



Modelling of staff development framework to enhance employee's performance in the selected South African local Government: Msunduzi Municipality

A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy in Business and Information Management, Durban University of Technology

By

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Declaration

I, Phumelela Talent Vezi, hereby declare that the work presented in this dissertation, titled "Modelling of Staff Development Framework to Enhance Employee's Performance in the Selected South African Local Government: Msunduzi Municipality", is my original research work, except where due reference is made. This dissertation has not been previously submitted for any degree or examination at any other institution.

I confirm that this dissertation has been prepared according to the regulations of the Durban University of Technology and that all necessary revisions have been made as recommended by my supervisors. It meets the academic requirements for submission and has been duly approved by my supervisors for external examination as part of the fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Business and Information Management.

Furthermore, I certify that all sources used have been acknowledged, and the research contained within this dissertation was conducted in line with the ethical guidelines and standards of the university. The findings, interpretations, and conclusions presented are the result of my independent work, under the guidance and supervision of my supervisors.

By signing this declaration, I confirm that I have obtained my supervisors' approval to submit this dissertation for external examination.

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Abstract

This doctoral research investigates the development of an effective staff development framework aimed at optimizing employee performance within the Msunduzi Municipality in South Africa. Recognizing the challenges faced by local government in enhancing workforce capabilities, the study employs an integrative approach that combines elements of organizational development, human resource management, and performance enhancement strategies to create a model tailored to the municipality's specific needs. Utilising a qualitative methodology, the research involved conducting in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, including employees, managers, and human resource professionals. Thematic analysis was utilised to identify recurring patterns and correlations within the qualitative data, leading to a deeper understanding of the socio-cultural factors that influence employee performance and engagement in the South African local government context. Findings highlight significant gaps in existing staff development initiatives, including inadequate training programs, opportunities for professional growth, and a lack of alignment between individual competencies and organizational goals. The proposed staff development framework emerges as a holistic model that emphasizes continuous learning, skills development, talent management, and the alignment of individual goals with broader organizational objectives advocating for a structured approach to staff development, incorporating regular skills assessments, targeted training programs, and leadership development initiatives. The study concludes that implementing evidence-based staff development framework significantly enhance employee performance and organizational effectiveness within the Msunduzi Municipality. Key recommendations include the establishment of mentorship programs, ongoing professional development opportunities, and partnerships with educational institutions to facilitate training. By providing practical insights for policymakers and practitioners, this research contributes to the broader academic discourse on human resource management in the public sector and serves as a potential blueprint for other local governments facing similar challenges.

KEYWORDS: Performance management, Performance measurement, Performance appraisal, Performance management analysis, Compensation system, Training strategies, Human capital development, Balanced Scorecard, Metropolitan Municipality

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Dedication

Dedicated to my Mother

Ms Qedi Vezi

This Thesis is dedicated to my mother, with all sincerity, who has always believed in me from the beginning until now. Mother, you have spent all you had just to ensure I acquire my education. I will do my best for you as long as I live.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CCL	Culture of Continual Learning
CLT	Continuous Learning and Training
COGTA	Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CSFs	Critical Success Factors
EDPPI	Employee Development and Performance Improvement
EXCO	Executive Committee
HRM	Human Resources Management
ICD	Internal Challenges of Delivery
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
ILP	Individual Learning Plan
KPAs	Key Performance Areas
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
KRAs	Key result areas
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
LCP	Leadership Commitment Practices
LGSETA	Local government Sector Education and Training Authority
MFMA	Municipal Finance Management Act
PDPs	Personal Development Plans
PIS	Performance Incentive Systems
PMS	Performance Management Strategies
PMS	Performance Management System
SALGA	South African Local Government Association
SDBIP	Service Delivery Budget Implementation Plan
SDF	Skills Development Facilitator
SDM	Sustainable Development Framework
SPDT	Staff Performance Development and Training
TDP	Training and Development Programs
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal

WSP

Workplace Skills Plan

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Globally, staff development and employee performance are essential to professional development that benefits individuals and organisations (Clinciu, 2023). A study by Sawyer et al. (2022) noted that an increase in poor service delivery and poor performance of organisations, especially public sectors, is often linked to poor staff development. As much as the KZN local government municipalities acknowledge the importance of staff development programs, it remains unclear if the programs are not addressing the current challenges or if the implementation model is incompatible with improving service delivery. Many changes have been noticed due to a change in the structure of organisations because of the COVID-19 pandemic; there was a decrease in the number of staff that came to work, hours of work were reduced, new arrangements such as working from home, and the need for further information technology literacy (de Lucas Ancillo et al., 2023). Understanding the rationale of staff development, how to develop and what to develop will bring a more sustainable structure to improve service delivery.

The establishment of selected KZN local government unit employs many employees. Most employees' job descriptions are not comparable to the salaries they earn. High absenteeism and low performance are prevalent when employees are underpaid. Therefore, it is imperative to investigate employees' perceptions regarding staff establishment. There is an increasing challenge of staff establishment development initiatives that motivate and encourage employees to boost their job performance and service delivery (Sibonde & Dassah, 2021). This means there is a lack of strategies for the development and training of employees in the human resources departments of local government (Local government Sector Education and Training Authority [LGSETA], 2013).

Effective governance is expected in local government municipalities or authorities to avoid compromising service delivery. Even though employees can be qualified for the job, there remains a need to continuously develop the staff to meet the current trends of their profession and remain competitive. Government establishments vary significantly between countries. Wherever problems relating to the incompetency of employees within the public sector still exist, poor service delivery emanates from a lack of skills (Dempster et al., 2020). Municipalities are understood to possess a variety of companies that serve the interests of the local people, whilst the staff members working in the

municipalities are lagging in capacity and competency to meet various demands and provide effective service.

Within the municipality, there was an allocation for employee development. To achieve this, the study aimed to uncover the impact of training and development on enhancing employee performance. Purposive sampling was employed to select participants and in-depth interviews served as the primary research method. The data were analysed using thematic analysis to identify emerging themes. In South Africa, the government enacted the Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 to implement performance management systems in municipalities. According to this Act, municipalities were required to create performance management systems suited to their unique conditions (Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000). This study addressed the challenges employees faced in terms of placement and job performance and explored strategies for enhancing staff development and improving service delivery within KZN local government municipalities.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The primary issue investigated in this study concerns the inadequate staff development framework within the Msunduzi Municipality and its impact on the effectiveness of the performance management system (Integrated Development Plan, 2023). The lack of a structured and strategic approach to staff development has contributed to the suboptimal implementation of performance management, affecting employee performance and overall service delivery. This issue is not unique to Msunduzi, as research indicates that many South African municipalities struggle with ineffective staff development initiatives, which, in turn, weaken the performance management system and hinder organizational effectiveness (Khunoethe et al., 2021).

Assessing existing staff development frameworks in South African municipalities reveals several shortcomings contributing to ineffective employee growth and performance management. Many local governments lack structured competency-based training programs, mentorship initiatives, and career progression plans, leading to fragmented skills development and limited opportunities for professional advancement (Masiya et al., 2021). Furthermore, staff development efforts often operate in isolation from performance management systems, resulting in a disconnect between employee training and organizational objectives. Studies highlight that the absence of a continuous learning culture, weak evaluation mechanisms, and insufficient investment in leadership development further exacerbate these challenges (Hadebe, 2021; Mogorosi, 2023). Municipalities struggle to build a capable workforce that can effectively deliver public services without a well-integrated and strategic approach to staff development.

The Auditor-General's report highlighted several challenges affecting staff development and the performance management system at Msunduzi Municipality during the 2021 and 2023 financial years. These include insufficient employee input in planning, a lack of consultation during development initiatives, and the failure to integrate staff development components into performance management targets (Masiya et al., 2021). These shortcomings reflect a broader trend of limited employee engagement in professional development, resulting in reduced motivation, skill gaps, and declining service delivery efficiency.

These issues align with broader systemic challenges South African local governments face in designing and implementing effective, responsive, and sustainable staff development frameworks that align with performance management objectives. Studies have found that misalignment with legislative requirements, inadequate monitoring and evaluation, and poor integration with organizational strategy are significant barriers to success (Beerli, 2021; Hadebe, 2021; Mogorosi, 2023). Addressing these challenges requires a holistic approach that embeds staff development into municipal operations, ensuring that employees are continuously upskilled, engaged, and aligned with strategic service delivery goals. Municipalities can enhance employee performance, improve service delivery, and create a more sustainable and effective public sector workforce by strengthening staff development.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Main research questions: How can a staff development framework be designed to effectively enhance employee performance in the Msunduzi Municipality, based on the perceptions and experiences of key stakeholders?

In this study, the researcher intended to find answers to the following questions:

- What staff development practices can enhance employee performance within KZN local government municipalities?
- What are the current performance management strategies implemented within the KZN local government municipalities?
- What are the current staff development practices about service delivery within KZN local government municipalities?

- What are the underlying causes of poor service delivery within KZN local government municipalities?
- What is the effective and sustainable staff development framework within KZN local government municipalities?

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main aim of the study: To develop an effective staff development framework that optimizes employee performance within the Msunduzi Municipality in South Africa.

The following were the research objectives of the study:

- To explore the staff development practices that can enhance employee performance within KZN local government municipalities.
- To explore current performance management strategies implemented within the KZN local government municipalities.
- To explore the current staff development practices about service delivery within KZN local government municipalities
- To understand the underlying causes of poor service delivery within KZN local government municipalities
- To develop an effective and sustainable staff development framework within KZN local government municipalities.

The significant contribution of this study to the field of municipal management lies in the development of new insights into the design and operationalisation of performance management systems tailored specifically for municipalities. Unlike much of the existing literature, which has predominantly focused on performance management within the private sector, this study addresses the unique challenges and requirements faced by public sector institutions such as municipalities. By successfully achieving its research objectives, the study bridges this knowledge gap, offering practical recommendations for improving municipal performance management systems. This contribution enhances both theoretical understanding and practical application, providing a foundation for more effective governance and service delivery in the public sector.

1.5 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

1.5.1 Model of effective training

This research examines models of effective training in relation to staff development and performance management within local government. Effective training models highlight that successful development initiatives should encompass skill acquisition, employee motivation, engagement, and a supportive work environment. Motivation theory highlights the importance of intrinsic motivation, indicating that employees with an internal drive to exceed job expectations are more inclined to engage fully with training and development programs (Sibonde & Dassah, 2021). Intrinsic motivation can improve performance and commitment, which are critical factors in local government contexts where service delivery is a primary concern.

Taylor's (1974) scientific management theory advocates for a systematic method of training and development, emphasising management's close supervision to enhance efficiency. This approach, while supporting standardisation, may conflict with modern training models that emphasise employee empowerment and collaborative learning (Ngobeni et al., 2022). Theory in human resource management (HRM) enhances these models by highlighting the significance of constructive managerial relationships and the cultivation of a mutual psychological contract. This relationship fosters trust and support, essential for developing a learning culture in which employees are encouraged to pursue training and skill enhancement (Hussain et al., 2019). These perspectives offer a comprehensive understanding of effective training in local government, highlighting how staff development and performance management can enhance service delivery in KZN municipalities.

- **Motivation Theory**

Motivation is a central component of effective staff development. As noted by Bandhu et al. (2024), motivation involves voluntary actions driven by an individual's intrinsic desire to exceed their basic job requirements. This intrinsic motivation can significantly drive employee growth and organisational performance (Akerle, 2023). Theories of motivation highlight the importance of understanding what factors inspire and engage employees, as this can inform more effective approaches to staff development within municipalities.

- **Scientific Management Theory**

As Taylor (1974) proposed, the principles of scientific management theory emphasise the need for management to have rigorous control and direction of work processes. This top-down approach assumes that employees have a limited understanding of their roles and require close supervision (Akerele, 2023). However, more contemporary management thought has moved away from the rigid control of Taylorism towards more collaborative and empowering models that leverage employee knowledge and initiative (Hussain et al., 2019). Exploring the alignment between scientific management theory and the staff development practices of KZN local governments can provide insights into evolving management philosophies in the public sector.

- **Resource Management Theory**

Human resource management theory focuses on building positive relationships and collaboration between managers and employees (Boon et al., 2024). This people-centred approach emphasises the importance of a psychological contract based on mutual understanding and shared goals. Applying HRM principles, such as employee engagement and empowerment, can foster a culture conducive to effective staff development and performance management (Alam et al., 2024).

1.5.2 Impact of training and development on employee performance

Training and development initiatives are key organisational activities aimed at improving the performance of individuals or groups within a workplace. These initiatives are designed to enhance employees' knowledge, skills and overall job performance (Arulsamy et al., 2023). As highlighted by Arulsamy et al. (2023), training programs are implemented to boost employees' effectiveness by enriching their skill sets, thereby contributing to organisational success. Zhenjing et al. (2022) adds that these programs not only focus on technical skills but also aim to increase workers' motivation, which in turn leads to improved job outcomes. Many successful organisations recognize that investing in the continuous development of their workforce is more cost-efficient than recruiting new employees (Davidescu et al., 2020), as it fosters loyalty, increases efficiency, and reduces turnover rates.

Niati et al. (2021) also affirm the profound impact of training and development on employee performance. They argue that well-structured training programs, designed to meet both individual and organisational needs, significantly improve employees' ability to carry out their responsibilities effectively. Niati et al. (2021) emphasize that training serves as a structured learning experience aimed at developing employees' competencies, enabling them to better perform their job duties. Therefore,

organisations must prioritise investing in their employees' continuous learning to maintain high standards of job performance and adapt to evolving business environments (Niati et al., 2021).

Training and development go beyond just administrative tasks; they are intentional, focused efforts to equip employees with knowledge, attitudes and skills for specific roles and responsibilities (Zhenjing et al., 2022). According to Noe (2020), training is a targeted learning activity that focuses on developing the necessary competencies for employees to excel in their professional duties. It is widely recognized that a well-executed investment in training and development leads to higher proficiency in the workplace.

In the context of local government municipalities, such as those in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), diverse training programs are essential for equipping employees with the relevant expertise to meet public service demands and improve service delivery. Fairman et al. (2022) assert that local government employees must undergo continuous professional development to better respond to community needs. Applying these theoretical frameworks to local government settings provide valuable guidance in creating tailored training programs that address the unique challenges faced by public sector organizations, ultimately leading to enhanced service delivery and organizational efficiency.

1.5.3 Importance of staff training and development

This study explored the staff development practices and performance management strategies employed within KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) local government municipalities, with the goal of creating an effective and sustainable framework to enhance employee performance and improve service delivery. In South Africa's continuous transformation, the development of municipal staff has become increasingly essential (Fairman et al., 2022). Staff development programs are critical for enhancing organizational performance, keeping employees' knowledge current, and improving individual skill sets. Additionally, these initiatives help employers make informed decisions regarding employee promotions and reward systems (Mbandlwa et al., 2020). The success of these programs, however, hinges on allowing employees sufficient time and resources to apply the skills and knowledge acquired during training (Snowden et al., 2023).

Mchunu and Dlamini (2020) argue that organizations that invest in employee training demonstrate a commitment to meeting both organizational objectives and the professional growth of their staff.

According to Viterouli et al. (2024), effective training and development involve five critical stages: needs assessment, instructional design, endorsement, implementation, and evaluation. Furthermore, Mbandlwa et al. (2020) stresses the importance of incorporating fundamental learning principles into the design of training programs. The application of learned skills in the workplace is a key factor in promoting effective learning and ensuring that different learning methodologies are integrated into practice.

Considering the diverse backgrounds and experiences of municipal employees, training programs are essential to addressing skills gaps and ensuring that staff can meet the evolving demands of their roles (Agrawal et al., 2020). Day et al. (2021) describe training programs as formal initiatives designed to help employees acquire new competencies, develop existing skills and improve overall job performance. As job roles continue to evolve, ongoing training and development remain crucial for organizations to maintain high levels of performance (Agrawal et al., 2020).

- **Employee performance**

In human resource development, employee performance is crucial for both individual career growth and company success (Kareem & Hussein, 2019). Improving employee performance benefits the organization and the employees, as better performance can lead to career advancement (Tafese Keltu, 2024). Leadership within the organization has a direct impact on employee performance. An ineffective leadership style can decrease employee performance, negatively affecting the company's overall performance (Hajiali et al., 2022). Given the importance of employees, it is essential to focus on their tasks to achieve organizational goals. High work motivation drives employees to work harder and more effectively, while low motivation results in a lack of enthusiasm and difficulty in completing tasks (Uka & Prendi, 2021).

- **Service delivery in local governments**

Service delivery refers to the framework of regulations, policies, principles, and mechanisms that institutions employ to provide services to their communities (World Health Organization (WHO), 2021). Kappo-Abidemi and Ogujiuba (2020) describes service delivery as the process of distributing essential services to communities with the goal of improving their living standards. However, for service delivery to be effective, municipal employees must possess a high level of competence and skill (Sibiya, 2023). Mac Naughton (2020) highlights that a lack of adequate skills and poor employee performance significantly hinder the effective provision of services to the community. This underscores

the critical connection between the skill sets of municipal and local government workers and the quality-of-service delivery. Poor employee performance, often stemming from insufficient training or expertise, directly impacts a municipality's ability to meet the needs of its residents, leading to dissatisfaction and inefficiency in public service provision (Kalonda & Govender, 2021). Therefore, investing in employee development is beneficial for the workforce and essential for maintaining high service delivery standards.

- **Staff development practices**

As demonstrated by Abubakar et al. (2019), staff progression is composed of organising that occurs through some indistinct period to ensure that all specialists in the affiliation can carry out their responsibilities to achieve the affiliation's targets. It should be seen that a significant part of the time colossal relationship, for instance, public regions are managing an issue of nonappearance of staff improvement practices, everything considered considering political components and bureaucracy alongside corruption (Igbokwe-Ibeto, 2019).

- **Informal coaching**

Coaching is an anticipated outline of controlling and supporting specialists to improve their strategy; cut-off focuses, and cut-off centres (Jautz et al., 2023). Zirar et al. (2023) portray the organisation as a reliable means of assisting workers with regulating issues. Coaching is a piece of live arranging given to specialists at their workspaces, which is given on an ongoing explanation and in lovely conditions. Coaching is done by the board (chief or head) during working hours as a section of the relationship between heads and staff as a planned movement at the workspace (Atkinson et al., 2022). The experience acquired through preparing will be essential to delegates in the workspace. Coaching is by and by in its most trustworthy stages in different pieces of training (Boyatzis et al., 2022). Most training has started to use orchestrating casually to assist workers with managing their responsibilities more accommodatingly and sensibly. Coaching has appeared to influence the general presentation of affiliations undeniably.

- **Employee empowerment**

Employee empowerment suggests the chance agents have in settling on choices about exercises identified with their work (Kooij et al., 2022). An agent should have the commitment and capacity to settle on choices about the client when a manager is not free and different experts cannot deal with the issue. Training employees to interact and react rapidly to client enquiries, be pleasing in administering clients, and commit to improving the alliance (O'Donoghue & Van Der Werff, 2022). As demonstrated

by Udod et al. (2020), skilled employees are generally valuable, and they drive forward and arrange partners with them to settle on intriguing choices for customer satisfaction.

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology considers the logic behind research methods and techniques, offering a broader scope than research methods, which in turn have a broader scope than research techniques (Williams, 2021). A qualitative approach was chosen because staff development in the public sector has been under-researched, and this method allows for a deeper understanding of the research problem (Clark et al., 2021). Qualitative research involves using instruments such as interviews, focus groups, and observations. According to Clark et al. (2021), this approach employs flexible, straightforward methods suitable for exploratory studies seeking to understand life experiences in context. Williams (2021) also highlights that qualitative research takes place in natural settings, capturing real experiences and outlining key issues. This method will provide an in-depth understanding of staff development theories and practices in South African local governance, focusing on KZN local government municipalities.

1.6.1 Research philosophy

The philosophy underlying qualitative research is interpretive, humanistic, and naturalistic, with an emphasis on subjectivity (Williams, 2021). It operates on the ontological premise that reality is multifaceted, allowing for multiple perspectives on any given phenomenon. Ontology, which examines the nature of reality, informed this study by guiding the exploration of how skill deficiencies impact service delivery within municipalities (Vogl et al., 2019). Each individual's unique experiences shape their understanding of issues such as poor service delivery due to gaps in employee skills.

Epistemologically, qualitative research generates knowledge through subjective observation, detailed descriptions, and a deep understanding of the phenomena being studied (Aspers & Corte, 2019). This approach considers how knowledge is acquired and validated, taking into account elements such as subjectivity, objectivity, causality, and validity. Ontological beliefs influence these epistemological assumptions, as ontology seeks to classify and explain the types and structures of entities (Sol & Heng, 2022). According to Bazen et al. (2021), qualitative researchers perceive truth as complex and dynamic, best understood by examining individuals within their specific socio-historical contexts. This perspective allows researchers to engage with participants in their natural environments, focusing on their lived experiences without relying on rigid instruments or predetermined questions (Ugwu & Eze, 2023b).

In this study, data was collected in a naturalistic setting, where the researcher interacted directly with participants to investigate their perceptions, emotions, thoughts, beliefs, expectations and behaviors concerning service delivery in local municipalities. This immersive approach allowed for a rich understanding of the issues, highlighting the real-world impact of skill gaps on service delivery.

1.6.2 Strategies in qualitative research

Qualitative research encompasses various strategies, including narrative inquiry, ethnography, phenomenology, and case studies. In this study, phenomenology was selected as the research approach. Phenomenology focuses on understanding the shared experiences of a specific group and seeks to uncover the essence of a phenomenon as it is experienced by individuals (Ugwu & Eze, 2023b). This method was particularly suited for this study, as it allowed for an in-depth exploration of the lived experiences of local government employees concerning performance, skill gaps, and service delivery.

By using phenomenology, captured the real-world experiences and perceptions of municipal workers who are directly involved in service provision. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants who possess firsthand knowledge of the challenges facing local government, specifically those related to performance management and skill deficiencies. The interviews were structured around two core questions: (1) What have you experienced regarding the phenomenon? and (2) What contexts or situations have shaped your experiences? These questions were designed to delve into both the personal experiences of the participants and the contextual factors influencing those experiences, such as organizational structures, resource constraints, and training opportunities. By focusing on their experiences, the research not only identified areas of concern but also highlighted potential solutions grounded in the realities of those on the front lines of municipal service delivery.

1.6.3 Research setting

Pietermaritzburg, the capital city of the KwaZulu-Natal province in South Africa, offers a unique and dynamic setting for conducting research. Its rich historical background, diverse population, and well-developed infrastructure make it an ideal location for various research activities, particularly in health, education, social sciences, and environmental studies. Pietermaritzburg is strategically located in the inland region of KwaZulu-Natal, serving as a hub that connects various rural and urban areas. The city's population is a mix of different ethnic groups, providing a culturally diverse environment that can enrich research focused on social dynamics, public health, and community development. According to the most recent census data, Pietermaritzburg has a population of approximately 600,000 people, with a

broad spectrum of age groups, socioeconomic statuses, and educational backgrounds (Statistics South Africa, 2020).

The city's healthcare infrastructure has several public and private facilities, including primary healthcare centres, district hospitals, and specialised clinics. Notable institutions such as Grey's Hospital and the Pietermaritzburg Metropolitan Hospital offer extensive resources for clinical research and public health studies. The presence of these facilities supports research on various health-related issues, such as infectious diseases, non-communicable diseases, and healthcare delivery systems (Grey's Hospital Annual Report, 2021).

Pietermaritzburg is home to several reputable educational institutions, including the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). UKZN's Pietermaritzburg campus provides a fertile ground for academic research, with access to various academic resources, research facilities, and expert faculty members. The university's commitment to community engagement and applied research aligns well with the goals of conducting impactful and socially relevant studies (University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2023).

The city blends urban and peri-urban settings, offering a microcosm of South Africa's broader socioeconomic landscape. This diversity allows researchers to explore various issues, from urbanisation and economic development to environmental sustainability and rural health. Pietermaritzburg's environmental features, including the nearby Msunduzi River and numerous green spaces, provide opportunities for environmental and ecological research (Msunduzi Municipality Environmental Report, 2022). Pietermaritzburg's well-developed transportation network, including road, rail, and air links, facilitates easy access for researchers and participants. The city's infrastructure supports the logistics of conducting extensive fieldwork, ensuring that data collection and stakeholder engagement activities can be conducted efficiently.

1.6.4 Target population

The study targeted a population of 12 staff employees who worked in the administration and management departments of the Msunduzi Municipality. These departments were pivotal to the municipality's overall functioning and thus were most in need of comprehensive staff development schemes (Khunoethe et al., 2021). Employees in these sectors were responsible for critical functions

such as policy implementation, strategic planning, financial management, human resources, and day-to-day administrative tasks (Khunoethe et al., 2021). Given their roles, the efficiency and effectiveness of these employees significantly influenced the municipality's overall performance and service delivery (Adams & Ama, 2024). Administration and management staff formed the backbone of municipal operations, directly impacting the ability to deliver essential services to the community. Effective staff development programs in these departments could lead to improved governance, enhanced service delivery, and increased public trust in local government (Adams & Ama, 2024).

1.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations were integral to maintaining the research process's integrity and safeguarding participant welfare. Informed consent was obtained from all participants including employees, managers, and HR professionals by providing comprehensive information about the study's goals, methods, and potential risks. This enabled participants to make informed decisions about their involvement. Confidentiality was strictly upheld by anonymizing data, using pseudonyms, and removing any identifying details to protect participants' identities and create a trusting environment for open dialogue. Recognizing the diversity of participant backgrounds, the research approach was culturally sensitive, emphasizing respect for local norms, active listening, and responsiveness during interviews.

The ethics committee of the university evaluated the research proposal to ensure compliance with ethical standards. Participants were invited to review and provide feedback on preliminary findings, thereby enhancing data accuracy and engaging them as active collaborators. Ethical reflection was maintained throughout the study, informing decisions from planning to dissemination. Prioritising these ethical considerations safeguarded participant interests and strengthened the credibility and reliability of the findings, aiming to promote positive change within the Msunduzi Municipality and uphold a culture of respect and integrity in human resource management.

1.9 CHAPTER LAYOUT

Chapter 1: Introduction and background

This chapter provides an overview of the study, including the research background, problem statement, aim and objectives, research questions, delimitations, limitations, and the outline of the chapters.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter reviews existing literature on employee satisfaction, placement administration, and policies in South African municipalities, local governments, and other business units. It examines the interpretation, effectiveness, and impacts of employee placement and staff allocation. Theories guiding this study are also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

The research methodology chapter details the research strategy, target population, sampling method, data collection procedures, data analysis, and measures for ensuring reliability and validity.

Chapter 4: Interpretation and discussion of results

This chapter presents the statistical data collected from local government administration employees, using frequency tables and bar graphs to illustrate the findings clearly.

Chapter 5: Discussion of findings

This chapter provides an overview of the study, explaining how the research objectives were achieved. It outlines the research findings derived from the study and offers recommendations for enhancing the performance management system at Msunduzi Municipality. Additionally, a service-oriented context for the performance management system is proposed. Finally, suggestions for future related research are provided.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Effective staff development within local government can drive employee performance, fostering both organisational success and community well-being. Although staff development aims to maximise employees' potential, it does not automatically translate to enhanced performance unless aligned with specific organisational objectives and tailored strategies (Adnan et al., 2024). The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the literature on developing a staff development framework that improves employee performance within the Msunduzi Municipality. According to Samah et al. (2019b), the local government sector presents distinct challenges and opportunities regarding staff development. As Reidsma et al. (2023) assert, a structured approach to staff development can support organisational success by leveraging employees' diverse skills and competencies.

Understanding the historical and contextual factors that shape this sector, particularly in South Africa, is essential for effective framework development (Schmid & Mitterreiter, 2021). Soklaridis et al. (2024) highlight that exploring this topic requires examining the evolution of staff development practices in local government, key operational characteristics, and theories supporting effective employee performance enhancement. The local government sector plays a critical role in society, offering essential services that impact daily life and contribute to socio-economic growth (Troncoso & Weber, 2020). Therefore, this chapter outlines the primary and secondary research questions, providing foundational literature that informs the study's focus on optimising staff development to elevate performance within the Msunduzi Municipality.

2.2 THEORY UNDERPINNING THE STUDY

This study is based on Human Capital Theory, which states that investing in employee skills, knowledge, and abilities enhances productivity and performance. Using this theory, the Msunduzi Municipality can develop a framework that improves employee competencies and leads to better service delivery. Below is a detailed discussion of this theory.

2.2.1 Definition of Human Capital Theory

In economics, Human Capital Theory refers to skills, knowledge, and abilities of employees as valuable assets of an organisation. Originating from the work of economists such as Becker (1964), Human

Capital Theory emphasises that an organisation's workforce is an asset that requires continuous development to achieve optimal performance. As a result, The Human Capital Theory (HCT) states that when organisations invest in the development of their employees, they end up becoming more efficient, innovative, and productive, resulting in better organisational performance (Munanura et al., 2021). This theory treats human capital (the workforce) similarly to physical or financial capital, suggesting that organisations can increase their overall value by developing the potential of their employees.

The Human Capital Theory lies in its direct relevance to performance improvement and skills development. By viewing employees as assets who bring a return on investment through enhanced performance, this theory aligns closely with the study's aim of improving employee output within Msunduzi Municipality. Furthermore, it highlights the strategic importance of investing in human resources to generate long-term benefits for both the organisation and the community it serves (Schmid & Mitterreiter, 2021). This makes Human Capital Theory particularly suitable for municipal settings, where enhanced service delivery has a direct social impact. Previous studies conducted by Zuk et al. (2024), have demonstrated that public sector organisations adopting Human Capital Theory focused strategies often experience improved productivity and organisational cohesion, primarily through tailored training programs and structured development initiatives. Another study by Haaland et al. (2023), found that municipalities implementing Human Capital Theory informed training experienced enhanced employee morale and community satisfaction. Hence, by prioritising Human Capital Theory, this study seeks to leverage its evidence-based strategies to support Msunduzi Municipality's goal of elevating staff capabilities and effectiveness.

This study also reviewed Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory, Motivation Theories, and Performance Management Theory (PMT) to assess their relevance for a staff development framework in the Msunduzi Municipality. Each theory offers valuable insights but does not fully align with the strategic focus of Human Capital Theory (HCT) on skill investment and long-term performance improvement. RBV Theory emphasises the competitive advantage gained through unique internal resources, including human capital (Yang et al., 2024). Although it supports the importance of skilled employees, it is more oriented toward positioning an organisation for external advantage rather than directly investing in workforce development. Motivation Theories, like Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1966), focus on the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that drive employee satisfaction and performance, emphasising the motivational impact of recognition and job satisfaction rather than building skill-based assets. Finally, Performance Management Theory centers on aligning employees' actions with organisational goals through evaluation and feedback (Armstrong & Taylor, 2023), focusing on performance tracking rather than direct skill investment. While each theory could add valuable dimensions; RBV by highlighting

the strategic importance of human resources, Motivation Theories by addressing job satisfaction factors, and PMT by providing performance-tracking methods, Human Capital Theory remains superior. HCT uniquely focuses on treating employee development as a strategic investment in human assets, aligning with the study's goals of creating a staff development framework aimed at skill enhancement and sustainable performance improvement within the municipality.

2.2.2 The Human Capital theoretical framework

According to McConnell et al. (2020) a more educated, better-trained person can supply a larger amount of useful productive effort than one with less education and training. The value of human capital theory is widely accepted to increase organisational performance, so an organisation relies on employees' skill, knowledge, and ability as a key concept of value creation. According to Lopukhina and Stiahunova (2021), human capital can be accumulated in different forms of education, training, migration, and health. Through such forms, employees gain knowledge, skills and abilities in different ways. Organisations invest in human capital because these organisations view humans as an asset and expect that what the company has invested in will be returned and provide a positive value in the future. In other words, an individual investment in their schooling or training and anticipate that the knowledge and skill earned will be enhanced to their career advancement. Gerhart and Feng (2021) argued that traditionally human resources of labor and business function have been viewed as a cost to be minimised.

However, nowadays, human resources are now viewed as human capital which leads to a source of value. Still, Bertheau (2021)) said that there is a tremendous paradigm shift which has occurred in the concept of human capital from the traditional to the present view as presented in table 1 below. These shifts changed human resource function by moving from an activity-based process to result based which is more connected and aligned with business strategy and views human capital as a value creation to be used in strategic management. Moreover, SHAFa et al. (2023) argued that human capital concept is seen as an asset and should be developed and integrated with multi-dimensional technology. However, the paradigm of the human capital shift from an activity-based (focus on a specific measurement, input focus, preparing for a routine works, etc.) to a result-based (focus on result and total performance such as business impact, cost-benefit analysis, output focus, and performance effectiveness) paradigm affects the human capital policy and practice by focusing more on the bottom line instead of top down management (Bratton et al., 2021).

TABLE 2.1: Human Capital Perspectives

Human Capital View	Traditional View	Present View
---------------------------	-------------------------	---------------------

Employee	viewed as a cost of production that needs to be controlled and closely monitoring.	viewed as a competitive advantage to the organisation that can be developed in their own specific way.
Human Capital	was perceived as a costly capital that needs to be minimised	is a source of value creation to the organisation
The HR function	used to work as supporting department.	is considered as a part of the strategic partner of the organisation that works on executive level.
Work	was functioned according to the manufacturing based.	increasingly focuses on knowledge based and cross functional collaboration
Involvement	HR involved in mostly in setting the management budget and planning. only HR involved in budgeting	HR acts as the process function involving in designing, planning as well as allocating budgeting. engages top executive in budgeting process.
Human Capital Metrics	focused only on the input such as cost and routine practices and activities.	are increasingly focus on design and metrics usage. focuses on the impact and result to the organisation
ROI	lacked know-how and truly understanding in ROI	more applied and engaged ROI to use as the tactic tool that help the organisation creates the influential relationship of output and result
Human capital measurement	used of the existing data.	focuses on data and information that necessary to the organisation with proactive
HR programs	no alignment with business and management objectives with HR at all levels.	aligned and cascaded down the goal, strategy as well as objectives of the organisation at all levels of management.

Overall report on human capital technology	was an input-based management more than output based.	focuses more on output and impact to the organisation.
Management	determined by top management and closely work with expertise in term of technical work.	decentralised and promoted the leadership from bottom of the structure
Objective	maximised shareholder benefits	maximises utilities and values for all stakeholders.

Source: Lin et al. (2021)

The Human Capital framework reflects the evolution of human resources into a strategic asset, recognising employees as a source of competitive advantage and value creation for organisations. This paradigm shift, as noted by Alsharari and Daniels (2024), redefines human capital from an activity-based approach focused on routine tasks and input measurement, to a results-based model aligned with business strategy and performance effectiveness. Table 1 above illustrates the contrast between traditional and present perspectives on human capital, highlighting the transformation in employee value, HR function, and the focus of human capital metrics. These shifts underscore the role of human capital as integral to organisational strategy, as further outlined in Figure 2.1.

