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Developing a managerial framework for Training and Development in the Mnquma Local Municipality, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to address a critical research gap concerning the implementation of training and development within local government by developing a managerial framework for training and development in Mnquma Local Municipality, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa, with the objective of enhancing the municipality's institutional capacity to deliver effective, efficient, and sustainable services to its constituents. The research examined the extent to which current T&D programs influence employee productivity and job performance and identified structural and operational challenges that impede effectiveness. Using a quantitative descriptive design, data were collected from 120 municipal employees via structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics. Findings reveal that T&D programs positively influence individual outcomes: 78% of respondents report improved productivity, and 83% report enhanced job performance. However, 33% rated program evaluation mechanisms as inadequate, while limited training expertise, poor technological infrastructure, and inconsistent opportunities to apply skills constrain organizational impact. These results confirm that while T&D enhances human capital, legislative compliance alone does not ensure systematic capacity development in rural municipalities, thereby refuting the assumption of automatic policy translation into practice. Based on these findings, the study proposes a four-component cyclical framework This framework contributes to scholarship by addressing the policy implementation gap in rural municipalities and extending Kirkpatrick's and ADDIE's models by integrating application and resourcing components for resource-constrained contexts. In practice, it operationalizes the Skills Development Act and the Municipal Systems Act to enable compliance with the Municipal Finance Management Act.

Keywords: Training and Development(T&D), Employee Productivity, Local Government, Skills Enhancement, Municipal Performance.

INTRODUCTION

Training and skill development are essential for equipping municipal administrators with the tools to address problems. Section 2 of the Skills Development Act (Act 97 of 1998), section 78 of the Local Government Municipal Systems Act (2000), and the Mnquma Local Municipality (MLM) are just a few

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examples of South African municipalities that highlight the significance of training and development in the public sector. Without effective training and development initiatives, municipal managers might lack the know-how to manage resources effectively, resulting in subpar service delivery and lower public satisfaction.[1]

On the other hand, well-planned training and development initiatives can enhance municipal managers' ability to deliver high-quality services, fostering confidence and trust among the general public. The significance of training and skill development in enhancing the delivery of public services is also emphasized in the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030.[2] According to the National Planning Commission, the NDP highlights the need for municipalities to develop and implement efficient training and development initiatives that address the unique needs of municipal managers and staff.

Training and development programs help municipal managers develop essential skills, such as strategic planning, financial management, leadership, and communication.[3] Section 78(1) of the Municipal Finance Management Act (Act 56 of 2003) requires municipalities to ensure that their employees have the necessary skills and competencies to perform their duties effectively. Effective training and development programs can also help municipalities address corruption, mismanagement, and inefficiency, which are often cited as major challenges for local government in South Africa.[4]

The development of effective employee training programs is a crucial aspect of enhancing organizational performance, particularly in local government. Several existing frameworks have been widely used to guide the development of training programs, including Kirkpatrick's Model of Training Evaluation,[5] the ADDIE Model, and Social Learning Theory.[6] However, these frameworks have limitations when applied to the specific context of local government.

Social Learning Theory, which emphasizes the role of observation and imitation in learning,[7] may be insufficient on its own to address the complex issues facing local government. These limitations highlight the need for a more tailored approach to training program development in local government.

Given the limitations of existing frameworks, there is a need for a more context-specific framework that accounts for the specific needs and challenges of local government. This framework should be grounded in scholarly research and tailored to the unique context of the MLM.

T&D initiatives are understood to offer benefits including improved service delivery,[8] increased employee engagement, and enhanced retention.[9] Investing in T&D is also understood to foster a positive workplace atmosphere and strengthen employee commitment.[10]

Despite the importance of T&D, there is a scarcity of research on this topic in the MLM context. This study aims to address this research gap by developing a managerial framework for T&D in the MLM, Eastern Cape, enhancing the municipality's capacity to deliver effective services to its constituents.

