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# Decentralization and Human Resource Development; Documented Challenges in Local Government Authorities in Tanzania

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| KEYWORDS | A B S T R A C T |
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| Decentralization, Human resources development, Local government reform capacity building. | This paper made an attempt to explore the documented challenges that constrain human resource development (HRD) under decentralization in Local Government Authorities (LGAs) in Tanzania. Critical review on decentralization and human Resources Development was thoroughly done to set the premise scene for the paper. The Paper used documentary sources to gather information relevant to the thematic area. These included journal articles, books, Government Reports, News paper and letters. Observation method was also used based on the author's background and experience in the thematic area. The paper found that decentralization as a process and as an approach has potential for Human resources development in Local Government Authorities in Tanzania. However the paper noted three major challenges which are multi –faceted and integrated in the character. They comprise policy induced challenges, skills and Organization challenges and performance induced challenges. Hence the paper strongly recommends on institutional review and re –design hence institutionalization of HRD and enforcement mechanisms with financial support, change of mind set and working culture and finally political and leadership will remain critical for the Human Resource capacity building within the Local Government sector under decentralization. |

## Introduction

Human Resource development in both Public and Private Sector institutions is indispensable in an increasingly knowledge based and globalized economies of the World (Analoui, 2007). Building Human Resource capacities (BHRC) for Public Service delivery (PSD) has been recognized and appreciated by both developed and developing nations. The New Public Management (NPM) also puts emphasis on capacity building on people component for institutions to remain relevant and performing their mandates (Hope, 2001).

Hope (2001), understands decentralization as an institutions change for effective and

efficient service delivery. He further recognized decentralization and Human Resource Development as potential and critical strategic policy elements for institutional change.

Hope (2001), views decentralization as a means through which governments would be able to deliver requisite quantity and quality services that meet citizen needs. Decentralization under New Public Management is considered imperative as it reduces bureaucratic controls especially by the Central governments. Emphasis is placed on flexibility autonomy, innovativeness, creativity and responsiveness on the demand side.

Decentralization is accepted in both theory and practice as a means to ensuring local governance in terms of delivery of Public Service which are more effective and efficient. However, the assumption is contingent on decentralization design, institutional setup and characteristics, technical and Human Resource Development (HRD) governing its strategic implementation (World Bank, 2000 and Pollit, et al, 1998).

Namara (1990) at the African Leadership Forum on June, 1990 raised and appreciated the importance of developing human resource capacity. He emphasized that it is imperative to build Local African capacities as the cutting edge of Africa's Strategic development agenda. In his view, lack of necessary skills and well managed public and private institutions for long term, sustainable growth was priority to be included in every development activity in Africa because of its implications for improved governance and development management.

The World Bank (2000), also noted that, Africa must solve its current human development crisis if it is to claim the 21$^{st}$ Century. Africa's future economic growth will depend less on its natural resources, which are being depleted and are subject to long run price declines and more on its labour skills and its ability to exploit available opportunities and demographic transitions (ibid).

The World Bank observation is a recognition that in an organization human resource is the most precious and critical resource, this position is shared also by Armstrong (2009) who clearly recognized that, human resource is the most valuable asset in an organization as it interprets policies, plans and objectives into actions and tangible results.

Organizations efforts need to be conceived, planned and executed by knowledgeable people who can coordinate and organize inputs into outputs, hence failure or success of organizations endeavours rests on the type of people involved in the process (Powell, 2001). To this regard therefore, it is not surprising that human resource management and development issues remain of great importance and concern to Public Sector Managers and reformers using decentralization as a service delivery model in Local Government Authorities (LGAs). The question that calls for an in-depth study is whether decentralization as a service delivery model and an institutional change using New Public Management principles and the quest for human resource development can work in the Local Government Authorities with its bureaucratic tendencies looking on the challenges embedded and which constrain the HRD.

**Rationale of the paper**

The Public Service Reform (PSRP) which was a comprehensive reform program identified systemic constrains which include; institutional weaknesses, poor service delivery, under-utilization and management of human resources, poor performance management culture, lack of a comprehensive and attractive incentive system in Public Sector, lack of effective records and information management systems and under-developed Human Resource in Public sector (URT, 2000, World Bank, 2000 and Mutahaba, 2002).

