

The Role of Human Resource Development in Improving Municipal Service in South Africa

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ABSTRACT: Provision of quality service by all spheres of government to citizens of South Africa is a Constitutional mandate. Poor quality of service delivery raises questions about human resource management practices in South African municipalities. If the performance of municipal administration is poor and its human resources are frustrated, neither of the strategic goals could be achieved. The efficiency of administration is directly linked to human resource capacity, therefore, there is a need to develop public institutions through modernizing human resources and improving their performance. Human resource development as a process for developing and unleashing human expertise through organisation development and personnel training and development for the purpose of improving performance to be involved in the advancement of municipal service is necessary. The paper highlights that it is important that human resource development be designed so as to make a much better use of human resources and to improve, at the same time, the well-being and opportunities of professional advancement of its personnel. Various municipalities are continuing to experience lack of service delivery and thus raises the question of saying, if human resource development is practiced well then why are there still continuing protests about service delivery. The purpose of this paper is to examine the role of human resource development in improving municipal service. A comprehensive literature survey or review in the study was the most important research method to gather relevant data that supports the study. Findings of the study indicated that there is shortage of skills in the practice of human resource development and therefore there is a need for HRD professionals to upgrade their skills and knowledge in order to meet the requirements of the new generation.

Keywords: Human Resource Development, Human Resource Management, Municipal Service, New Public Management, Public Service Delivery, Training and Development

1. Introduction

Provision of quality service by all spheres of government to citizens of South Africa is a Constitutional mandate. According to Yahiaoui, Anser and Lahouel (2015) efficiency of administration is directly depending on human resources, therefore it is necessary that every public institution be developed through modernizing and improving human resource management by building up efficiency of individuals and improving their performance. From its origins (Harbison & Myers, 1964; Nadler, 1970) in McGuire (2014:1) posit that HRD has evolved as a field of theory and practice with a distinctive tripartite agenda of human betterment, organisational enhancement and societal development. Swanson and Holton (2001:8) further indicate that it is easy to logically connect the origins of HRD to the history of humankind and the training required to survive or advance. According to Boohene (2011:266) there are scarce resources and human resources happen to be one of those resources, this is evident particularly if human resources are effectively deployed through appropriate human resource practices.

One of the key tasks for every organisation, and department is the effective management of human resources; this is because in most instances, human resources are required to perform duties of departments, organisations and etc. Poor (2013:253) states that the quality of human resources is a critical factor in the capacity of the government to deliver its mandate. Human Resource management is critically important in that it ensures that human capital is well managed and that all issues such as development, performance management, safety, wellness, administrative support and training relating to this resource are effectively dealt with. Furthermore, McGuire (2014:1) emphasises that the transformative power of HRD lies in its capacity to empower the creation of innovative and radical solutions to real-world problems.

2. Conceptualisation of Human Resource Development

Garavan and Dooley (2012:225) posit that as Hillion and McLean pointed out, it appears that

the definition of HRD varies from one country to another, and the national differences are a crucial factor in determining the way in which HRD professionals work. Human resource development can also be defined as a set of systematic and planned activities designed by an organisation to provide its members with the opportunities to learn necessary skills to meet current and future job demands (DeSimone & Werner, 2012:4; Singh, 2011). Meyer (2012:2) align with other authors by defining human resource development as all the processes, systems, methods, procedures and programmes an organisation employs to develop its human resources in order to equip employees to be able to contribute to organisational performance. Garavan and Dooley (2012:234) on the other hand also state that it is any process or activity that, either initially or over the long term, has the potential to develop adults' work-based knowledge, expertise, productivity and satisfaction, whether for personal or group/team gain or for the benefit of an organisation, community, nation or, ultimately, the whole of humanity.

Gibbs (2006:3) states that HRD is part of people management that deals with the process of facilitating, guiding and coordinating work-related learning and development to ensure that individuals, teams and organisations can perform as desired. Adding to the conceptualisation of HRD, Swanson and Holton (2001:4) choose to define HRD as a process for developing and unleashing human expertise through organisation development and personnel training and development for the purpose of improving performance. The practice of human resource development in the public sector is an essential activity in order to deliver public services effectively. It is therefore crucial that human resources be managed for a diverse, competent and well managed workforce. It is further indicated by Swanson and Holton (2001:3) that the practice of human resource development has long been established as compared to the discipline of HRD. In other words, human resources have been trained by various institutions and then later it was decided to include the human resource development as a discipline. Therefore, it is a good thing because if people learn about how human resources are developed in institutions, it will be easy for the management to gather employees with acquired skills and there will not be a lot of work to do when it comes to training of human resources.