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1 Khuselwa Nama et al., "The Impact of Training and Development on Employee Performance and Service Delivery at a Local Municipality in South Africa," *Problems and Perspectives in Management* 20, no. 4 (October 13, 2022): 42–51, https://doi.org/10.21511/ppm.20(4).2022.04.

2 National Planning Commission, *National Development Plan 2030: Our Future – Make It Work* (. Pretoria: The Presidency, Republic of South Africa, 2012).

3 Gcotyelwa Gcezengana et al., "An Investigation of a Nexus between Employee Skills Development and Competence in the Eastern Cape Department of Education," *Africa's Public Service Delivery and Performance Review* 10, no. 1 (December 19, 2022), https://doi.org/10.4102/apsdpr.v10i1.651.

4 National Planning Commission, "National Development Plan 2030: Our Future – Make It Work" (Pretoria: Republic of South Africa, 2020).

5 Kirkpatrick and Donald L, "Techniques for Evaluating Training Programs," *Journal of the American Society of Training Directors* 13, no. 3 (1959): 1–10.

6 Albert Bandura, "Self-Efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change.," *Psychological Review* 84, no. 2 (1977): 191–215, https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.84.2.191.

7 Bandura, "Self-Efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change."

8 Nama et al., "The Impact of Training and Development on Employee Performance and Service Delivery at a Local Municipality in South Africa."

9 Nkosinathi Masuku, Elriza Esterhuyzen, and Mpolokeng Ramajoe, "Determinants of Employee Engagement and Job Satisfaction in a Local Municipality," *SA Journal of Human Resource Management* 23 (June 17, 2025), https://doi.org/10.4102/sajhrm.v23i0.2988.

10 Masuku, Esterhuyzen, and Ramajoe, "Determinants of Employee Engagement and Job Satisfaction in a Local Municipality."

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theme A: Training and Development's Effect on Performance, Productivity, and Quality of Work

A substantial body of literature converges on the claim that training and development initiatives improve employee job performance, productivity, and the quality and timeliness of work, largely by building technical competence and enabling more efficient task execution. In a quantitative study of a South African local municipality, Nama et al. found that training and development were significantly associated with improved employee performance and with improved service delivery, and specifically identified coaching and mentoring as underused mechanisms for translating training into performance gains.[11] This claim is broadly consistent with the present study's findings, in which 78% of respondents reported improved productivity and 83% reported improved job performance following T&D participation. However, Nama et al.'s study, like much of the existing evidence on this relationship, comes from a more general local-government setting rather than a resource-constrained rural municipality specifically, and does not examine whether performance gains are sustained once training ends or depend on continued opportunities to apply new skills on the job. This is a meaningful point of difference: only 22% of Mnquma respondents rated their opportunities to apply newly learned skills as 'Good' or 'Excellent', suggesting that the performance gains Nama et al. report may not translate into sustained organizational impact without the structured application mechanisms introduced by this study's proposed framework.

Theme B: Training and Development's Effect on Skills, Knowledge, Adaptability, and Problem-Solving

A related strand of literature argues that training and development build employees' technical and soft skills, knowledge base, and competence to perform their roles. Gcezengana et al., investigating the Eastern Cape Department of Education, found that in-service training and mentorship were central to translating formal qualifications into actual job competence, and that skills gaps persisted even among qualified staff where training did not keep pace with changing technological and operational demands.[12] This finding aligns with the present study's result that 84% of respondents reported enhanced skills and knowledge following training. Where the two studies diverge is that Gcezengana et al. examined a provincial education department using a qualitative, interview-based design, whereas the present study's quantitative survey of a rural municipality suggests the same skills-competence gap identified in Eastern Cape education is also present in Eastern Cape local government, and is compounded there by the additional constraints of limited technological infrastructure and training expertise this study identifies on whether adaptability and problem-solving specifically, rather than skills and competence generally, show the same pattern.

