protests sometimes turn violent and lead to the loss of public infrastructure or even lives. According to Singh (2019:2), the gross damage to municipal infrastructure during a 2019 public service delivery protest in eThekwini Municipality cost the municipality R3.5 million. In addition, "the death of Andries Tatane in Ficksburg in the Free State Province during a service delivery protects is one of the extreme and possible results of violent service delivery protests in South African local government" (Matebesi 2018:249). This ugly side of the public service delivery protests could be curtailed through the capacitation of municipal employees and the effective, efficient and economic rendering of municipal services.

The ongoing bad administration demonstrates these interventions' failure, which makes the connection between public service demonstrations and the municipality's training and development of the failed employees' skills inescapably visible. Most importantly, the local level of government is the best place to lead the way toward addressing the backlogs in public service delivery that have caused broad areas to wallow in poverty, misery, unemployment, and inequality nearly three decades after the end of apartheid. The reasons and discussion on the lack of alignment between municipal employees' skill sets and the demands of the 4IR demonstrate the necessity for efficient solutions to these anomalies. According to this researcher, all municipalities in South Africa need to make sure they devote all available resources to activities that promote efficient local governance through skill development. The audit opinions from the AGSA and other local government overseers can be strengthened significantly through rigorous skill development and local government employee capacity and competency growth. South African towns are currently wasting billions in public funding due to ineffective leadership and inadequate personnel management methods. Skills development can assist in stopping this waste of resources.

4.3   EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE CHALLENGES IN MUNICIPALITIES

Zannazi (2017:218) notes that a highly skilled human capital base is mostly considered a fundamental pillar for competitiveness and a critical catalyst for both short-term and long-term national development. Since 1994, one of the most prominent concerns for

South Africa has been reducing unemployment, increasing employee productivity, and building a robust human capital base. Persistent poverty and inequality, combined with unemployment, provide significant obstacles to social development in South Africa and pose a risk to achieving the goals of the National Development Plan (NDP) Vision 2030. These issues are closely related. Primarily, insufficient skill development is a significant barrier to obtaining progressive state economic growth rates. The World Economic Forum (WEF) Global Competitiveness Report (2019), which ranks 141 countries in terms of skills competitiveness, ranked South Africa at number 72 regarding the quality of its workforce, 119 for quality of vocational skills and training, 102 for skill sets of graduates, 126 for digital skills among the economically active population, and 98 for the ease of finding skilled people. South Africa's skills scarcity is a major impediment to attaining the NDP's targets: 6 per cent annual national economic growth and ending poverty, unemployment, and inequality (Erasmus & Breier 2009:10).

The NDP is fixed on resolving the three ills that have long bewildered the government and society: unemployment, poverty, and inequality. According to Naidoo and Mare (2015:410), implementing the NDP requires well-coordinated multi-sectoral cooperation to transform South Africa and avoid falling into the same traps of its predecessors, such as the reconstruction and development programme. The NDP, therefore, stands a better chance of addressing the existing challenge of unemployment, which confronted the post-apartheid government (Naidoo & Mare 2015:419). Hence, employees' skills development for local government is quite pertinent to the current socio-economic development agenda of South Africa as a democratic developmental state.

4.3.1   Top and middle-level management-related challenges

This section unpacks various top (leadership) management, legal, human resources and organising challenges in detail. Mbandlwa et al. (2020:1650) argue that, in South African local government, especially at the top echelons of municipalities, there is an additional obstacle of managers and those tasked with managing budgets, committing fraud and corruption, where funds (and resources) meant for employee training and development are lost to personal aggrandisement. This challenge of embezzlement is one indicator of the unethical and unprofessional leadership rampant in municipalities,

which requires robust interventions and willingness from all local government stakeholders to abate (Mbandlwa et al. 2020:1651).

This study further underscores the rampant nature of this inadequacy, such that the municipality's scarcity of ethical, financial management and professional skills have stifled the effectiveness of training and development, thus affecting community development. Moreover, there is also a challenge at the top and middle level of organisations in the local government sector of South Africa that manifests itself in the absence of monitoring and evaluation of the whole process of Workplace Skills Plans and Annual Training Reports (Davids, Houston, Steyn-Kotze, Sausi, Betancourt, Pienaar, Kanyane, Viljoen, Ngqwala, Mchunu and Fokou 2022:40). This implies that the absence of monitoring and evaluation of these critical tools for employees' skills development in municipalities leads to poor management and the inability of the entities to intervene and implement remedial actions in cases where plans deviate from the original plan. According to Osei-Tutu (2007:35), the municipal and employees' performance challenges that are related to productivity include inter alia, human resource training consultants and line managers who are not always aligned on the appreciation of the challenges municipalities face. Therefore, "this quagmire creates a tricky scenario in municipalities, which at times results in generalised training interventions that are not in touch with the reality on the ground" (Durst, Lindvall & Bruns 2018:726). This argument, therefore, calls for municipal training stakeholders to know the goals of employee training to avoid the distortion of this intervention (Durst et al. 2018:728). There is also an obstacle in the form of poor allocation of training budgets, which results in funding matters not linked to the key performance indicators and the municipality's goals (Osei-Tutu 2007:35). Therefore, the gloss over of training that is not linked to key results areas of employees, considerably impedes local government's effective functioning.