In a study by Faggian et al. (2019), *Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis, with Special Reference to Education*, the Human Capital framework is explored to understand the impact of investments in education and training on individual productivity and organisational outcomes. This framework emphasises that resources and inputs, such as skills development and formal education, flow through processes like production and training to generate valuable outcomes, such as increased productivity and economic returns. As illustrated in Figure 1, the model demonstrates the relationship between resources, training, and processes that contribute to overall output and efficacy. By focusing on strategic human capital investments, organisations can enhance performance, creating a competitive advantage through a skilled and knowledgeable workforce.

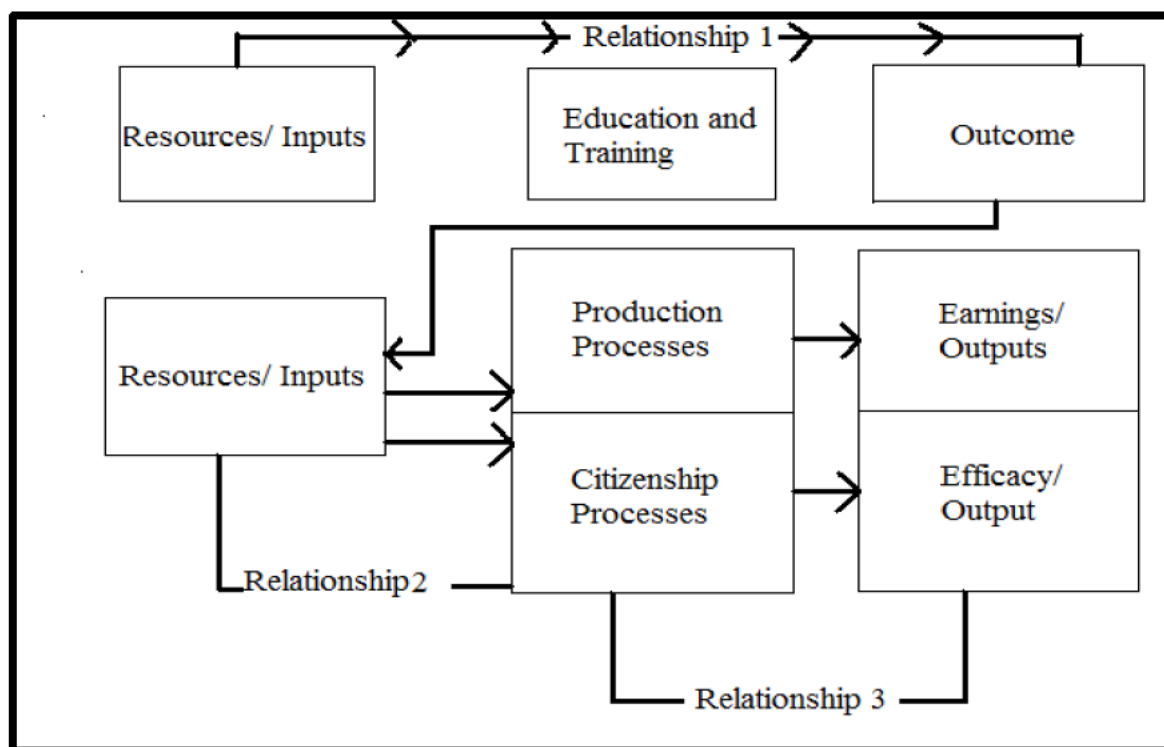


FIGURE 2.1: A model of Human Capital Theory

Source: Deming (2022)

The Human Capital framework can be applied as a comprehensive staff development framework for enhancing employee performance within the Msunduzi Municipality. This model outlines the systematic process by which resources, training, and production processes influence outcomes, directly linking to employee performance and organisational goals.

Starting with resources and inputs, these encompass the knowledge, skills, and experiences of employees, as well as financial investments in professional development programs. Studies have shown that such investments are crucial for enhancing productivity and efficiency within government institutions (Atube et al., 2021). Research by Qing et al. (2020) in the Chinese public sector has demonstrated that investing in training resources increases both employee job satisfaction and organisational productivity. Hence, South Africa's public service training strategy aligns with this principle, aiming to build capacity and increase efficiency within local governments (Shabangu, 2021).

Therefore, education and training are essential components of this model, as they play a critical role in human capital development. Structured training programs such as leadership workshops and skill-building courses, equip employees with the competencies needed to improve service delivery. Diaz-Navarro et al. (2024) found that continuous professional development in the public sector led to a measurable increase in workforce efficiency. Similarly Mlambo et al. (2022) found that South African

municipalities implementing structured staff training saw significant improvements in service delivery. This step is vital, as it provides employees with the skills required to adapt to evolving challenges within the local government sector. Following training, the production processes within the model emphasise the application of acquired skills in real-world settings to achieve specific organisational outputs. For instance, employees who undergo training in customer service can apply these skills to improve community interactions, leading to a better public perception of the municipality's service quality. Studies by Lynd (2021) illustrate that integrating learned skills into daily tasks within South African municipalities enhances organisational efficiency and output. Likewise, international studies, such as one by Fischer et al. (2022) in the Brazilian municipal government sector, underscore the impact of skill application on departmental performance outcomes.

Further, citizenship processes within this framework highlight employees' involvement in practices that foster a sense of responsibility and alignment with organisational values. This might include initiatives that encourage staff participation in community engagement projects, building a collaborative culture and driving performance. A study by Ngoc Su et al. (2021) in Australia highlighted the positive effects of citizenship behaviours on employee morale and organisational commitment. Whilst Dlamini (2020) reveals that South African municipalities have demonstrated similar outcomes, showing that staff who feel more involved and valued in the community are more likely to go beyond their primary duties, resulting in higher productivity and improved public service. Ultimately, the outcomes of this framework are reflected in tangible benefits such as improved efficiency in service delivery, reduced operational costs, and increased community satisfaction. This results-based focus aligns with Phillips and Johnson (2021) findings in a study of U.S. municipal governments, which demonstrated that municipalities with a focus on human capital metrics like return on investment (ROI) in training observed a direct correlation with improved performance metrics. Similarly, Kansheba et al. (2023) found that municipalities actively measuring the impact of human capital investments achieve better results in terms of service delivery and operational efficiency.

Finally, the efficacy and broader impact of this framework are realised through long-term organisational benefits. Effective staff development can result in a more adaptive workforce, increased trust from the community, and alignment with national service standards. A study by Yuan et al. (2024) state that local governments showed that similar frameworks resulted in significant improvements in public trust and service quality. Nkuna (2022) found that municipalities in that implement human capital strategies experience higher workforce retention and improved public sector outcomes. This framework serves as a roadmap for Municipalities to systematically enhance employee performance by aligning resources, training, and production processes to achieve meaningful outcomes. Not only does the model guide

human capital investments, but it also provides insights into how these investments yield tangible benefits, enhancing overall service delivery. Through this structured approach, Municipalities can strengthen its human capital to meet community needs effectively, as evidenced by studies across both local and international contexts.

2.3 PERFORMANCE

Performance is a critical measure in any organization, representing employees' efficiency, effectiveness, and productivity in achieving the organization's strategic objectives (Shaikh et al., 2021). In the context of local government, performance is particularly significant as it extends beyond internal operational success to encompass the quality and responsiveness of service delivery to the community (Thusi et al., 2023). Municipal employees are pivotal in ensuring that public services such as infrastructure maintenance, waste management, healthcare, and social development are delivered efficiently and equitably. According to Durokifa et al. (2023), high employee performance directly enhances a municipality's ability to meet community expectations, optimize resource utilization, and proactively address societal needs. Effective performance at the individual level translates into improved organisational effectiveness, enabling municipalities to function with greater accountability, fiscal discipline, and public trust. Mashashane (2022) further supports this view, emphasizing that a culture of high performance fosters continuous organizational growth, innovation, and sustainability.

Beyond operational efficiency, employee performance is intrinsically linked to public perception and stakeholder confidence. When municipal employees demonstrate commitment, competence, and responsiveness, service delivery improves, fostering greater community trust, civic engagement, and cooperation (Prins, 2023). Well-performing municipalities are more likely to implement transformative policies, attract investment, and maintain positive relationships with key stakeholders, including national government bodies and private sector partners.

Conversely, poor performance within local government structures can have detrimental effects. It often leads to delays in service provision, inefficient resource allocation, mismanagement of funds, and ultimately, public dissatisfaction. Citizens who experience inconsistent or inadequate service delivery may lose confidence in local governance, disengage from participatory processes, and perceive the municipality as ineffective or corrupt (Thusi et al., 2023). Additionally, prolonged inefficiencies can damage a municipality's reputation, reducing its ability to secure funding, attract skilled professionals, and implement necessary reforms.

Given these dynamics, enhancing employee performance within municipalities is not merely an internal objective but a strategic imperative for fostering sustainable governance, improving service outcomes, and strengthening the social contract between local government and its citizens. Addressing performance-related challenges requires robust performance management systems, continuous staff development, and the alignment of individual competencies with broader municipal goals.

2.3.1 Factors Influencing Performance

Several factors influence employee performance, ranging from the availability of resources to the level of training and support provided by the organisation. Access to adequate tools, technology, and information is essential for employees to carry out their duties effectively. Additionally, training plays a vital role in equipping staff with the skills and knowledge necessary to handle complex tasks and adapt to changing job requirements. Organisational culture and leadership also impact performance, as supportive leadership fosters an environment where employees feel motivated to excel. Studies have shown that employees who feel valued and supported are more likely to go above and beyond in their roles, contributing positively to overall performance (Asplund, 2022; Al-Refaei et al., 2023). For local government institutions, understanding and addressing these factors is key to creating a productive workforce that can effectively serve the public (Sun & Turkan, 2020).

2.3.2 Benefits of Enhanced Performance

Enhancing employee performance yields numerous benefits, both for the employees and the municipality. High performance leads to improved service delivery, which is vital for building and maintaining public trust. For instance, when municipal employees complete tasks efficiently and respond promptly to community needs, residents feel more confident in their local government's ability to serve them. Additionally, enhanced performance contributes to cost savings, as efficient employees reduce the need for rework and minimise resource wastage. On an individual level, employees who perform well often experience higher job satisfaction and career growth opportunities, which fosters long-term commitment to the organisation. In local government, these benefits are particularly important, as improved performance supports strategic goals, reinforces the role in the community, and promotes sustainable development (Ruth et al., 2020).

2.3.3 Performance management in organisations

Performance management and performance measurement are often treated as synonymous terms, though they refer to distinct yet interconnected concepts. Performance measurement refers to the regular assessment of outcomes and results, generating reliable data on the efficiency and effectiveness of programs (Mehale, 2021). It is also described as a process of evaluating progress towards pre-determined goals Ren et al. (2021) and the process of assessing how well an entity uses resources economically and deploys them effectively to achieve its objectives (Gunarathne et al., 2021). Performance measurement can include both financial and non-financial metrics. According to Ho et al. (2021), performance measurement serves as a tool for monitoring and maintaining control over organisational practices, ensuring that goals and objectives are met. It is also viewed as a mechanism for evaluating performance to foster improvements in employee output (Al Ahbabi et al., 2019). The primary purpose of performance measurement is to generate data on what has occurred, without delving into the reasons or potential solutions (Armstrong, 2021). Its focus is on tracking the organisation's progress towards achieving set goals and objectives (Hale et al., 2022). A performance measure can be defined as a quantifiable expression of the amount, cost, or outcome of activities that shows how much, how well, and at what level products or services are delivered within a given timeframe (Debnam et al., 2024). The use of a performance measurement system aids organisations in identifying areas of strength and areas requiring improvement (Ruth et al., 2020).

2.3.4 The nature of performance measurement

Effective performance measurement ensures the successful implementation of companies' strategy, determining goal achieving as well as meeting stakeholder needs, ensuring better decision making (Samah et al., 2019b). The Balanced Scorecard, recognised as a leading performance measurement tool, is based on four perspectives: financial, customer, internal process, and learning and growth (Vrečko et al., 2023). These viewpoints are intended to encompass all the organisation's actions, both current and future, both internally and internationally (Sun & Turkan, 2020). Organisations use performance measurement to address challenges such as the evolving nature of work, increasing competition, improvement initiatives, quality awards, external demands, IT advancements, and changing roles (Yahya & Ibrahim, 2021). Organisations that employ performance measurement often perform better than those that do not (Faggian et al., 2019). Performance measurement involves seven steps, detailed below:

- **Step 1: Identifying organisational goals**

Performance management focuses on the formulation of goals. According to Errida and Lotfi (2021), broad goals are defined through performance management, while progress toward broad organisational goals are measured through performance measurement. This involves setting measurable performance goals aligned with the organisation's overall objectives.

- **Step 2: Formulating performance objectives**

A performance objective is a specific result that contributes to the success of the unit or organisation and that an employee is expected to accomplish or produce (Sulelino et al., 2021). Performance objectives contain three key elements: The student performance; the conditions; and the criterion. For objectives to be achieved, they must be feasible. Consequently, Ren et al. (2021) this marks that objectives are components that, when combined, assist organisations in achieving intended goals. According to Hristov and Chirico Hristov and Chirico (2019), performance targets break down goals into measurable parts and each goal specifies parameters that must be met, thus ensuring that they are manageable and achievable.

- **Step 3: Creating a responsibility structure**

Creating a responsible structure ensures that everybody knows what they are expected to deliver by giving every task an accountable task owner. According to Janackovic et al. (2020), Job analysis is the foundation of an individual employee's performance plan within a specific job position. Therefore, strategic action plans contain information on responsibility to improve performance.

- **Step 4: Linking critical success factors and key performance indicators with performance objectives**

Performance measurement involves assessing productivity, output, and efficiency. During this process, critical success factors and key performance indicators (KPIs) are aligned with performance objectives to enable ongoing monitoring of progress toward established goals (Larsson & Ratnayake, 2024). Consequently, measuring performance is essential to evaluate progress in achieving these objectives once critical success factors and KPIs are connected (Fischer et al., 2022).

- **Step 5: Measuring performance**

Performance management and performance measurement are often treated as synonymous terms, though they refer to distinct yet interconnected concepts. Performance measurement refers to the regular assessment of outcomes and results, generating reliable data on the efficiency and effectiveness of programs. It is also described as a process of evaluating progress towards pre-determined goals and the process of assessing how well an entity uses resources economically and deploys them effectively to achieve its objectives (CIMA Official (J. Kalonda & K. Govender, 2021). Performance measurement can include both financial and non-financial metrics. According to Alzahrani et al. (2021), performance measurement serves as a tool for monitoring and maintaining control over organisational practices, ensuring that goals and objectives are met. It is also viewed as a mechanism for evaluating performance to foster improvements in employee output. The primary purpose of performance measurement is to generate data on what has occurred, without delving into the reasons or potential solutions; hence, the focus is on tracking the organisation's progress towards achieving set goals and objectives. A performance measure can be defined as a quantifiable expression of the amount, cost, or outcome of

activities that shows how much, how well, and at what level products or services are delivered within a given timeframe (McPherson et al., 2022). As a result, the use of a performance measurement system aids organisations in identifying areas of strength and areas requiring improvement.

- **Step 6: Interpreting performance results**

Performance indicators are established to facilitate the systematic analysis of results, which in turn provide critical insights for forecasting future needs and determining the relevant costs associated with these needs (Lopukhina & Stiahunova, 2021). This process is essential in ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently, based on the anticipated requirements. Furthermore, Patky and Pandey (2020) highlight, a key element of best practice in interpreting performance data involves auditing these results to ensure their accuracy and subjecting them to validation or reliability testing. This rigorous approach helps ensure that the data can be trusted and used for making informed decisions. In addition to forecasting, performance results play a crucial role in identifying key performance areas that may require enhancement. By highlighting strengths and weaknesses, organisations can focus their efforts on improving areas that are underperforming, ultimately leading to more effective and efficient operations (Reidsma et al., 2023). This continuous assessment and refinement process is vital for driving organisational growth and achieving long-term success.

- **Step 7: Communicating performance results**

Performance measurement reports should be documented and presented clearly for easy understanding by all stakeholders. Both employees and employers' benefit from performance evaluations, as they offer an opportunity to provide feedback, acknowledge achievements, and establish goals for future performance. They also create a space for open and honest discussions about areas needing improvement and strategies for growth.

2.3.5 Formulating Key Performance Indicators (Kpis)

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are defined as a measurable value that shows the organisation's progress toward achieving key business objectives (Hristov and Chirico, 2019: 5742). Organisations use KPIs to track whether their key business objectives are on track, behind, ahead, or have been achieved (Hristov and Chirico, 2019: 5742). KPIs are critical for measuring a company's success and accomplishing its objectives, ensuring the business remains on the correct path (Parmenter, 2015). KPIs are essential because they function as a scorecard for company health, measure progress through metrics tracking, help identify when adjustments are needed, and recognise and analyse patterns (Hristov and Chirico, 2019: 5742).

The triangular structure presented in the figure illustrates the hierarchy that guides the establishment and implementation of KPIs, starting from the vision and cascading down to actionable steps.

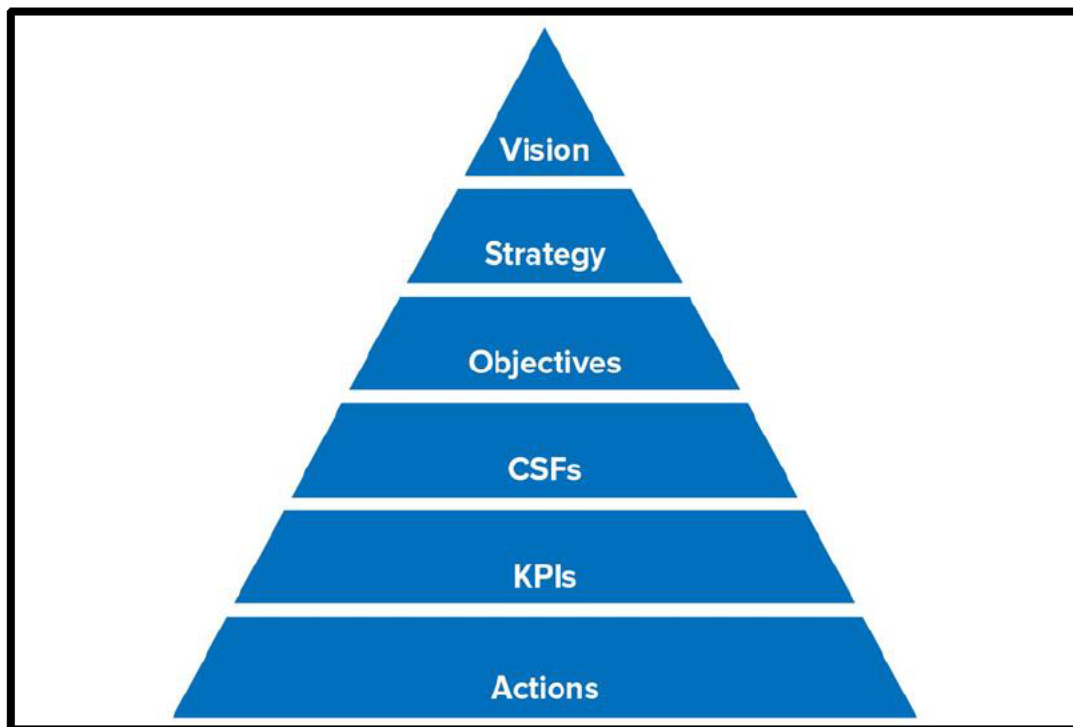


FIGURE 0.2: Key Performance Indicators

Source: (Parmenter, 2015).

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are measurable values that help organisations monitor their progress toward achieving key business objectives. KPIs serve as essential tools in performance measurement, offering insights into whether the organisation is on track, behind, or ahead in reaching its goals. They act as a scorecard for the overall health of the company, tracking metrics to measure progress, highlight areas needing improvement, and recognise patterns in performance. By offering a quantitative framework, KPIs help businesses make informed decisions, align activities with strategic goals, and ensure they stay on the correct path to success.

The triangular structure presented in the figure illustrates the hierarchy that guides the establishment and implementation of KPIs, starting from the vision and cascading down to actionable steps. This pyramid framework emphasises the importance of aligning every level of the organisation with its vision. At the top of the triangle is the vision, which provides the overarching purpose of the organisation. Below it lies the strategy, outlining how the vision will be achieved. The objectives further narrow down these strategies into specific, measurable targets. Critical Success Factors (CSFs) follow, identifying essential elements needed to achieve objectives. KPIs come next, serving as the specific metrics used to measure progress in key areas, while actions at the base represent the day-to-day

activities that drive the KPIs. This structure is crucial because it ensures that all organisational efforts are aligned from strategic vision to operational actions, making KPIs not just indicators but integral parts of a strategic management system.

2.4 ANALYSIS OF THE CONCEPT OF PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Performance management is essential for overseeing and evaluating employee performance, helping to create an environment where employees can maximise their potential and work efficiently toward organisational goals. This process involves setting clear objectives, enabling decision-making, and rewarding achievements, all aimed at fostering a supportive culture and framework that drive goal attainment (Doerig et al., 2023). Effective performance management should address performance at individual, team, and organisational levels.

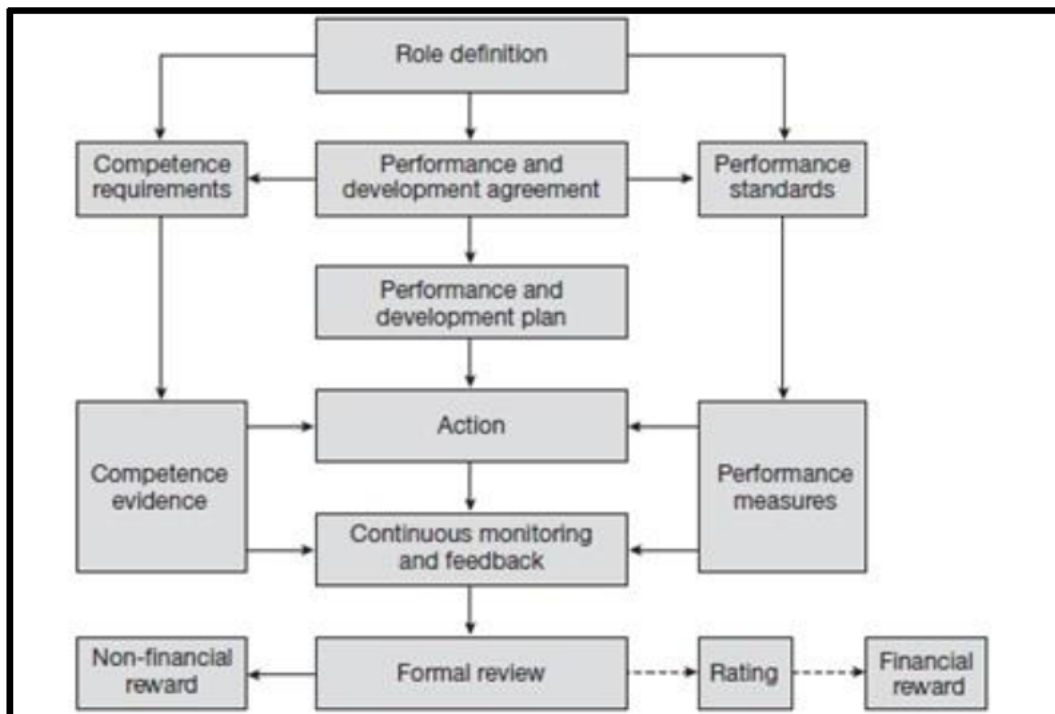
It is important to acknowledge that existing definitions of performance management often overlook how to address underperformance. Franco-Santos et al. (2021) argue that the primary goal of performance management should be to enhance the performance of individuals, teams, and the organisation, emphasising its role as an ongoing process aligned with organisational goals. Shahzad et al. (2021) further explains that the main function of performance measurement is to monitor and assess performance, identifying it as a critical sub-process within the larger performance management framework. Consequently, distinguishing between performance measurement and performance management is essential, as each plays a distinct but complementary role within an organisation.

2.5 THE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT PROCESS

In modern organisations, a company's vision, mission, and objectives are foundational elements that shape its performance and success (Kiesnere & Baumgartner, 2019). Performance management, which includes performance measurement, is crucial for organisations aiming to enhance efficiency and effectiveness (Govender & Bussin, 2020)). However, scholars caution that an excessive focus on quantitative metrics in performance measurement can overlook critical qualitative factors like employee morale, creativity, and long-term motivation (Apascaritei & Elvira, 2022). Excessive reliance on metrics may create a culture driven by fear and competition, inadvertently discouraging collaboration and stifling innovation. Critics of traditional performance management practices argue that while these systems aim to address individual deficiencies, they may neglect broader factors, such as organisational culture and economic influences, that significantly impact performance (Ha, 2020). A more holistic approach is recommended, one that considers both individual and organisational dynamics, emphasises

intrinsic motivation, fosters a collaborative culture, and supports skill development and employee growth (Somwethee et al., 2023). This approach can better align with long-term organisational goals, promoting sustainable performance and engagement across all levels of the workforce.

Figure 2 below illustrates a performance management model that highlights the interconnected steps of this process. In this model, Role Definition initiates the process by establishing competence requirements and performance standards, which flow into a Performance and Development Agreement and subsequently into a Performance and Development Plan. This plan guides employees' actions, supported by continuous monitoring and feedback to foster ongoing improvement. Following a formal review process, performance ratings determine both financial and non-financial rewards. This model



underscores the structured, cyclical nature of performance management but also reflects the critiques of conventional practices. For instance, while financial rewards may drive productivity, an overemphasis on compensation could create disparities in rewards distribution, potentially undermining teamwork (Kwon & Jang, 2022). A comprehensive approach to performance management, as emphasised by Loon et al. (2019), should therefore balance productivity with employee well-being and satisfaction to achieve sustainable success .

Figure 2: Illustration of a performance management model

Source: Helmold and Samara (2019)

Each component in the performance management model plays a critical role in fostering an effective and dynamic process. **Role Definition** sets clear expectations, allowing employees to understand their responsibilities and align their actions with organisational goals (Armstrong, 2021). This clarity forms the foundation of effective performance management, as studies show that role ambiguity can lead to stress and decreased job satisfaction (Baguley, 2021). **Competence Requirements** identify the skills and attributes necessary for successful job performance, which enhances both individual and organisational effectiveness (Calvin et al., 2024). Setting **Performance Standards** ensures that employees have measurable targets, a practice linked to enhanced motivation and productivity (Lee, 2021).

The **Performance and Development Agreement** formalises expectations, facilitating accountability and providing a reference point for development (McPherson et al., 2022). It also flows into a **Performance and Development Plan**, which maps out actions for employees to reach their potential. **Continuous Monitoring and Feedback** is integral, as research shows that timely feedback enables real-time improvements and fosters a culture of growth (Ngoc Su et al., 2021). The **Formal Review** allows for structured evaluation, ensuring fairness and transparency, while the rating derived from this review informs **Financial and Non-Financial Reward** (Reidsma et al., 2023). By rewarding performance through both tangible and intangible means, organisations can address diverse motivators, balancing extrinsic rewards with intrinsic satisfaction, as noted by scholars on employee motivation (Shyamala & Devi Kamatchi, 2019). This structured process, though systematic, requires a balance to avoid excessive focus on measurable outcomes, which some scholars argue can overshadow the importance of holistic employee well-being (Vegh et al., 2023).

2.6 STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT IN THE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT PROCESS

Stakeholders play a crucial role in the performance management process within organisations, including municipalities. According to Martin (2021), stakeholders encompass managers, employees, customers, and suppliers, each contributing uniquely to shaping the performance management process. Recognising who supports or opposes a project enables organisations to better understand the motivations, influences, and behaviours of various stakeholders, especially those who may be in opposition. The stakeholder systems model is essential for effective performance management in municipalities, as it empowers communities to hold elected officials accountable (Noto, 2020); hence, within public organisations, community involvement in the evaluation process fosters accountability for top management and justifies their decision-making. Consequently, Stirling et al. (2024) states that performance measurement systems play a crucial role in facilitating organisational learning and ensuring stakeholder accountability. Therefore, presenting information to the public completes the accountability loop for all involved stakeholders, reinforcing transparency.

Performance measurement enables organisations to evaluate whether employees and suppliers are meeting set standards and contributing to line with organisational expectations (Stirling et al., 2024). Additionally, effective performance management facilitates tracking of employee performance, addressing challenges, and fostering open communication between employees and management. This open dialogue builds trust and engagement, encouraging a culture of accountability and alignment with the organisation's mission and objectives. By reinforcing these values, performance management supports continuous improvement and enhances organisational effectiveness.

2.7 THE VALUE OF PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Performance management offers organisations a framework for monitoring employee performance, addressing challenges, and improving service efficiency (Sun & Turkan, 2020). Effective performance management promotes open communication, which enhances trust, support, and engagement among employees. Furthermore, performance management highlights training needs, boosts employee morale, identifies individuals for promotion, defines career paths, supports workforce planning, increases retention, and improves accountability (Yahya & Ibrahim, 2021). Therefore, clearly defined missions and objectives streamline the monitoring process, holding employees accountable for their contributions and reinforcing organisational objectives. In this way, performance management acts as a valuable approach that fosters organisational alignment and promotes continuous improvement.

In the context of municipalities, performance measurement provides political and public officials with insights into fund utilisation, enhancing transparency and accountability in local governance (McPherson et al., 2022). By providing feedback upon achieving objectives, performance measurement helps municipalities assess progress, record successes, and benchmark against top performers. This process fosters a culture of performance where employees understand their responsibilities and evaluation criteria (Janackovic et al., 2020). Moreover, performance measurement involves both internal and external stakeholders in defining key performance indicators, promoting transparency and accountability in public administration.

2.8 THE ROLE OF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT IN PERFORMANCE ENHANCEMENT

According to Somwethee et al. (2023), training and development play a critical role in enhancing performance, as skilled leaders positively influence employee satisfaction, commitment, and retention. Effective training equips employees with essential skills and knowledge, boosting productivity and fostering organisational growth. Furthermore, training ensures that employees' skills stay current with technological advancements, thus preventing skill obsolescence. By addressing performance gaps and promoting continuous skill development, organisations can deliver higher-quality service, achieve better customer satisfaction, and improve operational efficiency. While training focuses on imparting specific skills, development offers broader learning experiences that support employee progression. Together, they contribute to the improvement of skills, knowledge, and attitudes, which align with achieving organisational objectives (Yuan et al., 2024). Training increases employee awareness and motivation, fostering high performance and adaptability in their roles. This continuous development is vital to organisational success, as it keeps employees updated and prevents managerial obsolescence in an evolving business environment.

2.8.1 Benefits of Training and Development

Improving employee performance is one of the most significant advantages of training and development, as carefully designed programs address performance deficiencies and equip employees with the skills essential for their roles. By aligning training initiatives with organisational goals and targeting specific performance gaps, organisations can enhance service delivery, increase customer satisfaction, and optimise operational outcomes (Ruth et al., 2020).

In addition to boosting performance, training enhances employee confidence and encourages continuous learning, enabling employees to acquire new skills and adapt as technology advances. Organisations that invest in skill development can keep pace with technological changes, ensuring employees remain effective and current in their roles (Samah et al., 2019a). Furthermore, training and development reduce the risk of managerial obsolescence, as managers who stay up to date with trends and technologies become more effective. By promoting continuous learning and utilising available resources, organisations can help managers remain relevant and capable in dynamic business environments (Shabangu, 2021). Training programs also strengthen teamwork and problem-solving abilities across departments, equipping employees with innovative approaches for addressing organisational challenges. Moreover, well-structured orientation for new employees introduces them to the organisation's culture, which reduces anxiety, promotes smoother integration, and enhances their productivity. Structured orientation programs contribute to employee retention and facilitate a seamless transition into the workplace.

Additionally, training is invaluable for succession planning, as it prepares employees for future leadership roles. Development initiatives build the skills necessary for promotion, creating a sustainable leadership pipeline. Training also addresses personal growth needs, supporting employees' personal and professional development and fostering motivation, a goal-oriented mindset, and a readiness to embrace challenges. By nurturing a workforce aligned with their mission, organisations can cultivate commitment to long-term success (Janackovic et al., 2020).

In summary, training and development form the foundation of an effective performance management system. Through continuous learning, skill enhancement, and opportunities for growth, organisations can improve individual performance and drive broader organisational success.

2.9 OVERVIEW OF THE MUNICIPALITIES

Municipalities are critical entities within public administration responsible for delivering essential services such as water, sanitation, waste management, and local infrastructure. These organisations operate as the closest level of government to communities, addressing the daily needs of citizens and ensuring local development. The importance of municipalities lies in their direct interaction with the public, as they provide immediate and visible services that impact the quality of life (Torfing et al., 2019). Municipalities function through elected officials accountable to their communities, making transparency and efficiency in service delivery crucial for building trust (Bianchi, 2021). Effective

governance at the municipal level is essential to foster development, reduce inequalities, and empower communities. However, municipalities often face challenges related to resource constraints, political interference, and a lack of skilled personnel, which can hinder their ability to deliver high-quality services consistently.

2.9.1 Initiatives of Performance Management Strategies in Municipalities

Municipalities have increasingly adopted performance management strategies to improve accountability, efficiency, and transparency in service delivery. These strategies involve setting key performance indicators (KPIs), establishing monitoring and evaluation systems, and engaging stakeholders to track progress and hold officials accountable (Bianchi, 2021). Performance management has become essential in municipalities to ensure resources are used effectively and to justify the outcomes to the public (Sambo, 2022). By tracking performance metrics over time, municipalities can identify areas that need improvement and make data-driven decisions to optimise service delivery. For example, Oliver (2022) highlights that introducing performance benchmarks allows for comparison with top-performing municipalities, motivating staff and management to achieve higher standards. In addition, municipalities that consistently monitor and evaluate their performance have shown better alignment with strategic objectives, reduced inefficiencies, and enhanced service quality, as they are able to respond swiftly to areas where improvements are needed.

The table below presents an overview of the performance management strategies implemented by a municipality over the past five years, highlighting the benefits these strategies provided to both the organisation and its staff. This comparison demonstrates how municipalities have used various performance strategies, from implementing Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to advanced monitoring and evaluation, to improve service delivery, accountability, and staff development. By tracking these strategies over time, municipalities can gauge the impact of their initiatives on organisational effectiveness and employee engagement. This longitudinal analysis underscores the role of performance management in aligning municipal goals with community expectations and fostering a motivated, high-performing workforce.