Theme C: Training and Development's Effect on Morale, Satisfaction, Motivation, Engagement, and Retention

A further strand of literature links training and development to improved employee morale, job satisfaction, motivation, engagement, and reduced staff turnover. In a South African municipal setting closely comparable to Mnquma, Masuku et al. applied the Job Demands-Resources model to administrative employees at eMalahleni Local Municipality and found that leadership support, professional development opportunities, and a supportive work environment were key determinants of engagement and satisfaction, with clear implications for retention.[13] This is broadly consistent with the 85% of Mnquma respondents who reported improved morale following training. However, Masuku et al. also found only moderate overall levels of engagement and satisfaction even where these resources were present, which complicates a simple 'training improves morale' reading of the literature: the present study's finding that 33% of respondents rated evaluation mechanisms as inadequate suggests that, as in

[11] Nama et al., "The Impact of Training and Development on Employee Performance and Service Delivery at a Local Municipality in South Africa."
[12] Gcezengana et al., "An Investigation of a Nexus between Employee Skills Development and Competence in the Eastern Cape Department of Education."
[13] Masuku, Esterhuyzen, and Ramajoe, "Determinants of Employee Engagement and Job Satisfaction in a Local Municipality."

eMalahleni, morale and engagement gains from training in Mnquma may be capped by weaknesses in the surrounding organizational support system rather than by training itself.

Theme D: Training and Development's Effect on Communication, Teamwork, and Collaboration
A smaller strand of literature examines the effects of training on interpersonal and organizational functioning. Zweni, studying management interventions in training and development participation at a Western Cape municipality, found that a lack of effective communication and management practice was itself a barrier to employee participation in training, while combined departmental training interventions were reported to strengthen teamwork, enhance communication, and foster better working relationships once implemented.[14] This theme is the least directly tested by the present study's survey instrument relative to Themes A-C, and represents an area where this study's findings can extend rather than merely confirm Zweni's perspective. Whereas Zweni identifies communication as a precondition for participation, the present study's proposed managerial framework treats structured communication and mentorship as an ongoing component (Component 3) rather than a one-time enabling condition, which may address the sustainability gap Zweni's findings leave open.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Human Capital Theory

The Human Capital Theory, developed by economists Gary Becker and Theodore Schultz, guides this study.[15] It emphasizes the importance of employee training and development (T&D) in driving economic growth. The South African government recognizes the crucial role employee development plays in enhancing public service delivery and promoting economic growth.[16] Employee T&D is understood to improve job performance, productivity, and organizational effectiveness,[17] and to increase employee engagement, morale, and job satisfaction.[18]

The National Development Plan (NDP) 2030 highlights the need for a skilled and capable public service to drive economic growth and development.[19] This is critical for the MLM, where effective public service delivery promotes economic growth and where inadequate employee training and development are understood to constrain the municipality's ability to deliver public services.[20] Investigating T&D needs and developing a managerial framework will improve public service delivery and promote economic growth.

The significance of investing in staff development to improve public service delivery and economic growth in the MLM makes this theory pertinent. This study sought to provide a managerial framework to satisfy the T&D needs of employees by applying the Human Capital Theory, which would ultimately boost economic development and public service delivery.

METHODOLOGY

Research approach

The research approach chosen for this study was quantitative because it enabled the researcher to identify relationships among variables and test hypotheses. This study employed a quantitative research approach to develop a managerial framework for Training and Development (T&D) in the MLM. This approach was typically associated with deductive reasoning and logical analysis.[21] As a quantitative study, it aimed to identify relationships between variables (independent and dependent) by testing