Regarding the previously described issue, it appears that South African municipalities' workplace skills plans (WSPs) are not routinely thoroughly examined to verify compliance with the municipalities' strategic needs, and training is not tailored to suit those needs. This statement is substantiated by Alshammari (2020:719), who argues that the glaring lack of such training and development reviews affects the ability of public entities to continuously improve their practices for the inclusion of emerging

trends in the human capital development matrix. Other obstacles that Osei-Tutu (2007:34) identifies include training not being monitored to ensure that it is effective and markedly adds value to the learners (employees) and the municipality. The importance of monitoring cannot be understated to public entities because employee training also suffers from the absence of effective partnership of all stakeholders in the training endeavour (that is, Line Managers, Human Capital Consultants, Training Providers and Trainees), leads to ineffective training being provided (Wisetsri 2022:21). In other words, a municipality can train and develop its human capital on its own, but it needs expertise and partnerships to adequately impart the precise and necessary skills to its human capital. Fookes (1996:24) characterises monitoring as the collection of data and analysis used to provide and report information and the provision of feedback and review.

Dlamini and Migiro (2016:377) note that it is widely accepted that monitoring serves as a crucial management tool, as its smooth and effective operationalisation improves managerial functions. Its effectiveness and efficiency play a crucial management role that contributes immensely towards developmental programmes. Furthermore, Kusek and Rist (2004:19) argue that monitoring is crucial to managerial tracking, is not limited to management's achievements and organisations at large, and ensures that further checks and results are met and that resources are channelled in the right direction. Therefore, the absence of monitoring training processes is a significant obstacle to the ability of South African local government municipalities to improve the performance of their employees. Thus, there is a need to ensure that the design, adoption, execution and all other aspects of employee training and development interventions set the foundation for monitoring and evaluation for improved accountability and goal attainment.

4.3.2 Operational management-level employee performance challenges

Additionally, there is low morale in the operational echelons of South African local government municipalities (Makapela & Mtshelwane 2021:4). The ability of shop floor employees to freely contribute to the workplace skills plans (WSPs) by providing their personal information as a crucial component in creating effective training or comprehensive WSP for a specific municipality is inexorably impacted by such a situation.

A study by Luthuli et al. (2019) indicates that employees in the Umzumbe Local Municipality said that the implemented training and development interventions were never aligned with its WSP but rather a mere compliance measure by the municipal entity. Further to the above arguments, the study by Luthuli et al. (2019) shows that local government employee training programmes did not align with essential development tools such as the integrated development plan and the municipal service delivery budget plan, an anomaly that dented their efficacy.

The challenges discussed in this section of this chapter are indicative of a municipality whose employees are likely to be less skilled, have low morale, are demotivated and are unable to achieve their personal and municipal service delivery goals. The study deduces that the training and development of employees in the local sphere of government are significantly affected by some operational aspects, making it difficult for those responsible to give input, take part or even effectively use feedback from their performance. This affects the efficacy of training and the interventions that are unable to resolve the challenges they target. Similarly, this affects the morale of lower-level employees who feel short-changed and undervalued in the process.

4.3.3 Technology-related employee performance challenges

The development of employees in local government has many difficulties in terms of technology. The term technology for Enwereji and Uwizeyimana (2019:13579) means the scientific application of machinery and other devices to the work process in order to achieve the purpose of an organisation. These include the information and communication technologies (ICTs) that have become part of the 4IR. There is a challenge of a lack of capacity in local government related to technological skills. This researcher understands that professionals are the kinds of employees equipped with the soft skills needed for the modern 4IR local government entities. In addition to the above technical abilities, there is the challenge of the absence of, among other things, the technical expertise to adopt and implement intelligent solutions to municipal service delivery problems, such as innovative public service interventions. South African municipalities fail to refocus their employees' training and development programmes on the technical abilities that have become mandatory.

4.3.4   Finance-related employee performance challenges

This challenge is two-pronged, that is, in terms of the financing model of municipal skills development and the skills capacities of municipalities to manage these finances. Skills development in South African municipalities is affected by funding cycles, primarily from the discretionary grant. This is a municipal skills development grant through the Skills Development Levies Act (No. 9 of 1999), provided to deserving municipalities to enhance their skills development pool of funds (Telukdarie, Munsamy, Mohlala, Monnapula and Viswanathan, 2022:661). Specifically, the various determinant factors and process of discretion and disbursement of this grant make municipalities wait much longer (usually three to four years) to receive funds (Beyers 2016:170). Moreover, in some instances (and often), this skills development grant will be too meagre to cater to the municipality's employee training and development needs, thereby leading to the underfunding of training and development (Beyers 2016:170). This is in synchrony with what Shah (2005:72) identifies as an obstacle to the effectiveness of local government service delivery.

Organisational effectiveness in the local government system in South Africa is negatively impacted by decisions often directed by a bureaucratic agenda, and citizens' inputs are limited; hence this has an effect of constraining the potential for local government responsiveness to the needs and circumstances of their local communities (Shah 2005:72). There is voluminous evidence to the negative impact of centralised decision-making (when it comes to discretionary municipal funding), which has thus inhibited the ability of South African municipalities to get critical funding for training and development initiatives. Another dimension of this theme of challenges relates to the absence of skills in municipalities to manage the funds they are supposed to spend on behalf of their residents or constituents.

From the AGSA reports argued earlier in this chapter, this researcher makes a solid observation that municipalities have a shortage of human capital that is able to manage public funds. This includes the ability to prioritise service delivery and comply with laws such as the Public Finance Management Act (No. 1 or 1999), the Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act (No. 56 of 2003) and other regulations for sustainable financial management in South African municipalities. Van der Waldt et al. (2018:6) aver that, because of the critical importance of financial

management skills to local government, this is one skill that all planning and workplace skills intervention must prioritise. In the end, poor financial management affects how economics, effectiveness and efficiency are applied to public sector finances. In the design and execution of the WSPs, and auditing municipal skills, this researcher advocates for the urgent prioritisation of municipal financial management human capital capacitation.

