


Towards evidence-based human resource development for South African local government

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Background: The effective management of human resources is crucial for the sustainability of municipalities. However, as evidenced by poor service delivery, municipalities are not measuring human resource development. There is no known assessment tool or system to measure the performance of human resource development in South African municipalities.

Aim: This study investigated the human resource development challenges experienced in municipalities and recommends, among other things, an evidence-based assessment tool that will improve human resource development implementation.

Setting: Participants included line managers, human resource development professionals, employees, and councillors from randomly sampled local, district and metropolitan municipalities in South Africa.

Method: An exploratory sequential mixed-methods design was used. Quantitative data were collected using questionnaires from 111 respondents. Qualitative data were collected from respondents given an opportunity to elaborate on their responses to statements in the questionnaire.

Results: The results of the study show that municipalities are not effectively implementing human resource development, which compromises service delivery and municipal performance. They also suggest that municipalities are not effectively implementing the adopted Integrated Municipal Framework for Human Resource Development.

Conclusion: The study concludes that there is an urgent need for local government to prioritise the management of human resource development. An evidence-based assessment tool will ensure that human resource development governance gaps are addressed in municipalities.

Contribution: This study adds to the debate on the management of human resource development in South African local government by providing a context-specific analysis of implementing and managing human resource development and by recommending improvement strategies.

Keywords: human resource development; governance; assessment; performance; learning; local government; municipality; human resource management.

Introduction

South Africa's status as the most unequal country in the world was recently confirmed by its being ranked first among 164 countries in the World Bank's global poverty database. Despite more than 22 years of the Skills Development Act and the resultant Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), South Africa continues to face a crisis of confidence around skilled labour. In the South African labour market, a structural mismatch between demand and supply, which persistently undersupplies skilled workers while oversupplying unskilled ones, is prevalent. New technologies and changing trade patterns have encouraged the growth of tradable services, leading to a growing demand for skilled labour. The ongoing structural transformation of economies further amplifies this phenomenon, with inequality of opportunity considered a persistent driver of unequal outcomes for the South African population. Access to higher education has been found to be limited, especially among vulnerable and poor people (Chancel et al. 2022).

This article opens with an overview of the capacity challenges of local government and the policy response, followed by a literature review introducing key concepts. The empirical investigation is then presented. It was undertaken to determine how municipalities are implementing human

Note: In order to protect the anonymity of the participants that took part in the study, limited participant identifiers have been provided.

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resource development (HRD), and it used the Integrated Management Framework for Human Resource Development (IMF-HRD) as a basis for the analysis. The research design and results are presented and interpreted, followed by pertinent conclusions leading to a number of concrete recommendations for improving the management of HRD in South African municipalities.

Problem statement

Municipalities are not implementing and measuring HRD effectively as envisaged by the Local Government Sector Education and Training Authority (LGSETA) IMF-HRD, which leads to poor HRD performance in municipalities. Municipalities are ill-equipped to manage HRD and tend to choose solutions that appear easy, rather than more complex ones (Diko 2020). In the next section, the literature review, methodology, research setting, data collection, data analysis and procedure are presented.

Literature review

This section defines the theoretical framework for the study and presents an overview of the empirical literature.

Capacity challenges of municipalities

The National Skills Development Strategy III aims to reverse the structural inequality in South Africa with a renewed focus on increasing access to training and skills development opportunities, in order to achieve the transformation of inequities linked to class, race, gender, age and disability within the broader socio-economic context of South Africa. As competent employees are a key to sustainable success and long-term societal impact, municipalities must embrace and prioritise HRD (Cloete 2019; Department of Higher Education and Training n.d.). This can be achieved by employing digital technologies and employing integrated HRD approaches, through which municipalities can create greater public value (Martin & McGoldrick 2010; World Bank 2019).

The broad aim of the National Skills Development Plan is to support the objectives of the National Development Plan, which are to ensure the realisation of a capable and responsive state as well as to respond to the post-school education and training policy demand (Republic of South Africa 2019). There can be no doubt about HRD's unique position in terms of preparing municipalities for the future (McLean & Company 2020; World Bank 2019). This implies that human resources (people) should be managed well. However, consecutive reports from the Office of the Auditor-General of South Africa (2022) confirmed that municipalities have regressed in terms of their financial and human resource performance. Despite the fact that the Auditor General has consistently pointed out the governance anomalies, municipalities have not committed to clean governance over the past 5 years. A case in point is the Free State, where not a single municipality has managed to produce acceptable financial statements over the last 5 years. In general,

municipalities are in a permanent state of crisis (permacrisis). In addition, the brazen use of consultants is an indictment of the failing skills development initiatives under the auspices of the SETA. No less than R1.26 billion was spent on consultants in the 2021 financial year, with 79% of municipalities reappointing consultants used in the previous financial year (Auditor General of South Africa 2022).

Houston and Kanyane (2022:5–11) observed that the capacity constraints faced by local government go beyond just poor service delivery, and they identified 10 areas that impede local government's performance:

1. Financial resources: Municipalities are failing to collect revenue efficiently, which has a negative impact on their ability to deliver services to communities.
2. Human resources: Municipalities are finding it difficult to appoint staff with the requisite competencies in strategic positions.
3. Administrative leadership: Administrative leadership fell short in the areas of ethics and accountability, which in turn have a negative effect on the institutional environment and culture as well as on staff morale.
4. Political leadership and administrative interface: The strained relationship between the elected (politicians) and appointed (staff) leadership is the cause of instability in many a municipality.
5. Financial management capacity: Municipalities suffer from a lack of financial management and an overdependence on consultants.
6. Municipal service delivery: Poor project management and financial and institutional governance prevent municipalities from performing optimally.
7. Institutional environment: The morale of municipal officials is low because of a lack of consequence management and a rigid regulatory environment that stifles creativity and innovation.
8. Infrastructure and work tools: A lack of 'tools of the trade' negatively affects municipal performance.
9. Community engagement: Officials regard community engagement as a mere compliance exercise. As a result a high level of distrust between community members and elected and appointed leadership is prevalent.
10. Implementation of HRD interventions: The implementation of skills plans and capacity building interventions was found to be a major problem for municipalities.

Coordination and management of human resources activities in departments, as well as clear guidelines to departments on skills and capacity development, were largely lacking.