3. The Role of Human Resource Development in Improving Municipal Service

Dzansi and Dzansi (2010:996) emphasise that poor quality of service delivery raises questions about justice perceptions of HRM practices in South African municipalities. According to Johnston (2001:39) competing perspective of HRD is that it is primarily about helping individuals in organisations learn and grow. This perspective of HRD argues that learning is the mechanism for empowering individuals by equipping them with skills and knowledge required for technological and occupational change. Meyer (2012:279) accentuates that HRD will typically have to fulfil the following functions: doing proper needs analyses to determine mentoring, coaching and other capacity-building needs; selecting consultants and coaches to support the initial and or on-going implementation of mentoring/coaching. Furthermore, Boohene (2011:267) indicates that human resource management practices include amongst others recruitment, selection, training and development. Tabiu (2013:248) also emphasises that activities of HRM include HRM planning, staffing, training and development, performance management, compensation management, safety and health and employee relations. Additionally, Mohanty (2016:325) indicates the following as the functions of HRD: Training and development, performance appraisal, feedback and coaching, career planning and development, organisational development and potential appraisal.

It is the duty of the Human Resource Development to perform functions such as building the capacity of mentors and mentees to effectively manage the relationships; assist in the matching the mentors and mentees; create and maintain a sound institutional framework for mentoring and coaching by drafting policies, strategies and action plans; monitor the effective implementation of mentoring and coaching relationships and strategies (Meyer, 2012:279). Additionally, Watson (2015) indicates that HRD activities can include training, needs analysis, training programme design and modification, planning and control. It is therefore crucial to understand human resource development play an important role in the improvement of municipal services in the sense that if human resources working for municipalities are developed and trained then the municipal services will be improved. This will curb the protests with regard with service delivery.

3.1 Training and Development

Training and development is regarded as one of the roles that human resources play in the improvement or advancement of municipal services. Therefore, Ganihar and Nayak (2007:16) express their view that training is a learning process that allows employees to acquire new skill knowledge and attitude that bring about a permanent improvement in the ability and behaviour that will lead to more efficient performance. Armstrong (2006) in Boohene (2011:268) further indicates that training is the use of systematic and planned instruction activities to promote learning. People receive knowledge and acquire the necessary skills to perform their job satisfactorily through the formal process of training. Training as one of the largest component of HRD is tracked back through evolution of the human race although the term HRD is relatively new (Swanson & Holton, 2001:8). Goldstein, 1980; Lathan, 1988 in McGuire, Garavan and Dooley (2012:4) regard training as the main mechanism of human resource development and define it as systematic acquisition and development of the knowledge, skills and attitudes required by employees to adequately perform a task or job or to improve performance in the job environment.

The development of employees is a necessary of a company to improve quality and to meet the challenges of global competition and social change (Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart & Wright (2004) in Boohene (2011:269). Human Resources are developed through training, learnerships, mentorships and performance management development system (PMDS) (Public Service Commission, 2010). Thus, Chlivickas (2015:14) indicates that public administration and public sector in general will be advanced if there is an effective improvement of public governance, public management and administration, as well as the development of civil servant training systems. It is further indicated by Swanson and Holton (2001:3) that the purpose of human resource development is to focus on the resource that humans bring to the success equation- both personal success and organisational success. Another purpose according to Pillay (2016:14) is to provide a strategic human resource function within the department. Chlivickas (2015:8) indicates that though there is a big number of intelligent and qualified specialists in Central and Eastern European countries, imperfect legislation as well as human resources system very often impede the process of civil service and even that of public administration.

4. Human Resource Development and New Public Management

According to Brown (2004:305) public sector organisations need to hire, develop and train employees, and establish payment systems, set conditions of employment and develop a coherent set of employment policies. The adoption of New Public Management (NPM) may have opened the possibility of managers acquiring or developing sophisticated HRM techniques. Thus, NPM principles allow a more flexible and responsive approach to questions of recruitment, selection, retention, training and development of public sector employees (Brown, 2004:305). Robinson (2015:7) on the other hand indicates that the New Public Management (NPM) refers to a series of novel approaches to public administration and management that emerged in a number of OECD countries in the 1980s. It is further indicated that the New Public Management (NPM) is a management philosophy that is used by the government since 1980s in order to modernize the public sectors. Many developed and developing nations are now experimenting about the applicability of NPM in their contexts (Ferdousi & Qui, 2013:150).

Brown (2004:306) further contends that the introduction of New Public Management with an emphasis on transferring private sector management techniques into the public sector shifted the emphasis in the public sector from administration to management and was part of a broad strategy to achieve efficiency, effectiveness and quality of service. Nogueira and de Santana (2015:2) indicate that some governments are now endeavouring to rectify the strategic error that has occurred and a trend is emerging toward the upgrading of human resource management processes, which requires that some balance be sought between old and new ideas. Ferdousi and Qui (2013:150) further emphasise that in response to economic, institutional and ideological changes, as well as criticisms of inefficient and costly public sectors, public sector reforms has become an international phenomenon and therefore a paradigm of public sector management known as NPM has emerged in OECD. Constantinou (2015:38) also indicates that the emergence of NPM comprised a major shift whereby traditional public administration was transformed into a public management system, making governments more effective and efficient.