4.3.5   Planning premised employee performance challenges

Steiss (2019:50) describes planning as the act or process of making plans for something. It is important to discuss the planning context of employee skills development in South African municipalities. First, these relate to the most vital local government skills development matrix institution, the LGSETA. In enabling skills development, the LGSETA has the responsibility of ensuring that all municipalities have the requisite sector skills plans and that these are fully as well as judiciously implemented within the terms of the local government legislative framework (Thakhathi & Kanyane, 2019:53). Furthermore, the LGSETA is solely reliant on all municipalities to develop and submit their Workplace Skills Plans [WSP] and their Annual Training Reports [ATR] in order to provide credible information on what kinds of skill are available, and which skills are needed in the sector (Kanyane & Thakhathi 2019:53). Thus, there is need for an ample and comprehensive planning process by municipalities, which itself is dependent on the availability of the skill to plan. In terms of these statements, Davids et al. (2022:38) state that the challenge that municipalities face is that the mandatory or obligatory requirements are not monitored in terms of the need to have all these requirements uniformly in place and continuously improve the skills sets of the human capital in municipalities.

Furthermore, the local government skills and training development intervention gets affected when the workplace skills plan for various municipalities in South Africa is seen as being inconsequential (Thakhathi & Kanyane 2019:54). In some instances, skills development fails because of the arbitrary management styles (Thakhathi & Kanyane 2019:54). Therefore, there is need for all levels of employees and supervisors to develop an appreciation of the need for training and development in order for it to be effective. Note that planning for employee skills development is also dependent on the skills gap analysis process. Another challenge that affects the

effectiveness of employees training and development interventions in South African local government is the issue of poorly done training needs analyses by municipal officials responsible for this mandate (Van der Waldt, Fourie, Jordaan & Chitiga-Mabugu 2018:4). This is the planning domain of local government. In the context of this particular challenge, the efficacy of training and development interventions is hugely dependent on the ability of the top management in an entity to do a thorough training needs analysis that identifies every employee whose performance is lagging behind required thresholds and the possible interventions that can be done. This thus avoids a shot-gun effect type of training and development where resources are wasted in blanket training interventions which end-up training some employees on a skill that they do not require (Siegel 2020:626).

For Van der Waldt et al. (2018:5), undertaking these skills gap analyses enables the planning, resourcing, design and implementation of employee training and development interventions that can effectively resolve targeted problems. Luthuli, Nyawo and Mashau (2019:120) lament the problem that municipalities face "when the training needs analysis is poorly executed usually as a consequence when resources for training and development are limited while at the same time, the current employees are faced with broad training needs." As a result, generalised interventions will not consider the various unique and divergent training needs of the municipality's workforce (Luthuli et al. 2019:120).

Mohlala et al. (2014:221) refer to a study in the Department of Public Service and Administration that shows that the training needs analyses were not being meticulously done, resulting in its training needs priorities not being clear, resulting in the inefficacy of employee training interventions for this crucial public service entity. This researcher argues that these common challenges are ubiquitous in the local government sphere of South African today, where municipalities use the 'one size fits all' strategy in executing their employee training as well as capacity-building initiatives and interventions. The researcher, therefore, values these to be something that must be done meticulously and effectively by any public entity, including South African municipalities. Therefore, a haphazard training needs or skills gap analysis can effectively lead to an outcome of unchanged municipal employees' performance. Hence, Reddy (2021:19) concludes that South African municipal entities need

effective skills development interventions because it is the site of post-1994 transformation.

4.4 MUNICIPALITIES' SKILLS DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTIONS

This section discusses South African municipalities' various interventions to address their skills deficiencies. The interventions towards skills development in municipalities must be done within the human resources development context of the public sector. Draai and Oshoniyi (2013:871) note that human resource development (HRD) refers to the process whereby the government holistically invests in the development of requisite skills that will lead to improved performance and economic growth by the initiation of various national strategies. The study emphasises that the HRD practice is an interventive strategy that targets the creation of skill sets that will be in sync with the current developmental agenda of the NDP Vision 2030. While the NDP posits achieving a 'capable and developmental state' (National Planning Commission (NPC) 2012:26), it is unclear how the skills it seeks to develop will be concordant with the 4IR era. However, the emphasis of the national government on the NDP thrust has seen some municipalities taking into account the skills development that enables them to be part of the community development agenda that target the three monstrous societal evils at the local government level: poverty, unemployment and inequality (Noyoo 2019:43).

Hart, Booyens and Sinyolo (2020:25) note that to support the provision of innovation and skills-driven municipal services, the Department of Science and Technology convened the Innovation Partnership for Rural Development in 2011. This forum is meant to strategise and map out how to resolve the skills development quagmire that local government entities. The, "intention of this partnership is to pool the skills and knowledge of a number of science, technology and innovation actors, which include South African universities, science councils and public officials working in 27 priority or 'distressed' district municipalities" (Hart et al. 2020:27). This was an intervention to help ailing municipalities, most of which were unable to train their employees effectively on 21st-century compliant technical and technological skills. The researcher notes that such initiatives, interventions and programmes are a sign that a multi-stakeholder approach to skills development can rescue municipalities. Davids and Esau (2012:94) observe that one strategy that the city of Cape Town and other

employee-performance-conscious public entities have done towards intervening in their skills deficiencies is to view that talent management is a strategic initiative that advances the development of new skills and retention of scarce skills. This has been achieved by designing, adopting, implementing and sustaining a comprehensive human resources development (HRD) strategy in 2007 (Davids & Esau 2012:93). This study implores other local government entities to emulate this example of how employee skills development must be viewed as the lifeblood of local government.