The poor state of implementation of HRD interventions in municipalities confirms the findings of Cloete (2016) that municipalities face a plethora of integrated challenges in terms of managing and implementing HRD in local government. Finding and implementing sustainable solutions for the HRD crisis in the municipal landscape should thus be a common goal for all stakeholders in local government. The relevant role players should work collaboratively to strengthen the capacity,

processes and controls of municipalities. Credible HRD, financial reporting and performance reporting as well as compliance with key legislation will then be possible, which in turn will lead to improved service delivery (Auditor General of South Africa 2021).

The local government policy response

The District Development Model (DDM) is the South African government's latest attempt to arrest the governance collapse of municipalities. The DDM is built on a set of guiding principles (read behaviours). The DDM advocates for one plan that is birthed through a series of collaborative intergovernmental planning sessions reflecting on research, evidence and innovation-oriented dialogues (knowledge), all of which are based on each district and/or metro's own context (unique dynamics, challenges and opportunities).

According to Cloete (2021) the institutional vehicle for the DDM is the district hub that is governed by three work streams:

- the integrated planning and implementation stream, tasked with coordinating research related to service delivery and development
- the capacity building stream, tasked with overseeing the implementation of capacity building
- the monitoring stream, which will develop baseline data to ensure that service delivery takes place.

One of the challenges the DDM seeks to overcome is the absence of an automated system with which to manage DDM operations, reporting, monitoring and governance (knowledge), as there is no centralised repository of data to enable the government to realise the vision of coordinated HRD planning and budgeting.

The LGSETA (2017) commissioned research into the challenges skills development facilitators face with regard to implementing HRD in South African municipalities. The research report identified several challenges that prevent municipalities from functioning optimally. Of these, skills development facilitation (HRD) was considered at high risk. According to the LGSETA (2017), the HRD challenges facing municipalities were found to be concentrated on six levels, namely:

- knowledge pertaining to ethical values that support skills development (HRD)
- weak and/or poor employee awareness and understanding of HRD policy and/or plan
- poor practice of HRD by municipalities
- poor organisation (a lack of departmental HRD plans)
- ineffective functioning of consultative committees
- poor support by stakeholders.

To address the given challenges, the LGSETA adopted the IMF-HRD as an implementation framework (LGSETA 2017). It then implemented a training intervention programme across the 257 municipalities to capacitate municipalities to better manage HRD. To date, more than 1100 municipal officials in South Africa have been trained in the application

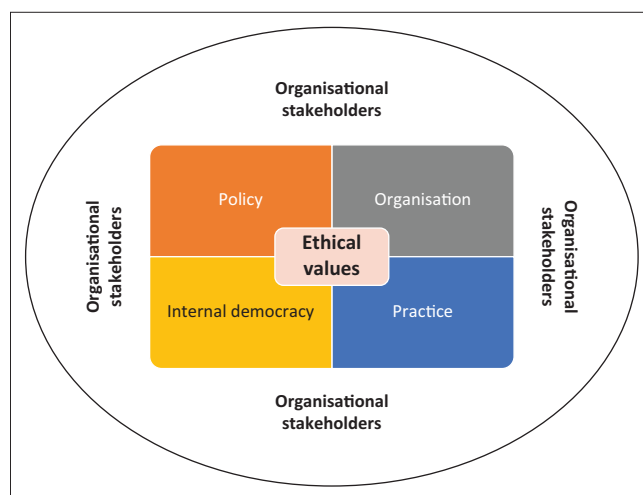
of the IMF-HRD. A brief explanation of the framework follows.

Integrated management framework for human resource development

Meyer, Roodt and Robbins (2011:2) argued that municipalities must adopt a more integrated approach to governing HRD and better managing the associated risks in order to become more effective and thereby ensure better governance outcomes and sustainability. This would include an integrated HRD governance framework with clear HRD policies, processes, procedures and consequences. That framework is the IMF-HRD.

The IMF-HRD has six focus areas (as illustrated in Figure 1) that refer to the degree of joint efforts by multiple departments in a municipality to create an innovative culture for managing HRD effectively in municipalities. At the centre of the IMF-HRD is a set of ethical values. The focus on ethical values emphasises the human element as reflected by the behaviour of the stakeholders – openness, transparency, fairness, accountability, procedural correctness – that in turn leads to trust among the role players. This lays the foundation for the ethical practice of HRD in municipalities, which could be captured in an organisational ethical charter or code of conduct. The need for the establishment of an ethical culture is highlighted by the Institute of Directors of Southern Africa (2016).

In the IMF-HRD model, the relationship between the HRD policies and practice is made explicit. For the municipal council (the employer), the policy puts in place a long-term vision that supports the strategic drivers of the municipality (the Integrated Development Plan) and prepares the municipality for current and future competency needs. The functional organisation of HRD is performed within the directorates, which leads to better communication between the organisational actors (line managers, HRD professionals, employees and councillors). The HRD practice is thus



Source: Cloete, H.C.A., 2016, 'Human resource development in local government – A management perspective', Unpublished PhD thesis, Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch

FIGURE 1: Integrated management framework for human resource development.

approached multidimensionally. Internal democracy is enhanced through the participation of employees in their own development. The value of stakeholder support is experienced on two levels, namely internal support and external support. The stakeholders are all committed to continuous improvement by supporting the HRD efforts of the core organisational actors. This is a result of the HRD culture that continuously questions current HRD practices with the objective of improving practice. The external stakeholders recognise that each stakeholder brings beneficial knowledge and experience to the table. The shared service model is premised on the pooling of HRD services, which is particularly beneficial to the organisational actors (Cloete 2016).

Municipal staff regulations

The Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA) (2021) introduced the *Municipal Staff Regulations 89 of 2021 in 2021*. The main objective of the regulations is to create a local government that is fair, efficient, effective and transparent and to create development-oriented human resource management and career development practices. The stated regulations aim to ensure that high standards of professional ethics are nurtured within local government and suitably qualified and competent persons are recruited and appointed in order to strengthen the capacity of municipalities to perform their functions. The aim is to establish a cohesive human resources management system that ensures adequate controls. The Municipal Staff Regulations set the institutional guidelines for municipal staff selection and recruitment and organisational design (human resource management). They also set the performance management and skills development (HRD) protocols to be followed by the local government. The definitive link between human resource management, HRD, HRD governance and evidence-based HRD is made explicit in the next section.

Human resource management

Traditionally, the human resource (HR) function was perceived to be about controlling labour costs and securing a steady supply of competent employees in order for the organisation to be of value (Itika 2011; Mullins 1999). The broad field of human resource management focuses on the employment relationship between employer and employee and the way in which people are managed in the workplace for the achievement of optimal results (South African Board for People Practices 2013). Human resource management has been defined as incorporating the specific practices and processes, formal policies and overarching human resources philosophies of how an organisation's employees are secured, developed, retained and rewarded. Another view of human resource management describes it as involving all the activities in which line managers engage in order to attract and retain employees to ensure that human resources in the organisation perform at efficient and effective levels to contribute to the accomplishment of organisational goals (Armstrong 1998; Harrison & Kessels 2004; Jones & George 2004).