TABLE 3.3: Overview of performance management strategies

Year	Performance Strategy	Benefit to Municipality	Benefit to Staff
2019	Implementation of KPIs	Increased transparency and accountability	Clear goals and targets for staff

2020	Adoption of Balanced Scorecard	Enhanced alignment with strategic objectives	Improved performance assessment and feedback
2021	Introduction of Benchmarking Practices	Enabled comparison with top performers	Motivation to reach higher standards
2022	Use of Community Feedback Systems	Improved public trust and service quality	Recognition and reward for staff efforts
2023	Advanced Monitoring and Evaluation	Reduced inefficiencies, data-driven decision-making	Opportunities for staff development in needed areas

Source: Munshi et al. (2019)

2.9.2 Staff Development Practices for Enhancing Service Delivery

Staff development is central to enhancing the effectiveness of the municipal delivery service. Effective staff development practices involve training, mentorship programs, workshops, and regular skills assessments, all tailored to address the unique needs of public servants in municipalities (Kwon & Jang, 2022). Training and development initiatives aim to equip employees with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to perform their roles effectively and meet service delivery standards. According to Lopukhina and Stiahunova (2021), skill enhancement among municipal staff positively impacts job satisfaction, retention, and performance. In addition, targeted training programs can reduce skill gaps and ensure that staff can adapt to technological advancements, policy changes, and community needs (McCuskey & Zhang, 2021). As staff competence improves, municipalities experience greater efficiency, accountability, and responsiveness in service delivery, contributing to public satisfaction and trust in local governance.

2.9.3 Causes of Poor Service Delivery in Municipalities

Poor service delivery in municipalities is often a result of a combination of factors, including limited resources, lack of skilled staff, inadequate training, political interference, and corruption (Noto, 2020). Municipalities frequently face budgetary constraints, which limit their ability to hire qualified staff and invest in essential infrastructure. Additionally, political interference can undermine decision-making, where appointments and promotions may be influenced by political affiliations rather than competence (Oliver, 2022). Corruption and mismanagement further contribute to resource misallocation, reducing the funds available for actual service delivery. As Zhao et al. (2024) suggest, insufficient training and development opportunities for staff also lead to performance issues, as employees lack the necessary

skills to carry out their responsibilities effectively. These combined factors create a negative cycle where poor service delivery erodes public trust, resulting in lower community engagement and support for local governments.

2.9.4 Developing an Effective and Sustainable Staff Development Framework

An effective and sustainable staff development framework in municipalities should prioritise continuous learning, skills enhancement, and accountability to ensure consistent service quality. According to Vegh et al. (2023), such a framework would involve structured training programs, mentorship, and a clear path for career progression, enabling staff to meet evolving community needs. The framework should emphasise regular performance assessments and feedback mechanisms to identify training needs and promote accountability (Ghasemzadeh et al., 2022). Furthermore, sustainable staff development requires aligning training with organisational goals, ensuring that all development activities contribute to the municipality's mission of delivering high-quality services. Integrating employee development into the broader performance management system fosters a culture of continuous improvement, equipping staff with the tools needed to tackle complex service challenges and fostering public trust in municipal governance.

2.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Performance measurement reports need to be documented and presented clearly to be easily understood by interested parties. Literature indicates that municipalities nationwide are mandated to implement performance management systems to evaluate their success. The benefits of training and development are extensive: competent leaders can effectively influence employee performance, skilled and engaged employees experience higher job satisfaction and commitment, leading to better retention rates, and overall workforce improvement enhances organisational goals and profitability. The upcoming chapter will discuss the methodology and research design.

CHAPTER 3

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR QUALITATIVE STUDY ON STAFF DEVELOPMENT IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Staff development is essential for organisational growth and performance, especially in local government, where employees are fundamental to public service delivery. As municipalities confront complex challenges like urbanisation, resource limitations, and heightened demands for accountability, cultivating a skilled, motivated, and adaptable workforce is essential. This chapter delineates the conceptual framework for a qualitative study examining staff development in local government, emphasising its influence on employee performance and organisational results. By placing the discourse within pertinent theoretical and contextual frameworks, the structure provides a basis for comprehending how development initiatives affect the operation of municipal systems (Ngwenya & Phiri, 2022).

The conceptual framework amalgamates essential theories and concepts to furnish a thorough perspective for examining staff development. Rooted in human capital theory and organisational learning frameworks, it underscores the importance of investing in employees' skills and knowledge to attain sustainable performance enhancements. The framework integrates aspects of motivation theories, acknowledging the relationship between personal development opportunities and employee engagement. The study seeks to connect theoretical constructs with practical challenges and opportunities in local government to offer detailed insights into staff development dynamics.

This chapter commences by outlining the theoretical foundations that underpin the study, emphasising their significance to the municipal context. It subsequently examines the influence of external and internal factors, including policy mandates, budget limitations, and organisational culture, on the formulation of staff development practices. The chapter concludes with a visual depiction of the conceptual framework, supplemented by a comprehensive elucidation of its elements and interconnections. This framework integrates theory and practice, guiding the research process while providing a systematic method for analysing the complex relationships between staff development and municipal performance.

3.2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The advancement of staff is an essential strategy for augmenting the capabilities and efficacy of local government entities. It involves systematic initiatives aimed at enhancing the skills, knowledge, and competencies of employees, ultimately leading to improved service delivery and promoting

organisational advancement. This study articulates a conceptual framework that positions staff development as a pivotal element, shaped by essential themes including capacity building, policy and governance, organisational culture, resource allocation, and employee motivation. The interplay of these elements with external factors, encompassing socio-political contexts and community requirements, yields quantifiable results such as improved service delivery, heightened efficiency, and enhanced staff performance.

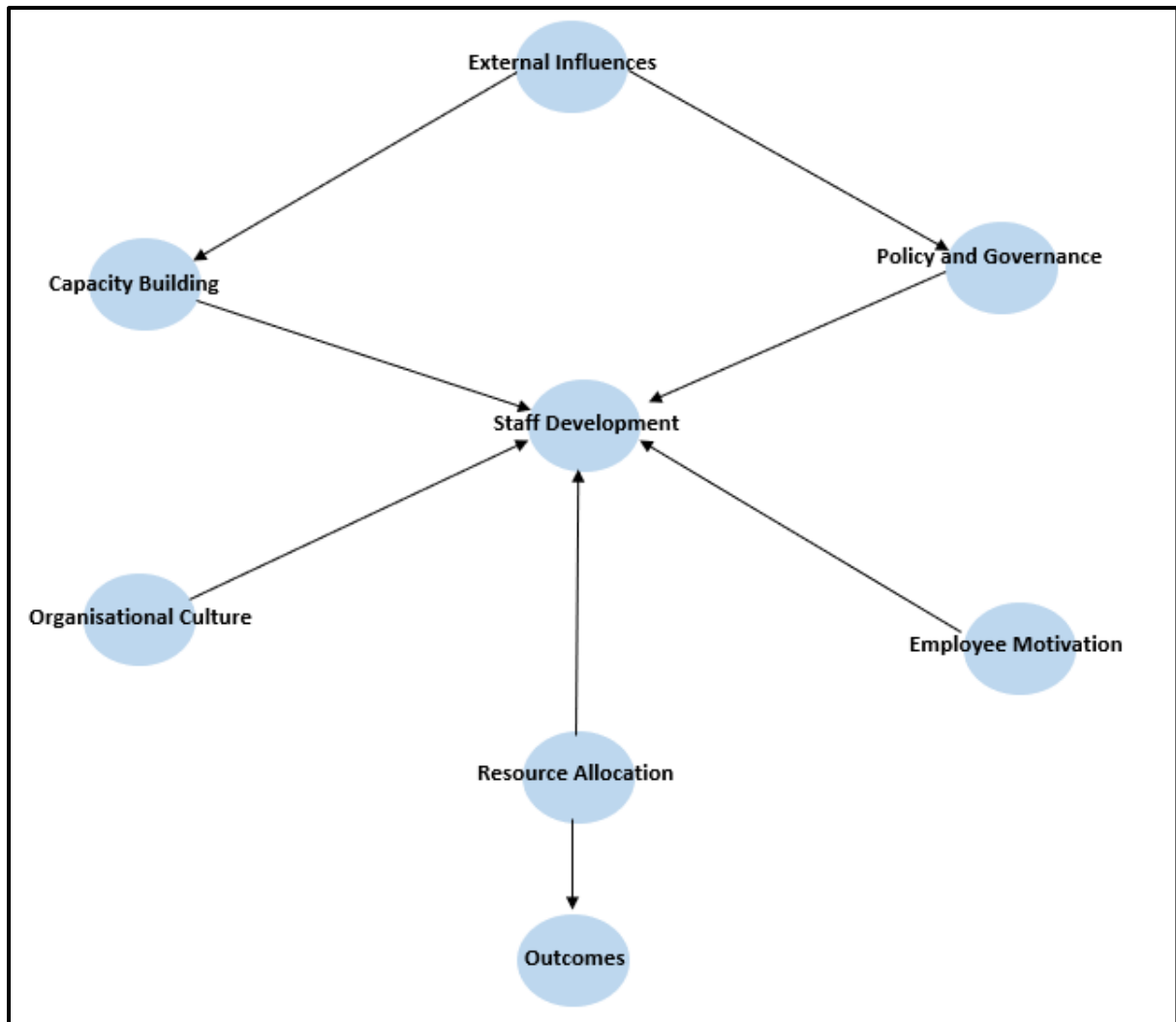


FIGURE 3.1: Conceptual Framework for Staff Development in Local Government

This conceptual framework is intricately connected to the subject of modelling a staff development framework aimed at enhancing employee performance within the Msunduzi Municipality, a selected local government in South Africa. It offers a systematic approach to comprehending and tackling the distinct challenges encountered by this municipality. The Msunduzi Municipality, akin to numerous local governments in South Africa, functions within a fluid socio-political landscape where the aspirations of the community and limitations of resources profoundly impact employee performance.

Through the integration of constructs like capacity building and organisational culture, the framework provides a perspective for recognising deficiencies in existing staff development practices and for formulating interventions that are in harmony with the municipality's strategic goals.

The importance of staff development has been emphasised by a multitude of scholars. Berman et al. (2021) underscores the essential nature of training and development in ensuring that employee competencies are in harmony with the goals of the organisation, especially within the realm of public service sectors. In a similar vein, Atmaja et al. (2022) underscore the crucial influence of local government policies in the formulation of human resource development initiatives, ensuring their alignment with the specific needs of the community. The framework synthesises these insights by illustrating how policy and governance establish the essential groundwork for capacity building and various developmental processes.

Moreover, the framework acknowledges the significance of organisational culture, a notion advocated by Amukhoye (2023), who contends that the collective values and beliefs within an organisation profoundly affect employee engagement and learning. An encouraging organisational culture cultivates innovation and adaptability, both of which are crucial for tackling the ever-evolving challenges encountered by local governments. Furthermore, the significance of resource allocation is paramount, as demonstrated by research conducted by Yang et al. (2021), which reveals the direct correlation between financial and infrastructural investments and the quality and efficacy of staff development initiatives.

The concept of employee motivation, as articulated in Herzberg's two-factor theory (1959), represents a significant theme integrated within the framework. The impetus of motivation is fundamental to fostering employee dedication and enhancing performance, rendering it an essential element of any developmental strategy. The framework incorporates external influences, reflecting the insights of Klepac et al. (2023), who emphasise that socio-political factors and community expectations significantly shape the priorities and effectiveness of local government initiatives.

Ultimately, the conceptual framework embodies a comprehensive approach to staff development, intertwining internal organisational dynamics with external environmental factors to realise transformative outcomes. This framework, by synthesising current literature and theoretical viewpoints, provides a solid basis for examining staff development within local government settings, highlighting

the interaction of various constructs and their combined influence on attaining organisational excellence.

3.3 CENTRAL PHENOMENON STAFF DEVELOPMENT IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Staff development is an essential element of efficient public administration, especially in the municipal context, where service delivery is significantly dependent on employee competence and motivation. Staff development refers to initiatives designed to enhance employees' knowledge, skills, and attitudes to improve performance and align with organisational objectives. This literature review examines the impact of development.

The basis of staff development is human capital theory, which asserts that investing in employees' knowledge and skills produces substantial organisational advantages, including enhanced productivity and innovation (Anosa, 2021). In the municipal context, staff development is bolstered by organisational learning theories that highlight the necessity of ongoing learning to respond to evolving community demands (Jejeniwa et al., 2024). These frameworks emphasise that municipalities, as service-oriented entities, must prioritise capacity-building initiatives to uphold a high standard of service delivery.

Local governments utilise diverse staff development strategies, encompassing training programs, mentorship, performance evaluations, and career progression opportunities. Formal training programs are widely employed resources that provide employees with essential technical skills, policy comprehension, and compliance knowledge required for municipal operations (Shava & Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2023). Moreover, mentorship facilitates the transfer of knowledge and the cultivation of leadership skills, whereas performance evaluations assist in pinpointing areas for enhancement and formulating customised development strategies (Adeniyi et al., 2024). Municipalities utilise workshops and team-building activities to foster collaboration and innovation.

On-the-job training has demonstrated notable efficacy in the municipal context, enabling employees to develop practical skills while directly confronting the challenges inherent in their positions. J. Kalonda and K. Govender (2021) indicates that municipalities implementing experiential learning methods achieve enhanced service delivery and increased employee satisfaction. Moreover, technology-

facilitated learning, including online courses and virtual workshops, is progressively establishing itself as a fundamental component of staff development, providing economical and adaptable training options.

Empirical evidence indicates that staff development significantly influences employee performance. Employees participating in specialised training programs exhibit significant enhancements in their technical skills and problem-solving capabilities, leading to improved service delivery (Morandini et al., 2023). Furthermore, professional development programs enhance employee motivation and job satisfaction, cultivating a sense of commitment and decreasing turnover rates in local governments (Wang et al., 2024)).

Within local government, the connection between staff development and performance is especially vital due to the sector's resource limitations and significant public accountability. Research by Carvajal and Sanchez (2024) demonstrates that municipalities that prioritise continuous learning programs generally surpass those that overlook staff development. The authors discovered that proficient municipal employees are more adept at addressing community challenges, including urbanisation pressures and infrastructure requirements, thus improving public trust.

Notwithstanding its advantages, staff development in local government frequently encounters obstacles including insufficient funding, opposition to change, and restricted access to resources. Budgetary limitations are a persistent challenge, as numerous municipalities find it difficult to allocate adequate resources for training initiatives (Mphahlele & Zandamela, 2021). Moreover, opposition from employees and managers who perceive training as an interruption to routine operations can hinder the effective execution of development initiatives. A notable challenge is the misalignment between development programs and organisational objectives. Research indicates that certain municipalities employ generic training modules that do not cater to specific job requirements, consequently diminishing their efficacy (Pinto & Henriquez-Encamilla, 2024). To address these challenges, local governments must implement a strategic approach to staff development, ensuring that initiatives align with organisational requirements and employee ambitions.

Staff development is fundamental to effective municipal governance, directly impacting employee performance and service delivery results. Although diverse strategies, including formal training, mentorship, and experiential learning, have demonstrated efficacy, local governments must contend with obstacles such as financial limitations and opposition to change. A strategic, needs-oriented

approach to staff development, underpinned by comprehensive evaluation mechanisms, is crucial for optimising its effect on employee performance and, consequently, community welfare. As municipalities encounter changing demands, ongoing investment in staff development will be essential for cultivating resilient and efficient local governments.

Staff development is crucial for enhancing employee performance, especially in municipalities such as Msunduzi Municipality, where service delivery is a primary obligation (Enaifoghe, 2022; Muringa & Mutereko, 2024). The correlation between development initiatives and performance is complex, involving elements of skill enhancement, motivation, and organisational alignment. This literature review analyses the aspects of staff development and their impact on qualitative and quantitative measures of employee performance. It establishes a foundation for comprehending the relationship between development initiatives and municipal service outcomes by examining evidence-based practices and theoretical insights (Qanazi et al., 2024).

Employee Performance in Municipal Settings: Employee performance in local government is frequently assessed based on service delivery, responsiveness, and operational efficiency. Quantitative metrics, including diminished service backlogs and expedited response times, are essential criteria for evaluating municipal efficacy (Rezvani et al., 2024). Nonetheless, qualitative indicators such as heightened employee motivation, superior work quality, and augmented accountability are equally vital for comprehending the overarching effects of staff development. Studies demonstrate that motivated employees display increased dedication and innovation, essential for meeting community needs in resource-limited settings (Gamberini et al., 2022). In Msunduzi Municipality, these indicators are especially crucial, as the municipality aims to reconcile public expectations with its ability to provide services efficiently.

Moreover, qualitative factors, such as response times and service backlogs, are crucial to assessing the overall effectiveness of staff development programs in municipal settings. As Armstrong and Taylor (2023) point out, employee performance is increasingly associated with workplace factors, including job satisfaction, leadership support, and a sense of purpose. A holistic view of employee performance can be obtained by using these qualitative indicators, especially for Msunduzi Municipality as it seeks to enhance community relations and improve operations. The greater the sense of value and support employees receive, the more likely they are to behave accountable, resulting in improved organisational performance (Ramdhan et al., 2022). For this reason, it is imperative that both quantitative and

qualitative measures of performance are integrated to capture the full effects of staff development initiatives on municipal efficiency.

Training and Skill Development: Training and skill development constitute the foundation of personnel development in local government. Structured workshops and on-the-job training programs are acknowledged as effective means for imparting the technical skills necessary for municipal operations (Perocho, 2023). These initiatives guarantee that personnel are adept in domains such as policy execution, fiscal management, and infrastructure upkeep. Moreover, aligning training programs with service requirements increases their pertinence and effectiveness. Research indicates that municipalities implementing customised training programs achieve enhanced efficiency and diminished errors in service delivery (Kulal et al., 2024). In Msunduzi Municipality, it is imperative to address skill deficiencies through specialised training to uphold the quality and responsiveness of services.

The purpose of training and skill development programs in local government is not only to enhance technical skills, but also to promote continuous learning and adaptability. In subsequent studies, Karlberg and Bezzina (2022) indicated that ongoing professional development helps municipal employees respond effectively to shifting demands and evolving policies. Furthermore, employees are more likely to engage in training when it is linked to their career progression or personal development. Training aligned with both individual and organisational objectives contribute not only to addressing existing skill gaps, but also to enhancing employee ownership, contributing to overall service quality in Msunduzi Municipality (Lawhon, 2020). Msunduzi is striving to improve service delivery, so integrating both technical and adaptive skills in training programs remains essential to enhancing performance and meeting the diverse needs of its residents.

Career Advancement: Opportunities for career advancement, such as succession planning and employee recognition, are essential for maintaining long-term motivation and engagement. Employees who recognise distinct opportunities for advancement are more inclined to maintain their commitment to their positions and positively impact organisational objectives (Ali & Anwar, 2021). Succession planning specifically guarantees that municipalities can preserve continuity in leadership and expertise. Recognition programs significantly enhance morale, as research indicates that the acknowledgement of accomplishments cultivates a culture of accountability and excellence (Ali & Anwar, 2021). Implementing effective career development strategies within Msunduzi Municipality can reduce turnover rates and cultivate a resilient workforce.

In addition to formal career advancement strategies, recognition programs are pivotal in maintaining employee morale and fostering a culture of accountability. According to Miidom et al. (2022), employee recognition not only boosts morale but also reinforces a sense of purpose and accomplishment within the organisation. When employees are recognised for their hard work and achievements, they are more likely to feel a deeper connection to the organisation and its mission, which enhances their performance and job satisfaction. This is particularly important in the public sector, where employees often work in high-pressure environments. Research by Israel et al. (2020) further underscores the importance of recognising employees for their contributions, noting that recognition programs contribute to a positive work culture and can significantly reduce turnover rates. By incorporating career advancement and recognition into staff development strategies, Msunduzi Municipality can cultivate a resilient and dedicated workforce that drives continuous improvement in service delivery.

Knowledge Sharing: Knowledge sharing is a crucial aspect of employee development that fosters organisational learning and innovation. Both formal mechanisms, such as inter-departmental meetings, and informal channels, such as peer mentoring, foster a culture of collaboration (Abu-Rumman, 2021). In municipalities, where employees frequently encounter intricate and evolving challenges, utilising collective expertise is essential for problem-solving and decision-making. Studies indicate that municipalities exhibiting robust knowledge-sharing practices demonstrate increased efficiency and employee satisfaction (Alkheyi et al., 2020). Msunduzi Municipality can improve the adaptability and creativity of its workforce by promoting systems for knowledge exchange.

The value of knowledge sharing extends beyond enhancing problem-solving capabilities to improving overall organisational adaptability and responsiveness. Israel et al. (2020) emphasise that municipalities with a strong culture of knowledge sharing are better positioned to adjust to external changes and challenges, as employees can rapidly exchange insights and solutions to emerging issues. Moreover, when employees share their expertise, they are more likely to feel valued and engaged, leading to higher job satisfaction and retention. As noted by Miković et al. (2020), knowledge sharing not only promotes innovation but also strengthens organisational cohesion, as it fosters a sense of collective responsibility for achieving shared goals. In Msunduzi Municipality, creating systems that facilitate both formal and informal knowledge exchange will allow the organisation to harness the collective expertise of its employees, thereby improving service delivery and building a more resilient workforce.

Performance Feedback and Support: Constructive feedback mechanisms, such as evaluations and performance appraisals, are essential for staff development. These processes furnish employees with insights regarding their strengths and areas for enhancement, allowing them to align their endeavours with organisational expectations (Bijalwan et al., 2024). Consistent feedback sessions, along with support mechanisms like coaching and counselling, bolster employee confidence and proficiency. Moreover, performance evaluations provide a foundation for recognising training requirements and career advancement prospects. In Msunduzi Municipality, the incorporation of transparent and constructive feedback mechanisms can enhance employee accountability and foster continuous improvement.

Several support mechanisms, such as coaching and counseling, can be used to enhance the confidence and proficiency of employees. Research by Grover and Furnham (2022) highlights that coaching, particularly when individualised, helps employees develop their potential, leading to improved job performance and satisfaction. Similarly, counseling provides a safe space for employees to address personal or work-related challenges that may affect their performance. These support systems contribute to employees' sense of value within the organisation and help them navigate obstacles that could hinder their professional development. In Msunduzi Municipality, implementing comprehensive feedback and support systems can significantly enhance workforce adaptability, creativity, and retention, ensuring that employees feel supported in their efforts to improve service delivery and achieve organisational objectives.

Mentorship and Coaching: Mentorship and coaching are pivotal instruments for employee development, providing tailored guidance and assistance. Seasoned mentors are essential in imparting knowledge, cultivating leadership abilities, and promoting a sense of belonging among mentees (Russell-Peter, 2021). Coaching, conversely, offers targeted interventions to rectify particular skill deficiencies and obstacles. Municipalities that emphasise mentorship and coaching experience elevated employee engagement and retention (Chaudhuri et al., 2022). Msunduzi Municipality can enhance skill development and cultivate a succession of competent leaders by implementing robust mentorship programs.

Mentorship and coaching are essential tools for nurturing the long-term development of employees, especially in public sector organisations like municipalities. Li et al. (2021) suggests that mentorship not only helps mentees navigate their professional journey but also accelerates their learning curve by providing real-world insights and guidance. Through mentorship, employees are exposed to the

practical application of leadership principles, governance structures, and strategic decision-making, which are crucial in municipal settings. This relationship fosters a sense of support and engagement, leading to improved job satisfaction and performance. Furthermore, mentors often serve as role models, helping to shape the organisational culture by embodying the values of the municipality, thus promoting a culture of continuous learning and leadership development.

Coaching, on the other hand, is an effective mechanism for addressing specific skill gaps and enhancing individual performance. Subhadarshini et al. (2024) highlights that coaching provides employees with personalised attention and structured feedback that helps them overcome challenges and achieve targeted goals. This is especially beneficial for employees in local government who may face evolving and complex challenges. By focusing on specific areas for improvement, such as communication, problem-solving, or time management, coaching enhances employees' capabilities in their current roles while preparing them for future leadership positions. For Msunduzi Municipality, implementing a structured mentorship and coaching framework would not only improve individual performance but also ensure the development of a pool of skilled leaders who can contribute to the municipality's long-term success and stability.

Comprehensive Influence of Staff Development on Employee Performance: The interaction among these aspects of staff development produces a cumulative effect on employee performance. Training improves technical skills, whereas career development fosters ongoing motivation and engagement. The exchange of knowledge promotes innovation, while feedback systems facilitate ongoing enhancement. Mentorship and coaching offer tailored assistance essential for manoeuvring intricate municipal positions. Empirical research consistently demonstrates a positive correlation between extensive staff development programs and enhanced municipal service delivery (Allen et al., 2020). For Msunduzi Municipality, implementing a cohesive strategy for staff development is essential for fulfilling its organisational goals and addressing community expectations.

Empirical studies further support the notion that a comprehensive staff development approach enhances municipal service delivery. As noted by Moshani (2022), municipalities with robust staff development frameworks experience improved service efficiency, reduced turnover, and greater employee engagement, which are directly linked to higher-quality public service. The strategic alignment of employee growth with organisational objectives ensures that staff members are not only equipped with the necessary skills but also remain motivated and committed to the municipality's vision. For Msunduzi Municipality, a cohesive staff development strategy is not just a tool for enhancing individual

performance but also a critical factor in achieving broader organisational success, as it supports the municipality in meeting its service delivery targets and effectively addressing community demands.

Obstacles and Factors: Notwithstanding the clear advantages of staff development, municipalities frequently encounter obstacles including financial limitations, opposition to change, and a disconnect between development initiatives and organisational objectives. Confronting these challenges necessitates a strategic approach that harmonises resource allocation with employee requirements. Msunduzi Municipality can address these challenges by cultivating a culture of continuous learning and utilising technology for economical training solutions.

Financial limitations are among the primary obstacles to effective staff development in municipalities. Research by Zweni (2022) shows that constrained budgets often limit the scope and frequency of training programs, hindering employees' professional growth. Municipalities in resource-limited environments are forced to prioritise essential services over developmental activities, which can undermine the long-term benefits of staff development. Moreover, the cost of high-quality training materials, facilitators, and technological infrastructure can be prohibitive. However, the strategic allocation of resources and investment in low-cost, scalable training methods, such as e-learning platforms, can mitigate this challenge. By embracing technology, Msunduzi Municipality can provide employees with affordable, flexible, and accessible training options that align with their development needs while optimising financial resources.

Opposition to change is another significant barrier to the successful implementation of staff development programs. Employees and even managers may resist new development initiatives due to fear of the unknown or discomfort with altering existing practices. As highlighted by Vitis and Gilmour (2017), change resistance can manifest in various forms, from passive disengagement to active opposition, and it often stems from a lack of understanding of the benefits. Addressing this challenge requires a clear communication strategy that emphasises the advantages of development programs and fosters a culture of continuous improvement. Moreover, involving employees in the design and implementation of development initiatives can reduce resistance, as it creates a sense of ownership and alignment with organisational goals. Msunduzi Municipality can overcome resistance to change by engaging employees early in the process, ensuring they understand the purpose and expected outcomes of development initiatives.

3.4 INFLUENCING FACTORS

This conceptual framework outlines key factors affecting learning and growth within local government organisations. A variety of factors influence development outcomes, including organisational culture, resources, and employee motivation. As part of fostering a culture of continuous improvement within the municipality, leadership support plays a pivotal role as well (Johnsson et al., 2021). In exploring the dynamics of staff development in local government settings, it is important to understand these elements.

3.4.1 Organisational Culture

Culture refers to the attitudes, values, and behaviors that underpin how employees interact and perform within an organisation. Staff development initiatives are profoundly influenced by local government culture because they shape work environments and employee learning skills. When continuous learning and development are prioritised by a company, employees are encouraged to take full advantage of growth opportunities. It makes the public sector more adaptable and more resilient in an ever-changing environment. According to Bendak et al. (2020), a company's culture plays a significant role in its ability to adapt and innovate. Therefore, it is critical in shaping the practices of development.

The success of staff development is also determined by the values embedded in an organisation's culture. Employees participating in training programs and applying their learning in practical settings are motivated by cultures that value knowledge-sharing, collaboration, and innovation. Hence, fostering a culture of learning is critical to building an effective workforce capable of meeting complex community needs, particularly in local government (Powley & Cameron, 2020). As a result of its emphasis on collective growth and knowledge sharing, staff development is not just an individual endeavor but also a strategic priority aligned with organisational objectives.

Whilst the contribution of organisational culture to sustainable workforce development is underscored by its inclusion in the conceptual framework for staff development; the learning initiatives become integral to the organisation's identity because of aligning culture with staff development programs. Therefore, for local governments to become more effective, leadership must cultivate and reinforce a culture of continuous improvement. Creating an environment conducive to learning and performance enhancement requires a combination of organisational culture and development strategies, according

Unzueta et al. (2020). Consequently, organisation culture plays a key role in the development of staff in local governments.

3.4.2 Leadership and Management Support

Staff development initiatives in local government are shaped by leadership and management support. Leadership sets the tone for organisational priorities, and employees' willingness to engage with learning and development programs is directly influenced by leadership commitment. Developing a culture of continuous improvement begins with senior leaders advocating for it. When senior leaders can make continuous improvement visible, a culture of learning results. A staff development framework is incomplete without leadership support, which Yukl et al. (2019) identifies as guiding, motivating, and empowering employees to achieve organisational and personal growth.

Leaders' values influence how staff development initiatives are perceived and implemented. The commitment of leaders to equity, transparency, and professional growth inspires employees to actively pursue self-improvement. Leaders' commitment to learning programs ensures alignment with broader strategic objectives in local government, where public service effectiveness is directly related to workforce capabilities (Mazzetti & Schaufeli, 2022). Moreover, management support strengthens employees' confidence that the organisation is committed to their development, thereby enhancing their engagement and performance.

As a vital component of sustainable workforce growth, leadership and management support should be incorporated into the conceptual framework for staff development. Hence, the role of leaders includes more than just facilitation. They are also catalysts for embedding development into the organisational culture. A few of their responsibilities include shaping organisational culture, allocating resources, and ensuring that development programs are designed to meet workers' unique needs (Hurtienne & Hurtienne, 2024). For local governments to meet this challenge, leaders must actively engage staff to identify training gaps, advocate for necessary resources, and create learning environments that support learning. As an integral part of the conceptual framework, leadership and management support are emphasised as crucial to building a thriving and capable workforce.

3.4.3 Resource Availability

Providing staff development resources is essential to the success of local government staff development programs. Development initiatives are designed and implemented effectively when resources, including financial support, training facilities, and learning materials, are available. Even well-intended programs can become ineffective or unsustainable if they do not receive sufficient resources. Balwant (2020) emphasise how access to appropriate resources impacts the quality and reach of training initiatives, thus directly affecting employees' ability to acquire and apply new skills. Staff development is an essential component of achieving workforce competence and efficiency in local governments, which operate under tight budgets and high public accountability.

Resource availability affects more than just the delivery of programs; it also influences employee engagement and perceptions. It's important to make resources readily available so that employees feel valued and supported, fostering a sense of belonging and motivating them to participate in development activities. As a result of investing in comprehensive learning resources, Margherita (2022) report that organisations become more innovative and focus on continuous improvement. As part of the overall goal of providing effective service, local governments need to make sure that resources are available for the development of programs that can address diverse workforce needs. As resources are incorporated into the conceptual framework, they are essential to the development of sustainable and effective staff development initiatives.

3.4.4 Employee Motivation

It is vitally important that employees are motivated in order for staff development initiatives in local government to be successful. Engaging employees in learning opportunities and applying newly acquired skills to their work is a function of motivation. Several factors affect participation in development programs, such as intrinsic motivators like the desire for personal growth and extrinsic rewards like career advancement. Motivated employees are more likely to embrace change and invest effort into self-improvement, making motivation an essential part of effective workplace development. Van den Broeck et al. (2021) point out that motivated employees are more likely to invest efforts into improving themselves. Motivating employees in local government facilitates staff development efforts that benefit the organisation's delivery service.

Motivation contributes to a culture of active learning and continuous improvement through its ability to create a sense of accomplishment and pride. In order to be motivated, employees realise that development programs are not obligations, but rather opportunities to improve their competencies and contribute towards the organisation's objectives. Based on Herzberg's two-factor theory, employees who feel valued and supported in their career aspirations are more motivated (Alrawahi et al., 2020). A

development program that aligns with the professional and personal goals of local government staff is more likely to keep them dedicated and engaged. An integral part of the study's conceptual framework is employee motivation, which demonstrates how it contributes to the sustainability and long-term success of staff development programs.

3.5 CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

A contextual factor refers to the conditions outside and within the organisation that influence the design, implementation, and outcomes of staff development initiatives. A variety of factors influence workforce development, including socioeconomic factors, organisational dynamics, workforce demographics, and regulatory frameworks. The local government context requires an understanding of these factors that can guide the design of development programs that address unique community needs and operational constraints. It is important to acknowledge contextual factors when developing initiatives to ensure they are useful, sustainable, and aligned with both organisational objectives and employee expectations, a point that has been highlighted by Grant et al. (2020). Staff development in local governments can be explored holistically through incorporating contextual factors into a conceptual framework.

3.5.1 Regulatory Framework

The regulatory framework is a critical element in shaping staff development within local government, as it provides the legal and policy foundation for workforce management practices. In South Africa, compliance with policies such as the *Municipal Systems Act* No. 32 of 2000 mandates the establishment of performance management systems to ensure efficiency and accountability in service delivery. This Act underscores the need for structured staff development initiatives that align with organisational goals and national priorities. As noted by Munzhedzi (2020) adherence to regulatory frameworks ensures that development programs are not only compliant with legal standards but also contribute to building a skilled and competent public sector workforce.

The value of the regulatory framework lies in its role as a guide for implementing equitable and effective staff development practices. Policies like the *Municipal Systems Act* emphasise the integration of performance management with employee development, ensuring that training initiatives are strategically linked to improving service delivery outcomes. Moreover, compliance with these regulations fosters transparency and accountability in local government operations, which are essential for maintaining public trust. Incorporating the regulatory framework into the conceptual framework highlights its importance in ensuring that staff development initiatives are both legally compliant and

strategically impactful, aligning employee growth with the broader goals of local government (Sutcliffe & Bannister, 2020).

3.5.2 Socioeconomic Environment

Changing socioeconomic conditions play a significant role in shaping staff development strategies within local government, influencing both the demand for services and employees' ability to perform those services. Various factors influence the priorities and focus of staff development programs, including unemployment rates, education levels, income inequality, and community needs. The South African local government sector operates in diverse socioeconomic contexts in which addressing disparities is a key priority. The Maemu (2023) article suggest that local government staff development programs must be responsive to socioeconomic conditions in order to develop a workforce capable of addressing local challenges. As a result of this responsiveness, development initiatives contribute not only to employee skills but also to equitable service delivery.

A conceptual framework that incorporates the socioeconomic environment has the advantage of grounding staff development programs in real-world challenges. Creating a workforce that is both skilled and sensitive to the needs of the communities that they serve is possible when development initiatives are aligned with socioeconomic conditions in the municipality. For example, employees can learn practical solutions for tackling inequality and poverty through training programs aimed at improving service delivery to underprivileged communities. Munzhedzi (2020) argue that local governments must understand and incorporate socioeconomic factors into their workforce planning in order to ensure worker development is both effective and aligned with broader development goals.

3.5.3 Public Sector Challenges

Public sector challenges significantly influence staff development initiatives in local government by shaping the priorities, resources, and strategies required to build a capable workforce (Saputra et al., 2024). Issues such as limited funding, bureaucratic inefficiencies, skills shortages, and high employee turnover create barriers to effective development programs (Ndatshe et al., 2024). In South Africa, local governments often grapple with these challenges while striving to meet increasing service delivery demands (Magagula et al., 2022; Enaifoghe et al., 2024). As Cloete and De Coning (2018) highlight, addressing public sector challenges requires innovative and adaptive approaches to workforce development, ensuring that employees are equipped to manage complex administrative and operational

tasks. Incorporating these challenges into the conceptual framework allows for a realistic understanding of the constraints and opportunities within staff development.