Further to the above, the HRD strategy of the city of Cape Town facilitates the introduction of training and development strategies through activity-based budgeting, which cuts down on excess and non-essential training interventions. Such can help one of the challenges discussed earlier in this chapter, where the prioritisation of training and development interventions was weak, leading to haphazard municipal employee training. Note that activity-based budgeting can take the shape of interventions such as internship programmes, graduate programmes, workshops, seminars and conferences, and the city-sponsored bursary scheme (Davids & Esau 2012:86). The study views this kind of budgeting to be good for employee skills development in local government since it caters only for the direct and current costs, thereby avoiding generic training interventions that are less targeted and, at times, irrelevant.

A positive that can be realised in the Cape Town example is that their HRD strategy also facilitates monitoring and evaluating municipal employee training and development plans. This process involves various echelons in the municipality and local government system, inter alia, the management team, the LGSETA, the portfolio committee, and the education, training and development committee (Davids & Esau 2012:86). Such an arrangement makes it easy to collect and use data on various performance indicators due to the involvement of the various stakeholders. The merit of a municipality and entity that values employee training, both in policy and practice, is that the employees have a tendency to react positively to training, and those who are afforded opportunities to partake in training initiatives are more likely to be committed to the organisation, creating both productivity and loyalty (Linde & Maritz 2013:354). Such a situation is advantageous for South African local government entities, which are central to the government's transformation agenda. Overall, Draai

and Oshoniyi (2013:880) implore South African municipalities to resolve the scarcity of vital and critical skills by considering strategies such as the design and implementation of scarce and critical skills retention programmes for technical staff towards the goal of markedly accelerating the transformation of local government, the grassroots government.

The WSP has also been aligned to the needs of the municipalities in a few entities, while the remainder of the municipalities lag behind. The city of Cape Town has also ensured that the developed skill sets align with its main service delivery tool, the IDP, to ensure that there is ample and able human capital for achieving its mandate. Nonetheless, some loose ends must be tied if South African municipalities' stated and appropriate employee skills development interventions are to succeed.

4.5   SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IMPLEMENTATION GAPS IN MUNICIPALITIES

This section discusses the implementation gaps regarding South African municipalities' interventions towards employee skills capacitation.

One skills development gap that this researcher notes from both the literature and the above discussion is the absence of skills by top management to prioritise skills development. Most municipalities use a 'one size fits all' strategy to train and develop their employees. This strategy has numerous problems because it generalises the skill sets and sometimes trains some employees on skills they will never apply to their jobs. In the end, the skills training is not activity-based and takes critical financial resources, which is sometimes unnecessary. The other gap identified relates to the lack of sufficient funding for skills development. Some municipalities have been seen not to prioritise budgets for employee training and development. Such lack of resources, which are primarily financial, impacts the quality of training employees get from their municipality. Some private service providers require funds to be hired, and if the finances are limited, the municipality will rely on poor-quality service providers or even in-sourced experts who are not well versed with the current dynamics of the labour market. This researcher argues that the discretionary fund and other grants that fund municipal employee training must not take too long to be decided and dispatched to the areas where they are needed most.

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The lack of top management buy-in in the context of employee training and development is another gap not addressed by the intervention in Section 4.4 of this chapter. However, it does appear in the challenges discussed in Section 4.3. This researcher notes that training and development interventions start and stop with the top management. The absence of buy-in or commitment from top management can cloud how even middle- and lower-level employees perceive and accept skills development interventions. If the top management is negative towards training and development, that can easily cascade down to other levels of management since there will not be a culture of effective training and development instilled in the entity. The top management sets the key performance indicators, measures periodic performance and determines the training needs of individuals and teams in the municipality. Without that willingness, employee training and development will be futile. Management also has been found deficient in conducting skills gap analyses, which has left many municipalities unable to determine the urgent and priority sets of skills. In such a case, intervening through employee skills training is impossible unless management decides to consider and implement blanket employee development programmes blindly.

Another gap the study identifies is the misalignment between skills development plans and key results areas. This challenge presents itself through a haphazard and very disjointed skills development strategy. The lack of synchrony and synergy between these two implies that the training needs are unclear because there is no agreement between the target and the measures to determine the target and intervene. Municipalities need to ensure that key performance indicators agree with the WSP to ensure that the latter keeps feeding into the skilling of municipal employees. The city of Cape Town has managed to adopt the strategy. However, most local government entities discussed in the previous sections of this chapter are still far from achieving that. Lastly, the study sees a gap of low morale amongst lower-level employees who feel disempowered to partake in the WSPs drafting due to mainly management attitudes. This study notes in the previous sections that this kind of morale makes employees want to give out false information, distorting the skills and training development process. This leaves top management relying on false outcomes indicators that will be the foundation of devising interventions. By so doing, this implies that the kinds of interventions that will be designed are false since they will be based on false input from demoralised employees. Municipalities that fail to acknowledge to

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moral sanity of their lower-level employees tend to face the consequences of poor employee performance and ineffective employee training programmes due to the entire system being built of false indicators. Therefore, loyalty, motivation and morale at all levels of the municipality's employees' hierarchy are equally important for employee training programmes to be effective.