Having considered a variety of human resource management definitions, Cloete (2016) defined human resource management as:

[The process by which the organisation attracts, maintains, and develops people (human resources) to ensure optimisation.] It is a facilitative conscious, organisation-wide, management-led approach for the effective management of people and processes, to achieve organisational optimisation using formal and informal development opportunities in order to achieve results that have positive internal and external value. (Cloete 2016:44)

Although considered a key component of human resource management, HRD is a discipline in its own right and is explained in the next section.

Human resource development

Hamlin and Stewart (2011) considered HRD as a process or activity that helps or enables individuals, groups, organisations or host systems to learn, develop and change behaviour for the purpose of improving or enhancing their competence. In this case, HRD has a complex interdisciplinary base that has developed differentially across countries and workplaces and in academia. There is a growing consensus that HRD encompasses both individual and organisational development, together with performance improvement as an end goal. Human resource development assumes that organisations can be conceived as development entities, places of learning and opportunities for growth. The development process of both organisations and individual employees can be influenced and directed through deliberate and planned interventions (Harrison & Kessels 2004; Matthews, Megginson & Surtees 2004).

Human resource development does not happen in a vacuum, but is shaped by an array of organisational actors such as HRD professionals, line managers, employees and, in the case of municipalities, elected officials, all of whom are in a collaborative relationship. However, HRD will not succeed if these actors continue to work in silos, as the challenges facing HRD are usually too complicated for one group to solve by itself. Traditional HRD silos often mean that groups are working independently on solutions to the same issues, but leadership, particularly in municipalities, should focus on building and enhancing a collaborative human resources culture to improve the effectiveness of those human resources (McLean & Company 2020). Collaborative HRD is defined by Cloete (2016:67) as:

[T]he process and structure of management that is based on active collaboration between the HRD professionals, line managers, employees and elected officials at all levels of the municipality to meet and monitor set organisational HRD objectives. It is a facilitative partnership approach that is co-owned and premised on mutual trust, dialogue, shared learning, the effect of which is to ultimately add greater internal and external value. (Emerson et al., 2011:2).

Governance and human resources

Collaboration can be thought of as an act of governance. There are various definitions of governance, but no universally accepted definition thereof. The act of governance

is defined by the relationship between the governors (the elected or appointed officials) and those being governed (the end users of services), and encompasses the process of governing (e.g. whether it is transparent, fair, accountable, procedurally correct and collaborative). It also involves the outcomes of that processes (equity, competence, development, growth, care, sustainability). As it is a behavioural framework, governance can be considered good or bad. Good governance is therefore based on ethical and effective leadership that is in turn based on formalised norms and standards and/or criteria (Cloete & Mmakola 2018; Masegare & Ngoepe 2018).

This leads to the concept of human resource governance, which can be described as a behavioural framework for dealing with multiple internal actors in organisations and their divisions and/or units. Such a framework consists of formalised norms and is the result of multiple external stakeholder influences. As a management tool, it has process and outcome indicators regulating human resource management tasks, activities and instruments under its scope (Kaehler & Grundei 2019; South African Board for People Practices 2018).

Given the aforementioned, it is necessary to define HRD governance as separate from human resource governance, as it has been established that HRD (although a part of human resource management) is also a discipline in its own right. Human resource development governance is defined as the functional, ethical and effective collaborative working relationship between the organisational actors (those with formal authority and those without it) in organisations to achieve organisational optimisation through deliberate, planned learning and/or development activities. It is underpinned by a set of process indicators (participation, accountability, responsiveness, strategic vision, consensus orientation and procedural correctness) and outcome indicators (impact, competence, growth, performance, productivity and sustainability). Having provided the definition of HRD governance, it is concluded that HRD governance is imperative for good municipal governance (Grobler, Bezuidenhout & Hyra 2014).

Evidence-based human resource development practice

Notwithstanding an enabling legislative environment, over the past two decades South African organisations have generally failed to implement workplace transformation effectively, as evidenced by a general lack of political will to implement workplace transformation policies (Cloete 2019; Department of Labour 2021). This confirms the view of Barber (2015) who argued that governments all over the world struggle with implementing their policies and that effective workplace transformation is dependent on organisational commitment to implement policies against concrete evidence.

Evidence-based HRD is research that is informed by real-world HRD practice. It involves the explicit and judicious

use of the best current evidence in making decisions about the development of individuals, groups and organisations. It integrates the individual HRD practitioner's (the specialist in the human resources department), line manager's and employee's expertise with the best available external evidence derived from systematic research. Evidence-based HRD is thus the conscientious and explicit use of research findings and the research process that informs, shapes, measures and evaluates professional HRD practice (Hamlin 2016; Hamlin & Reidy 2005). Evidence in this case can be made up of a range of components such as scientific evidence (typically expressed as research and/or surveys, dashboards, quantitative and/or statistical data or qualitative data) and the analysis thereof. However, evidence can also include economic, attitudinal, behavioural and anecdotal evidence. Evidence-based practice is thus the systematic approach to decision-making that supports best practice and accountability. When evidence is considered critically, the chances of doing the right thing at the right time for the individual and the organisation improve (Cloete 2019; Hamlin, Jones & Ellinger n.d.; Van der Walt & Minnie 2008).

The value of an evidence-based approach to policymaking is that policies based on evidence have a much better chance of succeeding than those formulated on ideologically and politically constrained considerations without evidence-based input (Van der Walt & Minnie 2008). Policy based on evidence is also likely to give policymakers confidence in the decisions they take. Evidence-based practice can further serve as a bridge between theory and practice to ensure excellence in application (Van der Walt & Minnie 2008). The ability to make evidence-based ethical decisions can be considered a required core competency for HRD professionals in municipalities, who will have to be more proactive by employing digital tools to assist the transformation efforts (Akinnusi 2008; Strydom et al. 2010). Organisations face the risk of stagnation if they do not take action to support digital transformation by being proactive (Cloete 2019; CoGTA 2021; McLean & Company 2020).

To prevent HRD decisions from being based on outdated traditions and practices, HRD professionals are required to remain relevant. They need to keep making decisions based on empirical evidence, be future focussed and make sure that management and all the internal stakeholders are informed. Evidence-based HRD should thus be a key pillar of the HRD governance model of South Africa, with a strong focus on consequence management (Gumede 2020; McLean & Company 2020; Van der Walt & Minnie 2008).