The value of acknowledging public sector challenges lies in its ability to inform more resilient and context-specific staff development strategies. By recognising these difficulties, local governments can focus on targeted solutions, such as prioritising critical skills training, fostering leadership development, and improving employee retention efforts. Additionally, addressing these challenges aligns with the broader goals of enhancing public efficiency and accountability. According to Bryson et al. (2021), overcoming public sector obstacles through structured development programs not only improves organisational performance but also strengthens public trust and service delivery outcomes. Including public sector challenges in the conceptual framework highlights the necessity of addressing systemic issues to ensure sustainable and impactful workforce development in local government.

3.6 OUTCOMES OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Local government organisations invest in employee learning and growth in order to achieve tangible and intangible outcomes. As a result, employees' skills are enhanced, their job performance improves, their job satisfaction is increased, and their engagement levels increase, all contributing to increased organisational effectiveness and service quality. Training programs can also help workers become more skilled and adaptable, enabling them to meet the needs of local communities more effectively. Akdere and Egan (2020) believe that the benefits of staff development extend beyond individual employees, as they support innovative decision-making, public service, and innovation in general. Staff development initiatives need to align with both employee needs and governmental goals, as the conceptual framework links them together.

3.6.1 Enhanced Skills and Competencies

Enhanced skills and competencies are the primary outcomes of staff development programs, which play a vital role in improving the overall efficiency of local government operations. It is vital for local governments to ensure that their employees possess the necessary skills to address complex and evolving community needs. Through staff development initiatives, employees can develop technical skills, leadership abilities, and problem-solving skills that will enable them to be more efficient and effective in their roles. Developing skills and competencies within an organisation fosters growth not only for individuals, but also promotes the success of the organisation by enhancing performance and adaptability. This result prepares employees for addressing challenges and driving public sector reforms within local government.

Enhanced skills and competencies contribute to more capable and resilient workers beyond improving job performance. Developing employees' competencies in the workplace increases their confidence and their ability to contribute to the organisation's strategic goals. Especially in local governments, empowerment is essential to fostering a culture of innovation and continuous improvement. Local governments can achieve organisational sustainability by developing skills and competencies to adapt to changing regulations, technological advancements, and changing public expectations, according to Kabeyi and Olanrewaju (2022). As enhanced skills and competencies are integrated into the conceptual framework, they are highlighted as central to achieving sustainable workforce development and improving public services.

3.6.2 Improved Job Satisfaction and Morale

Improved job satisfaction and morale are essential outcomes of staff development programs within local government. When employees participate in development initiatives that align with their personal and professional growth goals, they are more likely to feel valued and supported by their organisation. This, in turn, leads to higher levels of job satisfaction, which is crucial for reducing turnover rates and enhancing employee retention. According to Thant and Chang (2021), job satisfaction is influenced by factors such as recognition, achievement, and opportunities for personal growth, all of which can be addressed through targeted staff development efforts. In local government settings, where employees often face challenging workloads and public scrutiny, fostering job satisfaction and morale is critical for maintaining a motivated and engaged workforce.

The value of improved job satisfaction and morale lies in its direct impact on employee performance and organisational success. Employees with high morale are more likely to be proactive, take the initiative, and contribute to the achievement of organisational goals. Additionally, when job satisfaction is prioritised, employees are more willing to engage with development programs and embrace new responsibilities. As noted by Rameshkumar (2020), a workforce with high morale is more likely to exhibit greater organisational commitment and discretionary effort. In the context of local government, this means that improving job satisfaction through staff development not only benefits employees but also enhances the quality of public service delivery (Nama et al., 2022; Vuong, 2023). By incorporating improved job satisfaction and morale into the conceptual framework, the study highlights their significance in fostering a positive and productive work environment in local government (Shellow, 2022; Rokman & Kob, 2024).

3.6.3 Greater Retention and Reduced Turnover

Greater retention and reduced turnover are significant outcomes of effective staff development programs, especially within the local government sector. High employee turnover can be costly, disrupting operations and leading to a loss of institutional knowledge. Staff development initiatives that focus on skill enhancement, career growth, and employee well-being contribute to greater job satisfaction, which in turn fosters employee loyalty and reduces turnover. As noted by Jehanzeb (2020), employees are more likely to remain with an organisation when they feel that their professional development is supported and that there are opportunities for career advancement. In the context of local government, where continuity and experience are vital for effective service delivery, retaining skilled employees is essential for maintaining organisational stability and delivering quality public services.

The value of greater retention and reduced turnover extends beyond financial savings to fostering a knowledgeable and experienced workforce that can contribute to long-term goals. When employees remain in their positions longer, they develop a deeper understanding of the community's needs, organisational culture, and specific challenges faced by the municipality. This continuity enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of the delivery service. According to Rawashdeh and Tamimi (2020), reducing turnover through staff development initiatives can significantly improve organisational performance by ensuring that experienced employees are retained. By incorporating retention and turnover reduction into the conceptual framework, this study highlights the importance of staff development in creating a stable, committed, and capable workforce within local government organisations.

3.6.4 Quality of Service Delivery

The quality of service delivery is a fundamental outcome of effective staff development in local government. Staff development initiatives that focus on enhancing employees' skills, competencies, and problem-solving abilities directly impact the efficiency and effectiveness with which services are provided to the public. In local government, where the demand for high-quality public services is critical for community well-being, ensuring that employees have the right training and development opportunities is essential. As highlighted by González-López et al. (2021), investing in employee development not only improves job performance but also strengthens the overall capacity of the organisation to meet its goals. In the context of local government, high-quality service delivery is essential for maintaining public trust, meeting legal mandates, and improving citizen's' quality of life, making staff development a key driver of organisational success.

The value of improving the quality of service delivery through staff development lies in its ability to create a more responsive, efficient, and customer-focused workforce. Employees who are well-trained and equipped with the necessary skills are better able to address the complex needs of their communities, ultimately leading to improved service outcomes. Furthermore, developing employees' capabilities fosters a culture of continuous improvement, where staff members are motivated to innovate and find better ways of delivering services. According to Harvey (2023), enhanced employee skills are directly correlated with better performance in public service, which is essential for local governments aiming to fulfill their public sector responsibilities. By linking the quality of service delivery to staff development in the conceptual framework, this study emphasises the critical role of workforce development in improving public sector outcomes.

3.7 CONCLUSION

Staff development is a critical component for enhancing employee performance and achieving organisational objectives within local government. The conceptual framework explored highlights the interplay between key factors such as organisational culture, leadership support, resource availability, and employee motivation, all of which collectively drive the effectiveness of development initiatives. Additionally, contextual elements such as the regulatory framework, socioeconomic environment, and public sector challenges shape the implementation of these initiatives, making it imperative for municipalities to adopt tailored strategies that address their unique circumstances. The outcomes of staff development, including enhanced skills, improved job satisfaction, greater retention, and better service delivery, underscore its transformative potential in creating a competent and motivated workforce capable of meeting community expectations.

However, achieving these benefits requires municipalities to overcome significant obstacles, such as financial constraints and resistance to change, by adopting strategic and innovative approaches. Msunduzi Municipality, like many others, stands to gain from fostering a culture of continuous learning, utilising technology to optimise resource allocation, and promoting collaboration through mentorship and knowledge-sharing practices. By investing in comprehensive staff development programs aligned with organisational goals, municipalities can build resilient, skilled teams that not only improve service delivery but also ensure sustainable growth and adaptability in the face of evolving challenges.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a detailed explanation of the methods used in this research. It begins by discussing the research design and the philosophical worldview that underpins the research, providing a foundational context for the subsequent methodological choices. The chapter then outlines the research design, detailing the overall framework and approach taken to address the research questions. Following this, the research strategy is elaborated upon, explaining the specific plan and rationale for how the study was conducted. This includes an examination of the research approach, detailing the specific techniques and procedures employed for data collection and analysis. Additionally, the chapter explores the research setting, providing an in-depth description of the context and environment where the study was conducted. This section is followed by a thorough examination of the data collection process, including the tools and instruments used to gather information, as well as the procedures followed to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data.

Data analysis is another critical component covered detailing techniques and methods used to interpret data. This includes a discussion of any software or analytical tools utilized in the process. The chapter addresses data quality control measures implemented throughout the study. This includes a discussion of the steps taken to maintain high standards of data integrity and to mitigate any potential biases or errors. Finally, the chapter concludes with an exploration of the ethical considerations relevant to the study. This section highlights the ethical principles adhered to, including issues of consent, confidentiality, and the protection of participants' rights and well-being throughout the research process.

4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The concept of research design stands at the very core of the research process, serving as the blueprint that guides the study. One pivotal classification in research design pertains to its typology. As Bloomfield and Fisher (2019) outlined, research design can be broadly categorised into three primary types: exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory.

4.2.1 Exploratory research design

Exploratory research design aims to provide initial insights and understanding of the research problem or topic (Sileyew, 2019). It focuses on exploring unknown variables, understanding the relationships between variables, and identifying potential hypotheses. Exploratory research design is often used in fields such as marketing, business, and social sciences. The characteristics of exploratory research design, as Swedberg (2020) highlighted, include the following:

- *Non-experimental:* Similar to descriptive research, exploratory research design does not involve any manipulation of variables.
- *Deductive:* Researchers begin with a general hypothesis or theoretical framework and test it by gathering data and analyzing the relationships.
- *Exploratory:* The primary goal of exploratory research is to explore and gain insights rather than establish concrete conclusions.
- *Flexible:* Exploratory research designs allow for flexibility in data collection methods and analysis techniques, allowing researchers to adapt to changing circumstances.

4.2.2 Descriptive Research Design

Provide a comprehensive description of the characteristics of a population or a particular situation (Asenahabi, 2019). It focuses on accurately describing the variables of interest without attempting to explain the underlying reasons for those characteristics. Descriptive research designs are commonly used in fields such as sociology, psychology, and education. The characteristics of descriptive research design as highlighted, include the following.

- *Non-experimental:* Descriptive research designs do not involve any manipulation of variables, as they aim to describe the current situation or population.
- *Inductive:* Researchers gather data through observation, surveys, or interviews and use statistical methods to summarize and describe the findings.
- *Basically Descriptive:* Descriptive research aims to present a comprehensive overview of the data without drawing any conclusions or making generalizations.
- *Limited in scope:* Descriptive research focuses on a specific aspect of the research question rather than exploring multiple variables or causal relationships.

4.2.3 Explanatory research design

It establishes causal relationships, identify the underlying factors or mechanisms, and test hypotheses (Creswell, 2018). This research design extends beyond mere description or exploration, aiming to elucidate the relationships between variables. Explanatory research design is commonly used in fields such as medicine, biology, and economics. The characteristics of explanatory research design, as Bowen et al. (2017) highlighted, include the following:

- *Experimental:* Explanatory research designs involve the manipulation of variables and a control group, allowing for the testing of causal relationships.
- *Descriptive:* Explanatory research designs often begin with descriptive data and provide analysis to conclude the underlying mechanisms.
- *Causal:* The goal of explanatory research is to establish causal relationships and understand how different variables interact and influence each other.
- *Generalizable:* Explanatory research designs aim to generalize the findings beyond the specific study, making them applicable to broader contexts.

For this study on service delivery and staff development in South African local government municipalities, opting for an exploratory qualitative research approach was necessary. The objective is to identify issues plaguing service delivery and staff development within South African local government municipalities. An exploratory approach empowered the study to navigate this complexity, uncovering nuances that might remain hidden in other research paradigms (Golino & Epskamp, 2017). One of the study's primary goals was to comprehend the experiences, perspectives, and difficulties of local government employees in their day-to-day roles. This necessitated a research methodology that could immerse itself in the lived experiences of these individuals. It allowed engaging in in-depth conversations and observations. The power of exploratory research lies in its naturalistic orientation (Neuman, 2013). It thrives when examining events in their real-world settings. In this case, this meant stepping into the actual local government municipalities where service delivery issues were happening.

The study gained first-hand insights into the dynamics that impact service delivery and staff development by conducting interviews and observations in these authentic settings. This grounded approach ensured that the findings resonated with the real challenges faced by employees. Another noteworthy advantage of exploratory research was its capacity to generate theories and inquiries (Tashakkori, 2009) as the study collected and scrutinised data, patterns, connections, and trends

emerged. Lastly, the choice of an exploratory qualitative research approach for this study was far from arbitrary; it was a strategic decision rooted in the unique demands of the research problem. Its ability to navigate complexity, immerse in participant experiences, operate in naturalistic settings and spark future inquiries made it possible to be used in this research (Jebb et al., 2017). By embracing this approach, the study not only uncovered vital insights into service delivery and staff development but also paved the way for future investigations in this critical area.

4.3 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY AND PARADIGM

Ontology and epistemology are foundational concepts that significantly shape the field of research methods. Ontology focuses on the study of being, addressing questions related to the nature of reality and what exists (Al-Ababneh, 2020). It explores the various categories of existence and their interrelations, influencing how researchers perceive the nature of phenomena under investigation (Boon & Van Baalen, 2019). Epistemology, conversely, focuses on the study of knowledge, investigating its nature, origins, and boundaries (Al-Ababneh, 2020). It delves into questions about what constitutes valid knowledge, how knowledge can be acquired, and the extent to which knowledge is possible (Creswell, 2013).

These concepts have profound implications for research design, implementation, and evaluation. Ontological assumptions guide researchers in defining what is considered real and significant within their study, thereby influencing the selection of research topics and the framing of research questions (Boon & Van Baalen, 2019). For instance, a researcher with a realist ontology may focus on studying objective phenomena that exist independently of human perception, while a constructivist ontology might lead to exploring how social realities are constructed through human interactions and experiences (Creswell, 2013).

Epistemological perspectives, meanwhile, inform the methods and approaches used to gather and interpret data. They shape the criteria for assessing the validity and reliability of knowledge claims (Creswell, 2013). A positivist epistemology, for example, emphasizes objective measurement and the use of quantitative methods to uncover generalizable truths, whereas an interpretivist epistemology values subjective understanding and often employs qualitative methods to capture the depth and complexity of human experiences (Al-Ababneh, 2020).

By understanding and explicitly addressing their ontological and epistemological stances, researchers can make more informed and coherent methodological choices, ensuring that their research design is aligned with their underlying philosophical assumptions (Creswell, 2013). This alignment enhances the rigor and credibility of the study, facilitating a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the research phenomena (Al-Ababneh, 2020).

4.3.1 Ontology

For the current study, the researcher adopted a constructivism ontological stance. Constructivism suggests that reality is constructed by individuals based on their experiences and perceptions. Researchers adopting a constructivist ontological stance might view staff development and employee performance as subjective and context-dependent, acknowledging the role of individual and organizational interpretations in shaping these phenomena (Al-Ababneh, 2020).

This ontological position aligns well with the qualitative, phenomenological approach used in the study. By viewing reality as socially constructed, the researcher recognized that staff development practices and employee performance within the Msunduzi Municipality context would be shaped by the unique experiences, perspectives, and meanings ascribed by the participants. The constructivist ontology emphasizes that there is no single, objective reality, but rather multiple realities that are created through the interaction with participants. This stance allowed the researcher to delve into the nuanced, subjective understandings of staff development and performance management held by the municipal employees, supervisors, and other stakeholders. Unlike a positivist ontology, which posits a single, observable reality, the constructivist perspective allowed the researcher to capture the contextual intricacies and varied perspectives present in the local government setting. This ontological positioning was crucial in guiding the interpretive, inductive nature of the qualitative investigation.

4.3.2 Epistemology

Epistemology is the study of knowledge, its acquisition, and its limitations (Guyon et al., 2018). In the context of research methods, epistemology examines the methods and approaches researchers use to produce knowledge. It considers questions such as: What is knowledge? How is knowledge generated? What are the criteria for evaluating knowledge claims?

Epistemological perspectives influence the research design and methods employed (Guyon et al., 2018). For example, a researcher adopting a positivist epistemology is likely to emphasize quantitative methods, while a critical theorist may prioritize qualitative approaches (Al-Ababneh, 2020). The study adopted the epistemological perspective, and some of the reasons were as follows:

- Epistemology emphasizes the importance of reliability and validity in research (Goldman et al., 2018). It helped the researcher to assess the trustworthiness and credibility of the information gathered. By examining the sources, methods, and evidence that support a belief or claim, the researcher could identify biases and weaknesses in the existing knowledge. This enabled the researcher to make more informed judgments about the reliability and validity of the data collected.
- Epistemology encourages researchers to engage in critical thinking and reflexivity, which are vital in conducting research (Berryman, 2019). It encouraged the researcher to question assumptions, consider alternative explanations, and reflect on his own biases and assumptions. By engaging in this reflective process, the researcher could refine his research questions, design more valid and reliable studies, and interpret the results more accurately.
- Epistemology plays a vital role in ethical research practices by guiding researchers in understanding the nature and scope of knowledge, as well as the methods through which knowledge is acquired and validated. This philosophical foundation emphasizes the importance of key ethical principles such as informed consent, confidentiality, integrity, and fairness in the research process (Berryman, 2019).

Informed Consent: Epistemological principles highlight the importance of informed consent. This requires offering thorough information about the research's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits, ensuring that participants voluntarily agree to take part with a clear understanding of their involvement. By following this principle, researchers respect the autonomy and rights of individuals, enabling them to make an informed choice about their participation.

Confidentiality: Maintaining the confidentiality of participant data is another critical aspect emphasized by epistemology. Researchers are responsible for safeguarding personal information and ensuring that data is used solely for the purposes outlined in the consent agreement. This approach not only safeguards the privacy of participants but also cultivates trust between researchers and subjects for research integrity.

Integrity: Epistemology underlines the importance of conducting research with honesty and transparency. Researchers must accurately represent their findings, avoid fabrication or falsification of data, and disclose any potential conflicts of interest. This commitment to integrity ensures that the knowledge generated is reliable and credible, contributing to the overall advancement of the field.

Fairness: Fairness in research involves treating all participants equitably and without bias. Epistemological considerations require that researchers design studies that do not discriminate against or unfairly burden any group. This includes ensuring that the benefits and burdens of research are distributed justly and that vulnerable populations are given special considerations to protect their interests.

By incorporating these epistemological principles, researchers can ensure that their studies are conducted responsibly and ethically. This approach respects the rights of participants and data integrity as well as credibility and validity of the research findings. Moreover, an epistemologically grounded ethical framework promotes the advancement of knowledge in a manner that is socially responsible and aligned with the broader values of the research community.

Additional literature supports the integration of epistemological considerations in ethical research practices. For instance, Guba and Lincoln (1994) emphasize the importance of reflexivity, where researchers continuously reflect on their own biases and the ethical implications of their work. This self-awareness helps in maintaining objectivity and fairness throughout the research process. Similarly, Kamal (2019) highlights the transformative paradigm, which integrates ethical considerations with epistemological assumptions to promote social justice and equity in research.

4.3.3 Research philosophy

The concept of philosophical worldviews in research is a fundamental aspect that profoundly influences the entire research process (Nayar & Stanley, 2024). It encompasses a wide array of perspectives and approaches that researchers adopt to understand and engage with the complex realities they investigate. By exploring the impact of philosophical perspectives such as positivism, constructivism, critical theory, postmodernism, and pragmatism, studies can unravel how these worldviews shape research design, methodologies, and the interpretation of results (Nayar & Stanley, 2024). Understanding the

significance of philosophical worldviews is crucial for conducting research that aligns with one's epistemological and ontological beliefs (Creswell, 2018).

In the context of this research, constructivism emerged as the ideal philosophical framework for studying service delivery and staff development in South African local government municipalities. Constructivism posits that reality is subjective and socially constructed through individual experiences and judgments (Nayar & Stanley, 2024). This worldview resonated with the essence of this study, which sought to unravel the subjective experiences of local government employees. Acknowledging and valuing these subjective realities is paramount in the complex landscape of municipal service delivery and staff development, allowing for a nuanced exploration. Additionally, interpretivism encourages researchers to recognize their roles during research (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). This was particularly relevant to this study, as it sought to investigate the challenges and potential solutions within South African local government municipalities. Active engagement with participants, listening to their narratives, and interpreting their perspectives was vital. Constructivism provided the philosophical underpinning for this collaborative and interpretive approach.

A key facet of constructivism is its emphasis on interpretation. Researchers are urged to delve into the meaning-making processes of participants and the contexts in which these meanings emerge (Bleiker et al., 2019). For this study, where the goal was to understand employees' perspectives and issues related to service delivery and staff development, this interpretative approach was indispensable. Constructivist research methodologies, often qualitative, aligned seamlessly with this aim. Constructivist research typically employs qualitative methods such as interviews, participant observation, and content analysis (Taber, 2024). These methods were well-suited for investigating the meanings and interpretations that individuals, especially local government employees, attach to their experiences. Qualitative research's flexibility and capacity to capture the depth and complexity of human experiences make it indispensable in exploring the multifaceted challenges faced by employees in this context. Finally, constructivism was not just a suitable choice but a necessary one for the study of service delivery and staff development in South African local government municipalities. Its alignment with the subjective nature of reality, the active role of the researcher, the interpretative approach, and the utility of qualitative methods made it the ideal philosophical worldview for this research. By adopting constructivism, the study embraced a perspective that not only respects the unique experiences of participants but also empowers them to unravel the intricate fabric of challenges and possibilities within local government service delivery and staff development.

4.4 RESEARCH APPROACH

Research approaches are various methods or techniques used to gather information, analyze data, and draw conclusions about a particular topic or problem (Sileyew, 2019). There are three major research techniques as described by Creswell (2018), namely quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods.

4.4.1 Quantitative

Quantitative research is a foundational component of systematic analysis in the field of empirical study (Mohajan, 2020). The links, patterns, and trends that researchers measure provide unbiased insights into the phenomena they are studying (Kabir, 2016). The use of statistical tools, which not only makes it easier to uncover significant patterns from data but also allows researchers to come to objective, evidence-based conclusions, is a cornerstone of quantitative research. Quantitative research extrapolate conclusions from a particular sample to a larger population, supporting its function in guiding theories, policies, and well-informed choices (Kabir, 2016).

4.4.2 Qualitative

Qualitative research is an approach that explores the depths of understanding human experiences, perceptions, and meanings in contrast to the numerical accuracy of quantitative research (Borgstede & Scholz, 2021). Researchers who use qualitative approaches dig into the layers of the phenomenon's complexity using tools including interviews, observations, and content analysis (Jamshed, 2014). Qualitative research aims to understand the complex web of motives, feelings, and environments that influence actions and viewpoints by concentrating on people or groups. Finding the “how” and “why” of human behaviour is made much easier by the insights gained from qualitative research, which also improves our knowledge of the human condition (Creswell, 2014).

4.4.3 Mixed methods

Mixed-methods research recognises the benefits of both quantitative and qualitative approaches; this strategy is adaptable and aims to combine their unique characteristics. With this approach, numerical data and narrative insights combine to provide a more thorough grasp of research difficulties (Neuman, 2013). Researchers may strengthen the overall validity of their study by cross-validating results and using a variety of data-gathering approaches to triangulate their findings. Mixed-methods research acts as a bridge for the quantitative-qualitative barrier, revealing connections, exploring meanings, or

unravelling complex interplays, leading to a more comprehensive picture of the study area (Hirose & Creswell, 2023).

Qualitative was used and in opting for a qualitative approach, the research addressed the need for a comprehensive exploration of staff development within the public sector, an area that remains relatively under-researched. This choice aligned with the objective of gaining detailed, descriptive insights into the research problem. The selection of a qualitative research approach, as advocated by [Creswell \(2018\)](#), was motivated by its aptness for comprehending complex phenomena and gaining a profound understanding of participants' emotions, viewpoints, and actions. For this study qualitative methods offered a robust means of delving deeply into participants' genuine experiences.

This approach was particularly well-suited to unravel the unique issues inherent to South African local government municipalities, providing a platform for in-depth exploration and the acquisition of insightful knowledge. By using qualitative analysis, the research was able to explore these issues in their natural setting and comprehend how diverse aspects interact and have an impact on one another (Neuman, 2013). Moreover, given the goal of developing a staff development framework, qualitative analysis allows for the collection of insights that may be used to create a complete and successful framework. Because it values the voices and perspectives of participants, the research discovered unique difficulties, gaps, and possibilities via extensive examination and analysis.

The qualitative research approach incorporated use of interviews to conduct the study. [Creswell \(2018\)](#) asserts that this approach employs a range of methods and techniques that are adaptable, straightforward, and easier to comprehend. For instance, examining the experiences and difficulties associated with staff development and service delivery in this situation. The study discovered new viewpoints, spotted unanticipated problems, and developed a thorough grasp of the topic by using a qualitative method. In natural settings qualitative helped gather information in line with the study's objectives to gather the real viewpoints and experiences of workers in local government in regard to staff development and service delivery. The study better understood the elements impacting their actions and views by conducting research in a natural setting ([Ugwu & Eze, 2023a](#)). This method also offered a comprehensive insight into the modeling of staff development theories and practices within the local government municipalities of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), South Africa. Consequently, to create a staff development framework tailored to the challenges faced by these municipalities, this approach was crucial in achieving the study's objectives.

4.5 RESEARCH STRATEGY

A research strategy is a systematic approach to gathering information, analysing findings, and answering research questions. It provides a roadmap for researchers to follow, ensuring they are focused, organised, and efficient in their efforts (Gupta & Gupta, 2022). Developing a research strategy is essential for conducting effective and meaningful research. It helps researchers stay focused, organised, and efficient, ensuring that the research question is adequately addressed. Research strategies include the action research, grounded theory, phenomenology and case study they are discussed below.

4.5.1 Action research

Action research is a participatory approach to problem-solving and decision-making (Cohen et al., 2017). It involves a systematic process of identifying, analyzing, and addressing issues within an organization or community. Action research often involves cycles of planning, implementing, evaluating, and refining interventions or strategies (Clark et al., 2020). Action research aims to empower individuals or groups by involving them in the decision-making process. It involves collaboration between researchers and stakeholders, fostering a shared understanding of the problem and possible solutions (Mac Naughton, 2020). The research emphasizes continuous learning and improvement through ongoing data collection and analysis. It takes a practical and action-oriented approach, focusing on immediate solutions and implementation. Researchers engage in self-reflection and critical thinking to develop a deep understanding of the processes and outcomes.

4.5.2 Grounded theory

Grounded theory is a research methodology that Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss developed in the 1960s (Birks & Mills, 2022). It is a systematic approach to developing theories from data. Unlike deductive theories, which are based on existing knowledge and theories, grounded theory starts from the data. It develops theories based on the patterns and themes that emerge from the data (Stern & Porr, 2017).

In grounded theory, data is collected through various methods, such as interviews, observations, and documents (Dougherty, 2017). The data is analyzed through open, axial, and selective coding to identify patterns and themes. Open coding involves assigning codes or labels to the data, while axial coding

involves organizing and connecting these codes into categories or themes. Selective coding involves refining and defining the categories and themes, leading to the emergence of the core theories.

4.5.3 Phenomenology

Phenomenology is a research strategy that investigates human experiences through the eyes of individuals who have lived them (Neubauer et al., 2019). It explores the subjective dimensions of life to illustrate the intricacies of these experiences. Phenomenological research often employs in-depth interviews or observations to gather comprehensive accounts of individuals' experiences. These descriptions are then examined to identify recurring themes and key components of the phenomena under investigation (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022).

The study aimed to comprehend how staff members and stakeholders perceive and handle staff development and service delivery problems. Phenomenology enabled the research to elucidate the participants' subjective viewpoints, feelings, and insights, resulting in a greater understanding of their experiences (Pilarska, 2021). By concentrating on individual experiences and interpretations, this approach enabled the study to capture the numerous subtleties of these challenges (Telford, 2019). It facilitated the discovery of both the overt and covert features of the phenomenon, contributing to a comprehensive understanding. Through phenomenology, the study examined how contextual factors such as organizational culture, policies, and socio-political dynamics influence participants' perceptions and responses to staff development initiatives and service delivery challenges. This was achieved by conducting in-depth interviews and focus groups with participants. In Msunduzi Municipality, phenomenology proved to be a beneficial research strategy for analyzing staff performance, skill development, and service delivery (Kaufmann, 2022). It provided a framework for understanding how staff members and stakeholders navigate and address the issues related to staff development and service delivery, offering insights into their subjective experiences and interpretations. This approach allowed the study to uncover the nuanced and multifaceted nature of these challenges, enhancing the overall comprehension of the phenomena under investigation.

4.6 RESEARCH SETTING

The physical, social, and experimental settings in which the study is conducted are all included in the research setting. This entails elements including location, duration, target audience, and environmental circumstances (Moser, 2017). The research setting has considerable advantages for the research methods as well as the overall study in the context of this study. Since the research setting provides a

particular context for data collection and analysis, it was crucial to identify it. It guaranteed that the data acquired was based on the difficulties and experiences that local government workers encountered.

Pietermaritzburg, the research setting for this study, is the capital and second-largest city in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Established in 1838, it is governed by the Msunduzi Local Municipality. Also known as umGungundlovu, Pietermaritzburg is often called Maritzburg or PMB (SAH, 2023). The city is a significant industrial hub, producing aluminum, timber, and dairy products, and is the main economic center for the Umgungundlovu District Municipality. The public sector is a major employer due to the local, district, and provincial government offices. With a population of over 600,000, including neighboring townships, Pietermaritzburg has a large Indian South African community. Historically known for high-quality textiles, clothing, and footwear production, such as Doc Marten shoes, these industries have declined due to lower production costs in Asia. The city is now surrounded by timber plantations and citrus farms, contributing significantly to its economy, with key industrial outputs from Hulett's Aluminium and Willowton cooking oil.

The city's healthcare infrastructure is robust, with several public and private healthcare facilities, including primary healthcare centers, district hospitals, and specialized clinics. Notable institutions such as Grey's Hospital and the Pietermaritzburg Metropolitan Hospital offer extensive resources for clinical research and public health studies. The presence of these facilities supports research on various health-related issues, such as infectious diseases, non-communicable diseases, and healthcare delivery systems (Grey's Hospital Annual Report, 2021).

Pietermaritzburg is home to several reputable educational institutions, including the "University of KwaZulu-Natal" (UKZN). UKZN's Pietermaritzburg campus provides a fertile ground for academic research, and expert faculty members. The university's commitment to community engagement and applied research aligns well with the goals of conducting impactful and socially relevant studies (University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2023).

The city presents a blend of urban and peri-urban settings, offering a microcosm of South Africa's broader socioeconomic landscape. This diversity allows researchers to explore a variety of issues, from urbanization and economic development to environmental sustainability and rural health. Pietermaritzburg's environmental features, including the nearby Msunduzi River and numerous green

spaces, provide opportunities for environmental and ecological research (Msunduzi Municipality Environmental Report, 2022).

Pietermaritzburg’s well-developed transportation network, including road, rail, and air links, facilitates easy access for researchers and participants alike. The city’s infrastructure supports the logistics of conducting extensive fieldwork, ensuring that data collection and stakeholder engagement activities can be carried out efficiently.

4.6.1 Map of Pietermaritzburg



FIGURE 4.1: The map of Pietermaritzburg

Source: SA-venues.com

4.7 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

In research, the target population refers to the specific group of individuals or items that a researcher intends to study, assess, or derive conclusions from (Banerjee, 2020). It serves as the foundation for sampling, data collection, and the development of relevant conclusions (Banerjee, 2020). In this

research context, the target population included a total of 12 people (employees, managers, and stakeholders) of uMsunduzi municipality, a South African local government municipality who were affected by staff development practices and service delivery. This included entry-level to senior personnel and from various municipal agencies. The study targeted staff employees in the administration and management department, cashiers, receptionists, and general workers, as they most needed staff development schemes.

Creswell, (2018) defines sampling as the process of selecting a specific group of individuals from a larger population. Research utilizes two main types of sampling frameworks: probability sampling and non-probability sampling. This study employed a non-probability sampling technique known as Convenience sampling also known as Purposive sampling. Additionally, purposive sampling was used to select participants based on their perspectives on staff development within the municipalities. Purposive sampling ensured results were specific to the population under investigation.

In qualitative research, the goal is to thoroughly comprehend the experiences, viewpoints, and actions of a smaller number of people (Vasileiou, 2018). In order for the results to be confidently extrapolated, this sample must be true to the wider population. Employees from various departments within the municipality made the study sample. This research attempted to get a complete picture of the business workforce by ensuring that each department is represented. This representation was essential because it enabled the research to examine differences in viewpoints and experiences across various organisational divisions.

The term “sample size” refers to the total number of participants involved in a study (Kabir, 2016). The researcher interviewed 17 participants who represented each department in the municipality. This sample size guaranteed that a variety of perspectives and experiences were included in the study and that it was comprehensive enough to reveal the subtle nuances of employee experiences, performance issues, skill shortages, and the implications for service delivery. Table below shows the breakdown of positions interviewed holds

TABLE 4.1: Positions in the municipality

Position/Role	Number
General Manager: Corporate Services	2

Senior Manager: Human Resources Management (HRM)	1
Senior Manager ICT	1
Manager Performance management	2
Support staff in the different Business Unit	3
Senior Manager Performance Management	1
Manager in the office of the City Manager	3
Manager's different business unit	4
Total	17

4.8 INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION CRITERIA

4.8.1 Inclusion Criteria

The inclusion criteria for study participants aimed to ensure a thorough understanding of staff development practices within the administration and management departments of the Msunduzi Municipality. The study specifically included staff members working in these departments. The administration and management departments were targeted because the employees working in these departments typically have job roles that involve functions such as planning, coordination, reporting, and performance management. Due to the nature of their roles and responsibilities, these employees are well-positioned to provide insights into the municipality's staff development practices and how these practices relate to employee performance. In order to obtain diverse perspectives on staff development, employees from various levels within the administration and management departments were included, ranging from entry-level positions to more senior roles. Lastly, only those individuals who provided informed consent, indicating their willingness and capability to participate, were included in the study.

4.8.2 Exclusion Criteria

The exclusion criteria were established to maintain the study's focus on staff development practices related to administration and management functions. Employees working in operational or technical roles were excluded, as the researchers were interested in understanding the specific challenges and needs of the administration and management departments. Furthermore, employees who had been with the municipality for less than one year were excluded, as they were deemed to have insufficient experience and exposure to the organization's staff development initiatives. Finally, the researchers excluded employees who declined to participate or did not meet the time commitments required for the in-depth interviews, as their involvement was crucial to the success of the study.

4.9 DATA COLLECTION METHOD

The choice of data collection methods is pivotal in research and closely aligns with the research approach employed. In this study, which embraced a qualitative research approach, the primary data collection method of choice was structured interviews.