4.6   SUMMARY

This chapter holistically discussed various employee performance and corresponding skills development challenges that South African municipalities face. In Section 4.2, the study discussed the general employee performance and skills challenges, emphasising the stipulation of the NDP vision 2030 on skills development. The section further discussed the 4IR context of employee performance and municipal employees' skills development. Section 4.3 unpacked the various challenges, emphasising how they impact employee skills training and performance. Section 4.4 focused on municipalities' interventions to resolve the identified challenges. The closing section focused on the gaps that have exacerbated the inhibited effective employee training and development. The researcher notes that the discussions in this chapter indicate a local government whose entities have been affected by the same challenges caused by skills scarcity and poor interventions. The chapter realised research objectives: To explore the causes and implications of skills shortage on employee performance in South African municipalities; To describe challenges affecting the efficacy of existing skills development initiatives and programmes in South African municipalities; To discuss strategies that can be adopted and implemented towards an effective skills development practice in South African municipalities to improve employee performance (see Chapter 1, Section 1.4).

The next chapter offers the conclusion and synthesis and offers recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE

SYNTHESIS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Skills development is one key aspect that can help transform South African local government service delivery by improving employee performance. This study aims to assess the impact of such an intervention on employee performance in municipalities. In doing so, this dissertation, in its previous chapters, presented the conceptual, contextual, institutional, and legislative frameworks of skills development and employee performance in South African local government. These sections discussed the various aspects involved in the South African local government sphere's skills development and employee performance matrix. Such is important because this is the tier of government closest to the people; and is the actual site of service delivery that is key in transforming local communities' living standards. Chapter 5 provides a synthesis of the study. It aims to provide evidence realising the research objectives set in Chapter 1. The chapter concludes by offering significant and feasible recommendations towards enhancing skills development for improved employee performance in South African municipalities.

5.2 SYNTHESIS AND REALISATION OF RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Chapter 1 discussed the study's background, rationale and problem statement. It also discussed and laid bare the serious challenges that the local sphere of government in South Africa faces when it comes to the competencies and skills of their employees. Furthermore, the chapter provided a synopsis of how the lack of seriousness by municipalities to develop the skills of the employees is hampering the effective delivery of municipal goods and services. The preceding ensured that the study realised its first research objective: to ascertain the level of skills deficiencies and scarcity in South African local government. This opening chapter also provided the research objectives and questions that guided this study. Also discussed in Chapter 1 is the study's significance and rationale, where it was mentioned that the study concurrently expands the existing body of academic scholarship on skills development for improved employee performance, as well as the practices of municipal service delivery that are tied to employees' skills, competencies and aptitudes. The introductory chapter of the

study further discussed the key terms and concepts, clarified the research design and methodology, the ethical principles of the study, the measures taken to ensure that the study produces trustworthy findings, and the delimitation and limitations of the study. In this chapter, the study notes that employee performance issues in the context of skills development are pertinent and need exploration, thus warranting the research. Chapter 1 answered the following research question (see Section 1.3): What are the conceptual frameworks of skills development and employee performance? This was achieved by comprehensively discussing the various concepts central to understanding the issues surrounding skills development and employee performance (see section 2.2.1). In this chapter, the research clarified why skills are the foundation on which employee performance is anchored.

Furthermore, the chapter dissected the problem of skills scarcity in South African local government and the need to address such shortfalls since it is hugely hampering employee performance (See Section 2.4.1). Additionally, presented in this chapter are the concepts of competency and skills development that are pertinent issues since a competent employee is productive and able to carry out the various tasks that promote local government service delivery and community development. Skills development (see Section 2.2.4) was discussed as one effective intervention South African local government entities must pursue to plug the holes in their employee performance matrices. The role of the LGSETA, skill development facilitators and training committees were examined in this chapter (see Section 2.4.3) in the context of skills development. Education and training were also discussed as the activities and interventions municipalities can use to augment the skills development agenda in their areas of jurisdiction. Employee performance was also discussed at length in the second chapter (see Section 2.3.2). In this discussion, employee performance was regarded as their ability to execute tasks and responsibilities in a manner that promotes local government service delivery.

The various impediments to skills development, such as lack of compliance with legislation, were discussed in Chapter 2. In Section 2.5, the study discussed skills development advantages, including creating good and lasting rapport between the municipality and its residents. From the discussions in Chapter 2, the researcher observes that the study gave a comprehensive literature review on the central

concepts that informed this study. In the end, it enabled the understanding of skills development regarding the issue of employee performance in the local sphere of government.

Chapter 3 answered the following research question (see section 1.3): Which are the theoretical, legislative, and institutional frameworks regulating skills development in South African municipalities? This chapter gave an in-depth look at the theories, legislation, and institutional and policy frameworks that inform skills development in the case of South African municipalities. The third chapter discussed the legal and policy framework of skills development in South Africa, which included Section 195(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), which calls for good human resources development practices in the public sector (see Section 3.3.1). Furthermore, the Skills Development Act (1998), which implores public entities to prioritise employee training and development for effective public service delivery (see Section 3.3.3), and the Skills Development Levies Act (1999), which regulates the levying of payrolls for funds meant to develop employee skills (see Section 3.3.4). The third chapter also touched on the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act (No. 32 of 2000), which implores municipalities to develop the human capital capacities of its employees (see Section 3.3.5), Public Service Regulations (2001); White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service (1997), and the National Qualifications Framework Act (No. 67 of 2008).

The third chapter closed by discussing the institutional frameworks supporting skills development, such as the SETAs, the SALGA and the National Skills Authority, all of which endeavour to ensure that South African local government entities have the right skills sets and arrangements that promote this culture of continuous improvement in employees' performance. From this outgoing summary and findings, this researcher values the contribution of this chapter to this study since it thoroughly exposes the institutional, statutory, policy and other aspects guiding and cultivating the practice of skills development for improved local government employee performance.