Research methods and design

Research design and method

Research can be described as a procedure through which the researcher aims to answer questions and to solve certain empirical problems in a systematic manner with the support of facts. The objective of the research is to produce new knowledge. It considers several factors, including the location (setting) of data, method of data collection, research

procedure and method of data analysis (Brynard, Hanekom & Brynard 2014; Schurink 2010).

Research setting

The data were collected from participants who attended an LGSETA training session for employees from various municipalities across the nine provinces of South Africa. The exploratory research was completed between November 2019 and March 2020. In total, 111 research respondents completed the questionnaire. Of the population sample, 32% were line managers, 24% were HRD professionals, 32% were employees and 11% were councillors. They completed the questionnaire voluntarily, and they were chosen by means of random sampling, which means that every element in the population had an equal chance of being selected as a subject (Sekaran & Bougie 2011). All municipal actors other than councillors can be considered employees. For the purpose of this study, *line managers* refer to all those who have people reporting to them, *HRD professionals* are those employees tasked with coordinating the training and development of employees, and *employees* are those staff members who have no people reporting to them. *Councillors* are the elected officials of a municipality and can be considered employers.

Data collection and method

The method of data collection considered appropriate for this study was a mixed-methods approach relying on quantitative data (from a questionnaire) and qualitative data (respondents had an opportunity to elaborate on their responses) (Babbie 2011; Brynard et al. 2014). This is not uncommon, according to Maxwell (2013), and this kind of cross-checking of a variety of data collection methods or types of information can be beneficial. The design of the research instruments was informed by the IMF-HRD and the six identified focus areas, namely HRD ethical values, HRD policy, HRD organisation, HRD practice, HRD internal democracy and HRD stakeholders. The survey data were transferred from Google Forms to Excel spreadsheets and then transferred to and analysed in Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The data were recorded on electronic mobile devices.

Data analysis and procedure

This section reports on the research results and interpretation of findings emanating from the survey. The study adopted a sequential exploratory mixed-methods design in which the quantitative phase of data collection and analysis is followed by the qualitative phase of data collection and analysis (Fetters, Curry & Creswell 2013). Fieldwork is then followed by the analysis and interpretation of the data. In an interview on 04 April 2022, Schutte argued that irrespective of the theoretical soundness of information needed, the statistical validity and reliability of any survey are influenced by, inter alia, the following issues: On the one hand, respondents may not understand the content of the research questions or could experience a language barrier given that there are 11 official languages in South Africa (English is most respondents'

second language). On the other hand, respondents may not be willing to provide accurate and/or honest answers for different reasons. For example, they may not feel comfortable providing answers that portray themselves in an unfavourable light or that might be perceived by someone as critical and thereby threaten their job security.

The assumption is that organisational actors (HRD professionals, line managers, employees and councillors) comprehend and experience HRD differently in municipalities. The 31 statements in the questionnaire were developed to test each of the six dimensions of the IMF-HRD. For each statement, respondents had to indicate their response on a three-point Likert scale, where 1 = agree, 2 = don't know/not sure and 3 = disagree. Only the response of 'agree' was considered a positive experience, and this article therefore reports on that. In interpreting the data, a rate of agreement lower than 65% was considered indicative of an unsatisfactory response. Agreement of between 65% and 80% was interpreted as satisfactory, and agreement of between 81% and above was interpreted as excellent. The researcher used 65% as an arbitrary benchmark as used in previous research.

The research results and analysis are presented using the six identified focus areas of the IMF-HRD, as described earlier in the text, namely HRD ethical values, HRD policy, HRD organisation, HRD practice, HRD internal democracy and HRD stakeholders.

Human resource development ethical values

In this section, the respondents were presented with five statements relating to whether decisions are ethically made, whether employees believe their contribution to the organisation is recognised, whether the municipality is committed to ensuring equal access of opportunity in the development of employees, whether HRD of all employees is a priority in the municipality and whether the municipality has identified HRD ethical values. The percentages of agreement are shown in Figure 2.

The respondents were in agreement that decisions are not ethically made, and they were convinced that their contributions are not recognised, with reported rates of agreement well below 65%. As stated by one skills development facilitator, 'New ideas are never welcome'. Line managers (46%), employees (25%) and, to a lesser degree, councillors (64%) believed that the municipality they represent is not committed to ensuring equal access of opportunity in the development of all employees. In contrast, the HRD professionals' rate of agreement was significantly higher (88%) on this indicator. The line managers (29%) and employees (25%) felt very strongly that HRD of employees is not a priority for municipalities, with the HRD professionals (52%) and councillors (55%) giving a higher rating, although still significantly lower than 65%. A line manager stated that 'only [a] few employees benefit from skills development. Either the HRD is selective, or the said department enforces employees to go for training, but HRD is not pushing for

re-skilling personnel'. Given the low overall rates of agreement, the research respondents' perception of identified organisational HRD values was not surprising, as only 37% of line managers and 22% of employees agreed with the associated statement. One employee said, 'My personal experience at the municipality was requesting training on numerous occasions and no response'. Again, HRD professionals (64%) and elected officials (55%) had higher percentages of agreement.

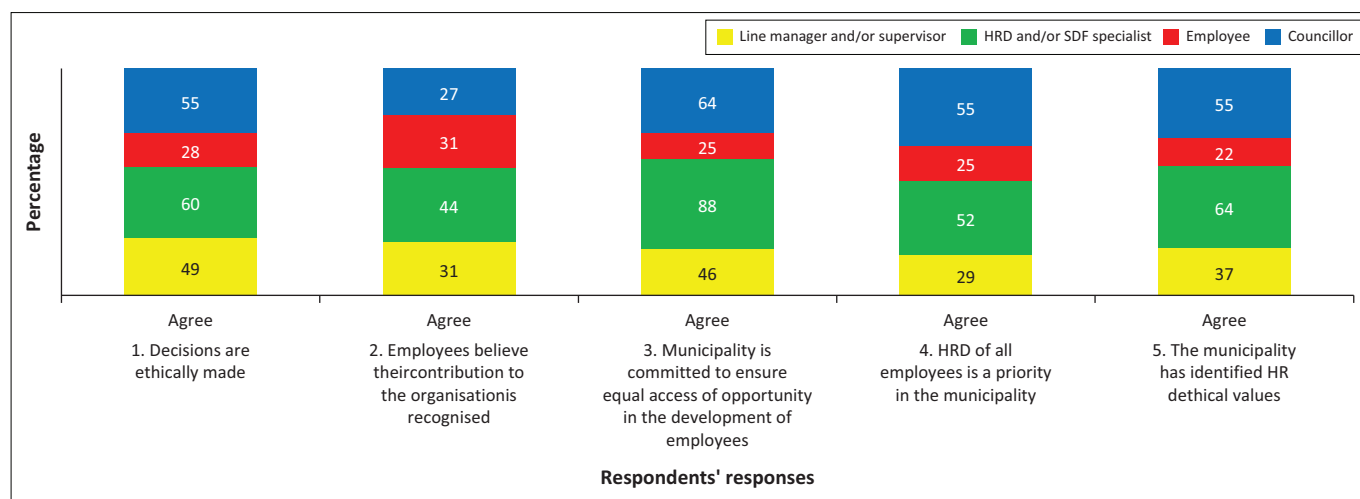
The results for this section indicate that municipalities are not functioning well in the area of ethical values as per the IMF-HRD, as revealed by the majority of the respondents.