4.9.1 Interviews

Interviews are a widely utilised and versatile research method that plays a crucial role in the collection of qualitative data (Naeem et al., 2023). Interviews come in various forms, each tailored to suit different research objectives and contexts. Xu and Zammit (2020) classifies interviews into three primary types: structured, semi-structured, and unstructured. Structured interviews feature predetermined, closed-ended questions, which are ideal for gathering standardized data and conducting surveys (Naeem et al., 2023). Semi-structured interviews incorporate open-ended questions within a flexible format, enabling detailed exploration while preserving some level of structure (Xu & Zammit, 2020). Unstructured interviews are characterised by a conversational, free-flowing approach, allowing participants to express themselves freely and provide rich narrative data.

Interviews find extensive applications across various research domains, including social sciences, psychology, healthcare, and business studies. In a study conducted by Clarke (2019) on thematic analysis, interviews were instrumental in exploring and understanding complex social phenomena, providing a rich source of qualitative data. Interviews offer numerous advantages in research. They allow researchers to probe deeper into participants' thoughts, feelings, and experiences, as emphasised by Rubin (2012). Interviews, provide a platform for participant engagement and rapport building, fostering trust and openness (Azhar & Iqbal, 2018). This interpersonal connection often leads to the revelation of insights that might not surface through other data collection methods.

This study employed structured, scheduled interviews to gather necessary information, aligning with its qualitative methodology. Participants received interview guides and completed informed consent forms before the interviews. The interview schedule aimed to understand staff attitudes and perceptions of staff development effectiveness. Face-to-face interviews facilitated deductive and comparative analyses of participant perspectives. To minimize bias, identical questions were posed to all respondents, reducing interviewer influence and allowing for objective result comparisons.

4.9.2 Data management strategy

Data collected through interviews is stored securely to ensure the confidentiality and integrity of the information. All physical data, including written notes and any printed transcripts, are kept in a secure locker accessible only to the researcher and supervisor. Recorded interviews, whether in audio or video format, are also stored in this locker and will be retained for a period of five years, in compliance with data retention policies and ethical guidelines.

After transcription, the coded information undergoes further security measures. The digital files of transcribed interviews are encrypted with robust password protection. These passwords are known only to the researcher and supervisors, ensuring that the data remains confidential and secure from unauthorized access. Additionally, encrypted backups of the digital files are made to prevent data loss, stored on secure, access-controlled digital storage systems. These strict data security measures are implemented to maintain ethical standards, protect participant privacy and confidentiality, and ensure research integrity. Regular audits and checks are conducted to verify compliance with data protection protocols, and any breaches or vulnerabilities are promptly addressed.

4.9.3 Data analysis

Data analysis involves condensing extensive information from primary or secondary sources. In this study, thematic analysis was utilised, which is a method for examining qualitative data by identifying, analyzing, and reporting recurring patterns within the data set (Dawadi 2020). The six-step thematic analysis process outlined by Dawadi (2020) was employed for this study.

This includes:

Step 1: Familiarisation

To get a thorough understanding of the data, the study started by reading the interview transcripts several times. This first immersion helped me gain a thorough grasp of one another's viewpoints and experiences of participants.

Step 2: Coding

Systematic coding was used, and every transcript was carefully examined to find the most pertinent sections. Segments that encompassed important concepts, emotions, and insights were given codes, which served as identifiers for crucial information.

Step 3: Generating themes.

Themes start to emerge from the plethora of codes. These themes are broad ideas that include recurring patterns of meaning in the data. They offer a logical structure for arranging and analysing the gathered data.

Step 4: Reviewing themes.

To guarantee their consistency and relevance, the identified themes undergo a thorough evaluation. The coded segments were revisited during this iterative phase to make sure they were in line with the intended theme.

Step 5: Defining and naming themes.

Each theme was carefully outlined and given an appropriate name to capture its essence. Writing labels that are concise and evocative while capturing the core of the underlying patterns was a necessary step in this approach.

Step 6: Writing up.

The final step required thorough documentation of the thematic analysis process to guide the presentation of findings and interpretations. This analysis involves describing and interpreting data by selecting codes and creating themes. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and read multiple times for familiarity. The primary researcher systematically coded the data, identifying recurring patterns. Themes were reviewed for coherence by examining all coded segments. To ensure integrity, transcripts and themes were checked for consistency, with disagreements resolved through discussion. Participants were given pseudonyms to protect confidentiality.

ATLAS.ti software was used to conduct the thematic analysis. ATLAS.ti is a strong qualitative data analysis program that gives researchers a full range of tools for managing, analysing, and extracting insights from vast and complicated qualitative datasets (Atlas.ti, 2019). ATLAS.ti improves the speed and depth of the theme analysis process in the context of this study. ATLAS.ti is suitable for coding. The study imported interview transcripts into ATLAS.ti at this point. After that, when the researcher ran through the transcripts, codes were assigned to pertinent portions. For example, in this research, codes such as “Performance Issues,” “Skills Gap,” and “Service Delivery Challenges” are applied to various areas of the text. Following that, Code Grouping starts, in which comparable codes are put together to establish prospective themes. Codes linked to a lack of skills and training, for example, were placed under the wider issue of “Training Needs.”

The capabilities of ATLAS.ti go beyond basic organisation enabled the research to dive into the depths of the data, finding hidden meanings and correlations. The program aids in the recognition of patterns that are not immediately evident, allowing for a more subtle and complete examination. The study was better able to manage the intricacies of qualitative data by using ATLAS.ti, which improved the rigour and depth of the theme analysis. This method ensures that the findings are not only well-structured but also have a systematic and well-documented analytical procedure.

4.10 DATA QUALITY CONTROL

Ensuring data quality control in qualitative research is crucial for maintaining the trustworthiness and credibility of the study's findings (Adler, 2022). Achieving this involves rigorous processes to enhance data reliability and validity. Trustworthiness and credibility are central to this effort, serving as fundamental pillars that uphold the integrity of the research (Creswell and Creswell, 2017).

4.10.1 Trustworthiness

Ahmed (2024) describes trustworthiness as a methodological tool that evaluates the accuracy and adequacy of research. It uses criteria such as “dependability, transferability, and confirmability”. In this study, trustworthiness was demonstrated by presenting findings that accurately reflected participant responses. This ensured the results were genuine and applicable to other participants. Consistency was maintained by replicating the findings with the same participants in the same context. Trustworthiness was also achieved by ensuring the findings originated solely from the participants, verifying the accuracy of transcriptions, and transparently presenting all information, even if it contradicted the research themes.

4.10.2 Credibility

Tamayo et al. (2020) emphasizes that credibility is crucial for ensuring data quality control in qualitative research. Stahl and King (2020) define credibility as the “confidence in the truthfulness of research findings”. In this study, credibility was established by accurately representing participants' original views and interpretations. The researcher ensured that interview transcripts were error-free and unbiased. Different experts reviewed the transcripts to minimize distortion, and codes were thoroughly examined to maintain accuracy.

Triangulation was also employed, using multiple data sources and methods to cross-verify the findings. This approach helped to identify and mitigate any inconsistencies or biases that could affect the credibility of the results. Additionally, a clear audit trail was maintained, documenting each step of the research process and decisions made, which allowed for transparency and reproducibility of the study. These combined efforts contributed significantly to limiting errors and reducing bias, thereby enhancing the overall credibility of the research.

4.10.3 Dependability

This demonstrates that the findings are consistent and reproducible. To ensure dependability, the researcher maintained a logical, traceable, and well-documented process. This allows readers to assess the research's dependability (Adler, 2022). Auditing the research process also supports dependability.

4.10.4 Confirmability

Confirmability ensures findings are shaped by respondents, not researcher bias. It shows that interpretations come directly from the data (McGinley et al., 2021). Kyngäs, Kääriäinen, and Elo (2020) state that confirmability is achieved with credibility, transferability, and dependability. Guba (2005) recommends documenting theoretical, methodological, and analytical choices to clarify decision-making.

4.10.5 Bias and limitations

To address potential biases and limitations effectively, it is crucial to implement comprehensive strategies that build trust with respondents and ensure the accuracy and integrity of the data collected. The sensitive nature of the topic sometimes led to respondents becoming rude or uncooperative, often assuming I was from the government or aid organizations. Some were reluctant to cooperate due to political fears or requested incentives for participation. To address these issues and reduce bias, several measures were taken. Firstly, the informed consent letter was meticulously crafted to clearly state the study's purpose and emphasize my role as a student conducting academic research. This transparency aimed to build trust with respondents and clarify that there were no personal or financial rewards for participation. By highlighting the academic nature of the research and ensuring anonymity and confidentiality, respondents were more likely to feel secure in sharing their honest views without fear of repercussions.

To further reduce potential biases and ensure data accuracy, rapport-building techniques were employed during interactions with respondents. This involved spending time to establish a connection and understanding the respondents' concerns and perspectives before commencing the formal interview process. Creating a comfortable and open environment encouraged more candid and cooperative responses. Additionally, the research team included diverse individuals with varied backgrounds who could relate to different respondent groups, thereby minimizing the risk of interviewer bias. Regular debriefing sessions with the research team ensured that any potential biases or issues encountered were discussed and addressed promptly. These comprehensive measures collectively contributed to minimizing errors, reducing biases, and enhancing the credibility and reliability of the research findings.

4.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations are fundamental in conducting research, particularly in studies involving human participants. Ethical guidelines ensure that the rights, dignity, and well-being of participants are protected, thereby maintaining the integrity and credibility of the research. Ravetz (2020) asserts that past scientific abuses necessitate weighing the societal benefits of research against potential physical and emotional costs to participants. Consequently, this study carefully considered ethical guidelines when approaching respondents. The contribution of ethical considerations to this study was substantial. By adhering to ethical guidelines, the research maintained high standards of integrity and credibility. Participants engaged openly and honestly, knowing that their rights and well-being were prioritized. Ethical practices also fostered a positive relationship between the researcher and participants, enhancing the overall quality and reliability of the data collected. Ethical considerations are integral to the conduct of responsible and credible research. This study's commitment to ethical guidelines facilitated a trustworthy and respectful research process, ultimately contributing to the validity and impact of its findings.

4.11.1 Protection of the rights of the institution

The researcher sought permission from the KZN local government Municipalities before conducting any data collection. Organisational policies, structure and procedures were respected in seeking permission.

4.11.2 Protection of the participants

This study ensured that confidentiality was maintained throughout the interview and post-interview processes, including data analysis and presentation. According to Herrera (2019), collaborating with organizations or institutions can facilitate access to participants, thereby legitimizing the study and protecting both the researcher and the institution. Informed consent was obtained from all participants,

who signed a form indicating their understanding of the study's purpose and procedures. Respondent information was anonymized by using codes instead of names or other identifiers. The researcher treated all participant information as privileged, taking rigorous steps to protect their confidentiality.

4.11.3 *Freedom from harm and exploitation*

The researcher made sure that participants were protected from any form of harm and exploitation. There was no physical or psychological harm witnessed during the study as the researcher used good judgment, especially in communication. No informal language was used to prevent psychological harm; the researcher was neutral where possible and was gender sensitive.

4.12 **CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter detailed the comprehensive process of data gathering, presentation, and analysis. Its main aim was to outline the scientific journey in modeling staff development theories and practices within the local governance of KZN municipalities in South Africa. It began by discussing various philosophical approaches from the literature, justifying the use of constructivism in this study. The research design and the exploratory approach were then explained. The chapter also described the research strategy and setting, targeted population, and sample size. Data collection procedures and instruments, as well as the data analysis method, were detailed. Finally, the chapter addressed data quality control mechanisms and ethical considerations.

CHAPTER 5

INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter covers the findings of a qualitative study done in Msunduzi Municipality. It gives an in-depth analysis of the data gathered from interviews, giving insight into essential areas of performance management and staff development procedures in a local government environment. The study objectives, previously stated in Chapter 1, serve as a foundation for this analysis. This study used thematic analysis to systematically evaluate qualitative data acquired from interviews, which was made possible using the Atlas.ti qualitative data analysis application. As such, the chapter is a vital component of this study, providing insights into the complexities of performance management and staff development strategies in the local government context. This chapter contributes to an in-depth comprehension of the challenges, methods, and impacts connected with these practices in Msunduzi Municipality through the systematic analysis of qualitative data. Furthermore, it situates the research within a larger academic discourse by comparing the findings to current literature in local government administration and service delivery.

5.2 PROFILE OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Performance management practices, a core component of organisational success, are influenced by the unique experiences and perspectives of those involved. To gain a comprehensive understanding of performance management practices at Msunduzi Municipality, it is essential to consider the respondents' backgrounds. Their roles, demographics, and experiences offer valuable insights into the municipality's operations and the intricacies of its performance management system. An 85% response rate resulted from 17 of the original sample of 20 individuals intended for the study, as seen in Table 5.1. This high response rate suggested that people are interested and invested in the subject. It also emphasised how important performance management is to the municipality's administration.

TABLE 5.1: Gender composition of interview participants

Gender	Number	Percentage
Male	9	52.9%
Female	6	35.3%
Not Indicated	2	11.8%
Total	17	100%

Examining the gender distribution offers an additional perspective of representation in the municipality. Among respondents, males outnumber females. Nonetheless, the roughly equal representation of men and women shows that both genders are important to the municipality's operations and performance processes. The fact that some respondents declined to disclose their gender is evidence of the municipality's inclusiveness and respect for people's preferences.

As seen in Table 5.2, the age distribution is approximately 23.53% of the sample that falls within the age group 40-44, and approximately 76.47% of the sample is aged 50 and above.

TABLE 5.2: Age distribution of interview participants

Age Group	Count	Percentage
40-44	4	23.53%
50 >	13	76.47%

A crucial piece of information for comprehending the demographic makeup of Msunduzi Municipality is the racial makeup of the individuals interviewed. Although the sample under consideration demonstrated homogeneity, with all participants being African at 100%, as seen in Table 5.3, it is important to consider this statistic in the context of other diversity indices and the larger historical, geographical, and institutional background. Future initiatives can be informed by the data's findings, ensuring that the municipality's performance management procedures are inclusive, successful, and sensitive to the varied experiences of its workforce.

TABLE 5.3: Racial distribution of interview participants

Race	Number	Percentage
African	17	100%
White/ European	0	0
Indian	0	0
Total	17	100

The data in Table 5.4 presents a varied representation of roles and positions among the 17 Msunduzi Municipality respondents. A notable proportion of the participants hold administrative roles, underscoring the municipality's focus on gathering perspectives from those with decision-making authority. The "Manager in different business units" and "Support staff in different business units" had three respondents. In contrast, the role of "Manager in the office of City Manager " had the most representation with four respondents. There was one responder for each of the following roles: "Senior Manager: Human Resources Management (HRM)," "Senior Manager ICT," and "Senior Manager Performance Management." This could mean the municipality has a more streamlined or specialised structure for these roles.

TABLE 5.4: Interview participants' role/position

Position/Role	Number
General Manager: Corporate Services	2
Senior Manager: Human Resources Management (HRM)	1
Senior Manager ICT	1
Manager Performance management	2
Support staff in the different Business Unit	3
Senior Manager Performance Management	1
Manager in the office of the City Manager	3
Manager's different business unit	4
Total	17

5.3 THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF RAW DATA AND FIELD NOTES

Thematic analysis, a recognised method in qualitative research, played a pivotal role in this study. It was employed to discern, analyse, and convey patterns and themes within the qualitative material accrued from interviews (Dawadi, 2020). One of the principal tools facilitating this process was Atlas.ti, a renowned qualitative data analysis software known for its efficiency in organising and interpreting

qualitative content (Atlas.ti, 2019). This section delves into the intricate steps of thematic analysis using Atlas.ti, elucidating how it was instrumental in systematically decoding the interview data. The thematic analysis and coding process followed a structured format, as seen in Figure 5.1.

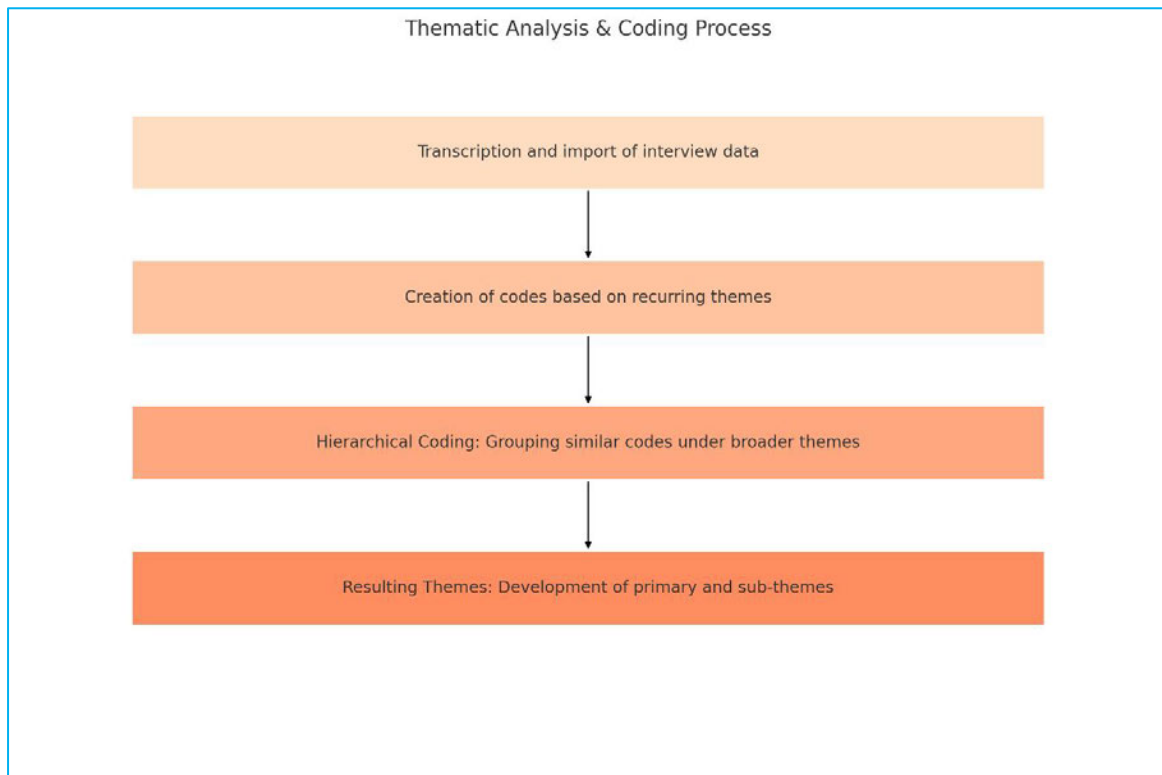


FIGURE 5.1: Thematic analysis and coding process

- **Transcription and import of interview data**

Before any coding could commence, each interview recording was meticulously transcribed, converting spoken words into written text. Once transcribed, these documents were imported into Atlas.ti, ensuring they were readily accessible, searchable, and preparatory for coding.

- **Creation of codes based on recurring themes**

Codes in Atlas.ti are labels affixed to specific segments of the interview transcripts. They act as markers, highlighting certain themes or concepts within the dataset (Dawadi, 2020). For this study, these codes were generated in alignment with recurring themes and patterns during the analytical process. Each code mirrored a thematic topic, enabling the researcher to systematically categorise and organise the data by tagging relevant portions of the text.

The word cloud generation feature of Atlas.ti provided a visual representation of the term frequencies from the interview transcripts. The prominence of these codes varied among participants, as accentuated in the subsequent word cloud. Notably, words such as ‘training,’ ‘PDPs,’ ‘performance management,’ ‘monitoring,’ ‘managers’, and ‘service delivery’ stood out due to their larger size, indicating their frequent mentions in the chosen quotations, as depicted in Figure 5.2.



FIGURE 5.2: Term frequencies from the interview transcripts

- **Hierarchical coding and grouping similar codes under broader themes**

A significant feature of Atlas.ti is its capacity to form code hierarchies. This facilitated a nuanced understanding of the data, permitting similar codes to converge under overarching themes. For instance, under the broader theme of "Performance Management Practices", subcodes were fashioned to capture distinct facets of performance management like "Alignment with Legislative Practices" and "Leveraging External Expertise". Such hierarchical methods enhanced the study's granularity, providing the opportunity to probe themes at varying depths.

- **Resulting themes and development of primary and sub-themes**

Stemming from the coding phase, themes were derived in response to recurrent themes and patterns detected throughout the research. Four primary themes, as seen in Figure 4.3, emerged, each pertaining to sub-themes and topics related to the study's objectives.

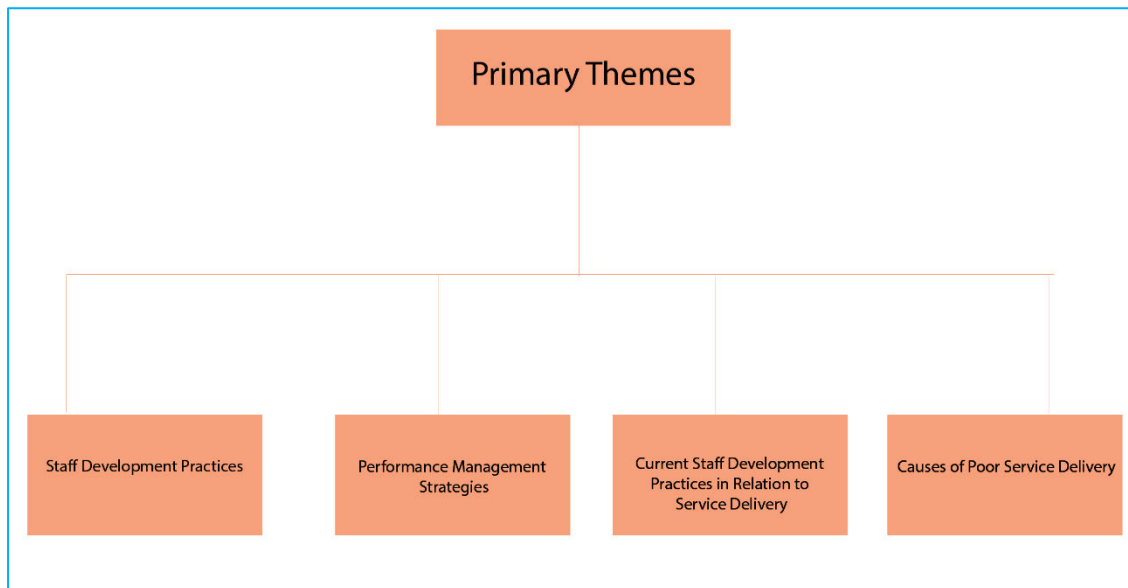


FIGURE 5.3: Primary themes

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the research methodology by adhering to this systematic approach. This not only sets the stage for an expansive analysis and discussion of the findings but also underscores the depth of the investigation, particularly as it delves into the intricacies of performance management and staff development within local government settings.

5.4 GENERATED CODES AND THEMES

5.4.1 Staff development practices

As seen in Figure 5.4, Msunduzi Municipality's staff development practices include a wide range of strategies such as Personal Development Plans (PDPs), training, coaching, mentorship, workshops, and seminars. PDPs empower employees to establish and pursue developmental goals aligned with company objectives. Training programs provide employees with the skills and information they need to grow in their professions, while workshops and seminars promote lifelong learning. Coaching and mentoring provide experienced colleagues with individualised instruction and information exchange. These practices highlight the municipality's commitment to developing a competent and empowered staff, which is in keeping with its aim to improve service delivery.

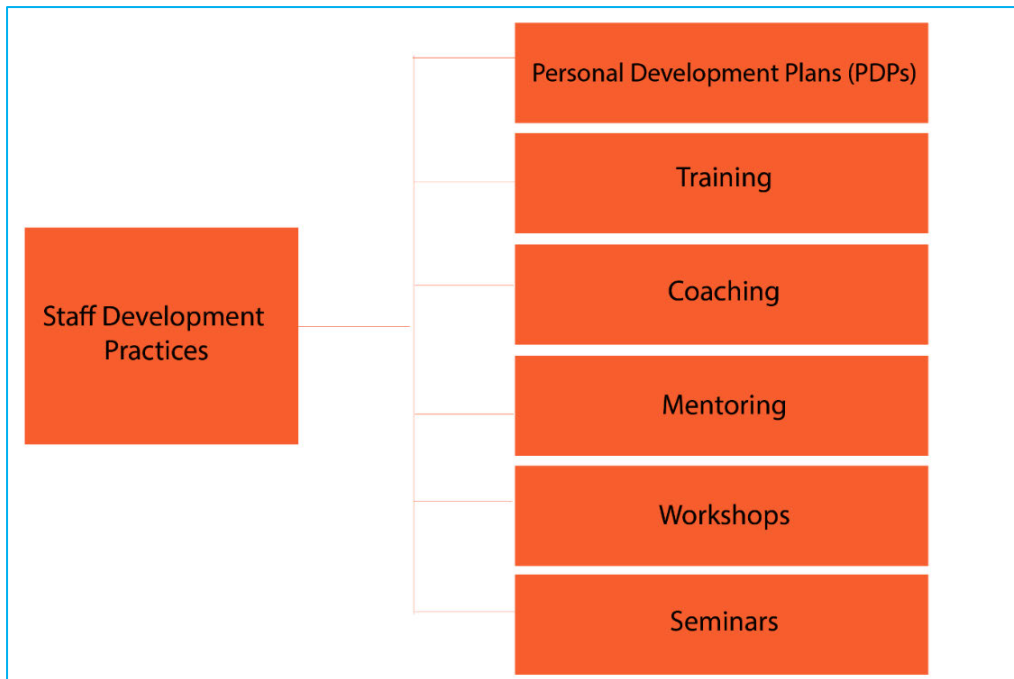


FIGURE 5.1: Staff development practices and its sub-themes

5.4.2 Performance management strategies

This theme included comments on the strategies used by Msunduzi Municipality to manage and improve performance, such as compliance with legislation and using external expertise. The theme also captured the municipality's challenges with executing effective performance management, including concerns of seriousness and timeliness. It included comments on the performance management system's periodic review, emphasising the mid-term assessment. It also contains information regarding the essential components of Msunduzi Municipality's performance management system, such as the IDP, SDBIP, and performance agreements, as seen in Figure 5.5.

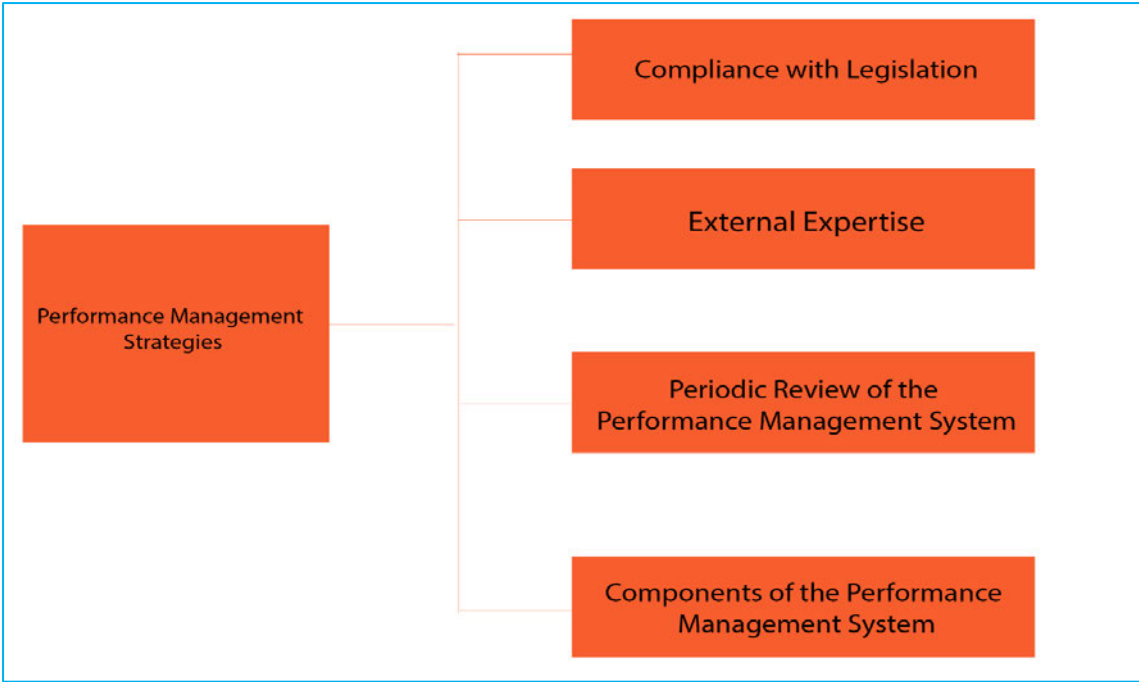


FIGURE 5.2: Performance management strategies

5.4.3 Current staff development practices about service delivery

Continuous learning and capacity-building emerged as major sub-themes in the interviews, as seen in Figure 5.6, emphasising their relevance in Msunduzi Municipality's current staff development processes in relation to service delivery. The research focuses on two main themes: continual learning and capacity building. These practices demonstrate the municipality's commitment to improving personnel competence and organisational capacities. These topics emphasise the critical importance of continuing learning and skill development in attaining efficient municipal service delivery.

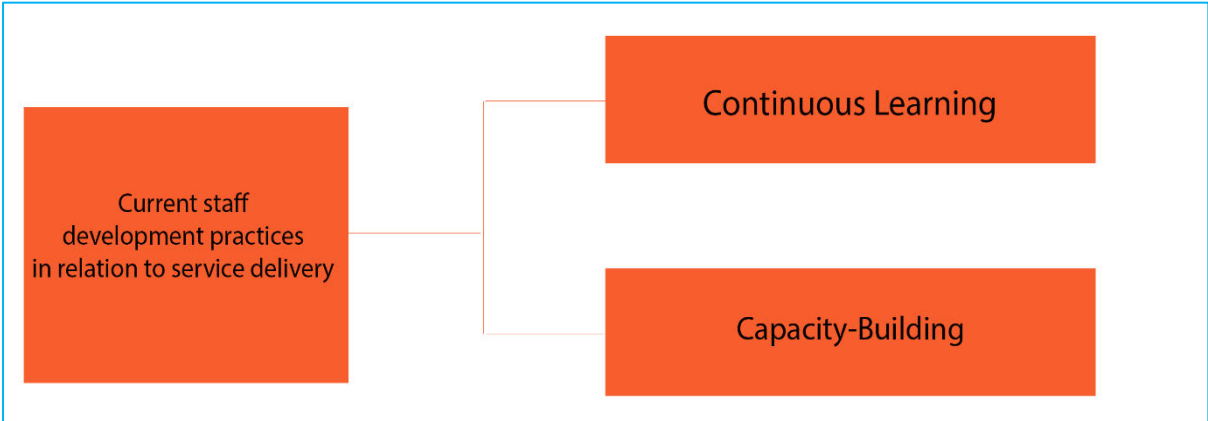


FIGURE 5.3: Current staff development practices about service delivery

5.4.4 Causes of poor service delivery

This theme included internal and external factors in the municipality that contributed to poor service delivery, as seen in Figure 5.7. Internal factors such as insufficient planning, late appointment of service providers, insufficient debt collection, limited management monitoring, and departmental fragmentation contribute to poor service delivery. These internal issues highlight the need for sound financial planning, leadership, and management techniques. Furthermore, political engagement and power battles within the municipality aggravate service delivery problems. External challenges include service provider workmanship, project plan monitoring flaws, and community concerns concerning local labour appointments and prices. Addressing these multiple elements is critical for enhancing municipal service delivery.

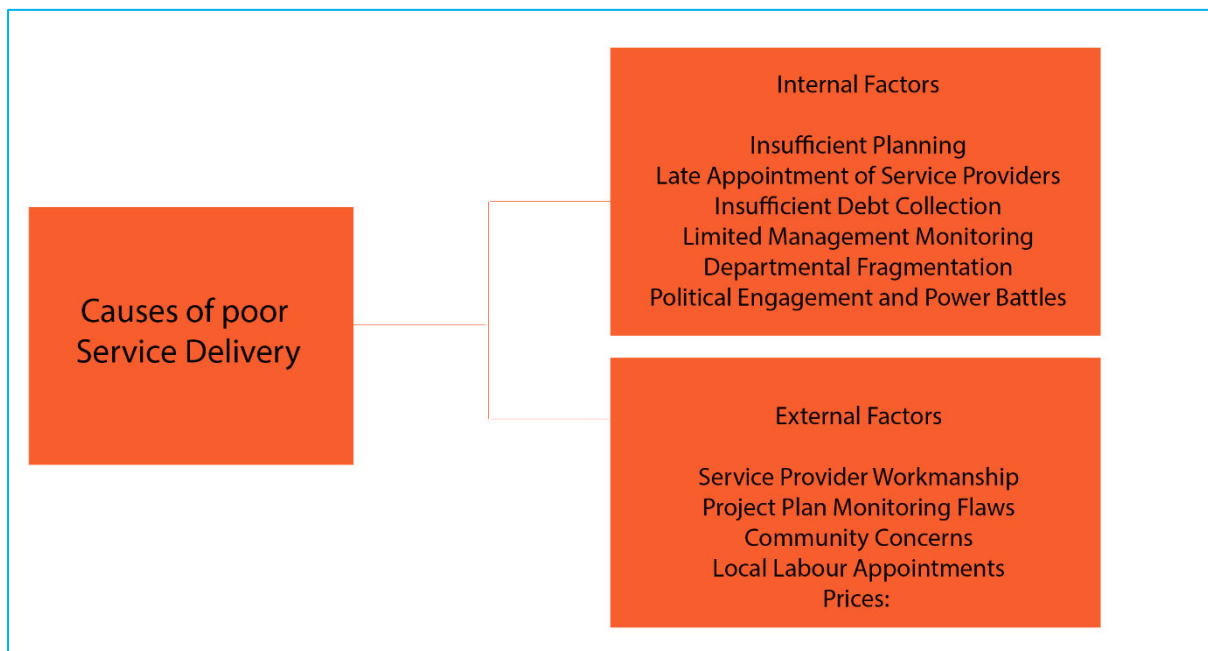


FIGURE 5.4: Causes of poor service delivery

These themes were routinely applied to appropriate segments of the interview transcripts throughout the thematic analysis process. Within the Atlas.ti, this step entailed marking text segments related to a certain code and appending the matching code label. This coding system allowed for the sorting and retrieving of data related to each topic, which expedited the subsequent analysis. Thematic analysis based on the application of these codes yielded significant insights into Msunduzi Municipality's performance management and staff development processes. A full examination of each theme, substantiated by exact quotes from the participants, will be presented in the following sections. This analysis provides an in-depth understanding of the themes and their connection with the study objectives.

5.5 TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES TO THE GENERATED THEMES

Table 5.5 provides a comprehensive overview of participant perceptions in four key areas relevant to municipal management and service delivery. Under the theme of Staff Development Practices, a significant number of participants (12 out of 17) acknowledged the vital role of Personal Development Plans (PDPs) within the municipal framework, particularly emphasising their importance in fostering development and setting goals. This theme also highlighted the utility of PDPs in goal setting and skill enhancement, as recognised by 11 out of 17 participants, suggesting a strong belief in structured, goal-oriented development programs. Furthermore, the integration of external expertise in training was underscored by 13 participants, indicating a trend towards embracing diverse learning experiences through external insights and methodologies.