[14] Noluthando Zweni, "Employee Participation in Training and Development Interventions at a Selected Municipality," *SA Journal of Human Resource Management* 21 (2023): 1–10.
[15] Gary Stanley Becker, *Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis* (National Bureau of Economic Research, 1975); W Schultz Theodore, "Investment in Human Capital," *The American Economic Review* 51, no. 1 (1961): 1–17.
[16] National Planning Commission, *National Development Plan 2030: Our Future—Make It Work* (Pretoria: The Presidency, 2012).
[17] Nama et al., "The Impact of Training and Development on Employee Performance and Service Delivery at a Local Municipality in South Africa."
[18] Masuku, Esterhuyzen, and Ramajoe, "Determinants of Employee Engagement and Job Satisfaction in a Local Municipality."
[19] National Planning Commission, *National Development Plan 2030: Our Future—Make It Work*.
[20] Nama et al., "The Impact of Training and Development on Employee Performance and Service Delivery at a Local Municipality in South Africa."
[21] Alan Bryman and Emma Bell, *Business Research Methods*, 6th ed. (Oxford University Press, 2022).

hypotheses and confirming statements about their relationships.[22] The unit of analysis was atomistic variables, which formed part of the whole. Quantitative research enabled researchers to discover a predetermined reality fixed by the methods used, allowing hypotheses to guide the research.[23] The quantitative approach was structured and relied on reliable data to analyze numeric information using statistical procedures. This approach enabled the researcher to obtain data objectively, systematically, and in a standardized, controlled manner, using statistical, logical, and mathematical techniques and a predetermined research design.

Research design

This study adopted a quantitative descriptive survey design, which was appropriate because it enabled data collection from a large sample and facilitated generalizing the findings to the broader population. Data on staff members' training and development needs in the MLM were collected more easily using a descriptive survey design, which also shed light on the municipality's current training and development situation.

Sampling

The sampling technique chosen for this study was a non-probability sampling method, specifically purposive sampling, which was employed to select a sample of 120 young individuals from the MLM who had participated in T&D programs. This sampling method enabled the researcher to deliberately select participants who were information-rich and knowledgeable about the research topic. This purposive approach was justified on the grounds that these employees were information-rich, having directly experienced the municipality's T&D programs, and could therefore provide focused insight relevant to the study objectives; it is acknowledged that this non-probability approach limits the statistical generalisability of the findings beyond the sampled group.

Sampling in this study was conducted using the following steps:

1. **Step 1: The target population:** Employees of the MLM were defined as the target population.
2. **Step 2: Selecting a sampling frame:** A sampling frame is a list of individuals or elements from which a sample is selected. The sampling frame consisted of MLM employees aged 18-35 who had participated in formal T&D programs sponsored by the MLM.
3. **Step 3: Determining if a probability or non-probability sampling method will be chosen/Sample technique:** The sampling technique chosen for this study was a non-probability sampling method, specifically purposive sampling.
4. **Step 4: Determining sample size:** A sample of 120 young individuals from the MLM who had participated in T&D programs was determined.
5. **Step 5: Gathering data from designated elements:** Data were collected from the sampled respondents using questionnaires.
6. **Step 6: Conduct fieldwork:** Data collection was carried out accordingly.

Data analysis

Descriptive statistics were used in this study's data processing method, and SPSS was used for statistical testing. To ensure the analysis addressed the research questions, the data analysis approach was tailored to the study's goal. Prior to analysis, the data were coded, validated, edited, entered, and cleaned. The study's sample or dataset, comprising the means, standard deviations, and frequencies of the variables, as well as the demographic and biographical information, sample size, and response rate, was summarized using descriptive statistics. Research findings were visually presented using graphical representations to provide insightful information about the study. Consistent with the study's descriptive design, the relationships among variables were examined using descriptive statistics (frequencies,

[22] J W Creswell and J D Creswell, “Reserach Design Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches (Sixth Edit)” (Sage Publications, Inc, 2023).

[23] Fred N Kerlinger and Howard B. Lee, *Foundations of Behavioral Research*, 4th ed. (Boston: Cengage Learning , 2020).

percentages, means) rather than inferential/regression analysis. R version 4.1.4 and SPSS version 25 statistical tools were used for the analyses.