Human resource development policy

Respondents were asked to indicate their perception of the following aspects: whether the municipality has an HRD policy in place; whether the HRD policy is understood by all research respondents; whether the HRD policy statement is linked to the Integrated Development Plan, skills development, employment

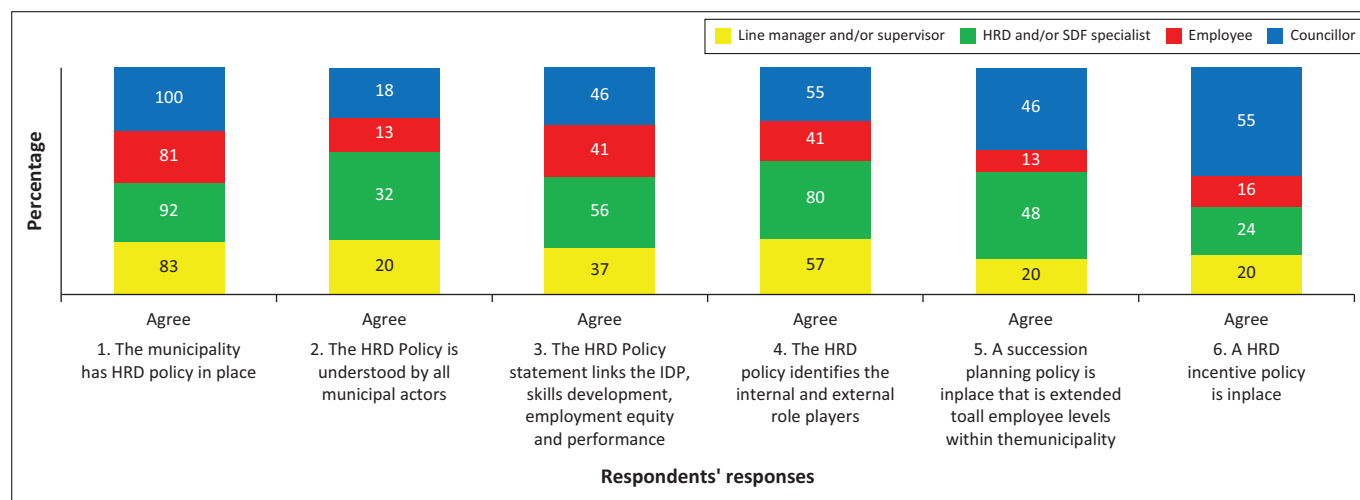
equity and performance; whether the HRD policy identifies the internal and external role players; whether a succession planning policy is in place that is extended to all employee levels within the municipality; and whether an HRD incentive policy is in place. The percentages of agreement are shown in Figure 3.

The respondents acknowledged the existence of HRD policies, but these policies are not understood by line managers (20%), HRD professionals (32%), employees (13%) and councillors (18%). Employees and councillors' rates of agreement were the lowest. This lack of understanding was highlighted by an employee who stated, 'In our municipality, policies are not introduced to employees at the lower level such as general worker, plumbers and plumbers' assistants'. The HRD policy fails to link the Integrated Development Plan, skills development, employment equity and performance, as confirmed by the agreement rates of the line managers (37%), HRD professionals (56%), employees (41%) and councillors (46%). According to the HRD professionals (80%), the HRD policy identifies the internal and external role



HRD, human resource development; SDF, skills development facilitator; IDP, integrated development plan.

FIGURE 2: Human resource development ethical values.



HRD, human resource development; SDF, skills development facilitator; IDP, integrated development plan.

FIGURE 3: Human resource development policy.

players. This is, however, not the case according to line managers (57%), employees (41%) and councillors (55%).

The respondents were in agreement that a succession planning policy that extends to all employee levels is not in place within the municipalities, with all the research respondents' rates of agreement below the 65% threshold. The same applies to the incentive policy, for which there were unacceptably low percentages of agreement below 65%. One employee even stated, 'No succession plan in place and this demotivates employees'.

It is concluded that although HRD policies are present, these policies are not effectively integrated as per the IMF-HRD, as revealed by the majority of the respondents.

Human resource development practice

The respondents were asked to indicate their perception of whether their municipality conducts and/or reviews skills development audits annually, whether HRD interventions are undertaken in line with employees' personal development plans, whether the municipality applies formal and informal approaches to skills development, whether employees are presented with opportunities to practise new competencies after skills development interventions and whether there is an agreed-upon procedure for the practice of skills development in the workplace. The percentages of agreement are shown in Figure 4.

From the research findings, it is clear that there are significant challenges in the area of HRD practice in municipalities. Only 56% of employees agreed that the municipality conducts and/or reviews skills development audits annually. One employee stated, 'Employees are invited for the purpose of awareness of filling and returning skills audit forms. Management sign forms without sitting one session'. Another employee observed that 'the skills audit in my opinion is carried out for compliance. Feedback is never received'. However, this perception differed for line managers (66%), HRD professionals (68%) and councillors (82%).