TABLE 5.1: Total number of participants' responses to the generated themes

Theme	No	Participant Perception	Participant Responses
Staff Development Practices	1	Importance of PDPs in Municipal Framework	12 participants acknowledged PDPs' central role, mentioning "development" and "goals".
	2	PDPs as a Tool for Goal Setting and Skill Enhancement	11 participants mentioned PDPs' utility in goal setting and enhancing skills.
	3	Integration of External Expertise in Training	13 participants emphasised the benefits of integrating external expertise in training.
Performance Management Strategies	1	Alignment with Legislative Practices	13 participants emphasised aligning with MFMA and the Systems Act.
	2	Leveraging External Expertise	11 participants discussed using external PMS experts from CoGTA.
	3	Mid-Term Assessment	14 participants identified the importance of mid-term reviews and adjustments.
	4	Key Components of PMS	16 participants emphasised the interconnectedness of IDP, SDBIP, and performance agreements.
	5	Lack of Seriousness in PMS	9 participants perceived PMS as a tick-box activity.
	6	Adherence to Time Frames	12 participants discussed challenges with late submissions and non-compliance.
Current Staff Development Practices about Service Delivery	1	Continuous Learning and Capacity-Building	14 participants stressed continuous training; 12 emphasised engagements with external agencies; 13 noted external PMS professionals' role; 10 highlighted the importance of PMS Champions.
Causes of Poor Service Delivery	1	Internal Factors	12 participants mentioned the late appointment of providers and poor debt collection; 11 noted a lack of operational supervision; 10 discussed departments operating in silos; 9 pointed out political interference.
	2	External Factors	14 participants stressed service provider issues; 13 discussed community objections regarding labour and prices.

In the area of Performance Management Strategies, participants stressed the importance of aligning performance management with legislative frameworks like the MFMA and the Systems Act, as noted by 13 participants. This underlines the need for statutory compliance in performance management. The role of external professionals, especially from CoGTA, was emphasised by 11 participants, pointing to a reliance on specialised external knowledge for enhancing internal processes. Additionally, the

criticality of mid-term reviews and adjustments was discussed by 14 participants, highlighting a proactive and adaptive approach to performance management. The interconnectedness of various performance management systems components was underscored by 16 participants, indicating a holistic approach. However, concerns were raised about the superficial treatment of PMS and challenges with timely submissions and compliance, suggesting areas for improvement. Regarding current staff development practices related to service delivery, the emphasis was on continuous learning and capacity building. Participants highlighted the importance of ongoing training, engagement with external agencies for diverse perspectives, external PMS professionals' contributions, and PMS Champions' roles, all seen as critical for improving service delivery.

Finally, the Causes of Poor Service Delivery were attributed to internal and external factors. Internally, issues such as late appointment of service providers, poor debt collection, inadequate supervision, departmental silos, and political interference were identified. Externally, problems with service providers, particularly in workmanship and monitoring, along with community objections to local labour and pricing, were highlighted. These factors reflect challenges in managing internal processes and external stakeholder relationships and ensuring quality in outsourced services. Overall, the table offers valuable insights into the strategic, operational, and human resource-related issues vital for effective municipal management, illustrating a comprehensive perspective from the participants on these crucial areas.

5.6 RESULTS OF PARTICIPANTS

The participants' results in Msunduzi Municipality's study highlight the importance of Personal Development Plans (PDPs) and Training and Workshops in staff development and performance management. PDPs are crucial for goal setting, skill enhancement, and alignment with organisational objectives. Training and workshops, utilising external expertise, are also essential for nurturing a skilled workforce. Performance management is crucial, with participants emphasising the need to align with legislative frameworks and leveraging external expertise. Key components of the performance management system, such as the IDP, SDBIP, and performance agreements, are foundational. Concerns are raised about the superficial treatment of performance management and challenges related to late submissions and timeframes. Staff development about service delivery is crucial, with continuous learning and capacity-building key themes. Poor service delivery is influenced by internal and external factors, with internal factors including late appointments, poor debt collection, lack of operational supervision, departmental silos, and political interference, as discussed herein.

5.6.1 Objective 1: Staff development practices

Under staff development practices, two sub-themes were also established, namely personal development plans and training and workshops. Various interview responses are captured in Table 5.5, highlighting the relationship between the two subthemes and interview responses.

TABLE 5.1: Participant Perception and responses on the theme staff development practices

No	Participant Perception	Participant Responses
1	Importance of PDPs in Municipal Framework	12 participants acknowledged the central role of PDPs in the municipal framework, frequently using terms like "development" and "goals".
2	PDPs as a Tool for Goal Setting and Skill Enhancement	11 participants explicitly mentioned the utility of PDPs in goal setting and enhancing employee skills.
3	Strategic Alignment of PDPs	10 participants emphasised the alignment of PDPs with broader organisational objectives, stressing its strategic importance.
4	Training and Workshops in Employee Development	15 participants discussed the value of training and workshops, underlining the municipality's commitment to continuous learning.
5	Integration of External Expertise in Training	13 participants highlighted the integration of external expertise in training initiatives, emphasising the benefits of diverse learning avenues.

5.6.1.1 Sub-Theme 1: Personal development plans

Several participants discussed the importance of PDPs in Msunduzi Municipality's staff development policies. The sub-theme provides insights into the key terms and their prominence in the context of personal development plans in Msunduzi Municipality's staff development policies. From this sub-

theme, terms such as "PDPs", "development", "goals", "employees", and "municipality" stand out, emphasising the importance of Personal Development Plans in staff development.

These statements emphasise the value of personal development plans as a tool for defining goals, increasing skills, and aligning individual development with corporate objectives. According to Participant 3,

"Staff development is critical to quality service delivery. Annually, employees must complete personal development plans submitted to the HR unit. The HR unit is responsible for implementing the skills development plan by appointing service providers through SCM so that staff and councillors can undergo planned training."

This technique is critical in promoting the growth and development of municipal personnel. According to Participant 5, PDPs are important for supporting goal setting and progress.

"PDPs are an important component of our staff development practices; they assist staff in establishing clear goals and identifying development opportunities."

This feature of PDPs is consistent with the larger purpose of staff development since employees are encouraged to define their developmental goals and suggest areas for improvement. Furthermore, Participant 7 stressed the importance of PDPs in the municipality, saying,

"PDPs are considered essential in our municipality. They ensure that staff align with the organisation's goals and are constantly developing their abilities."

This underscores the strategic importance of PDPs in linking individual growth with wider business goals and creating employee purpose. Finally, Participant 9 mentioned the incorporation of PDPs into the performance management system, saying,

"PDPs are part of our performance management system. They allow employees to create their growth paths and obtain the required assistance."

This integration represents a comprehensive approach to staff development in which personal development objectives are connected to performance assessments, ensuring that workers receive the assistance and advice needed to improve their abilities and contribute to the municipality's success.

Several respondents consistently emphasised the importance of Personal Development Plans (PDPs) in employee development within Msunduzi Municipality. PDPs are not only required but also an important tool for goal formulation, improvement, alignment with corporate objectives, and integration with the performance management system. These findings highlight the importance of organised and purposeful staff development processes in local government, which contribute to increased skills, alignment with organisational goals, and improved service delivery.

5.6.1.2 Sub-Theme 2: Training and workshops

The sub-themes for "Training and Workshops" reveal the municipality's strategic focus on employee development. Central to this are "training" and "workshops", emphasising their significance in staff growth. The spotlight on "employee" indicates tailored training initiatives, while terms like "collaborate" and "external" highlight collaborations with external partners. The prominence of "skills" and "knowledge" underscores the aim to boost employees' competencies. Various training methods, such as "seminars", ensure diverse learning avenues. The sub-theme suggests a holistic approach to nurturing a skilled, updated, and adept workforce.

Participant 9 emphasised the importance of training, coaching, and mentoring in employee growth, stating,

"Workshops and seminars, often organised by provincial and national departments and organisations like the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), play a vital role in enhancing employee skills and knowledge."

This dedication to training is consistent with the research goal of better understanding existing staff development strategies. Participant 2 also emphasised the relevance of training and workshops in promoting staff development in local government.

"We actively encourage our employees to participate in relevant training programs and workshops. It is a proactive strategy to ensure that our employees are up to date on industry trends and best practices," they said.

This statement stresses the proactive nature of staff development activities, to provide personnel with the most up-to-date knowledge and skills. Furthermore, Participant 8 shed light on the coordinated efforts of several departments and entities in encouraging staff development.

"We collaborate with external agencies and industry experts to organise training sessions and workshops; these efforts are intended to expose our personnel to a variety of viewpoints and techniques," they said.

This collaborative approach to staff development enhances the learning experience and broadens municipal employees' horizons. Moreover, Participant 10 discussed the function of workshops and seminars in employee development, saying that external expertise in the form of *"PMS Specialists"* and *"PMS Champions"* assists business units. According to them,

"These specialists and champions guide through workshops and training sessions, ensuring that our staff members understand and effectively implement performance management strategies."

This demonstrates the varied aspects of staff development in which external knowledge is used to improve certain skill sets and abilities.

5.6.2 Objective 2: Performance management practices

The theme of performance management practices identified six subthemes: alignment with legislative practices, leveraging external expertise, mid-term assessments, key components, lack of seriousness

and adherence to time frames. Table 4.7 highlights participant perceptions on this theme as well as their responses.

TABLE 5.2: A Participant's perception and responses on the theme of performance management

No	Participant Perception	Participant Responses
1	Alignment with Legislative Practices	
	Importance of aligning with MFMA and Systems Act	13 participants stressed the significance of aligning performance management strategies with legislative frameworks, such as MFMA and the Systems Act.
2	Leveraging External Expertise	
	Role of external PMS professionals from CoGTA	11 participants emphasised the importance of using external PMS experts and leveraging their expertise for the municipality's PMS strategies.
3	Mid-Term Assessment	
	Significance of mid-term reviews and adjustments	14 participants identified the importance of mid-term assessments and the criticality of aligning performance metrics with budget realities during this phase.
4	Key Components of PMS	
	Role of IDP, SDBIP, and performance agreements	16 participants emphasised the interconnectedness of the IDP, SDBIP, and performance agreements as the foundation for performance management in the municipality.
5	Lack of Seriousness in PMS	
	Perceiving PMS as a tick-box activity	9 participants expressed concerns that performance management is often treated superficially, undermining its effectiveness.
6	Adherence to Time Frames	
	Challenges with late submissions and non-compliance	12 participants identified that late submissions and failure to adhere to timeframes are significant challenges in the effective implementation of performance management.

5.6.2.1 Sub-Theme 1: Alignment with Legislative Practices

Throughout the interviews with key study participants from Msunduzi Municipality, the alignment of performance management strategies with legislative frameworks emerged as a recurrent theme. Participants gave useful insight into how the municipality's performance management practices are structured to meet certain regulatory obligations, notably the Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA) and the Systems Act.

Participant 2, for example, highlighted the significance of this alignment, adding,

"Our performance management processes are meticulously designed to mirror the provisions of the MFMA. We place an emphasis on fiscal responsibility and accountability."

This declaration indicates the municipality's commitment to aligning its performance management processes with the MFMA, a key component of the legislation governing South African municipalities' financial management. Participant 3 emphasised the connection even further, saying,

"The Systems Act serves as the backbone of our performance management framework. We organise our planning, monitoring, and reporting processes directly from its provisions."

This demonstrates how the Systems Act, which establishes essential governance principles for local government, directly impacts the design and implementation of Msunduzi Municipality's performance management systems. Furthermore, Participant 4 offered a concrete example, noting,

"Our performance indicators are not chosen at random; they are carefully chosen to align with the objectives outlined in our Integrated Development Plan (IDP), as mandated by the Systems Act. This ensures that our performance initiatives are aligned with our strategic objectives."

This example highlights the direct relationship between statutory requirements, such as those in the Systems Act, and the practical application of performance management systems. These interviews, in summary, give information on the municipality's commitment to integrating performance management strategies with statutory frameworks, notably the MFMA and the Systems Act. Participant examples show how these regulatory requirements directly impact the design of performance management systems, the selection of performance indicators, and the entire approach to monitoring and reporting. This alignment ensures the municipality works within the law while striving for outstanding performance management.

5.6.2.2 Sub-Theme 2: Leveraging external expertise

In addition, Participant 4 emphasised the use of external Performance Management System (PMS) professionals from the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA). They stated that,

"These specialists assist in shaping and implementing the municipality's PMS turnaround strategy."

This method demonstrates a willingness to seek outside expertise to improve performance management processes. The involvement of government specialists demonstrates a coordinated effort to integrate performance management with more expansive sector-wide initiatives.

Participant 10 added to this theme by noting that *"PMS Specialists"* and *"PMS Champions"* were selected to assist business units in preparing and submitting performance statistics and reporting. This practice demonstrates a proactive approach to acquiring external information to improve performance management within Msunduzi Municipality. The municipality exhibits an organised approach to capacity-building and knowledge transfer by allocating responsibilities to these external specialists.

5.6.2.3 Sub-Theme 3: Mid-Term Assessment

Msunduzi Municipality reviews performance management mostly at the mid-term assessment.

"During this phase, budget adjustments are considered, and performance indicators are reviewed," revealed Participant 8.

Any changes or removal of indicators must be coordinated with budget revisions to preserve openness and accountability in the process. Participant 5 went on to say,

"The mid-term assessment is a critical juncture where we evaluate both budget and performance indicators. To maintain a balanced approach, performance metrics should be adjusted based on budget realities."

Participant 12 added,

"The review process is an opportunity to ensure that performance indicators accurately reflect the municipality's financial capacity and strategic priorities. It necessitates considerable analysis and coordination with budget modifications."

These interview samples highlight the significance of mid-term evaluation as a critical stage in performance management within Msunduzi Municipality. They emphasise the importance of a consistent and open method for matching performance indicators with budget modifications to enable successful performance reviews.

5.6.2.4 Sub-Theme 4: Key components

The Integrated Development Plan (IDP), the Service Delivery Budget Implementation Plan (SDBIP), and performance agreements are key components of the performance management system. According to Participant 10,

"These components are central to planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating performance within the municipality." Participant 4 elaborated, saying, "The IDP, SDBIP, and performance agreements are all interconnected, forming a comprehensive framework for performance management. They help us define goals, allocate resources, and measure our success."

Participant 6 went on to explain the importance of these components, saying,

"Performance agreements, in particular, provide a clear roadmap for individual and departmental goals. They guarantee that everyone is on the same page with the overall company goals."

Together, these participants emphasised the vital significance of key components like the IDP, SDBIP, and performance agreements in developing and driving Msunduzi Municipality's performance management system. They emphasise the linked nature of these components and their contribution to good performance planning, execution, monitoring, and assessment.

5.6.2.5 Sub-Theme 5: Lack of seriousness

The impression that performance management is often perceived as a mere tick-box activity rather than a tool for monitoring and improvement is a typical problem raised by participants.

"Because people do not understand that performance management is a system, they think it is the function of one unit, so they ignore it or only respond to templates for the sake of ticking a box," said Participant 6.

This lack of sincerity can undermine the performance management system's efficacy. Participant 11 elaborated on this lack of seriousness, saying,

"Submissions received are either late or incomplete. Furthermore, the POEs supplied do not correspond to the actuals given."

This lack of clarity and accuracy in performance reporting implies a shallow approach to performance management, which can lead to untrustworthy data for decision-making. Likewise, Participant 12 expressed their viewpoint, saying,

"There is a sense that the role of PMS is one of implementation rather than facilitation. As a result, business units do not build the necessary SOPs to carry out their obligations properly."

This notion of performance management as merely an execution instrument rather than a development facilitator shows that an organisational mentality shift is required. These extracts from interviews highlight the difficulty of insufficient dedication and sincerity in applying performance management strategies within Msunduzi Municipality. This problem raises questions about the performance management system's efficacy in promoting organisational improvement and meeting service delivery targets.

5.6.2.6 Sub-Theme 6: Adherence to time frames

Another issue that arose was the failure to meet deadlines. According to Participant 7,

"Late submissions and non-compliance with timeframes pose significant obstacles to effective performance management."

These difficulties are closely related to the study goal of comprehending the difficulties in performance management. Participant 10 said,

"The current challenge is to comply with the newly promulgated Staff Regulations, which require that all staff be on a performance management system."

This regulatory component complicates the performance management environment because the municipality must connect its processes with increasing legal requirements. Furthermore, according to Participant 8,

"Resource and technology constraints also hinder the effectiveness of performance management."

Because of this multi-dimensional difficulty, enhancing performance management may include addressing both human and technology resource constraints.

5.6.3 Objective 3: Current staff development practices in relation to service delivery

5.6.3.1 Sub-Theme 1: Continuous learning and capacity-building

Continuous learning and capacity-building emerged as a major sub-theme in the code of current staff development practices in relation to service delivery in the interviews, emphasising their relevance in Msunduzi Municipality's staff development processes. The respondent's perceptions and participants' responses are seen in Table 4.8. This sub-theme is consistent with the municipality's goals of increasing service delivery and performance management via enhancing staff knowledge and skills and developing organisational capacities. The municipality's proactive approach to encouraging staff to engage in training programs and seminars demonstrates the municipality's commitment to continuous learning.

TABLE 5.3: Participant perception and responses on the theme of current staff development practices about service delivery

No	Participant Perception	Participant Responses
1	Continuous Learning and Capacity-Building	
	Importance of ongoing staff training and seminars	14 participants stressed the significance of continuous learning and capacity-building in improving service delivery.
	Engagement with external agencies for diverse perspectives	12 participants highlighted the importance of collaborating with external entities and experts to bring fresh viewpoints and methodologies.
	Role of external PMS professionals in refining practices	13 participants emphasised the contributions of external professionals, such as PMS specialists from CoGTA, in enhancing performance management processes.
	Importance of PMS Champions for internal knowledge-sharing	10 participants underlined the role of designated PMS Champions within departments as pivotal for promoting internal knowledge transfer and fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

Furthermore, as stated by Participant 8, engagement with external agencies and industry experts is important in exposing municipal personnel to new viewpoints and methodologies, adding to their ongoing learning journey. External specialists, such as PMS Specialists and PMS Champions, assist workers in understanding and executing performance management initiatives, demonstrating a commitment to external knowledge transfer and continual development. Participant 8 stated,

"A monthly article on performance management is published in the internal newsletter. All other processes are recorded on the approved policies and SOPs, circulated on the municipal intranet and website. A dedicated PMS advisor per business unit is called to Manco's to update and lead the departments on the PMS framework, requirements, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting."

Hiring external professionals, such as PMS professionals and PMS Champions, demonstrates the municipality's commitment to improving performance management methods via outside knowledge. These experts contribute essential ideas and best practices gained from their experiences beyond the municipal boundaries. They bring new viewpoints and industry experience to the table, which can aid in refining existing performance management systems. PMS Specialists, who frequently come from the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA), are well-versed in performance management systems and frameworks customised to the local government environment. Their participation in developing and implementing the municipality's PMS turnaround strategy demonstrates a proactive attitude to dealing with performance issues. Msunduzi Municipality may

benefit from tried-and-tested approaches and creative solutions to improve its performance management procedures by using the experience of these professionals.

Similarly, the designation of PMS Champions within different company departments demonstrates a commitment to internal knowledge-sharing and capacity-building. These champions act as internal advocates for performance management, promoting staff members' knowledge and implementation of performance management ideas. They are critical in converting the overall performance management plan into practical departmental tasks. This method encourages workers to participate actively in the performance management process and develops a culture of continual improvement and accountability.

5.6.4 Objective 4: Causes of poor service delivery

Within the theme of poor service delivery, two sub-themes were established, mainly external and internal factors. Table 4.9 highlights participants' perceptions and responses to the internal and external factors that cause poor service delivery in the municipality.

TABLE 5.4: Participant perception and responses on the theme causes of poor service delivery

No	Participant Perception	Participant Responses
1	Internal Factors	
	Late appointment of service providers and poor debt collection	12 participants mentioned these as significant contributors to poor service delivery.
	Lack of adequate operational supervision	11 participants emphasised the lack of management oversight as a root cause of poor service delivery.
	Departments operating in silos	10 participants highlighted the issues of departments functioning independently, leading to divided efforts and a lack of synergy.
	Political interference in service delivery	9 participants pointed out the disruptions caused by political dynamics and decisions made for political gains.
2	External Factors	
	Service provider workmanship and monitoring issues	14 participants stressed the problems from service providers, especially regarding workmanship and project monitoring.
	Community objections regarding local labour and prices	13 participants discussed community complaints as a significant external factor affecting service delivery. They emphasised the need for careful dialogue and community engagement.

The participants' insights highlight internal and external factors affecting service delivery. Internally, issues like the late appointment of service providers, poor debt collection, lack of supervision, departmental silos, and political interference are critical challenges. These factors suggest improved management practices, better coordination among departments, and minimising political influence to enhance service efficiency.

Externally, the quality of service provider workmanship, the need for effective monitoring, and addressing community concerns through engagement and dialogue are pivotal. Strengthening relationships with service providers and fostering transparent communication with the community can lead to better service outcomes.

Addressing these issues requires a multifaceted approach, focusing on internal reforms and external stakeholder management. By tackling these identified factors, service delivery's overall efficiency and effectiveness can be significantly improved, leading to better outcomes for the communities served.

5.6.4.1 Sub-Theme 1: Internal factors

The interviews revealed various internal causes of the municipality's poor service performance. Poor planning, the late appointment of service providers, insufficient debt collection, a lack of management monitoring, and departments functioning in divisions are examples of these causes. According to Participant 2,

"Late appointment of service providers and poor debt collection results in insufficient funds for urgently needed projects."

These findings highlight important internal issues influencing service delivery. Participant 6 addressed the issue of insufficient management oversight, noting,

"One of the root causes of poor service delivery is a lack of adequate operational supervision. When employees are not regularly watched, it is difficult to discover and manage performance difficulties."

This lack of monitoring leads to inefficiencies and may result in unsatisfactory service delivery outcomes. Participant 11 raised the issue of departments functioning in divisions inside the municipality.

"Different departments frequently operate independently, with limited communication and collaboration; as a result, efforts are divided, and there is a lack of synergy in service delivery", they added.

The municipality's capacity to deliver integrated and comprehensive services to the community may be hampered by the segmented approach. Furthermore, Participant 12 spoke on the influence of political involvement on service delivery, adding,

"Political interference and power struggles can disrupt service delivery initiatives. Decisions are sometimes taken for political gain rather than for the welfare of the society."

This demonstrates the intricate relationship between political dynamics and service delivery outcomes.

5.6.4.2 Sub-Theme 2: External factors

Externally, issues with service provider workmanship and project plan monitoring were raised.

"Service providers frequently do not monitor their project plans, resulting in delays and cost overruns," said Participant 2.

Furthermore, community complaints, notably about local labour appointments and prices, were mentioned as external elements influencing service delivery. Participant 4 elaborated on the problem of service provider craftsmanship, saying,

"Service providers' workmanship is a major concern. Some contractors fail to achieve the requirements, resulting in substandard project outputs that fall short of community expectations."

This emphasises the importance of service provider performance in ensuring successful service delivery. Still, Participant 7 emphasised the difficulties that might arise because of community complaints, stating,

"Community objections, particularly those related to local labour appointments and rates, can halt projects and create tensions. To overcome these concerns, careful dialogue and community participation are required."

This external element can disrupt project timetables and increase expenses, compromising overall service delivery efficiency. Participant 10 also discussed the influence of community objections on service delivery initiatives, stating that

"Community objections can lead to project delays and sometimes require legal intervention to reach resolutions."

This outside pressure highlights the significance of good community participation and conflict resolution tactics in local government operations.

5.7 INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

A qualitative analysis was undertaken in this research study conducted in Msunduzi Municipality to uncover significant findings on performance management and staff development practices in the local government environment. The primary results indicated that the municipality prioritises aligning its performance management strategies with statutory frameworks, including the Municipal Finance Management Act (National Treasury, 2018) and the Systems Act, to ensure fiscal responsibility and accountability. This alignment underscores the municipality's commitment to legal compliance and effective governance.

To demonstrate its commitment to continuous improvement, the municipality actively seeks external help from government professionals to create and implement its performance management initiatives. This external collaboration enhances the robustness and effectiveness of these initiatives, ensuring they are up to date with best practices and regulatory requirements. Regarding staff development practices,

the study underlined the critical significance of Personal Development Plans (PDP) in employee development, goal setting, and skill upgrading. PDPs are integral to the performance management system, serving as a roadmap for individual growth and development. Workshops and training programs, often arranged in partnership with external organisations, be essential in improving employee skills and keeping employees up to date on industry trends. This continuous professional development ensures that staff members are well-equipped to meet the evolving demands of their roles.

5.7.1 Factors affecting service delivery

The study also highlighted several internal and external factors contributing to poor service delivery:

5.7.1.1 Internal factors

Service Provider Workmanship Concerns: Issues with the quality of work performed by service providers were a significant internal challenge. This finding suggests the need for stricter quality control and better selection criteria for service providers.

Project Plan Monitoring: Inadequate monitoring of project plans leads to delays and subpar outcomes. This indicates a gap in the oversight mechanisms within the municipality.

Performance Management Challenges: A lack of seriousness in certain areas results in inadequate submissions and unclear reporting. Additionally, resource and technological limitations hinder meeting deadlines, highlighting the need for enhanced resource allocation and technological upgrades.

5.7.1.2 External factors

Community Complaints: Community objections, particularly regarding local labour and pricing, affect service delivery. This finding emphasises the importance of community engagement and transparent communication to address and mitigate concerns effectively.

5.7.2 Performance management evaluation

The municipality assesses its performance management mostly during the mid-term evaluation stage. Budget adjustments and performance indicator assessments are conducted during this period to ensure alignment with strategic goals and budgetary capability. This mid-term evaluation is crucial for making

necessary adjustments and keeping the municipality on track to meet its objectives. Key components of the performance management system, such as the Integrated Development Plan (IDP), the Service Delivery Budget Implementation Plan (SDBIP), and performance agreements, were highlighted as essential in shaping the municipality's performance management framework. These components collectively ensure the municipality's strategic goals are clearly defined, monitored, and achieved.

5.8 DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

These findings provide a comprehensive understanding of performance management and staff development practices in Msunduzi Municipality. They align with existing literature on local government administration and service delivery, affirming the importance of aligning performance management with statutory frameworks and the role of continuous professional development in enhancing employee capabilities. The study's insights into the internal and external factors affecting service delivery underscore the complexity of managing local government operations. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach, including improving quality control for service providers, enhancing project monitoring, engaging with the community, and upgrading resources and technology. Moreover, the importance of regular performance evaluations and the integration of key performance management components highlight the need for systematic and ongoing assessment to ensure alignment with strategic objectives. By understanding and addressing these factors, Msunduzi Municipality can improve its service delivery and staff development practices, ultimately leading to better outcomes for the community.

5.8.1 Research question 1: Staff development practices that can enhance employee performance within KZN local government municipalities

5.8.1.1 *Personal development plans*

Developing staff performance is a crucial goal in local government municipalities to guarantee successful service delivery and community satisfaction. The Msunduzi Municipality research discovered an important conclusion highlighting the importance of Personal Development Plans (PDP) in accomplishing this aim. Personal Development Plans (PDPs) are organised instruments that help individuals design their career paths inside the organisation (Eraut, 2020). The Msunduzi Municipality research findings highlight how PDPs help employees define clear, individualised goals, identify areas for growth, and match their individual development with the municipality's wider aims (Participant 3 and Participant 5). This systematic approach to development provides workers with a growth path and instils a feeling of ownership and dedication to their improvement and the business's success. Personalised plans play an important role in staff development by facilitating targeted tactics for skill-

building and performance improvement (Beusaert, 2011). PDPs are more than static documents; they are dynamic tools that enable employees to assess their progress and make required modifications.

The focus placed by Msunduzi Municipality research findings on Personal Development Plans (PDPs) as a critical element of staff development not only accords with earlier research but also provides insightful information on their integration and effect within the performance management system. This result highlights the value of PDPs in promoting personal development while also assuring congruence with corporate goals (Participants 3 and 5). The conventional notion that staff development is frequently disassociated from more comprehensive performance management initiatives is challenged by the inclusion of PDPs into the performance management system, as seen in Msunduzi Municipality findings. Instead, it shows how PDPs may effectively coordinate individual employee growth with organisational strategic goals.

Employee development plans are not just an isolated activity but an essential component of the overall performance management process, as evidenced by Participant 3's statement that employees will be required to complete annual PDPs submitted to Human Resources. In addition, Participant 5 stated that PDPs can be an important component of staff development practices. They can assist staff in establishing clear goals and identifying development opportunities, emphasising the PDPs' dual purpose. They not only function as a guide for personal development but also provide employees with the capacity to establish specific goals that align with the company's strategic goals. This is consistent with the body of research highlighting the importance of PDPs in boosting employee engagement and motivation by giving them a sense of direction (Dawkins, 2018; Rousseau, 2019). For instance, PDPs, according to Dawkins (2018), can significantly raise staff morale and performance. Employees are more likely to experience a feeling of ownership over their career development by defining individualised development objectives and monitoring progress, which increases work satisfaction and commitment.

Similar to how PDPs work to connect individual goals with corporate objectives, Rousseau (2019) emphasises the significance of this. Employees are more likely to be inspired and invested in their jobs when they can understand how their personal development supports the company's overall success. This finding has important consequences for both theory and practice. Theoretically, it advances knowledge of the function of PDPs in training personnel in local government. Although other studies (Dawkins, 2018; Rousseau, 2019) acknowledged the importance of personalised development plans, this study provides useful advice on how PDPs might be easily included in the performance management system.

It disproves the idea that PDPs are stand-alone programs and shows how they have the potential to be a key component of employee development plans for local governments.

5.8.1.2 *Training and development*

In addition to PDPs, training programs, as an important component of staff development, have been identified as critical to improving employee performance in local government municipalities. They provide the basis for employees to gain the information and skills required for efficient role performance. The findings of the Msunduzi Municipality research stress the importance of training in providing employees with the abilities they need to achieve in their roles (Participant 9, Participant 2). Noe (2013) work on employee training and development offers useful insights into the current landscape of training programs and their relevance to the Msunduzi Municipality research. The study stresses training as a strategic strategy for growing human capital inside businesses, which is consistent with the findings of the Msunduzi Municipality study. The strategic character of training is one of the important conclusions from the study. He contends that training is not a stand-alone activity but an essential component of an organisation's human resource development plan. This viewpoint is consistent with the Msunduzi Municipality research, which identifies training as a critical component of local government personnel growth.

Furthermore, the study's insights into different training delivery modalities are particularly pertinent to the Msunduzi study's emphasis on the importance of training in developing local government employees. Noe (2013) investigates several training modalities, such as conventional classroom instruction, on-the-job training, and technology-based training. According to the Msunduzi Municipality research, these various strategies correspond to employees' distinct demands and preferences within local government towns. In addition, the study's emphasis on training alignment with corporate objectives strengthens the Msunduzi Municipality study's findings. Aligning training programs with these objectives is critical in local government, where performance goals and community service delivery are vital.

The analysis of the idea of training transfer by Baldwin (2018), in the context of the Msunduzi Municipality, gives considerable information on the efficacy of training programs within local government contexts. They underline that training should include more than just providing information and abilities; it should also guarantee that employees can effectively use their newly gained competencies in their day-to-day duties. This approach is consistent with this study's findings, which

show that the practical application of training is critical in the setting of local government. For example, Participant 9 emphasised the relevance of workshops and seminars in improving employee skills and knowledge, highlighting the practicality of training.

When contemplating the nature of local government activity, the importance of the notion by Baldwin (2018) becomes evident. Employees in local government frequently confront various and complex obstacles in their work, and the ability to use their skills to manage these challenges effectively is critical. Participant 10's mention of external specialists who assist business units through workshops and training sessions reinforces the idea that training in Msunduzi Municipality is about developing competencies that can be applied to improve job performance. As a result, Baldwin (2018) idea of training transfer provides useful insights into how local government training programs, as demonstrated in the Msunduzi Municipality research, should be organised to guarantee that training leads to actual increases in job performance and satisfaction.

Salas (2012) stresses the relevance of training design and delivery in boosting employee performance, emphasising the need to personalise training programs to specific performance goals. This is consistent with the findings of the Msunduzi Municipality study, in which training is identified as a strategic instrument for addressing the particular requirements and problems that local government personnel encounter. Salas (2012) emphasis on aligning training with organisational objectives echoes the findings of the Msunduzi Municipality research, in which training is considered a tool to improve employee abilities, better job performance, and eventually contribute to the municipality's overall effectiveness. Participant 9's mention of workshops and seminars hosted by external organisations and industry experts, for example, underscores the concept that training programs inside Msunduzi Municipality are not generic but rather created with specific performance goals in mind. These programs are designed to ensure that employees learn the skills and information required to perform in their professions while also addressing the issues that local government employees face. A thorough approach to training design and delivery is repeated in the Msunduzi study's focus on the significance of targeted and goal-oriented training to increase employee performance. As a result, the findings guide how local government training programs, as witnessed in the Msunduzi Municipality, are established.

Goldstein (2016) emphasises the importance of training needs analysis in creating effective training programs, focusing on personalised training for specific performance gaps and corporate goals. This is consistent with the findings of the Msunduzi Municipality study, in which training is identified as a strategic instrument for addressing the particular requirements and problems that local government

personnel encounter. Both the Msunduzi Municipality research and observations by Goldstein (2016) emphasise the need to tailor training to target performance differences specifically. For example, Participant 2's reference to the municipality's attempts to encourage employees to engage in appropriate training programs underscores the concept that training should be targeted to individual and departmental requirements rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. This method is similar to the idea of tailoring training to individual performance gaps by Ludwikowska (2018). As a result, the municipality guarantees that its employees receive training directly relevant to their duties and responsibilities, resulting in increased job performance. Therefore, Ludwikowska (2018) observations give useful information on how local government training programs, as demonstrated in the Msunduzi Municipality, could be structured to address performance gaps and improve overall staff performance successfully.

5.8.2 Research question 2: The current performance management strategies implemented within the KZN local government municipalities

5.8.2.1 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

The study's findings in Msunduzi Municipality provide important insights into the complex setting of performance management strategies throughout KZN local government municipalities. These findings are critical because local government performance management is inextricably linked to the delivery of important services and the overall functioning of these organisations. Adopting Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) as a major component in performance management is a noteworthy finding (Participant 1, Participant 4). KPIs give a standardised framework for evaluating and measuring employee performance in relation to company goals. This is consistent with the larger performance management literature, which emphasises the significance of explicit and quantitative key performance indicators (Sultan, 2023). KPIs enable KZN towns to take a proactive step toward objective performance review, which is critical for ensuring service delivery goals are accomplished effectively.