Chapter 4 of the dissertation answered the following research questions (see Section 1.3): What are the causes and implications of skills shortage on employee performance in South African municipalities?; Which are the challenges affecting the efficacy of existing skills development initiatives and programmes in South African

municipalities?; Which strategies can be adopted and implemented towards an effective skills development practice in South African municipalities to improve employee performance? Chapter 4 is the inner core of the study since it revealed various findings related to the three research questions as listed in the above section of this current chapter. The researcher discussed the challenges that affect skills development as an intervention to address employee performance issues in South African local government. This was done through an exposition of the challenges in board terms where skills scarcity was once again the centre of the argument, where critical human capital competencies were revealed to be deficient (see Section 4.2). In the same section, the study lambasts the lack of enough return on investment by municipalities where vast sums of money are poured into skills development but with little or no return on the investment, hence a waste of resources. It was further established in the fourth chapter of this dissertation that local communities are finding it extremely difficult to improve their living standards because the people serving in their municipalities are not possessing the requisite skill sets. The other impediment impacting skills development that the chapter looked at is the absence of investment in 4IR soft skill sets (see Section 4.2.1). The study establishes that the South African municipality employees' skills are obsolete and incompatible with the 21st-century demands of local government service delivery.

The fourth chapter further revealed in Section 4.2.2 that the state of local government (public) service delivery was shambolic, as seen in the rampant financial mismanagement in most municipalities, where taxpayers' money is not economically, effectively and efficiently used. In the context of this finding, this researcher notes that the inability of South African local government employees to possess financial management competencies consistently is a massive contributor to losses in community development potential. Furthermore, the study discovered that the rise in service delivery protests that have caused the loss of human life and infrastructure was a testament to the poor employee performance in South African municipalities. The top-level employee performance challenges discussed include leadership deficiencies, corruption, political bickering, lack of proper monitoring and evaluation practices, poor prioritisation of skills development as a major cost item in municipal budgets and absence of consistent workplace skills plans (see Section 4.3.1). In Section 4.3.2, the issue of low employee morale and poor motivation has been

identified as a major operational challenge to skills development in South African municipalities. There are additional findings related to the absence of skilled professionals to push this 21st-century skills development agenda (see Section 4.3.3) and the poor financing options and procedures of local government skills development (see Section 4.3.4). Another finding related to the issue of employee performance and skills development refers to the lack of synchrony between the municipalities' workplace skills plans and the LGSETA's plans for local government skills development, where the former is seen to neglect the regular skills planning, something that automatically affects how the LGSETA moves forward (see Section 4.3.5).

Chapter 4 further discussed the various interventions and measures meant to improve skills development in municipalities. These included the NDP's focus on a public sector-wide innovation and skills development champion by the Department of Science and Technology, the use of mentoring and coaching for municipal employees, and activity-based budgeting and the synchronisation of WSPs and IDPs. Examples of leaders in skills development in local government have been identified as the city of Cape Town. The findings from Chapter 4 from the preceding synopsis show that the South African local government is in a severe predicament regarding skills development. Therefore, there is a need for strategies and interventions aimed at making employees more effective, productive and community-centred.

Chapter 5 discusses the realisation of the research objectives and the main findings. This closing chapter of the dissertation thereby achieves the following research objective (see Section 1.4): To offer recommendations for effectively addressing skills development for improved employee performance in South African municipalities. Chapter 5 also discusses the scope for further research and the proving that the study has achieved its set research objectives and adequately answers the research questions that the researcher sought to address fully upon embarking on this research journey.

5.3   RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

Based on the review of literature and documents to explore skills development and employee performance, discussed in Chapters 2, 3 and 4, this study proposes the

following recommendations for improvement. These recommendations and suggested strategies and interventions can be adopted and implemented by the identified role players to improve skills development continuously in the local sphere of government.

- ***Improving local government skills development funding:***

The study recommends pooling funds into a central local government fund for municipal skills training and development. Such a consolidated local government skills development fund can be housed in the Department of Cooperative Government, and such must be a national budget cost item. Such a structure of local government skills development can ensure that funds are available as and when required by municipalities. That will address the shortage of funds for real, wholesome interventions in local government employee skills development. In the same vein, this fund can be the only fund where all contributory levies, budget allocation and donations from other role players are kept for municipal skills development. The management of this fund needs to be legislated, and there must be stringent conditions and procedures for funding to be allocated. However, once due diligence is done, there must be swift disbursement of funds while the target skill sets are still relevant and impact directly on local government employee performance.

- ***Developing fourth industrial revolution soft skills for municipalities:***

Therefore, the study vouches for adopting 4IR soft skills-related skills development practices in South African municipalities. Such a strategy will be implemented through a partnership between local government and the various stakeholders encompassing the LGSETA, tertiary education institutions and community-based organisations to do a feasibility study, diagnose urgent and relevant skill sets, and develop training programmes and the corresponding implementation modalities. This 4IR-related intervention can help municipalities train their employees and improve their competencies on relevant and time-compliant skills that can help the delivery of goods and services in a 21st-century context. This can be further aided by combining such skill development initiatives with an activity-based budgeting practice where funds are allocated only to relevant and urgent activities to avoid blind budgeting that sometimes allocates funds to activities far from urgent.