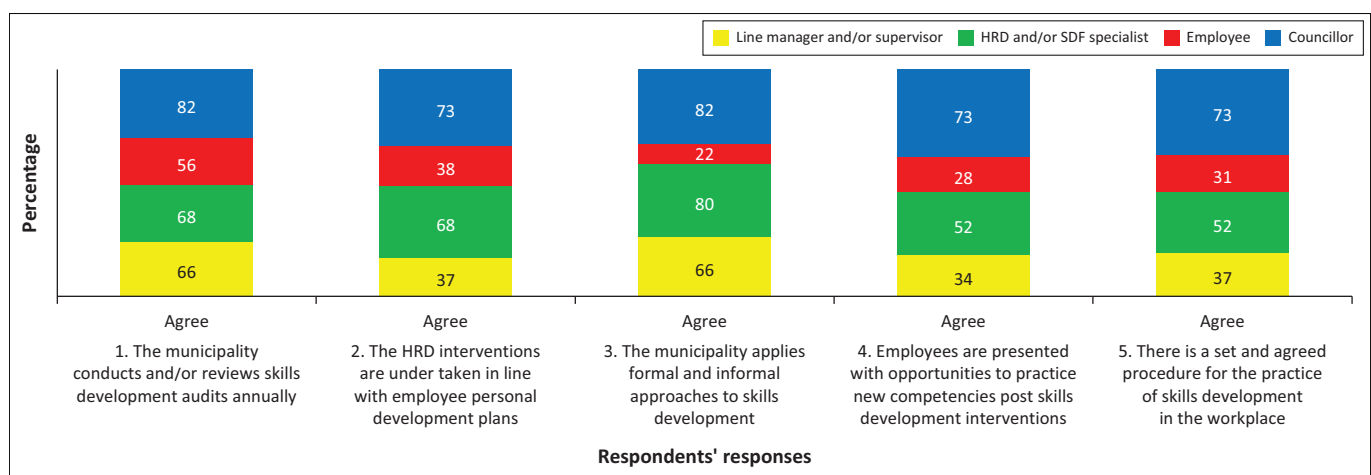
Line managers (37%) and employees (38%) were of the view that HRD interventions are not undertaken in line with employees' personal development plans. This was confirmed by an employee who said, 'My director has never discussed any skills development with me'. Another employee remarked that 'employees are given training that they are not supposed to receive as per their skills'. This negative view was not shared by councillors (73%) and HRD professionals (68%).

There were opposing views about whether the municipality applies formal and informal approaches to skills development. On the one hand, HRD professionals (80%), councillors (82%) and line managers (66%) seemed to agree with the statement. On the other hand, employees (22%) reported a completely different experience. Municipalities are not presenting employees with enough opportunities to practise new competencies after skills development interventions, according to line managers (34%), HRD professionals (52%) and employees (28%). The councillors' rate of agreement was well above the 65% threshold at 73%. However, a councillor observed that 'expansion for experience in other workplace areas is not accepted by the unions'. The set and agreed-upon procedure for the practice of skills development in the workplace was perceived as lacking by line managers (37%), HRD professionals (52%) and HRD professionals, but councillors' (73%) agreement percentage was particularly high in this area. One employee remarked that 'employees are always left in the dark and have no real say in their training needs'.

It is concluded from the aforementioned that HRD is not practised satisfactorily as per the IMF-HRD, as revealed by the majority of the respondents.

Human resource development organisation

The respondents were asked to indicate their perception of whether departmental skills plans are in place, whether line managers in the directorates take responsibility for skills development planning and implementation, whether the



HRD, human resource management; SDF, skills development facilitator; IDP, integrated development plan.

FIGURE 4: Human resource development practice.

role of the skills development facilitator is understood, whether skills development interventions are monitored by directorates and whether line managers, employees and HRD professionals are working together (collaborating) to achieve HRD objectives. The percentages of agreement are shown in Figure 5.

From the research findings, the majority of the respondents (31% of line managers, 52% of HRD professionals and 47% of employees) agreed that departmental skills are not in place. However, this view was not shared by the councillors (91%).

The respondents' responses confirmed that line managers in the directorates are not taking responsibility for skills development planning and implementation. There were low levels of agreement from line managers (23%), HRD professionals (24%), employees (34%) and elected officials (36%). A councillor observed that 'HRD rests with only the corporate services manager. Other managers are less interested. Therefore, they are not involved'.

It is alarming that the role of the skills development facilitator is still not understood by the research respondents, as confirmed by line managers (34%), HRD professionals (48%), employees (34%) and councillors (64%). Because the departmental skills plans are not in place, skills development interventions are not effectively monitored by directorates, as confirmed by the low rates of agreement of line managers (31%), HRD professionals (40%), employees (28%) and councillors (55%).

The respondents are not collaborating effectively to achieve the HRD objectives. This is evident from the low agreement rates of line managers (37%), HRD professionals (36%), employees (22%) and councillors (36%). This was confirmed by a line manager who stated, 'Line managers are also confused on how to assist in reskilling the staff, as the policy is vague'. An employee also confirmed this: '[The] line manager and SDF [skills development facilitator] are definitely not working together'.

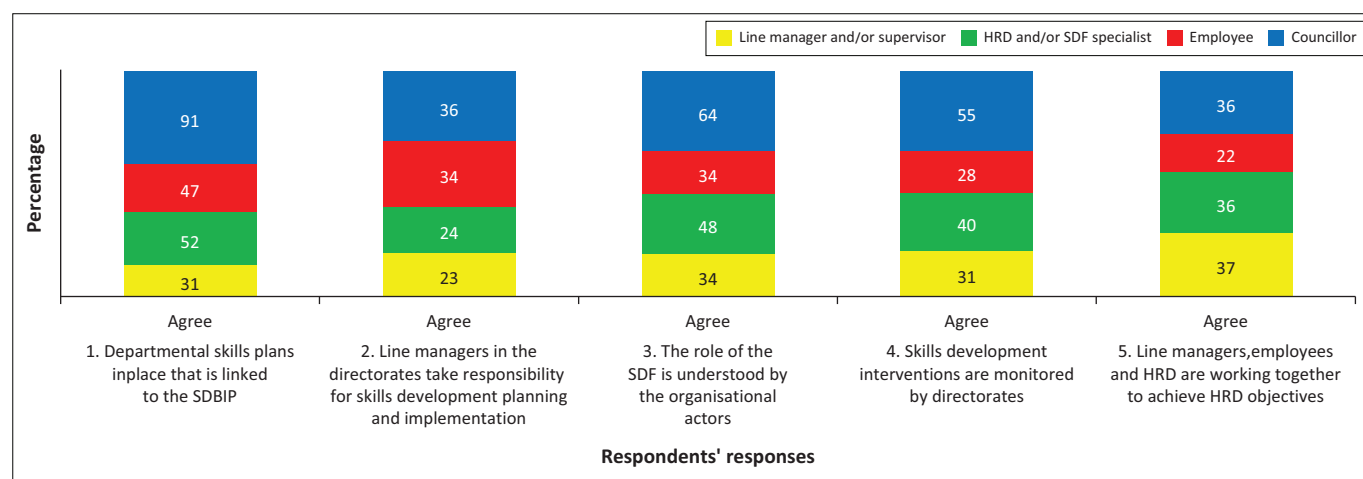
It is concluded that the organisation of HRD in municipalities is a problem and thus not in line with the IMF-HRD, as revealed by the majority of the respondents.