Msunduzi Municipality's emphasis on mid-term assessment as a critical component of performance management demonstrates the municipality's commitment to a dynamic and flexible approach to performance evaluation. This mid-term review serves as a strategic checkpoint, with performance indicators analysed and budget modifications made to ensure that the municipality's performance management remains aligned with its developing financial capacity and strategic goals. Participant 8's admission that performance indicator evaluations accompany budget modifications shows the municipality's realistic approach to performance management. This synchronisation of budget revisions and performance metric changes indicates a balanced viewpoint recognising the interaction between

budgetary realities and performance objectives. This method is consistent with current performance management approaches, highlighting the importance of a flexible and responsive system that can adjust to changing conditions (Brown, 2019). Participant 5's observations emphasise the significance of reality and pragmatism in performance management. The municipality ensures that performance objectives remain reachable and achievable by changing performance indicators based on budget realities. This method is consistent with performance management ideas that advocate for defining clear, reasonable, and achievable performance goals (Pessl, 2016).

Furthermore, Participant 12's emphasis on extensive study and collaboration with budget changes demonstrates the depth and effort involved in the mid-term evaluation process. This thorough examination ensures that performance indicators appropriately represent the municipality's financial capabilities and strategic goals, critical components of good performance management. It also reflects current performance management practices such as data-driven decision-making and evidence-based performance evaluation (Sultan, 2023).

The study's findings challenge the widespread belief that performance management strategies in the context of Msunduzi Municipality's local government are only a checkbox exercise. This information reveals a widespread perception in the municipality that performance management is frequently handled superficially, which raises serious concerns about the overall efficacy of performance management systems when they are not adopted as tools for real organisational improvement (Participants 6, 11, and 12). This critique of the conventional understanding of performance management as a strategic instrument for development is consistent with earlier work by Strohmeier (2015), who contends that performance management needs to be more than a compliance mandate or a bureaucratic exercise if it is to provide real benefits. Instead, it should be a fundamental component of the company's culture, encouraging continuous learning and growth.

The study's findings, which show that performance management practices are perceived as superficial, support this viewpoint. Performance management falls short of its potential for fostering organisational progress when seen solely as a box-ticking process. A change in perspective is necessary, as evidenced by Participant 6's assertion that people do not understand that performance management is a system; they think it is the function of one unit, so they ignore it or only respond to templates for the sake of ticking a box. According to this impression, many workers might not completely understand the comprehensive nature of performance management and how it improves organisational performance. As a result, they might participate in the process superficially, concentrating on filling out forms and

meeting deadlines rather than actively looking for methods to enhance their performance and support corporate objectives. In addition, Participant 11's statement that submissions received are either late or incomplete further exemplifies the effects of this perception. When performance management turns to a compliance exercise, the quality and timeliness of submissions can be weakened, making the data collected less accurate for decision-making. This finding challenges the accepted view that performance management inherently leads to improvements in performance.

5.8.2.2 *Adherence to legal requirements*

Further, the adherence to legal requirements in local government operations is practically significant, as demonstrated by the alignment of Msunduzi Municipality's performance management processes with legislative frameworks such as the MFMA and the Systems Act (Participants 2 and 3). This finding is consistent with previous research that highlights the value of this alignment (Brown, 2017; Mafini, 2016). For instance, Brown (2017) research on the financial sustainability of municipalities showed the crucial significance that adherence to legal requirements plays in safeguarding the financial well-being of municipalities. In this situation, adherence to the MFMA is essential for good financial management of local governments. Municipalities must abide by the MFMA's key financial governance principles, which include responsible financial management, accountability, and openness (National Treasury, 2018). Like the Systems Act, which established core guidelines for local government administration, planning, and performance management, local government governance is crucial (National Treasury, 2018). The comment made by Participant 3 that The Systems Act serves as the backbone of the performance management framework highlights the direct influence that this law has had on the performance management procedures used by Msunduzi Municipality. This finding supports the body of research that highlights how the Systems Act influenced the practices and processes of local governments (Mafini, 2016).

Beeri (2018) argues that the significance of this alignment also calls into question the notion that local government operations are frequently ineffective and bureaucratic. It demonstrates the intricate and sophisticated nature of the performance management procedures used by Msunduzi Municipality, where adherence to legal standards is a key component of their strategy. This challenges the idea that local government operations are only concerned with mundane administrative duties. Instead, it emphasises that local governments can implement highly organised performance management systems that meet legal requirements. This finding has important consequences for philosophy and practice. Theoretically, it improves knowledge of how laws influence local government activities.

This conclusion highlights that legal compliance may be a driving factor for sophisticated and responsible operations, even if previous theories frequently characterise local governments as being inefficient (Deciu, 2022). It presents a complex viewpoint on how local government operations and law interact. This finding demonstrates the importance of following legal standards and practically matching performance management processes with legal obligations. Local governments should consider methodical ways to guarantee adherence to laws like the MFMA and the Systems Act. For instance, routine training and capacity-building programs might be established to improve staff comprehension of these legal obligations. Local governments might also designate certain teams or persons to monitor laws being followed throughout performance management procedures.

5.8.2.3 *Performance management system*

Participant 4's thoughts on using external Performance Management System (PMS) specialists from the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA) provide an interesting viewpoint on performance management within Msunduzi Municipality. This approach demonstrates a realisation of the importance and complexity of performance management and a desire to harness external expertise to improve the success of the municipality's PMS turnaround plan. This method is congruent with the larger performance management literature, which argues that collaboration with external professionals may contribute fresh insights, best practices, and an objective viewpoint to the process (Edwards, 2012).

Additionally, the hiring of "PMS Specialists" and "PMS Champions" to assist business divisions in accumulating and reporting performance information demonstrates a proactive approach to performance improvement (Participant 10). Msunduzi Municipality exhibits an organised approach to capacity-building and knowledge transfer by delegating duties to these external professionals. This is consistent with the ideas of organisational learning and knowledge management since these external experts contribute to developing internal competencies and continuously improving performance management systems (Tan, 2021). This method makes it easier to obtain useful external information and promotes a culture of constant development and flexibility. In comparison, the methods seen within Msunduzi Municipality reflect the rising realisation in the literature that successful performance management frequently requires a combination of internal and external expertise (Khunoethe, 2021). The participation of CoGTA government professionals reflects the notion of intergovernmental collaboration and information exchange, which is critical for the success of performance management in the public sector. Municipalities like Msunduzi may benefit from a larger pool of knowledge and

experiences by collaborating with external professionals, improving the quality of their performance management initiatives.

Additionally, the realisation that the Integrated Development Plan (IDP), the Service Delivery Budget Implementation Plan (SDBIP), and performance agreements are critical components of Msunduzi Municipality's performance management system demonstrates the municipality's dedication to a comprehensive and structured approach to performance management. The elements mentioned above do not exist in isolation but as a holistic structure meant to support successful performance planning, execution, monitoring, and assessment within the municipality. This holistic approach reflects current performance management methods, which emphasise harmonising corporate goals and resources for best results (Islami, 2018). The collaborative significance of these components in creating the municipality's aims and priorities is a significant dimension stressed by Participant 10 and expanded on by Participant 4. The IDP acts as a strategic roadmap, outlining the municipality's developmental goals and objectives over a certain period. Msunduzi Municipality ensures that its human and financial resources are allocated in a way that is coherent with achieving these goals through strategic alignment of the IDP with the SDBIP and performance agreements. This synchronisation is consistent with current performance management methods, emphasising goal congruence and strategy alignment as critical to long-term success (Islami, 2018).

Furthermore, as stressed by Participant 6, the emphasis on performance agreements is critical. Performance agreements provide an organised and clear way to define individual and departmental goals per the overall corporate goals. Such alignment is a strong mechanism that ensures all employees work cohesively toward the same goal, ensuring that their collective efforts contribute to the municipality's overall performance. This approach is consistent with existing performance management literature, emphasising the importance of having well-defined performance standards and creating clear and attainable goals (Brown, 2019). The interrelated structure of these components simplifies performance planning and supports successful performance execution, monitoring, and assessment. When all company members follow these performance agreements, they develop a common knowledge of expectations and obligations. This shared understanding is critical in a complex organisation such as a local government municipality, where varied activities and services must collaborate to achieve broad goals.

5.8.2.4 Performance management challenges

The performance management difficulties found within Msunduzi Municipality provide useful insights into the intricacies and challenges experienced by local government municipalities in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). These obstacles, called "Lack of Seriousness" and "Adherence to Time Frames," highlight significant concerns that must be addressed to improve performance management processes.

According to the interviews, performance management is sometimes seen as a purely administrative chore, devoid of its genuine function as a tool for monitoring and development. As described by Participant 6, a lack of sincerity might impede the effectiveness of the performance management system. The idea that it is just a matter of "ticking a box" highlights the need for an organisational culture transformation. This is consistent with performance management literature, which emphasises the significance of performance-oriented company culture (Tedla, 2016). Moreover, the finding that submissions are frequently late or incomplete and inaccurate performance data (Participant 11) points to a larger problem with data quality and dependability. Informed decision-making and successful performance improvement attempts require reliable data (Al Hijji, 2018). Inadequate data quality impedes performance management and jeopardises the organisation's capacity to respond to challenges and opportunities effectively. Participant 12's notion of performance management as largely an implementation instrument rather than a development facilitator demonstrates a basic misunderstanding of its purpose. This viewpoint calls for a paradigm change in which performance management is considered a strategic driver of organisational transformation and alignment with service delivery objectives.

Another problem mentioned in the studies is meeting deadlines and sticking to time limitations. Late submissions and failure to meet deadlines (Participant 7) can considerably reduce the efficacy of performance management programs. This is a multidimensional difficulty, according to Participant 10, who mentioned that regulatory obligations, such as the recently adopted Staff Regulations, offer obstacles. To comply with shifting rules, flexibility and adaptation in performance management strategies are required (Pinto, 2017).

Finally, as stated by Participant 8, resource and technological limits add another degree of complexity to the issue of meeting deadlines. Poor resources and technology can hamper data collection, analysis, and reporting procedures. Effective performance management necessitates human resources and a technology infrastructure capable of supporting data-driven decision-making.

5.8.3 Research question 3: The current staff development practices in relation to service delivery within KZN local government municipalities

5.8.3.1 *Continuous learning and capacity-building*

Continuous learning and capacity-building are essential to effective staff development in KZN local government municipalities. According to Participant 3, Msunduzi Municipality spends substantially on various training programs and seminars to improve the skills and knowledge of its personnel. This dedication to ongoing learning is critical, and it aligns with larger research that emphasises the value of training and development activities in enhancing staff capabilities and performance (Walters, 2017). In the dynamic world of local government, where changing legislation, rising technology, and growing community demands are common; continual training is critical to providing personnel with the tools they need to manage these difficulties effectively. Continuous learning improves individual capacities and aligns staff with the strategic goals of the municipality, as noted in the Msunduzi Municipality research (Participant 3, Participant 5). According to the Msunduzi Municipality research (Participant 2), it is important to utilise mentorship and coaching programs to help personnel in their duties. These programs provide tailored direction and assistance, allowing employees to successfully apply what they have learned in service delivery.

The literature substantially supports the importance of coaching and mentoring in developing employee competencies and promoting professional progress (Al Hilali, 2020; Shiri et al., 2023). In the context of local government, where employees frequently face complicated difficulties and different stakeholder relationships, having access to mentors and coaches improves their capacity to manage these complexities. Coaching and mentoring go beyond typical training approaches by giving customised instruction that targets particular individual requirements and issues. This individualised approach is consistent with contemporary human resource development strategies, in which employee development is considered a strategic necessity (Dachner, 2021). Furthermore, when seasoned personnel pass on their skills to fresher workforce members, these initiatives help to transfer knowledge inside the firm. This information sharing promotes individual employee growth, corporate learning, and continual improvement. The whole business benefits from a communal pool of knowledge that fosters innovation and excellence as experienced personnel share their thoughts and best practices.

5.8.3.2 *Performance-based incentive systems*

In the Msunduzi Municipality research, participant 6 emphasised using performance-based incentive systems, such as bonuses and pay increases, to motivate and incentivise people to achieve in their professions. This approach is consistent with the considerable research on staff development that emphasises the relationship between incentives and performance (Alkandi, 2023). Individual contributions and organisational goals are made more concrete through performance-based awards, reinforcing the message that outstanding performance is acknowledged and rewarded. These incentive schemes encourage individuals and foster an organisational culture of performance excellence. It motivates personnel to continually improve, contributing to the municipality's service delivery goals.

Furthermore, these incentive schemes are consistent with current human resource management methods, in which firms increasingly understand the need to tie individual achievement to overall corporate success (Zhenjing, 2022). Including frequent performance assessments and reviews as part of the performance management process demonstrates the KZN local government municipality's commitment to improving employee performance (Participant 6, Participant 8). Performance assessments provide constant feedback, create goals, and enhance performance. This is consistent with Zhenjing guidelines, which emphasise the need for continuing performance discussions. Municipalities in KZN promote a culture of performance excellence and personal growth among their employees by implementing these techniques (Mashashane, 2022; Marie & Khumalo, 2024). Establishing performance-based incentive systems, such as bonuses and pay increases, indicates that the municipalities acknowledge the relationship between rewards and performance (Participant 6, Participant 8). This approach is congruent with the larger performance management literature, which emphasises the significance of incentives in inspiring individuals to achieve (Zhenjing, 2022). Local government towns in KZN encourage workers to actively contribute to attaining corporate goals by providing real rewards for great performance.

5.8.4 **Research question 4: The underlying causes of poor service delivery within KZN local government municipalities**

5.8.4.1 *Poor service delivery*

The study's results in Msunduzi Municipality give significant insights into the numerous reasons for inadequate service performance throughout KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) local government municipalities. Service delivery is a vital component of local administration, and understanding the underlying issues that contribute to its inadequacy is critical for improving community quality of life.

The interviews showed a variety of internal reasons that greatly contribute to the municipality's substandard service delivery. Poor planning, late appointment of service providers, inefficient debt collection, insufficient management monitoring, and departmental fragmentation are examples of internal difficulties. According to Participant 2, the late appointment of service providers and poor debt collection results in insufficient funds for urgently needed projects. Participant 2's remark that late appointment of service providers and poor debt collection results in inadequate cash for vital projects emphasises the critical role of financial management in service delivery. This conclusion is consistent with previous research, which has identified budgetary constraints as a substantial impediment to successful service delivery (Khunoethe, 2021). The allocation and management of financial resources are critical to guaranteeing timely project completion and service delivery efficiency.

Furthermore, as Participant 6 pointed out, the investigation highlighted the key issue of insufficient managerial supervision. Inefficiencies and poor service delivery might result from a lack of frequent supervision and performance management. This observation is consistent with recognised best practices in local governance that emphasise the significance of proactive management (Mamokhere, 2022). The assertion by Participant 11 that separate municipal agencies frequently operate autonomously in divisions is a significant internal obstacle. This fragmentation impedes departmental communication, cooperation, and synergy, limiting the municipality's ability to deliver integrated and comprehensive services. This issue contradicts the literature's stated ideas of integrated service delivery (Mamokhere, 2022). In addition, as stated by Participant 12, the study highlighted political engagement as a significant internal element impacting service delivery. Political interference and power battles can derail service delivery attempts, as choices are sometimes driven by political gain rather than community benefit. This emphasises the complex link between political dynamics and service delivery outcomes, a subject that runs across the literature on local government difficulties.

The study also revealed extrinsic factors that significantly impact service delivery. These include concerns from the community concerning local labour appointments and prices, as well as difficulties with service provider workmanship and project plan monitoring. Regarding service provider performance, Participant 2 stated that service providers typically fail to monitor their project plans, resulting in delays and cost overruns. This external element emphasises the significance of competent project management and monitoring in ensuring the successful delivery of services. It also accords with the literature, emphasising the need for local government expert project management (Irfan, 2021).

Also, community concerns, particularly about local labour appointments and costs, were recognised as major external variables influencing service delivery. Participant 7 commented on the difficulties that community concerns might cause, notably regarding local labour appointments and prices. Such concerns can interrupt project timelines and increase costs, jeopardising overall service delivery efficiency. Effective community engagement and conflict resolution methods are required to mitigate these external pressures. This is consistent with other research, which emphasises the significance of community involvement in local government operations (Rijal, 2023). Likewise, Participant 10 stressed the impact of community opposition on service delivery activities. Community opposition can cause project delays and require judicial involvement to resolve certain situations. This highlights the significance of effective conflict resolution tactics and community participation in local governing processes.

5.8.5 Research question 5: The effective and sustainable staff development framework within KZN local government municipalities

According to the study's results, establishing an effective and sustainable staff development framework within the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) local government municipality is a key undertaking aimed at resolving the multiple issues these organisations encounter. This framework should be methodically created in the quest for improved service delivery and expanded personnel skills, encompassing numerous features that match the unique demands and possibilities found in the research. The study's findings highlight the critical relevance of completing a complete needs assessment to identify skill gaps and development needs among municipal employees. Concurrently, engaging with the local community is critical to match staff development with service delivery goals (De Weger, 2018). The first step in establishing a solid framework is to fully understand both internal staff requirements and external community expectations, laying the groundwork for an integrated approach to staff development. Forming clear and precise development objectives and targets that match individual employee growth and organisational performance enhancement is a critical component of this framework (De Weger, 2018). These objectives must be drawn from the needs assessment and community participation (Participant 10). As a result, the staff development framework is inextricably related to the basic objective of local government municipalities, which is to offer efficient and effective community services.

A wide set of training and development programs is required to transform these goals into practical results. Workshops, seminars, mentoring, coaching, and on-the-job training should all be included in this program. They must be properly tailored to meet the individual demands of employees. The

practical application of training is stressed so that staff can apply their newly acquired abilities to real-world service delivery difficulties. Mentorship and coaching are critical components of the framework because they foster a culture of customised advice and support (Al Hilali, 2020). Participant 2 emphasised the importance of such programs, which may help newer employees hone their abilities. Mentorship and coaching activities should be organised and incorporated into the broader staff development framework to ensure that they are not haphazard but part of a systematic approach to learning and growth. In addition to training and mentoring, the framework should include performance-based benefits, such as bonuses and promotions, directly related to achieving specified growth goals (Alkandi, 2023). It is critical to recognise and reward workers who actively participate in skill development and contribute to enhanced service delivery (Participant 6). This framework fosters a sense of ownership and commitment among municipal employees by establishing a link between individual progress and organisational performance.

In addition, as noted by Participant 5, a culture of continual learning should be maintained inside the firm. Employees are encouraged to actively seek learning opportunities, exchange expertise, and cooperate with coworkers in this culture. It entails building forums for information sharing and offering resources for self-directed learning. This type of setting not only improves individual talents but also allows for sharing best practices, hence promoting collective growth and creativity within the municipality. Another critical component of this framework is integrating staff development with the larger performance management system (Steinmann, 2018). Discussions on staff development goals and success should be included in performance reviews to ensure alignment between individual growth and organisational objectives. By combining these two factors, the municipality guarantees that staff development directly contributes to performance improvement and service delivery goals (Participant 9). The framework must include procedures for continuous monitoring and assessment. These systems should be established to collect employee input and use performance measures to evaluate the efficacy of staff development programs (Participant 10). The framework's continual assessment and adjustment based on evaluation results and changing demands ensures its relevance and sustainability.

This system is built on leadership commitment, with leaders at all levels actively involved in staff development activities (Participant 8). Leadership engagement in mentoring and coaching programs displays a commitment to lifelong learning and sets an example for workers (Khakwani, 2011). A leadership team that supports and invests in employee development fosters a culture of constant improvement and progress. This structure is built with flexibility and adaptation in mind (Participant 4). It should be built to meet changing demands, new problems, and altering community priorities. Training programs and objectives must be updated regularly to keep the framework current and

responsive. Lastly, integrating staff development with the larger performance management system, particularly during mid-term evaluation (Participant 8), ensures that staff development stays a dynamic and vital component of the organisation's strategic objectives. This alignment emphasises the importance of employee development in generating performance gains and meeting service delivery goals.

In conclusion, the study findings indicate that the development of an effective and sustainable staff development framework for KZN local government municipalities requires a holistic approach that includes needs assessment, community engagement, clear objectives, diverse training programs, mentoring, performance-based rewards, continuous learning culture, integration with performance management, monitoring and evaluation, leadership commitment, flexibility, and accountability. This structure allows municipal personnel to develop their skills and greatly contribute to better service.

5.9 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND STUDY FINDINGS

Using theoretical frameworks in research is a significant tool for properly grasping and interpreting data. Several theoretical concepts were used to guide the research process and give a systematic lens through which to interpret the data in this study on the Msunduzi Municipality. Motivation theory, effective teaching models, scientific management theory, and human resource management theory were among them. In this section, the researcher goes into further depth on how these theoretical principles intersect with and highlight the study's findings inside the municipality.

The theoretical framework emphasises motivation's vital role in staff development. This notion is especially pertinent when considering Msunduzi Municipality's employee development practices. Personal Development Plans (PDPs) and training programs are used in the municipality to motivate and encourage employees to participate in their active personal development (Participant 3). Liu (2019) describes motivation as willingly undertaken acts prompted by a person's intrinsic urge to exceed the basic requirements of their role. This is consistent with Msunduzi Municipality's staff development approach, in which workers are encouraged to set personal development objectives and actively explore possibilities for growth (Participant 5). The municipality's dedication to the notion of motivation is obvious in its systematic approach to PDPs, which serve as a developing tool and match employees' progress with the organisation's goals (Participant 9). The effectiveness of intrinsic motivation, as highlighted in the theoretical framework, is demonstrated further in the interviews. Employees inspired and driven by their goals are more likely to be committed and engaged in their jobs. This intrinsic drive is a significant motivation for human growth and development, leading to organisational performance

(Ocen, 2017). The convergence of the theoretical framework with the outcomes from Msunduzi Municipality highlights the practical importance of motivation as a driving factor behind efficient staff development. By recognising and harnessing its employees' intrinsic drive, the municipality fosters individual growth and increases its capacity to fulfil organisational goals. This framework emphasises the need to incorporate motivational theories and practices into local government organisations to build a continuous learning and growth culture.

Furthermore, it is critical to recognise that motivation does not exist in isolation but interacts with other theoretical framework components, such as effective training and human resource management. As observed in Msunduzi Municipality's practices, these factors contribute to a complete approach to employee development. The framework notes that effective training supplements motivation by offering employees the required skills and information to attain their growth goals (Nassazi, 2013). Human resource management concepts that emphasise good relationships and teamwork foster an atmosphere conducive to motivation.

The suggested theoretical framework as depicted in Figure 6.1 emphasises the need for an effective training model focusing on learner-centred training, constructive behaviour, motivation, and achievement celebration (Shah, 2020). This methodology provides a systematic and comprehensive approach to training and development consistent with the concepts in Msunduzi Municipality's staff development processes (Participant 9). The municipality's approach to training and workshops, based on learner-centred training, is coordinated with the principles developed in the effective training model. The primary concept of the effective training model, which stresses skill enhancement and knowledge acquisition, perfectly aligns with Msunduzi Municipality's commitment to supporting the professional development of its personnel. The municipality understands the critical importance of providing its workers with the requisite skills, decision-making ability, and planning competencies for success in their professions (Participant 9). The model's learner-centred approach embraces the notion of employee empowerment, allowing individuals to direct their growth and development within the organisation. This learner-centred approach, championed by the theoretical framework and Msunduzi Municipality, emphasises the need to develop a workforce that is more than just passive beneficiaries of training but also active participants in their professional path.

The municipality fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility for progress by putting employees at the core of their development. This method transcends standard training paradigms, which sometimes

take a one-size-fits-all approach and instead tailor training and development activities to match individual needs and objectives.

In addition, the municipality's activities reflect the theoretical framework's emphasis on constructive conduct and motivation. Constructive behaviour entails learning technical skills and developing a strong work ethic, cooperation, and dedication to ethical behaviour (Grabowski D, 2021). The focus of Msunduzi Municipality on seminars and training sessions to establish these values is consistent with the framework's objectives. Furthermore, motivation, a vital component in driving performance and engagement, is fostered through providing development opportunities and acknowledgement of successes, echoing the framework's celebration of accomplishments.

Finally, the theoretical framework stressing learner-centred training, constructive behaviour, incentive, and achievement celebration complements Msunduzi Municipality's staff development methods. The municipality's focus on empowering its employees, establishing a culture of continuous learning, and recognising the importance of constructive conduct and motivation exemplifies its commitment to maximising the potential of its workforce. This convergence of theory and practice represents a progressive approach to staff development that benefits individual employee growth and adds to the overall efficacy and service delivery of the municipality.

Taylor's theory of scientific management lays a high focus on management's control over work processes. It states that management should have total control over the speed and methods of work and that employees should be required to follow specific instructions (Muldoon, 2020). Furthermore, the idea believes that employees' comprehension of work is immature and that strong supervision is required to assure job completion. This method prevents internal organisational disputes while maintaining management's superior knowledge and control over work processes (Waring, 2016). On the other hand, the findings of staff development practise in Msunduzi Municipality reveal a significantly different approach. The municipality emphasises employee empowerment, teamwork, and development (Participant 5). Personal Development Plans (PDPs), which enable employees to take an active part in identifying their development goals and areas for growth, are one significant practice that exemplifies this approach. This approach recognises employees as people with unique insights and contributions to bring to their personal growth and the firm's goals. Therefore, the disparity in approaches reflects a larger change in current management thought away from the rigorous control of Taylorism and toward a more inclusive and employee-centric approach. The Msunduzi Municipality's emphasis on empowerment and personal development is consistent with current employee engagement

and motivation ideals. It understands that allowing workers to determine their growth may help them become more motivated, engaged, and inventive contributors to the organisation's success.

Furthermore, Msunduzi Municipality's approach is consistent with the concept of a learning organisation in which employee growth and continual learning are critical components (Shava & Muringa, 2024). By allowing staff to determine their growth goals, the company develops a culture of continual improvement and adaptation, which is especially important in the volatile context of local government. Finally, the significant distinction between Taylor's scientific management theory and Msunduzi Municipality's staff development methods demonstrates a transition toward more employee-centred, empowering, and collaborative management techniques. This move acknowledges the significance of individual employee contributions and is consistent with modern management approaches that stress motivation, engagement, and organisational learning. While Taylorism formerly dominated management thought, the current trend in organisations, including local government, is toward more inclusive and participatory staff development methods.

In addition, encouraging employee engagement in development initiatives demonstrates the municipality's commitment to developing a sense of ownership and autonomy in the development process. Unlike scientific management theory's assumptions, which indicate that people require continual direction and control, Msunduzi Municipality believes individuals can take the initiative and meaningfully contribute to the organisation's success (Muldoon, 2020). This difference between scientific management theory and the municipality's approach demonstrates how management practices evolve. While scientific management theory was dominant at the time and helped to greater efficiency in some situations, it also had limits due to its rigorous work style and the premise of employee maturity. On the other hand, modern organisations, such as Msunduzi Municipality, have realised the need to empower and include people in their growth, resulting in a more collaborative and employee-centred approach. This change in management philosophy is consistent with a larger trend in modern management techniques that promote employee involvement, empowerment, and a more flexible and adaptive work environment. It recognises that workers are more than cogs in a machine; they are active partners in the firm's success. As a result, the disparity between Taylor's theory and the municipality's actions demonstrates the continuing evolution of management concepts in response to changing organisational demands and a better knowledge of personnel potential.

Human Resource Management theory focuses on positive relationships between managers and employees through collaboration. According to this concept, firms should strive to preserve a

psychological contract based on collaboration, reducing organisational conflicts and building relationships between management and employees. Management's job in this setting is to build strong relationships with employees and encourage them to collaborate for the greater good of the business (Boon, 2019). The observed staff development procedures in Msunduzi Municipality are consistent with the human resource management theory concepts. Personal Development Plans (PDPs) and training programs are essential practices that illustrate this connection (Participant 7). These practices reflect a comprehensive understanding of labour relations within the municipality. The municipality fosters collaboration between management and employees by encouraging employees to actively participate in developing their development objectives and engaging in training programs (Steinmann, 2018). Implementing Human Resource Management theory concepts also demonstrates the municipality's commitment to preserving strong relationships with employees. This dedication is seen in attempts to foster a culture of connection, strong and diverse leadership, and a clear vision of the organisation's objectives. Msunduzi Municipality's staff development procedures correspond with the organisation's aims and encourage the growth of a collaborative and empowered workforce. Lastly, the relationship between Human Resource Management theory and Msunduzi Municipality's staff development practices emphasises the necessity of healthy relationships, teamwork, and employee-centred growth in modern businesses. This method fosters a culture of connectedness, strong leadership, and a shared vision, eventually contributing to the organisation's success and employee well-being. Adopting these principles represents the progression of management techniques toward a more employee-centric and collaborative approach, which is increasingly acknowledged as critical in today's dynamic and competitive corporate climate.

Finally, the alignment of HRM theory with staff development practices in Msunduzi Municipality represents a strategic and philosophical convergence. This unity indicates an organisation's dedication to excellent labour relations and recognises the critical role of cooperation, empowerment, and employee-centred growth in accomplishing corporate goals. Msunduzi Municipality promotes itself as a forward-thinking body within the field of local government by adopting the ideas of HRM theory into its activities, embracing current management paradigms to enhance employee engagement and total organisational performance.

5.10 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY FINDINGS

The Msunduzi Municipality research gives valuable insights into local government practices. These insights offer valuable insights into various aspects of local government practices. It examines the effectiveness of staff development initiatives, focusing on whether existing training programs and professional development efforts are aligned with municipal performance objectives. Additionally, the research highlights significant challenges in performance management, including gaps in the planning, execution, and monitoring of performance management systems within local government. It also explores employees' engagement in development planning, looking at the extent to which municipal employees are involved in decision-making processes related to staff development and performance evaluation. Furthermore, the research assesses the impact on service delivery, evaluating how staff development and performance management inefficiencies contribute to delays, resource misallocation, and overall service quality. It investigates municipal staff development frameworks' legislative and policy alignment, questioning whether they align with national policies, governance frameworks, and compliance requirements. The research also sheds light on organizational culture and leadership, providing insights into how leadership practices, workplace culture, and organizational commitment influence municipal performance. Finally, the study identifies best practices and improvement strategies, suggesting potential reforms and practices that can enhance municipal efficiency, accountability, and employee performance. However, recognising and addressing the study's limitations is critical to ensuring a balanced understanding of its findings and relevance. One significant limitation is the small sample of interviews, which may not represent the whole range of viewpoints within the municipality.

Furthermore, if specific persons or departments were overrepresented or underrepresented in the interview process, bias might be introduced, thereby impacting the representativeness of the findings. Another disadvantage is the study's dependence on qualitative data acquired through interviews. While qualitative research provides detailed information, it lacks quantitative methodologies' statistical rigour and generalisability. As a result, the findings may be context-specific to Msunduzi Municipality and may not be easily transferrable to other KwaZulu-Natal local government municipalities. The study date is also restricted since conditions, procedures, or difficulties within the municipality may have evolved or changed after the research. As a result, the findings may not accurately reflect the current situation. Also, the possibility of participant prejudice must be considered. Respondents may have given replies they feel are socially desirable or anticipated, which might have compromised data accuracy.

Furthermore, the research does not investigate conflicts of interest or political pressures on respondents, which might impact the information supplied.

Another drawback is that the study focuses on Msunduzi Municipality, which may have distinct characteristics and issues. As a result, the findings may not be immediately relevant to other KZN municipal governments or areas with diverse contexts and governance arrangements. Resource and access constraints might have limited the study's scope and depth. For example, the researcher could not access all necessary papers, data, or employees inside the municipality, which might restrict the results' comprehensiveness. Data interpretation is subjective in qualitative research, and various participants derive different conclusions from the same data. Although attempts are made to decrease subjectivity, its presence must be acknowledged.

Language obstacles and communication difficulties might have hampered the depth and accuracy of the data obtained, especially since respondents were varied. The study's response rate or the percentage of persons or departments seeking interviews with those participating may influence the findings' representativeness. Non-response bias, in which individuals who did not participate had alternative opinions, might impact the results.

Finally, respondents may have offered responses that they felt would favourably reflect their activities or decisions, perhaps disguising weaknesses or concerns.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This concluding chapter summarises the study, highlighting the attainment of research objectives via a focused analysis of the findings. This study examined the development of a Staff Development Framework aimed at improving employee performance in the Msunduzi Municipality, a local government entity in South Africa. The research provides key insights into employee performance management, focussing on current practices, challenges, and potential areas for improvement. The findings highlight the significance of a structured, service-oriented approach to staff development for enhancing performance and service delivery within the municipality.

This chapter offers practical recommendations to enhance the performance management system through the implementation of a development model specifically designed for the needs and context of Msunduzi Municipality. Strategies are recommended to promote a culture of continuous learning, enhance employee engagement, and improve skills development. The study promotes a collaborative framework that incorporates feedback mechanisms, resource allocation, and accountability measures to enhance sustainable performance improvements. Finally, the chapter suggests directions for future research, specifically focussing on optimising development frameworks for municipal settings, assessing the long-term effects of performance-enhancing initiatives, and tackling emerging challenges in local government workforce development. These recommendations enhance a strong, adaptive, and efficient strategy for staff development in South African municipalities.

6.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

In Chapter 1, the problem statement referred to the poorly designed performance management system at Msunduzi Municipality. The improper design or development of the performance management system at this municipality advances its unproductive execution, thus leading to poor employee performance.

Effective governance is expected in Local government municipalities or authorities to avoid compromising service delivery. Even though employees can be qualified for the job, there remains a need to continuously develop the staff to meet the current trends of their profession and remain competitive. Government establishments vary greatly between countries, with some showing problems

relating to the incompetency of employees within the public sector, leading to poor service delivery emanating from a lack of skills.

Municipalities are understood to possess a variety of companies that serve the interests of the local people, while the staff members working in the municipalities are lagging in terms of capacity and competency to meet various demands and provide effective service. Within the municipality, there is an appropriation for developing employees. This study, therefore, utilised a case study analysis style. The qualitative research approach was used to unearth the impact of training and development on enhancing employee performance. Purposive sampling was used to identify participants, and in-depth interviews were used as research techniques. Thematic analysis was then used to analyse data, forming categories of themes that emanate from the data.

6.3 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The qualitative analysis of Msunduzi Municipality revealed several significant findings related to performance management and staff development practices in the local government context. These findings can be discussed as the key themes that emerged from the thematic analysis.

6.3.1 Personal Development Plans (PDPs)

The study's findings highlighted the critical importance of Personal Development Plans (PDPs) in enhancing employee performance within Msunduzi Municipality. This aligns with the theoretical framework's emphasis on motivation as a key driver of staff development. The data showed that PDPs enabled employees to set clear, individualised goals, identify areas for growth, and align their personal development with the municipality's broader objectives (Participant 3, Participant 5) (Dawkins, 2018; Rousseau, 2019).

This finding is consistent with existing literature on the role of PDPs in promoting employee engagement and motivation. The study's insights underscore how PDPs can serve as a strategic tool for connecting individual growth with organisational goals, contradicting the notion that staff development is often disconnected from performance management initiatives. By integrating PDPs into the performance management system, Msunduzi Municipality demonstrates an approach well-aligned with the theoretical framework's emphasis on the interplay between motivation, training, and human resource management (Participant 9).