Ethical considerations

The researcher adhered to several key ethical principles to maintain the integrity and trustworthiness of the study. The researcher demonstrated honesty and transparency regarding the study's methods, funding sources, conflicts of interest, and findings. Upholding academic integrity, the researcher avoided fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism, thereby maintaining the study's credibility and trustworthiness. Adhering to these ethical principles, the researcher ensured the study's integrity, reliability, and validity. Ethical clearance for this study was obtained from the Faculty of Management and Public Administration Sciences Research Ethics Committee (FMPAS-FREC) at Walter Sisulu University, acting under the delegated authority of the University's Senate Research Ethics Committee (SREC). Approval was granted under protocol number FMPAS/DPMG/2025/0024 (SREC approval date: 11 August 2025; certificate issued: 26 August 2025).

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Biographical Overview of Respondents

The study surveyed 120 MLM employees. The sample was 55% male and 45% female. Most respondents (75%) had more than 2 years of service, and 80% held a diploma, degree, or postgraduate qualification. Respondents represented management, administrative, and technical roles.

Presentation of findings for Objective 1: To investigate the extent to which training and development programs have improved employee productivity and performance at the MLM.

Most respondents (78%) believe that the municipality's training and development programs have positively impacted their productivity, with 50% rating it “Good” and 28% rating it “Excellent”. Only a small percentage (7%) rated it poorly (Not good at all or Poor).

This suggests that the municipality's training and development programs are effective in enhancing employee productivity, which can lead to improved job performance and overall organizational efficiency. The results indicate a strong positive correlation between training and development programs and employee productivity, highlighting the importance of investing in employee development initiatives.

The municipality's training and development programs have improved job performance.

The majority of respondents (83%) believe that the municipality's training and development programs have positively impacted their job performance, with 55% rating it “Good” and 28% rating it “Excellent”. Only a small percentage (5%) rated it poorly (Not good at all or Poor).

This suggests that the municipality's training and development programs are effective in enhancing employee job performance, thereby improving service delivery and overall organizational success. The high ratings indicate that employees feel more confident and capable in their roles after participating in the training programs.

The municipality provides adequate resources for training and development.

Most respondents (73%) believe that the municipality provides adequate resources for training and development, with 45% rating it “Good” and 28% rating it “Excellent”. A relatively small percentage (9%) rated it poorly (Not good at all or Poor).

This suggests that the municipality is generally perceived as investing sufficiently in training and development resources, which is crucial for employee growth and organizational success. However, there is still room for improvement, as 21% of respondents rated it “Fair” or lower, indicating some dissatisfaction with the resources provided.

The training and development programs offered by the municipality are relevant to job requirements
Most respondents (83%) believe that the municipality's training and development programs are relevant to their job requirements, with 50% rating them "Good" and 33% rating them "Excellent". Only a small percentage (7%) rated it poorly (Not good at all or Poor).
This suggests that the municipality's training and development programs are well-aligned with employees' job requirements, which is crucial for effective skill development and job performance. The high ratings indicate that employees feel the training programs are practical and applicable to their work. When training is relevant, employees are more likely to be engaged and motivated, and to apply new skills and knowledge on the job, ultimately contributing to the municipality's overall success.

The municipality evaluates the effectiveness of its training and development programs.
The majority of respondents (67%) believe that the municipality evaluates the effectiveness of its training and development programs, with 40% rating it "Good" and 27% rating it "Excellent". A notable percentage (13%) rated it poorly (Not good at all or Poor), and 20% rated it "Fair".
This suggests that while the municipality has some mechanisms in place to evaluate training effectiveness, there may be room for improvement. Regular evaluation is crucial for assessing the impact of training programs and identifying areas for improvement. The municipality may consider strengthening its evaluation processes to ensure that training programs meet their intended objectives and have a meaningful impact on employee development.