Human resource development internal democracy

The research respondents were asked to indicate their perception of whether the local labour forum (LLF) is functional within their municipality, whether the training and/or consultative committee is representative of all directorates, whether the training and/or consultative committee understand their roles and responsibilities, whether all employees understand their HRD rights and responsibilities and whether employees receive quarterly feedback from the training and/or consultative committee on HRD matters. The percentages of agreement are shown in Figure 6.

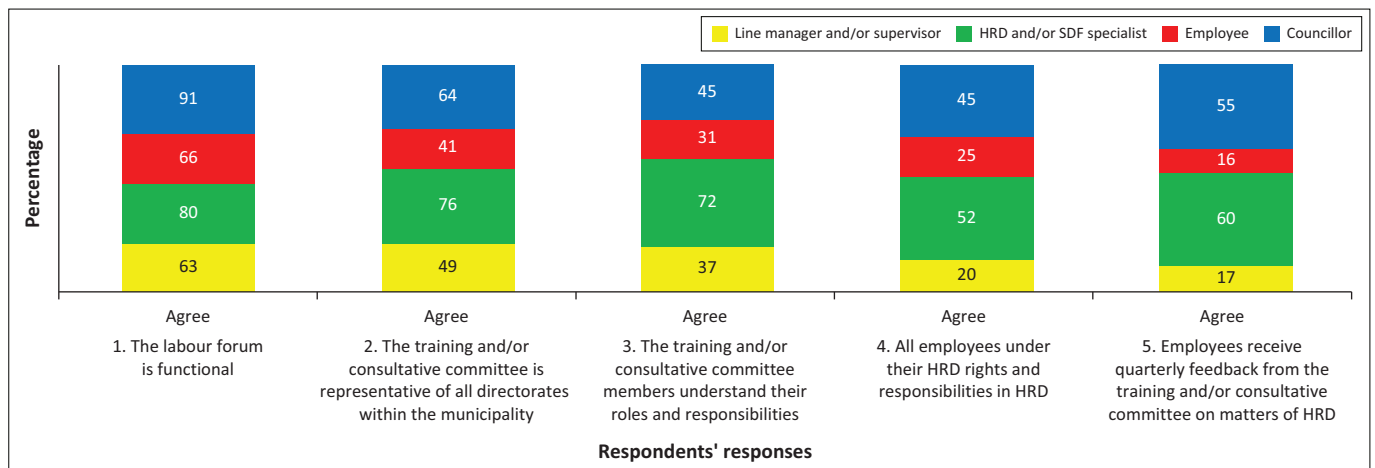
The majority of the research respondents agreed that their LLF is functional, although only 63% of the line managers agreed with the statement, which indicates a lower level of satisfaction and is below the 65% threshold. One line manager confirmed that the 'LLF is working but management does not support decisions taken'. A councillor stated that 'The LLF is only functional if there are issues that labour unions are not satisfied with. Otherwise, they do not pitch up for meetings'. The training and/or consultative committee appears not to be representative of all the directorates within the municipality, as indicated by the levels of agreement of line managers (49%), employees (41%) and councillors (64%). This view was not shared by the HRD professionals (76%).

According to the HRD professionals (72%), the training and consultative committee understand their roles and responsibilities. This view differed considerably from that of line managers (37%), employees (31%) and councillors (45%). The research respondents in general do not understand their HRD rights and responsibilities, as confirmed by the low agreement rates of line managers (20%), HRD professionals (52%), employees (25%) and councillors (45%). The research respondents generally disagreed with the statement that



SDBIP, Service Delivery Business Implementation Plan; HRD, human resource development; SDF, skills development facilitator; IDP, integrated development plan; SALGA, South African Local Government Association.

FIGURE 5: Human resource development organisation.



HRD, human resource development; SDF, skills development facilitator; IDP, integrated development plan.

FIGURE 6: Human resource development internal democracy.

they receive quarterly feedback from the training and/or consultative committee on HRD matters. The HRD professionals (60%) and councillors (55%) scored significantly higher on the satisfaction index. This is in stark contrast with line managers (17%) and employees (16%). This lack of feedback was confirmed by an employee who said, 'I have never heard any mention of training and/or consultative committee. No feedback ever'.

From the findings, it is concluded that internal democracy is not optimally functional as per the IMF-HRD, as revealed by the majority of the respondents.

Human resource development stakeholders

The research respondents were asked to share their views on the various stakeholders who give life to HRD in the workplace. These statements dealt with whether a senior manager is leading workplace transformation, whether councillors understand their HRD oversight roles and responsibilities, whether shop stewards understand their HRD roles and responsibilities, whether senior management are supporting the development programme of management and employees and whether the LGSETA, the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) and CoGTA are working together to support the HRD efforts of the municipality. The percentages of agreement are shown in Figure 7.

The findings indicate that research respondents could not identify a senior manager who is leading workplace transformation, as confirmed by the agreement rates of line managers (51%), HRD professionals (56%), employees (44%) and councillors (64%). The political HRD oversight is compromised because councillors do not understand their HRD oversight roles and responsibilities, as confirmed by the low agreement rates of line managers (23%), HRD professionals (36%), employees (25%) and elected officials (45%). Although councillors rated themselves higher in the survey, all respondents' rates of agreement were below the 65% threshold.

The low rates of agreement by line managers (26%), HRD professionals (64%), employees (31%) and councillors (45%)

prove that shop stewards do not understand their HRD roles and responsibilities. One councillor remarked:

'[S]hop stewards know their responsibilities, but I think they would be more effective if they were not employed by the same organisation that they have to fight with for the rights of the workers.'

Senior management is not effectively supporting the HRD programme of management and employees, as confirmed by the low agreement rates of line managers (46%), HRD professionals (28%), employees (19%) and councillors (55%). An employee said:

'I have done training programmes and tertiary study starting with the National Diploma and I am currently doing Honours in Public Administration, but for the past eight years I am still occupying the same position. There is no growth in terms of my career and progression in the institution. This is very demotivating!'