6.3.2 Training and development

The study's findings also emphasised the importance of training programs, workshops, and external collaborations in developing employee skills and knowledge (Participant 9, Participant 2). This aligns with the theoretical framework's discussion of effective training models, which stress the need for learner-centred, constructive, and motivational approaches.

The data showed that Msunduzi Municipality's training initiatives were tailored to address specific performance gaps and competency needs, mirroring the recommendations in the literature regarding the importance of needs-based, goal-oriented training (Noe, 2013; Goldstein, 2016). As emphasised by Baldwin (2018), the practical application of training was also evident in the municipality's approach, with external specialists providing guidance and support to ensure that employees could effectively apply their newly acquired skills. However, the study's findings also revealed some potential areas for improvement. While the municipality's commitment to training and development was evident, the perception that performance management is sometimes treated as a superficial, compliance-driven exercise (Participants 6, 11, 12) suggests that the linkage between training and broader organisational goals may not be fully realised. This finding aligns with Strohmeier's (2015) critique of performance management as a bureaucratic exercise rather than a strategic tool for continuous improvement.

6.3.3 Adherence to legal requirements

The study's findings demonstrated Msunduzi Municipality's strong emphasis on aligning its performance management strategies with legislative frameworks, such as the Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA) and the Systems Act (Participants 2, 3). This alignment is consistent with the literature highlighting the importance of legal compliance in local government operations (Brown, 2017; Mafini, 2016). By adhering to these legal requirements, the municipality appears to have developed a sophisticated and responsible approach to performance management, dispelling the notion that local government operations are inherently inefficient and bureaucratic (Beeri, 2018). This finding underscores the practical significance of legal compliance and its potential to drive more effective and accountable municipal governance.

6.3.4 Performance Management Systems

The study's insights into Msunduzi Municipality's performance management system, including the use of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), mid-term assessments, and the integration of the IDP, SDBIP, and performance agreements, align with current best practices in performance management (Participant 4, Participant 8, Participant 12) (Sultan, 2023; Brown, 2019; Pessl, 2016). The emphasis on mid-term assessments and synchronising performance indicators with budget realities reflects a flexible and responsive approach, as the literature advocates. This suggests the municipality is committed to ensuring its performance management system remains aligned with evolving strategic priorities and financial capabilities. However, the perception that performance management is sometimes treated as a superficial, compliance-driven exercise (Participants 6, 11, 12) points to the need for a cultural shift within the organisation. Fostering a deeper understanding of performance management's strategic value and promoting employee engagement may enhance the system's effectiveness and drive meaningful organisational improvements (Strohmeier, 2015).

6.3.5 External collaboration and capacity-building

The study's findings highlighted Msunduzi Municipality's proactive approach to leveraging external expertise and collaborations to enhance its performance management and staff development practices (Participants 4, 10). This aligns with the literature emphasising the importance of partnerships and knowledge-sharing in local government contexts (Edwards, 2012; Khunoethe, 2021). The involvement of "PMS Specialists" and "PMS Champions" from the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA) demonstrates the municipality's commitment to capacity-building and knowledge transfer, which is consistent with the concepts of organisational learning and continuous improvement (Tan, 2021). This approach reflects the growing recognition in the literature that successful performance management often requires a combination of internal and external expertise (Khunoethe, 2021). By tapping into external resources and facilitating internal knowledge exchange, Msunduzi Municipality appears to be comprehensively addressing the complexities of performance management and staff development.

6.3.6 Causes of poor service delivery

The study's findings on the underlying causes of poor service delivery within Msunduzi Municipality, both internal and external, align with the broader literature on local government challenges. The internal factors, such as late appointment of service providers, inefficient debt collection, lack of operational supervision, and departmental fragmentation (Participants 2, 6, 11), are consistent with the literature

highlighting budgetary constraints, management issues, and organisational silos as common impediments to effective service delivery (Khunoethe, 2021; Mamokhere, 2022).

The external factors, including concerns from the community regarding local labour appointments and prices, as well as issues with service provider workmanship and project monitoring (Participants 2, 4, 7, 10), underscore the importance of community engagement, effective project management, and quality control in local government service delivery (Prabatha, 2022; Rijal, 2023).

These findings provide valuable insights into the multifaceted challenges that Msunduzi Municipality and other local government organisations face in delivering quality services to their communities. Identifying these factors can inform the development of comprehensive strategies and interventions to address the root causes of poor service delivery. In summary, the discussion of the study's findings demonstrates a strong alignment with the theoretical framework and existing literature on performance management and staff development in the local government context. While the findings highlight areas of good practice, they also identify potential areas for improvement, particularly in fostering a more strategic and employee-centric approach to performance management. Overall, the insights gained from this study contribute to a deeper understanding of the complexities and challenges faced by local government municipalities in enhancing employee performance and service delivery.

6.4 THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK WITH STUDY FINDINGS

Figure 6.1 visually represents how the theoretical principles interact with the study findings, emphasising the importance of motivation, effective training, human resource management, and the deviation from scientific management theory in shaping the staff development practices at Msunduzi Municipality. The arrows indicate the interconnectedness and influence of these theoretical perspectives on each other and various aspects of municipal operations.

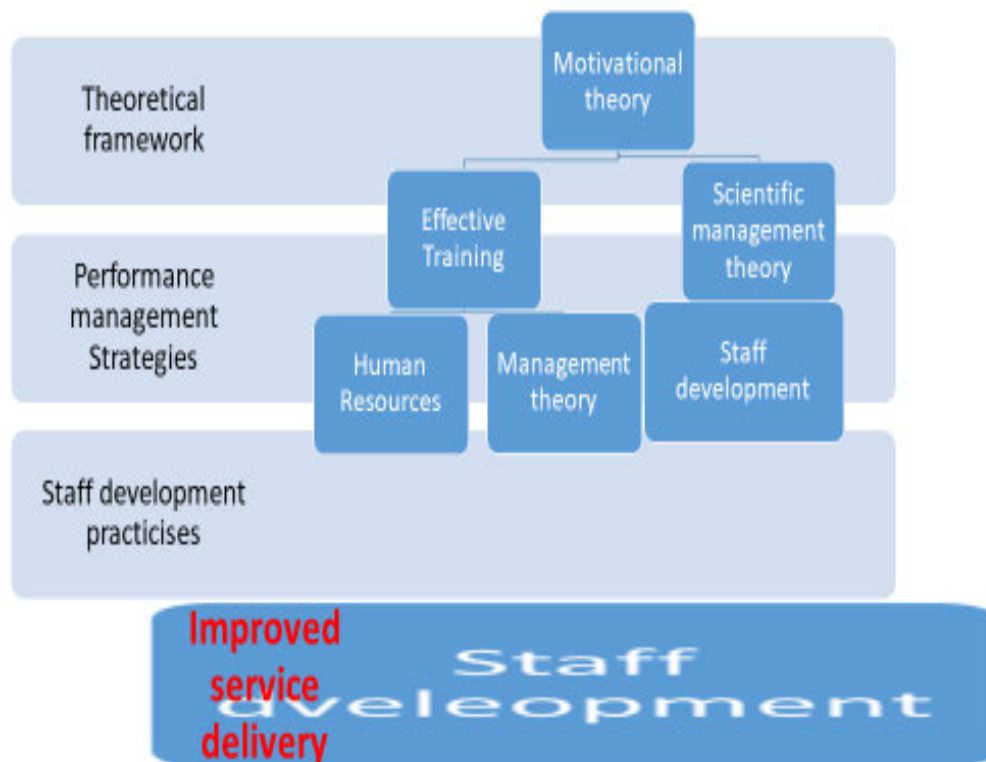


FIGURE 6.1: Relationship between theoretical framework and study findings

In this schematic diagram:

- **Motivation theory:** This theory emphasises the intrinsic drive of individuals to exceed basic job requirements and is essential in understanding staff development practices.
- **Effective training:** Effective training complements motivation theory by providing employees with the skills and knowledge needed to achieve their development goals.
- **Scientific management theory:** This theory contrasts with the observed staff development practices in Msunduzi Municipality, which prioritises employee empowerment and development over strict control and supervision.
- **Human resource management theory:** Human resource management theory focuses on fostering positive relationships and collaboration between managers and employees, which aligns with the collaborative approach observed in Msunduzi Municipality's staff development practices.

Theoretical frameworks are useful lenses for researchers to analyse and interpret their results. This study adopted a theoretical framework that included motivation, effective training, scientific management theory, and human resource management. Herein is a discussion of how these theoretical principles relate to the study findings reported in Msunduzi Municipality.

The theoretical framework emphasises motivation's vital role in staff development (Liu, 2019). This notion is especially pertinent when considering Msunduzi Municipality's employee development practices. Personal Development Plans (PDPs) and training programs are used in the municipality to motivate and encourage employees to participate actively in their personal development (Participant 3). Liu (2019) describes motivation as willingly undertaken acts prompted by a person's intrinsic urge to exceed the basic requirements of their role.

This is consistent with Msunduzi Municipality's staff development approach, in which workers are encouraged to set personal development objectives and actively explore possibilities for growth. The municipality's dedication to the notion of motivation is obvious in its systematic approach to PDPs, which serve as a developing tool and match employees' progress with the organisation's goals (Participant 9). The effectiveness of intrinsic motivation, as highlighted in the theoretical framework, is demonstrated further in the interviews. Employees inspired and driven by their goals are more likely to be committed and engaged in their jobs (Liu, 2019). This intrinsic drive is a significant motivation for human growth and development, leading to organisational performance (Ocen, 2017). The convergence of the theoretical framework with the outcomes from Msunduzi Municipality highlights the practical importance of motivation as a driving factor behind efficient staff development. By recognising and harnessing its employees' intrinsic drive, the municipality fosters individual growth and increases its capacity to fulfil organisational goals. This framework emphasises the need to incorporate motivational theories and practices into local government organisations to build a continuous learning and growth culture.

Furthermore, it is critical to recognise that motivation does not exist in isolation but interacts with other theoretical framework components such as effective training and human resource management. As observed in Msunduzi Municipality's practices, these factors contribute to a complete approach to employee development. The framework notes that effective training supplements motivation by offering employees the required skills and information to attain their growth goals (Nassazi, 2013). Human resource management concepts that emphasise good relationships and teamwork foster an atmosphere conducive to motivation (Liu, 2019). The theoretical framework proposed an effective training paradigm emphasising learner-centred training, constructive behaviour, motivation, and accomplishment celebration (Dena, 2003). This methodology provides a systematic training and development approach and may be considered an important component of Msunduzi Municipality's staff development procedures (Participant 9). The municipality's approach to training and workshops in

learner-centred training matches the concepts established in the effective training model. The model's emphasis on improving skills and knowledge is consistent with the model's emphasis on productive conduct (Dena, 2003). Msunduzi Municipality understands the necessity of providing its employees with the essential skills, decision-making ability, and planning abilities to achieve in their professions (Participant 9). This learner-centred approach develops employee empowerment, allowing individuals to take control of their growth.

Furthermore, as the theoretical framework describes, motivation is inextricably tied to effective training. According to the approach, successful training should excite and encourage learners (Dena, 2003). In this regard, Msunduzi Municipality's training activities are intended to inculcate knowledge, drive, and excitement among personnel (Participant 9). By doing so, the municipality adheres to the principles of the successful training model, ensuring that employees are not only prepared with skills but also motivated to use them effectively. Another significant feature is the celebratory nature of training accomplishments and personal achievements. Under the effective training model, recognising and applauding accomplishments is an important element of the training process (Dena, 2003). This is also evident in Msunduzi Municipality's approach to training and development (Participant 8). Recognising and celebrating personal and group accomplishments fosters the sense that training is more than simply a normal activity but also a crucial chance for growth and development. This celebratory component corresponds to the model's emphasis on establishing a pleasant learning environment in which learners feel accomplished and successful.

Taylor's theory of scientific management lays a high focus on management's control over work processes. It states that management should have total control over the speed and methods of work and that employees should be required to follow specific instructions (Muldoon, 2020). Furthermore, the idea believes that employees' comprehension of work is relatively immature and that strong supervision is required to assure job completion. This method prevents internal organisational disputes while maintaining management's superior knowledge and control over work processes (Waring, 2016). On the other hand, the findings of staff development practise in Msunduzi Municipality reveal a significantly different approach. The municipality emphasises employee empowerment, teamwork, and development (Participant 5). Personal Development Plans (PDPs), which enable employees to take an active part in identifying their development goals and areas for growth, are one significant practice that exemplifies this approach. This approach recognises employees as people with unique insights and contributions to bring to their personal growth and the firm's goals. In addition, encouraging employee engagement in development initiatives demonstrates the municipality's commitment to developing a sense of ownership and autonomy in the development process. Unlike scientific management theory's

assumptions, which indicate that people require continual direction and control, Msunduzi Municipality believes individuals can take the initiative and meaningfully contribute to the organisation's success (Muldoon, 2020). This difference between scientific management theory and the municipality's approach demonstrates how management practices evolve. While scientific management theory was dominant at the time and helped to greater efficiency in some situations, it also had limits due to its rigorous work style and the premise of employee maturity.

On the other hand, modern organisations, such as Msunduzi Municipality, have realised the need to empower and include people in their growth, resulting in a more collaborative and employee-centred approach. This change in management philosophy is consistent with a larger trend in modern management techniques that promote employee involvement, empowerment, and a more flexible and adaptive work environment. It recognises that workers are more than cogs in a machine; they are active partners in the firm's success. As a result, the disparity between Taylor's theory and the municipality's actions demonstrates the continuing evolution of management concepts in response to changing organisational demands and a better knowledge of personnel potential. According to Boon (2019), Human Resource Management theory focuses on positive relationships between managers and employees through collaboration. According to this concept, firms should strive to preserve a psychological contract based on collaboration, reducing organisational conflicts and building relationships between management and employees. Management's job in this setting is to build strong relationships with employees and encourage them to collaborate for the greater good of the business (Boon, 2019). The observed staff development procedures in Msunduzi Municipality are consistent with the human resource management theory concepts. Personal Development Plans (PDPs) and training programs are one essential practice that illustrates this connection.

These practices reflect a comprehensive understanding of labour relations within the municipality. The municipality fosters collaboration between management and employees by encouraging employees to actively participate in developing their development objectives and engaging in training programs (Boon, 2019). Implementing Human Resource Management theory concepts also demonstrates the municipality's commitment to preserving strong relationships with employees. This dedication is seen in attempts to foster a culture of connection, strong and diverse leadership, and a clear vision of the organisation's objectives. Msunduzi Municipality's staff development procedures correspond with the organisation's aims and encourage the growth of a collaborative and empowered workforce. Lastly, the relationship between Human Resource Management theory and Msunduzi Municipality's staff development practices emphasises the necessity of healthy relationships, teamwork, and employee-centred growth in modern businesses. This method fosters a culture of connectedness, strong leadership,

and a shared vision, eventually contributing to the organisation's success and employee well-being. Adopting these principles represents the progression of management techniques toward a more employee-centric and collaborative approach, which is increasingly acknowledged as critical in today's dynamic and competitive corporate climate.

6.5 IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

Findings from the study contribute to practice by improving knowledge in people management. Specific areas where people management was improved through the study employed employee development, performance improvement, and performance evaluation strategies.

The study adds practical knowledge applicable to staff development and employee performance improvement in South African local governments and other institutions. Eraut (2020) indicates that PDPs are vital management practices intended to improve employees at their levels by providing them with opportunities to enhance their knowledge and skills for the organisation's benefit. For example, the study views personal development plans (PDPs) as a method that enhances staff development and improves employee performance because it is proven through the study of Msunduzi Municipality that PDPs allow staff to define and develop individual goals, identify areas for growth, and match their needs for development to the municipality's general goals for employee development. Because the capacity of employees is enhanced at individual levels and the developments are aligned with organisational goals, the organisation gains direct benefits by using PDPs to improve staff capacity. This is because employees become culturally and practically competent when evaluated within the organisation (Dawkins, 2018; Rousseau, 2019). Therefore, PDPs are promoted as staff development and performance improvement management practices that are beneficial to the individual employee and the organisation, making them an ideal corporate practice to embrace.

Training and development is another practice in staff development and employee performance improvement that enhances an individual's capacity to achieve the organisation's objectives. The study reveals that Msunduzi Municipality uses training and development strategies that include on-the-job training, technology training, and conventional classroom instructions to enhance the employees' capacity according to the organisation's competency needs. Similarly, studies from human resource research show that training and development are integral components of employee development to improve these skills so that they align with the needs of the organisation, especially during recruitment and when initiating change processes that require competency in certain areas of knowledge or practice

(Baldwin, 2018; Noe, 2013; Goldstein, 2016). Training and development programs are suitable when organisations evaluate their performance and identify employee competency deficiencies as factors contributing to poor performance (Salas, 2012). Hence, as seen in the case of Msunduzi Municipality, training and development is a practical approach to building an employee's capacity for the organisation's human resource competency needs.

As a practical approach to evaluating performance, key performance indicators (KPIs) are fronted as a strategy by Msunduzi Municipality. KPIs provide a standardised framework for evaluating and measuring employee performance compared to the organisations that form KI (Sultann, 2023). KPIs are applicable by using midterm assessment as a vital performance management component. In the Msunduzi Municipality case, it emerges that the performance management analysis must be aligned with the municipality's budget to ensure that goods are set within the organisation's financial capability and that there are realistic performance measures. The application of midterm assessment is consistent with current management approaches that emphasise the importance of responsible and flexible systems that adapt to the system's changes (Brown, 2019). Furthermore, proposing the setting of realistic and attainable goals in the Msunduzi case aligns with the ideologies of Pessl (2016) that suggest that when using performance management goals, they should be reasonable, clearly defined, and achievable in relation to the organisation's abilities and employee's competencies. Therefore, by making performance indicators realistic and attainable by the employee and the organisation, it is possible to make a quantitative analysis of performance during mid-term assessment and adjust accordingly.

Adhering to legal provisions has practical significance in improving organisational performance. Brown (2017) found in his study of the financial management system in municipalities that adherence to legal requirements safeguards the financial wellness of the organisation because it avoids legal battles that could lead to the payment of fines or compensations while hurting the organisation negatively in the media. Similarly, Mafini (2016) indicates that organisations perform better when they have legal advisors who act on their decisions from a legal perspective to ensure that they align with best practices. For example, the study shows that the MFMA Act and the Systems Act are the two legal guidelines that Msunduzi Municipality follows in their decision-making processes to ensure that they are economically viable and legally binding, which makes the organisation apply ethics in their practices. The findings show that the MFMA Act provides municipalities with a legal framework for managing their finances responsibly, staying accountable, and being transparent, while the Systems Act guides local governments in planning and performance management, targeting their employees and organisations. Besides, while Beerl (2018) feels that aligning activities and organisations with the legal requirements creates bureaucracy, she also believes that it helps avoid negative publicity in the media and saves the

organisation's image as part of the public relations management strategy. Hence, adhering to legal requirements governing the corporate sector provides legal considerations that organisations must consider as a practice to remain legally and ethically competent while maintaining a positive public image.

The study's findings challenge the widespread belief that performance management in the context of Msunduzi Municipality's local government is only a checkbox exercise (Strohmeier, 2015). This information reveals a widespread perception in the municipality that performance management is frequently handled superficially, which raises serious concerns about the overall efficacy of performance management systems when they are not adopted as tools for real organisational improvement (Participants 6, 11, and 12). This critique of the conventional understanding of performance management as a strategic instrument for development is consistent with earlier work by Strohmeier (2015), who contends that performance management needs to be more than a compliance mandate or a bureaucratic exercise if it is to provide real benefits. Instead, it should be a fundamental component of the company's culture, encouraging continuous learning and growth. The study's findings, which show that performance management practices are perceived as superficial, support this viewpoint. Performance management falls short of its potential for fostering organisational progress when seen solely as a box-ticking process. A change in perspective is necessary, as evidenced by Participant 6's assertion that "people do not understand that performance management is a system; they think it is the function of one unit, so they ignore it or only respond to templates for the sake of ticking a box." According to this impression, many workers might not completely understand the comprehensive nature of performance management and how it improves organisational performance. As a result, they might participate in the process superficially, concentrating on filling out forms and meeting deadlines rather than actively looking for methods to enhance their performance and support corporate objectives. In addition, Participant 11's statement that "submissions received are either late or incomplete" further exemplifies the effects of this perception. When performance management turns to a compliance exercise, the quality and timeliness of submissions can be weakened, making the data collected less accurate for decision-making. This finding challenges the accepted view that performance management inherently leads to improvements in performance.

These findings emphasise the necessity for a culture change within Msunduzi Municipality and other local government organisations regarding their practical ramifications. Fostering an alternative strategy through awareness campaigns and training is crucial, as the perception of performance management as a compliance exercise shows (Participants 6, 11, and 12). Practically speaking, local governments must consider programs that foster a better comprehension of how performance management contributes to

actual organisational improvement. For instance, Msunduzi Municipality may regularly hold leadership and staff workshops and seminars emphasising the strategic facets of performance management. These courses could illustrate how performance management might improve service delivery and better conform to legal obligations. The municipality may develop a workforce that views performance management as a useful tool for attaining individual and corporate goals by investing in employee engagement and education.

Additionally, the municipality should set up feedback channels that motivate staff to offer opinions on the performance management procedure. The municipality may encourage ownership and commitment to the process by incorporating staff in establishing performance metrics and goals. The ideas of employee empowerment and engagement, which have been proven to have a good effect on performance (Harter, 2002), align with this participatory approach. Local governments could also consider regularly evaluating their performance management systems to find development opportunities. This might entail benchmarking against best practices in other towns or conducting external reviews (Boyne, 2005). Local governments may better respond to changing conditions and increase their capacity to accomplish service delivery goals by regularly assessing and improving their performance management procedures.

Furthermore, the emphasis on utilising outside expertise and working with organisations like the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA) highlights the importance of partnerships and knowledge-sharing in improving initiatives for staff development and performance management (Participants 4 and 10). Local governments can gain from actively seeking out these partnerships since they are consistent with the rising understanding of the need for outside expertise in performance improvement initiatives. Local governments, for example, might develop formal partnerships with appropriate government agencies, academic institutions, or business groups to have access to specialised information and resources. These collaborations may include sharing best practices, cooperative research initiatives, or training programs. Local governments can obtain new insights and inventive solutions to complicated issues, such as enhancing service delivery or complying with changing regulatory requirements by leveraging external expertise (Agranoff, 2003).

Additionally, the participation of "PMS Specialists" and "PMS Champions" in aiding business units with performance management procedures demonstrates the practical importance of capacity-building and knowledge transfer inside local government organisations (Participant 10). Local governments may use similar tactics to develop internal knowledge and guarantee the proper implementation of

performance management systems. Local governments, for example, might develop mentorship programs in which experienced personnel coach newbies in the complexities of performance management. This speeds up information transmission and promotes a culture of continual learning and progress (Tung, 2015). Furthermore, expenditures in training and development programs for performance management staff can increase their skills and capabilities, leading to more successful performance assessment and improvement activities.

The study's emphasis on the mid-term evaluation phase of performance management shows that local governments are at a crossroads. Devoting special resources to this phase, ensuring performance metrics remain linked with budget realities, and promoting openness throughout the process can all contribute to more successful performance management (Participants 8, 5 and 12). Practical methods to boost this evaluation step might include specialised training and dedicated personnel to help with the process. Local governments, for example, might engage in training programs that provide workers in charge of mid-term evaluations with the required skills to conduct complete appraisals. Data analysis, performance benchmarking, and the interpretation of key performance indicators (KPIs) are examples of subjects that can be included in training (Kang, 2016). Local governments may increase the quality of evaluations and make more informed judgments regarding performance improvements by equipping personnel with the necessary information and tools. Also, designating dedicated personnel or teams to manage the mid-term review may guarantee that this phase receives the needed attention. These professionals may organise the review process, communicate with multiple departments, and transparently present the findings to top management and important stakeholders. This focused strategy can assist in avoiding delays and ensure that performance management remains a dynamic and continuous process instead of a static compliance activity. More importantly, local governments might investigate using digital solutions to simplify the mid-term evaluation process. Data collection, analysis, and reporting may be aided by performance management software and data analytics tools, making the process more efficient and data-driven. These technology developments can permit fast evaluations and provide real-time performance data to decision-makers. Finally, the findings of this study, supported by qualitative interviews conducted inside Msunduzi Municipality, provide important insight into the complexity of performance management and employee development in local government. They both reinforce current ideas by emphasising the significance of legislative alignment and tailored staff development while challenging conventional wisdom by emphasising the need to address perceptions of performance management as a superficial exercise. These findings have practical consequences, requiring cultural transformations, teamwork, and an emphasis on the mid-term evaluation phase to improve performance management and staff development procedures in local government contexts.

6.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Recognising the research's constraints is critical for providing a transparent and credible description of its breadth and potential restrictions. First, the small sample size and focus on a specific local government environment, namely Msunduzi Municipality, limit the results' generalisability to a larger local government landscape. While the findings provide valuable information about performance management and staff development in this municipality, they may not wholly represent the difficulties of other local government settings. Second, various constraints were encountered during data collection, compromising the accuracy and completeness of the data. Access to specific information or documents was occasionally restricted, limiting the depth of investigation. Third, despite efforts to account for confounding variables, external influences beyond the scope of the research may have impacted the behaviours under study. Political dynamics, economic factors, and legislative changes are all included. Lastly, the study's scope limits must be acknowledged since it primarily focused on performance management and staff development within the framework of local government without getting into more significant organisational dynamics or external stakeholder viewpoints. Despite these constraints, the findings are still useful for meeting the research objectives within Msunduzi Municipality. They provide valuable insights into the issues and techniques associated with performance management and employee development in this local government setting. However, due to the unique variables that may come into play elsewhere, caution should be given when extrapolating these findings to various situations.

6.7 REALISATION OF RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This section of the study emphasises whether the research objectives posed in Chapter 1 were realised. Several research objectives expressed in the study were addressed in numerous chapters. The objectives were:

- To explore the staff development practices that can enhance employee performance within KZN local government municipalities.
- To explore current performance management strategies implemented within the KZN local government municipalities.
- To explore the current staff development practices about service delivery within KZN local government municipalities
- To understand the underlying causes of poor service delivery within KZN local government municipalities

- To develop an effective and sustainable staff development framework within KZN local government municipalities.

The research objective of the theoretical explanation of the principles and practice of a performance management objective was sufficiently realised by a hypothetical.

6.8 RECOMMENDATIONS

Several significant suggestions come from the research findings and recognised limits to guide future research and practical application. Future research must widen its focus beyond Msunduzi Municipality to include a broader spectrum of local government scenarios. This would allow for a more thorough knowledge of the differences, problems, and effective techniques in performance management and staff development procedures among municipalities. Second, studies should look more into the impact of external factors on performance management and staff development in local government, such as political dynamics, economic situations, and shifting legislative frameworks. A more in-depth assessment of these external impacts can help municipalities successfully alter their strategy to meet external issues. Finally, longitudinal studies that follow the evolution of performance management and staff development practices over time can provide useful insights into trends, the long-term effectiveness of tactics, and the long-term viability of staff development frameworks.

Furthermore, researchers might undertake comparison analyses to evaluate the efficacy of various staff development approaches in local government contexts. Such evaluations might indicate optimal practices for improving staff performance and service delivery. Also, considering the stated resource and technological limits as problems in performance management, future studies should investigate the role of technology in improving performance management procedures within local government. Overcoming resource constraints might entail studying digital technologies, data analytics, and performance management software. Finally, future studies might focus on community participation measures to reduce external influences affecting service delivery. Examining successful techniques for including communities in decision-making processes, dispute resolution, and project supervision can aid in the continuity of service delivery and community satisfaction. These proposals serve as a road map for future study, allowing scholars and practitioners better to understand performance management and staff development in local government. Implementing these recommendations has the potential to increase the efficacy of these practices, resulting in better service delivery and governance results.

6.9 CONCLUSION

The study successfully achieves its objectives by addressing the research questions and advancing both practical and theoretical knowledge in employee development and performance management. Specifically, the research underscores the effectiveness of Personal Development Plans (PDPs) combined with continuous learning and training, alongside performance-based incentive systems, as viable staff development practices capable of enhancing employee performance within KZN local government municipalities. Moreover, it highlights the prevalent use of performance-based incentive systems and continuous learning and training as current performance management strategies within these municipalities.

Furthermore, the findings reveal that internal challenges such as poor planning, late appointment of service providers, inefficient debt collection, insufficient management monitoring, and departmental fragmentation significantly contribute to poor service delivery within KZN local government municipalities. However, the study also identifies pathways for developing an effective and sustainable staff development framework. This includes formulating clear and precise development objectives and targets aligned with individual employee growth and organisational performance enhancement, implementing a diverse range of training and development programs, fostering a culture of continual learning, and demonstrating leadership commitment.

In terms of theoretical implications, the study lays the groundwork for future quantitative research to test the effectiveness of recommended practices as hypotheses for evaluating employee development and improvement practices in both local governments and corporate settings. On a practical level, the study offers actionable strategies that human resource managers, organisational leaders, and talent managers in local governments and corporations can adopt to enhance employee development and performance improvement initiatives. The findings of this study provide valuable insights and practical guidance for enhancing employee development and performance improvement strategies in local government municipalities and corporate environments. By implementing the recommended practices, organisations can strive towards fostering a continuous growth and development culture, ultimately leading to improved service delivery and organisational effectiveness.

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APPENDIX A: GATEKEEPER'S LETTER

The Msunduzi Municipality OFFICE OF THE MUNICIPAL MANAGER

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Mr. Phumelela T Vezi
Student No. 20823271
J1401 Dinagene Road,
Umlazi Town-ship
4031

03 May 2021

Per Email: VeziP@ukzn.ac.za

RESEARCH CONSENT LETTER – “MODELLING OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK TO ENHANCE EMPLOYEE'S PERFORMANCE IN THE SELECTED SOUTH AFRICAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT”.

Your correspondence regarding the above has reference.

Please be advised that you hereby granted permission to conduct your research within Msunduzi Municipality, subject to the following conditions:

- (i) Correspondence from your institution confirming ethical clearance;
- (ii) Ensure that the Office of the City Manager is informed when you commence your research in the municipality.
- (iii) You will forward a copy of the completed research report to the Office of the Municipal Manager, c/o Ms. Madeleine Jackson as per the above contact details;
- (iv) None of the information and/or findings obtained during the research project will be used to construe the Municipality in a negative light and/or against the Municipality in any court of law.
- (v) The municipality will not be responsible and expected to provide resources for your study such as transport, research assistants, etc.
- (vi) Permission must be obtained from the municipality prior to any publication or paper that will be published or presented containing municipal information.

I trust the above is in order

MADELEINE JACKSON
SENIOR MANAGER: OFFICE OF CITY MANAGER

OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

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APPENDIX B: ETHICAL APPROVAL



Faculty Research Office
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7 December 2022

Student Name: P.T. Vezi
Student Number: 20823271
Degree: PhD in BIM
Email: 20823271@dut4life.ac.za
Supervisor: Dr C. Mabaso
Co-supervisor: Dr A. Rajlaal
Supervisor email: Calvinm@icloud.com
Co-supervisor email: ashneer@dut.ac.za

Dear Mr P.T. Vezi

ETHICAL APPROVAL: LEVEL 2

I am pleased to inform you that the Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) following feedback from two reviewers, has granted preliminary permission for you to conduct your research "*Modelling of staff development theories and practices in the South African Local Governance on KZN local government Municipalities*".

When ethics approval is granted:

You are required to present the letter at your research site(s) for permission to gather data. Please also note that your research instruments must be accompanied by the letter of information and the letter of consent for each participant, as per your research proposal.

This ethics clearance is valid from the date of provisional approval on this letter for one year. A student must apply for recertification 3 months before the date of this expiry.

Recertification is required every year until after corrections are made, after examination, and the thesis is submitted to the Faculty Registrar.

A summary of your key research findings must be submitted to the FRC on completion of your studies.

Yours sincerely

Dr. C.J. Nyide
Faculty Research Ethics Committee Chairperson
Faculty of Accounting and Informatics
Durban University of Technology
Email: nyidec@dut.ac.za



APPENDIX C: ETHICAL TRAINING CERTIFICATE



Zertifikat Certificat

Certificado Certificate

Promouvoir les plus hauts standards éthiques dans la protection des participants à la recherche biomédicale
Promoting the highest ethical standards in the protection of biomedical research participants



Certificat de formation - Training Certificate

Ce document atteste que - this document certifies that

Phumelela Vezi

a complété avec succès - has successfully completed

Introduction to Research Ethics

du programme de formation TRREE en évaluation éthique de la recherche
of the TRREE training programme in research ethics evaluation

Release Date: 2021/07/29
CID: ZKZIEIYF

Professeur Dominique Sprumont
Coordonateur TRREE Coordinator



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Swiss Academy of Medical Sciences (SAMS/ASSIMSANW) (www.sams.ch) - Commission for Research Partnerships with Developing Countries (www.kfpc.ch)

[REV : 20170310]

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW GUIDE



DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY
INYUVESI YASETHEKWINI YEZOBUCHWEPHESHE

“Modelling of staff development framework to enhance employee’s performance in the selected South African local Government: Msunduzi Municipality”

SECTION A

(Please mark with (X) in the appropriate blocks and explain where it necessary)

RESPONDENT PERSONAL INFORMATION

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

	General Manger: Corporates services
	Senior Manager: Human resources Management (HRM)
	Senior Manager ICT
	Manager Performance management
	Support staff in the different Business Unit
	Senior Manager Performance Management
	Manager in the office of City Manager (MM)
	Manager’s different business unit

1. Indicate whether you are:		
Female		
Male		
2. Age		
20-24		
25-29		
30-34		

35-39		
40-44		
45-49		
50>		

3. Race:	
African	
White/European	
Coloured	
Indian/Asian	
Other (please specify)	

4. What is the highest tertiary qualification?

SECTION B

(Please mark with (X) in the appropriate blocks and explain where it necessary)

CONDITIONS

5. How long have you been in Msunduzi Municipality?	
0-7 years	
8-10 years	
11-18 years	
+19 years	

Thank you for your co-operation and assistance.

APPENDIX E: EDITORS LETTER



Website: www.chiefeditors.net

Email: info@chiefeditors.net or boldwin@chiefeditors.net

Cell: 063 022 3162 or 072 492 6144

Dear Sir/madam

Re: Confirmation of editing and proofreading

This letter informs the responsible authorities that our team proofread and edited the work authored by **Phumelela Talent Vezi (20823271)** to the best of its ability. Our editing involves spelling check, punctuation, grammar, sentence construction, word reduction, cross reference citations, basic formatting (general layout), presentation style, indexing, and other mechanics of the English language. No technical alterations have been made.

Corrections were made using track changes, which have been clearly outlined for the author's reference. It is the onus of the author to accept or reject the suggested changes.

Please do not hesitate to contact us on the details provided above for more information.

Disclaimer: The editor will not be held responsible for any errors introduced due to the changes made after editing.

Yours,



B. Mutsvene (Coordinator)

Affiliation: International Affiliation of Writers Guilds (IAWG)

IAWG