- ***Undertaking skills audits for municipal employees:***

The design and implementation of interventions into employee skills development are best done when the extent and gravity of the problem are ascertained and known. Some interventions fail to improve employee performance in South African local government because the basics of problem-solving are not followed, hence the need for a thorough skills audit. An audit of the available skills in municipalities has always been mandatory. However, this study suggests that this be done as a crisis intervention where the LGSETA, municipalities, the Department of Cooperative Government and Traditional Affairs and other relevant stakeholders do a holistic and comprehensive audit of local government skill sets and deficiencies. Such an exercise can help municipalities and the national government know the urgent priority areas that require more attention. An overall audit can also help funders to know the gravity of the problem, and if successfully done, the design, implementation and evaluation of possible and diverse interventions will be easier and swifter. This researcher values the effect of this skills audit because it can also help the adoption of 4IR skills development interventions or programmes, as argued in the previous recommendations. Therefore, workplace skills audits must be redesigned, and punitive measures attached to those not complying with such requirements.

- ***Coaching and mentoring employees:***

Coaching and mentoring have been identified as some of the tried and tested strategies modern organisations use to develop the skills and competencies of employees. In the context of the South African local government, the deficiencies in the required skills have been blamed on leadership failures, where leaders resort to personal aggrandisement instead of coaching and mentoring their junior subordinates. As a result, the senior leaders do not mentor their juniors on effective skills development, good leadership, and effective employee performance. Furthermore, the poor morale witnessed in South African municipalities also signals that the relations between senior management and their junior counterparts are sour and rotten. Consequently, there is virtually no succession plan, coaching, mentoring, or proper talent management. Using talent management practices such as coaching and mentoring is one of the proposed strategies South African municipalities can use.

As an intervention to local government skills development challenges, coaching is a personal (usually one-to-one) on-the-job approach to helping people develop their skills and levels of competence. Through the coaching intervention, subordinates are motivated and use effective feedback derived from their coaches' skills, expertise, and commitment. While mentoring can work well when the municipality uses selected and trained individuals to provide guidance, pragmatic advice and continuing support will help the person or persons allocated to them learn and develop. Therefore, this can help municipalities develop skills critical for organisational success, especially in senior management or leadership. Coaches and mentors must be dedicated experts carefully selected to train, develop and sharpen employees' leadership skills.

- *Introducing employee performance incentives and sanctions:*

Sanctions and incentives have long been proven to be the carrot and stick analogy of human behaviour. This is premised on rewarding good behaviour and punishing bad behaviour within organisations. Municipal entities can use this tactic to promote and demote certain behaviours linked to skills development and employee performance. For example, incentivising good behaviour can encourage employees to seek professional development and skills training initiatives that can make them earn more rewards within their municipalities. Furthermore, the post-training period in an organisation can serve as a time when a municipality rewards employees whose performance has been improved as a result of them attending skills development interventions. Furthermore, using sanctions for employees with a negative attitude towards improving their skills and competencies can be another working strategy that South African local government entities can use. This can be done through severe salary deductions, using performance-based incentives and bonuses, and demoting those municipal employees who do not produce as expected.

Therefore, this study recommends that the South African local government entities tie rewards and sanctions to employee performance to motivate their employees to seek skills development initiatives. Employees who fail to improve their skills and competencies will face serious medium- to long-term consequences, such as being relieved of their duties or having benefits withdrawn. This strategy must be applied to every employee to create some positive impetus towards the acceptability of training and development initiatives, even those the organisation does not initiate. In the end,

skills development must be considered suitable to both the individual's career goals and the municipality's objectives and mission. The researcher observes that the success of skills development and other strategies depends on how the employee contingent accepts the interventions due to it targeting employees to a greater extent.

- ***Making workplace skills plans and skills audits more binding:***

One challenge identified in several parts of this dissertation is the failure of municipalities to perform mandatory audits and draft workplace skills plans. This study suggests that these must be made compulsory, and any municipality found wanting and non-compliant must face sanctions. This is because the design and implementation of skills development interventions in municipalities have to begin with the skills gap analysis and the training need analysis. A correctly done audit can correspondingly lead to a properly designed intervention. Therefore, South African local government has to ensure that there are binding local government regulations, be it through a White Paper on Skills Development in Local Government or otherwise, making it obligatory for the workplace skills plans and skills audits to be done regularly. Such a situation will ensure that every municipality stays in touch with its skills needs, deficiencies and status quo towards ensuring that skills development becomes the starting point of enhancing employees' performance and keeping the local government transformation agenda on track. The LGSETA and the Department of Cooperative Government and Traditional Affairs at the national sphere of government can lead this intervention by making these major skills development tools mandatory for South African local government.

5.4   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY

This section provides evidence that the findings of this study support the human capital theory. In Section 3.2, the discussion centred on the theoretical framework that guides the study, which is the human capital theory, regarded as the pillar onto which training and skills development are based since it seeks to improve the effectiveness of human capital by giving them more competencies, abilities, and aptitudes. This has also been related to talent management initiatives in municipalities or public entities. The overall premise of Chapter 3 was that skills development (for improved local government employee performance) is an intervention to improve South African municipalities' human capital capacities and capabilities. In Chapter 3, it was argued that improved

human capital capacity improves the entity's productivity and the earning and fringe benefits of the employees of such an entity. The third chapter further looked at the critique levelled against the human capital theory, especially its obsession with money, rewards and productivity, since it is guaranteed that training and development can result in a corresponding increase in employee performance, loyalty and impetus.

Chapter 4 showed the findings related to the challenges faced in the skills development agenda by local government entities in South Africa. The findings of this chapter showed that the human capital theory is enduring because it has been championing skills development for improved employee performance in the past, present and future. At present, in the context of the 4IR, it is the human capital theory that best describes the need for entities such as municipalities to always ground their productivity on the issue of skills, abilities, competencies, capacities and training interventions to make employee performance more effective and productive. The various challenges affecting skills development, from poor leadership, lack of planning or monitoring, evaluation, and poor legal compliance in municipalities, all point to an absence of a robust human capital theory practice in South African local government. Overall, from the findings of this study, the human capital theory has been vindicated as a pillar on which employee performance is solidly linked and hence must be used to improve municipal effectiveness in service delivery.