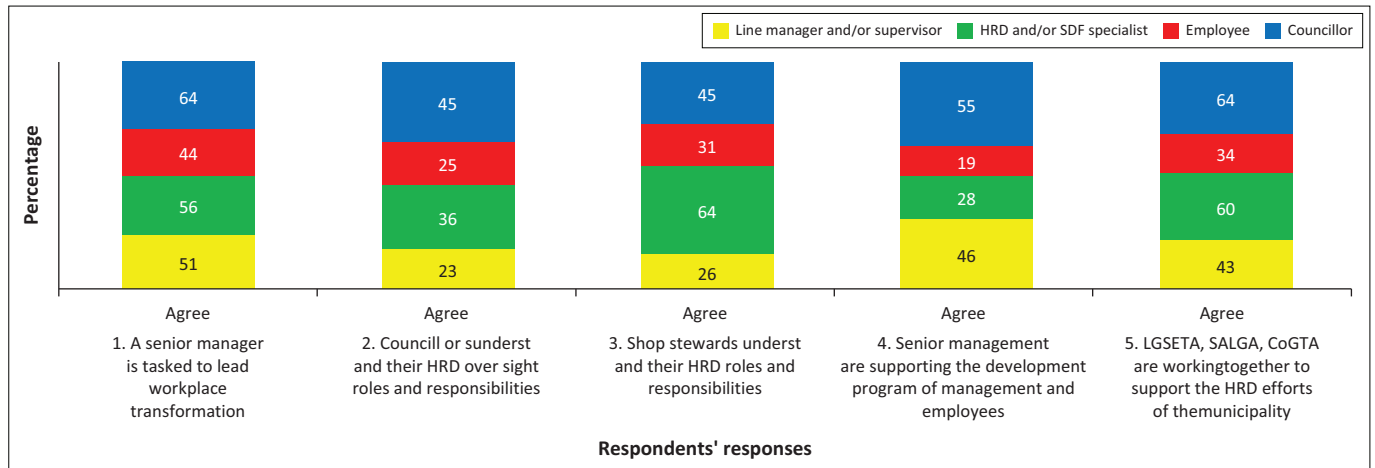
Another employee stated that 'management decide for staff but do not engage staff so as to get end results'.

Finally, the external bodies, namely the LGSETA, SALGA and CoGTA, appeared not to be working in unison with municipalities to support the latter's HRD efforts. This was evident from agreement rates of line managers (43%), HRD professionals (60%), employees (34%) and councillors (64%) – all below the 65% threshold. The higher percentage of agreement of councillors and HRD professionals could indicate that they have a closer working relationship with these external bodies than line managers and employees do. One councillor said, 'SALGA is not favouring the councillors but favour the employees. However, the LGSETA is supportive'.

The results indicate that HRD stakeholders are not acting optimally as per the IMF-HRD indicators, as revealed by the majority of the respondents.

Conclusion and implementation recommendations

From the evidence provided in this study, it is clear that municipalities continue to face a myriad of HRD



HRD, human resource development; SDF, skills development facilitator; LGSETA, Local Government Sector Education and Training Authority; SALGA, South African Local Government Association; CoGTA, Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs.

FIGURE 7: Human resource development stakeholders.

governance challenges in the areas of ethical values, policy, organisation, practice and stakeholders, which are the pillars of the IMF-HRD.

Decisions are not ethically made, and employees feel that their contribution is not recognised. Equal access to opportunity in the development of employees was not satisfactorily reported, with the result that the HRD of all employees is not a priority in municipalities. Municipalities have not satisfactorily distinguished a set of ethical HRD values to govern the conduct of the municipal actors, as identified in the IMF-HRD. They have HRD policies, but these policies are not well understood. The HRD fails to link the integrated development plan, skills development, employment equity and performance. The policies do not clearly identify the internal and external role players. In addition, succession planning policies are not implemented sufficiently, with the resultant incentive policy virtually absent.

Although municipalities conduct and/or review skills development audits annually, in most cases these HRD interventions are not undertaken in line with employees' personal development plans. The end users of skills development reported that formal and informal approaches are not satisfactorily applied and employees are seldom presented with opportunities to practise new competencies. The biggest weakness relates to the absence of an agreed-upon procedure for the practice of skills development. The departmental skills plans are not in place, and line managers in the directorates do not take responsibility for skills development planning and implementation. The result is that skills development initiatives are not monitored within directorates. The role of the skills development facilitator is not understood, and line managers, employees and HRD professionals are not working together (collaborating) to achieve HRD objectives.

The LLF is functional, but the training/consultative committee is not necessarily representative of all directorates. The training and/or consultative committee

does not understand its roles and responsibilities. In general, employees do not understand their HRD rights and responsibilities, and HRD quarterly feedback is absent. Senior managers are not leading workplace transformation efforts and supporting the development initiatives of management and employees. The councillors and shop stewards do not understand their HRD oversight roles and responsibilities. Finally, the LGSETA, SALGA and CoGTA are not working collaboratively to support the HRD efforts of the municipalities.

This study has illustrated that municipalities are failing to manage HRD effectively (see also previous research by Gumede 2020). Unless this situation is acknowledged, municipalities will not be able to reach their objectives envisaged in the Municipal Skills Regulations and National Skills Plan.

The research indicates that HRD is poorly implemented in municipalities and the following five recommendations are proposed:

- An HRD evidence-based system (dashboard) is proposed that is premised on gathering data from municipal actors (i.e. employees, line managers, councillors and HRD professionals) in order to determine the HRD-related status quo of a municipality at any given time, as envisaged in the Municipal Staff Regulations. This will enable internal and external stakeholders, as identified in the literature and the IMF-HRD, to monitor and evaluate municipal HRD performance in order to plan and enable evidence-based interventions (new knowledge).
- The collaborative competence of line managers, employees and HRD professionals will have to be improved if there is going to be long-term success for managing HRD in municipalities. This can be undertaken through a comprehensive capacity-building programme that includes coaching, mentoring and training, as identified in the literature and the IMF-HRD.

- Political office bearers and shop stewards should be capacitated to perform their HRD oversight role more effectively through a comprehensive capacity-building programme that includes coaching, mentoring and training, as identified in the literature and the IMF-HRD.
- External stakeholders identified in the literature and the IMF-HRD, such as SALGA, CoGTA and the LGSETA, should form a collaborative task team to address the HRD implementation crisis in local government through the appropriate vehicle (DDM).
- Future national research with a more representative sample of municipalities should be conducted to determine whether the HRD efforts of municipalities are realised as envisaged by the policymakers.

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Authors' contributions

H.C.A.C. is the sole author of this research article.

Ethical considerations

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Data availability

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