5. Challenges Associated with Resource Development

According to Pillar (2016) the following are human resource development challenges:

- Some departments still do not enjoy adequate support of the top management for HRD implementation in terms of human and financial resources.
- Departments and practitioners have only recently begun to understand framework.
- Not all departments have adequately resourced HRD units and many HRD practitioners still struggle to fully understand the strategic role of HRD function
- HRD implementation plans not a conscious exercise in many departments and therefore what is planned is not what is implemented.
- Weak alignment between HRD processes and HRM processes.
- Mismatch between training and development initiatives and organisational needs/priorities.

5.1 Technology or Skills

Singh (2011) states that the techniques and technologies used for training are moving in a very high pace as in the case of technological development, the new technologies are replacing the older ones quickly. This requires an HR professional to then upgrade his skills and knowledge in order to meet the requirements of the new generation. Lauby (2011) posits that human resources professionals are realizing that the fast-paced, ever-changing digital world impacts their jobs and workplaces because technologies are evolving every day.

5.2 Knowledge or Information

Enhancement of knowledge is a big challenge for HRD professional as they have to understand the different philosophies demonstrated at different places in the world. The philosophy related to leadership is an example of the challenge faced by HRD professional as it changes dramatically in organisations from different parts of the world (Singh, 2011). Johnston (2001:37) states that there is a need

for HRD practitioners to become highly skilled to ensure that their practice meets the changing needs of organisations since they are primarily responsible for employee development.

5.3 Lifestyle or Habits and Environment

The life style of an employee is also important for HRD professionals because they have to understand the habits of the employees and then decide the training that needs to be imparted for bringing a change in the habits of the employees (Singh, 2011). The participant in Budhwani (2006:62) indicated that the lifestyle and environment that people have is extremely hard for them to contribute additional time. It is a problem because people do not have time to contribute to the development work. According to Singh (2011) the nature of the environment where the organisation is situated contributes to the success of an organisation.

5.4 Management Support

Public Service Commission (2011) indicated that one of the main challenges which HRD practitioners face is lack of management support. Many departments indicated that due to lack of support of line managers, HRD units found it difficult to implement practices effectively.

6. Legislative Frameworks

In order to effectively manage and guide the skills development, training and capacity building of employees within the Public Service, legislation, proper strategies, policies, processes and procedures are necessary.

6.1 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996

Van der Westhuizen and Wessels (2010:33) indicate that the Constitution is the supreme law of the Republic; law or conduct inconsistent with it is invalid, and obligations imposed by it, must be fulfilled. According to Barlett (2011:46) the Constitution legitimises the need for quality education and training, HRD and HD for all South African citizens. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, emphasise that public administration must be broadly representative of the South African people, with employment and personnel practices based on ability, objectivity, fairness, and the need to redress

the imbalances of the past to achieve broad representation; Good human resource management and career-development practices to maximise human potential must be cultivated; A high standard of professional ethics must be promoted and maintained (RSA, 1996).

Section 195(1) of the Constitution (RSA, 1996) requires the following basic values and principles to strengthen service delivery: democratic values and principles, a high standard of professional ethics, efficient, economic and effective use of resources and services must be provided impartially fairly equitably and without bias based on the citizens' needs and priorities. Barlett (2011:46) further indicates that the Constitution thus emphasises the need for quality public service delivery and section 195(1)(h) requires the public administration to cultivate competent capable public officials with good human resource management and development practices and career development practices to maximise human potential. Therefore, the development of human resources in municipalities will thus help achieve effective, efficient and economic use of resources which will lead to the quality delivery of services.

6.2 White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (Batho Pele), 1997

The provision of a policy framework and a practical implementation strategy is regarded as the primary purpose of the White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery in order to ensure transformation of the public service and improved and efficient public service delivery to all its citizens. Chapter 11 of the White Paper focuses on, among other things: plans for staffing, human resource development and organisational capacity building, tailored to service delivery needs; and the redirection of human and resources from administrative tasks to service provision, particularly for disadvantaged groups and areas. The WPPSTE acknowledges that training and education are not the solution to all organisational problems, but recognizes that education and training contribute to a strategy for human resource development. Training and education thus need to be systematically linked to the broader processes of human resource development.

6.3 Skills Development Act, 1998

According to Kaufman (2014:394) the purpose of the Skills Development Act was to raise skill levels

in the workplace by requiring companies to invest in at least 1 percent of payroll on workforce training. This Act has been so successful in increasing investment in training that South African companies spend. Skills Development Amendment Act 37 of 2008 Skills development in the workplace is governed by the Skills Development Act (SDA) (No. 97 of 1998) (RSA, 1998d), which mandates every employer to appoint a Skills Development Facilitator (SDF) for the purpose of managing human resource development in every organisation.