The municipality's training and development programs have enhanced skills and knowledge.
Most respondents (84%) believe that the municipality's training and development programs have enhanced their skills and knowledge, with 55% rating them "Good" and 29% rating them "Excellent". Only a small percentage (4%) rated it poorly (Not good at all or Poor).
This suggests that the municipality's training and development programs are effective at enhancing employees' skills and knowledge, thereby improving job performance, productivity, and overall organizational effectiveness. The high ratings indicate that employees feel more competent and confident in their abilities after participating in the training programs.

The municipality provides opportunities for employees to apply new skills and knowledge acquired through training.
Most respondents (78%) believe that the municipality provides opportunities for employees to apply new skills and knowledge acquired through training, with 50% rating it "Good" and 28% rating it "Excellent". A relatively small percentage (7%) rated it poorly (Not good at all or Poor).
This suggests that the municipality is generally effective in providing opportunities for employees to apply their new skills and knowledge, which is crucial for reinforcing learning and improving job performance. By allowing employees to apply what they have learned, the municipality can maximize the return on investment in training and development, and employees can continue to grow and develop in their roles.

The municipality's training and development programs have improved employee morale.
With 55% rating it "Good" and 30% rating it "Good," the majority of respondents (85%) think the municipality's training and development initiatives have raised staff morale. Outstanding. Just 5% of respondents gave it a low rating (bad or not good at all). This implies that the municipality's training and development expenditures are positively impacting staff morale, which, in turn, can lead to higher job satisfaction, lower employee turnover, and enhanced overall well-being. Employees are more likely to be interested, driven, and dedicated to the company when they believe their employer is investing in their personal development.

DISCUSSION
This study aims to address the research gap by developing a managerial framework for training and development in MLM, Eastern Cape, to enhance the municipality's capacity to deliver effective services

to its constituents. The findings provide evidence that while T&D programs currently improve individual employee outcomes, the absence of a structured framework limits consistent, equitable, and measurable impact on municipal service delivery.

The finding that 78% of employees reported improved productivity and 83% reported improved job performance confirms the central claim in public administration literature that T&D builds institutional capacity,[24] (see Theme A). The 84% who reported enhanced skills and the 85% who reported improved morale further validate the relationship between T&D, skills competence, and morale described in Themes B and C above.[25] These results indicate that when delivered, training fulfills the intent of the Skills Development Act (Act 97 of 1998) at the employee level.

The 83% of respondents who found training relevant to job requirements support the view that perceived relevance drives engagement and application,[26] (see Theme A anchor). However, this positive finding must be read against the 33% of employees who rated program evaluation as "Fair" or below, and the identified challenges of inadequate monitoring, limited expertise, and poor technological infrastructure. This directly contradicts Kirkpatrick's Model (1959) and the ADDIE framework,[27] both of which treat systematic evaluation and resourcing as non-negotiable for training effectiveness. The data therefore refute the assumption that policy compliance alone guarantees results. Training is occurring, but without evaluation and infrastructure, the municipality cannot demonstrate return on investment or compliance with Section 78 of the Municipal Systems Act (2000).

The research gap this study addresses is the disconnect between legislative T&D mandates and practical implementation in rural municipalities. The findings show this gap clearly: employees benefit from training, yet access is uneven, evaluation is weak, and application opportunities are inconsistent, with 22% of respondents rating application opportunities as "Good" or "Excellent". This means current T&D efforts are ad hoc and manager-dependent rather than system-driven. This finding extends the broader argument that generic national frameworks may fail in rural, resource-constrained contexts. It also challenges the sufficiency of Social Learning Theory for municipal settings on its own, because social learning cannot occur without structured opportunities to apply skills and without technology to support it.[28]

The study confirms that a skilled workforce is essential for achieving strategic objectives, as 78% of employees linked training to productivity gains. However, the identified weaknesses in evaluation and infrastructure explain why these individual gains are not translating into consistent organizational performance. This is significant for the aim of enhancing service delivery: the Municipal Finance Management Act (Act 56 of 2003) requires a competent workforce to manage public funds, yet the municipality lacks a mechanism to ensure all employees reach competence. Therefore, the data support the study's core proposition that a managerial framework must standardize four elements: needs analysis, equitable access, delivery, and evaluation. Without this, T&D will remain fragmented, and the municipality's capacity to serve constituents will remain constrained.