5.5 LESSONS LEARNT FROM BEST PRACTICES

This section discusses lessons the South African local government can learn from international and African best practices in the following sub-sections.

5.5.1 Skills development for improved employee performance in municipalities in the city of Whittlesea (Australia): An international case study

According to the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) in their Workplace Local Government Workforce and Future Skills Report (2018), there were several issues such as 69% of local governments were experiencing a skill shortage and skill gaps (ALGA 2018:6). Such shortages are mainly in the areas of Engineers, Urban and Town Planners, Building Surveyors, Environmental Health Officers, and Project Managers topping the list of occupations in demand (ALGA 2018:45). Furthermore, this ALGA report shows that the skills shortage is the inability of councils to compete

with the private sector on remuneration; lack of suitably qualified or experienced candidates available locally; high demand across the labour market for certain critical skills and occupations; and remoteness or location making it difficult for councils to attract and retain workers (ALGA 2018:45). In addition, 60% of municipalities have unmet training needs arising from the high cost of training and lack of training available locally (ALGA 2018:57). In the same vein, 70% of municipalities have done no analysis or forecasting of changing roles or skills requirements arising from digital disruption and technology changes (ALGA 2018:57). As a result, the city of Whittlesea (CoW) has adopted its municipal lifelong learning-action and strategy plan (2016). This strategy seeks to respond to the preceding findings where it now focuses to improve their position in relation to soft skills for their local government employee, particularly the ability to work productively, drive engagement and demonstrate presence as a member of a virtual team; ability to understand concepts across multiple disciplines; and digital skills (CoW 2016). The municipality prioritised the skills development of its employees in its budgets and committed more resources such as time and expertise (CoW 2016).

Furthermore, the CoW resorted to plugging the skills gap by hiring part-time experts while its employees undergo training. The synergy between local government entities and other stakeholders in skills development and training has augmented this intervention. These include local councils themselves; local government associations, professional associations, and industry skills councils; registered training organisations; universities and colleges of technical and further education; private sector providers; departments of local government in each jurisdiction; the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations of the Australian Government; and trade union (Woods, Artist & O'Connor 2015:112). Furthermore, learning within local government in Australia has been institutionalised to ensure that the skills development packages take care of the career and professional development needs of both current and future employees (Woods et al. 2018:123). As a result, this places the municipalities on par with private sector entities regarding competition for talent and the critical skills needed for local government service delivery.

The South African local government can derive a lesson from the preceding section by way of adopting strategies such as the creation of skills development synergies

with various stakeholders, the use of priority areas for skills development budgets, the hiring of experts on a part-time basis while the skills packages are designed to make the municipality an employer of choice. Hence, there is a need to make local government careers attractive for potential employees, who will join them knowing that their personal career goals are taken care of, and their community-centred passion for service delivery will also be realised in the process.

5.5.2 Skills development for improved employee performance in municipalities in the city of Kigali, Rwanda: An African case study

Rwanda's current development strategy, the national skills development and employment promotion strategy (2019–2024), has various priority areas, including Priority Area 3, which seeks to make the country a globally competitive knowledge-based economy. Moreover, within this particular priority area is the project related to local government skills development called the Develop Kigali Innovation City (KIC) agenda that has become the host of a thriving skills ecosystem including industries, universities and academic institutions with the aim to train engineers and business graduates as 'Job Creators' rather than 'Job Seekers' and eventually exporting skills (Republic of Rwanda (RoR) 2019:68). This research notes the issue of the skills development ecosystem hosted by the city of Kigali, which shows that the focus here is on skills development as a local government culture and a result of intergovernmental cooperation. Furthermore, the city of Kigali thrives on a market-led education initiative where there is an increased private sector involvement in curriculum design to ensure that emerging skills sets are incorporated into education and skills development (City of Kigali (CoK) 2018:72). Such strategies of skills development also encompass the training of potential employees of the Rwandese local government system on the latest and relevant skills sets which include soft skills (CoK 2018:75).

The Kigali Innovation City concept fosters university-industry government cooperation to ensure synergies of skills development and knowledge sharing (Republic of Rwanda 2019:110). There is also an issue of establishing joint training centres with leading private sector entities to always tap into critical skills and expanding as well as professionalising business and innovation centres at universities, colleges and higher-level TVET institutions (RoR 2019:110). Lastly, the Kigali Innovation City programme

has revamped sector skills councils to inform skills development in technical vocational education and training (TVET) and higher education towards bridging the skills gap in priority sectors with high potential for growth (RoR 2019:110). The city development strategy (2018) of Kigali also emphasises the use of coaching and mentoring by senior managers to groom and train junior employees as part of a succession plan in leadership and promoting delegation (CoK 2018:81).

The South African local government system can pluck feathers of knowledge from the city of Kigali by making municipalities the centres of innovation and incubation of ideas, forging partnerships with stakeholders towards skills development and putting skills and professional development at the centre of innovation and effective service delivery. Other lessons from Kigali include using coaching and mentoring culture to develop subordinates' skills in the municipality. Such a practice can help tap into the on-demand skills and ensure that the municipality stays within prevailing practices of effective employee performance for good service delivery. This is vital, especially given that skills development is most successful when various stakeholders are brought on board.

5.6   SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

A future study could be extended to embrace a detailed investigation in which the following area can be explored: skills development for improved employee performance in South African public service. It would be a comparative study to explore two public service departments selected to form part of the study.

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