The amended Skills Development Act aims to improve the quality of the sector skills plans to ensure better investment of HRD and skills development initiatives to ensure an enhanced return on investment. The HRDSA will utilise the improved sector skills plans to develop a national master scarce skills list, to further direct HRD in improving return on investments with regard to HRD programmes and projects.

6.4 South African Qualification Authority (SAQA) Act, 1995

Human Resource Development Strategy for public Service (2006:50) indicates that this legislation introduces new institutions, programmes and funding policies designed to increase invest in skills development. The two overriding priorities that this legislation seeks to address include the ever-present reality of the global economy and the imperative to increase skills within the country to improve productivity and competitiveness of its industry, business, commerce and services. The second is to address the challenges of an unequal society, to make it more inclusive and to encourage greater cohesion. The government has committed itself to training and development in the Public Service through its White Paper on public Service Training and Education (WPPSTE, 1998). There is a challenge of training and transforming employees in government departments in a manner that will not only benefit government in its quest for excellent service delivery, but will empower the individual employees as well.

6.5 Macro Human Resource Development Strategy

The Human Resource Development Strategy (HRDS) (South Africa 2002) was adopted to support a holistic approach to training and development in

the South African public sector (Venter, Van der Walt, Phutiagae, Khalo, Van Niekerk and Nealer, 2007:183). To enable it to actualise its constitutional mandate of creating a better life for all, the government envisages a public sector that is guided by the ethos of service and committed to the provision of high-quality services (Majam, 205:446) in Venter *et al.*, (2007:183). Venter *et al.* (2007:183) state that the key mission of the HRDS is to maximise the potential of the people of South Africa through the acquisition of knowledge and skills to work productively and competitively in order to achieve a rising quality of life for all and to set in place an operational plan together with the necessary institutional arrangement to achieve this plan. Pillay (2016) indicates that the strategic HRD strategic framework provides strategic vision and direction for human resource development across the entire public service. The human resource development strategic framework is a national framework that is intended to provide the overarching strategic direction for human resource development within the public service.

Boohene (2011:266) further indicates that research in Human Resource Management (HRM) has established that the success of any organisation is highly influenced by the calibre of its human resource (HR), which in turn, is affected by the organisation's human resource management practices. Therefore, in terms of the public sector, public sector organisations require good quality of human resources and human resource management practices. Collins and Druten (2003) in Boohene (2011:267) contend that the effectiveness of human resource practise, particularly employee selection procedures, performance appraisal, rewards and benefits management, and employee training and development often have a direct bearing on organisational productivity and performance. If people are well trained and developed in organisations, there will be an increase in productivity. The assumption that underpins the practice of HRM according to Armstrong (2006) in Boohene (2011:267) is that people are the organisation's key resource and organisational performance largely depends on them. Therefore, if an appropriate range of HR policies and processes are developed and implemented effectively, then HR will make a substantial impact on the firm's performance. In the public sector, effective provision of services or effective administration of services by the public servants depends largely on the human resource management practices in the public sector.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

In this paper, the role that human resource development plays in the advancement of public service is very important. It is essential that every public sector have human resources that know their personnel function as it is defined as a group of activities that are responsible for the provision, utilisation and maintenance of adequate personnel for effective service delivery. Typically, activities in the human resource management include aspects such as recruitment, selection, training, placement, evaluation and remuneration of personnel. It is important that civil servants training be developed for the advancement of public service. Armstrong (2006) in Boohene (2011:268) indicates that HRD invests in people in order to enable them to perform well and empower them to make the best use of their natural abilities. Furthermore, Public Service Commission (2011) accentuates that there should be an evaluation of training and development initiatives in government departments by measuring the effectiveness both in terms of realising the components outputs and the departments' strategic objectives as well as measuring improvement of employee competence in crucial in an organisation.

It is thus important to indicate that if there is management of human resources in municipalities, there will be diverse competent and well managed workforce that is capable of and committed to delivering high quality services to the people of South Africa. It is also necessary for the human resources in municipalities to be committed to their work by providing services to the people at the right time rather than being forced to provide those services. Furthermore, Chlivickas (2015:13) stipulates that it is important to improve the capabilities of human resources and of the public sector at large in order to transform the contemporary society, with priorities to be set for intellectualisation, ability to react to increasingly rapid changes, adaptability and competitiveness. From the concept Human Resource Development, the development of human resources in the public service stresses that if public service officials are well trained, there will be effective provision of services this is because the effective provision of services revolves around the training of public service officials. Rao, 1990; in Mohanty, (2016:323) indicates that employees in every organisation or institution are the most important and valuable resources and their development can help the organisations or an institutions

realize their objectives by creating a competent, dynamic and motivated employee force.

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