The findings both confirm and complicate existing literature. They confirm that T&D improves performance, morale, and skills when relevant. They refute the notion that legislative frameworks automatically produce capable municipalities. The discussion demonstrates that addressing the research gap requires moving beyond isolated training events to an institutionalized managerial framework that operationalizes policy into practice at MLM.

The proposed framework addresses the identified gaps by institutionalizing training and development into four interdependent components to ensure consistency, compliance, and impact on service delivery. Component 1: Standardized Needs Analysis and Access requires annual ward-based skills audits aligned to the IDP and Section 78 of the Municipal Systems Act, ensuring equitable

[24] Nama et al., "The Impact of Training and Development on Employee Performance and Service Delivery at a Local Municipality in South Africa."

[25] Gcezengana et al., "An Investigation of a Nexus between Employee Skills Development and Competence in the Eastern Cape Department of Education"; Masuku, Esterhuyzen, and Ramajoe, "Determinants of Employee Engagement and Job Satisfaction in a Local Municipality."

[26] Masuku, Esterhuyzen, and Ramajoe, "Determinants of Employee Engagement and Job Satisfaction in a Local Municipality."

[27] Michael Molenda, "In Search of the Elusive ADDIE Model," *Performance Improvement* 42, no. 5 (2003): 34–37.

[28] Bandura, "Self-Efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change."

identification of training needs across all departments and addressing the 17% of employees who found current programs not fully relevant. This feeds into Component 2: Resourced Delivery Protocol, which mandates a dedicated T&D budget line, appointment of qualified municipal training officers, and provision of basic technological infrastructure for blended learning, directly responding to findings of limited expertise and poor infrastructure. To operationalize learning, Component 3: Structured Application Mechanism compels line managers to create post-training work plans that guarantee opportunities for employees to apply new skills, targeting the 22% of respondents who lacked strong application opportunities, and ensuring Social Learning Theory principles are met through mentorship.

To close the accountability loop, Component 4: Mandatory Multi-Level Evaluation System adapts Kirkpatrick's Model for the rural municipal context, requiring Level 1 Reaction and Level 2 Learning assessments after each program, Level 3 Behavior evaluations at 3-month post-training by supervisors, and Level 4 Results tracking linked to quarterly service delivery KPIs from the SDBIP. This addresses the 33% dissatisfaction with current evaluation practices and ensures compliance with MFMA requirements for a competent workforce. The framework operates as a continuous cycle in which evaluation data from Component 4 directly inform the next needs analysis in Component 1, moving Mnquma from ad hoc training events to a legislatively compliant, measurable system that enhances institutional capacity to deliver services to constituents.

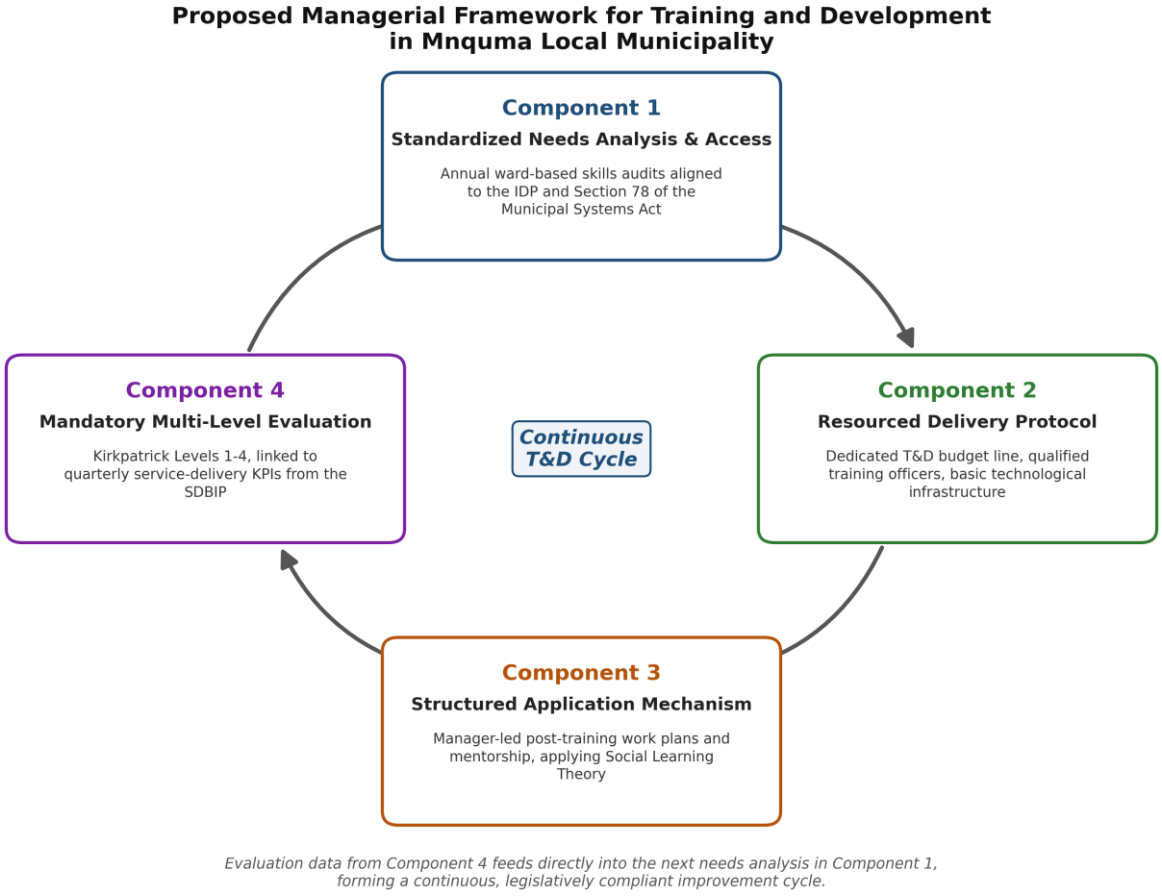

Figure 1: Proposed Managerial Framework for Training and Development in MLM

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

The MLM should develop a comprehensive training framework that addresses the specific needs of its employees. This framework should align with the municipality's strategic objectives and prioritize training needs based on business requirements. The framework should include training needs assessment, training program design, implementation, and evaluation. Additionally, the municipality

should establish a training committee to oversee the development and implementation of the framework. This committee should comprise representatives from various departments and levels of the organization to ensure that the framework is inclusive and effective.

The municipality should prioritize training and development by allocating sufficient resources to support employee growth. This can be achieved by allocating a dedicated budget for training and development and ensuring it is used effectively. Furthermore, the municipality should explore alternative funding sources, such as grants and partnerships, to support training and development initiatives. This will enable the municipality to provide more comprehensive training programs that cater to the diverse needs of its employees.

The municipality should review its training policies and procedures to ensure equal access to training opportunities for all employees. This can be achieved by developing a policy that promotes equal access to training opportunities and establishing a system to track employee training and development. The municipality should also ensure that all employees are aware of available training opportunities and are encouraged to participate. By doing so, the municipality can promote a culture of learning and development, which will ultimately enhance the skills and knowledge of its employees.

CONCLUSION

This study's findings confirm that training and development programs have a significant positive impact on employee productivity and performance at MLM. The programs have improved job performance, enhanced skills and knowledge, and contributed to a more competent workforce. To sustain these benefits, the municipality should develop a comprehensive training framework, prioritize training and development, and ensure equal access to training opportunities. By doing so, the municipality can enhance service delivery, employee engagement, and overall performance.

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