Decentralization as part of the wider Sector Public Service Reforms in Tanzania was a reaction vide publication of Decentralization policy paper of 1998 which intended to address the challenge of service delivery at the grass root levels. Issues of Human Resource Development, was one of the major components in that Policy (URT, 2000). The Decentralization Policy was conceived as one of the strategies to bring major policy changes, process and practice with the aim of strengthening the capacity of Local Government Administrative System as one of the very crucial Public Sector Institutions responsible for public service delivery in the country.

In Tanzania, issues with regard to human resource development, decentralization and centralization are more historical. The country since 1961 after independence, inherited an administrative system from the colonial government which was prepared to serve the colonial government (Hussein, 2013). The Local Government System which was operational was more or less centralization, since institutions were controlled from the Central government as the principal policy maker and definer of the operational standards (ibid).

In 1972 the Local Government Authorities in Tanzania were abolished for a period of ten years up to 1982 when they were re-introduced again (URT, 2000). All these changes had a bearing impact on the institutional setup and human resource capacities development and performance (Hussein, 2013).

This background information therefore brings attention on difficulties and challenges of developing people as a valuable asset in Public sector, specifically decentralized Local Authorities in Tanzania. Also the nexus of New Public Management and how has the decentralization reforms responded to issues of Human Resource Development and the challenges associated using Local Government Authorities in Tanzania. Thus, the study is envisaged to explore the documented challenges that constrain decentralization for human resource development in Local Government Authorities in Tanzania.

**Objective of the paper**

The key objective explored was to explore the documented challenges that constrain human resource development under decentralization in Local Government Authorities in Tanzania.

**Specific issues to be explored included**

(i) To find out the importance of Human Resource Development under decentralization in LGAs in Tanzania

(ii) To identify documented achievements on human resource development under decentralization in LGAs in Tanzania.

(iii) To identify the documented challenges on Human Resource Development concerns and

decentralization in LGAs in Tanzania.

## To address those objectives, the paper answered the following questions

(i)     What specific importance is placed on Human Resource Development under decentralization is LGAs in Tanzania.

(ii)    What are the documented achievements on human resource development under decentralization in LGAs in Tanzania?

(iii)   What are the documented challenges on Human Resource Development concerns and decentralization in LGAs in Tanzania?

## Theoretical assumptions

The question of having knowledgeable, competent workforce and capacity building has been a matter of concern and features out in development literature, organization theories and performance management. Larbi (1998), points out that, capacity is not the same as 'Capacity building'. Rather the absence of capacity, calls for capacity building; hence effective capacity building must be preceded by assessing the existing capacities. In the context of Public Sector, capacity is the ability of government to plan, manage and sustain the development process of their economies and societies; and keeping with aspirations and potential of their respective countries people (ECDPM, 1994, and Larbi, 1998).

Lane and Wolf (1990) understand capacity as the ability to govern, which is embedded to human resources available in government institutions. Grinole (1995) define capacity is the ability to perform appropriate task, meaning that capacity is task performance, achieving purpose effectively and

sustainably either at individual level, group, community, organization or government level.

The Institutional theory and open system theory can explain better the underlying philosophy between decentralization and Human Resource Development in Local Government Authorities. The institutional theory as pointed by Hope (2001), that institutions shape the relationship of individual within an organization, shapes decision making styles, shapes allocative and productive powers and also defines what is allowed and what is prohibited.

The system theory and specifically the open system theory can also best fit in understanding issues of Human Resource Development as its premises assumes that organizations have similar characteristics with other living organisms (Analoui and Karami, 2003).

A System is generally defined as an arrangement of interrelated parts. The interrelated parts are the structures which work in an interdependent elements forming an entinty, that is the System (Jackson and Schuler, 1999).

An Open System and Institutional theory, all depends much on the internal and external environment. The external environment may necessitate change of frame works and policies while the later i.e the open system can be affected by the external environment for inputs that are transformed during the through put to produce outputs that are exchanged in the environment.

It is generally understood that managing an organization requires effective deployment of three key resources re Financial, Physical and Human Resources. However, it should be noted that among the three resources, the

most valuable and critical resource is the people (Human Resource) to this note, it has been observed that developing human resource in an organization is a sub system of Human Resource Management embedded in the larger organizational System (Analoui and Karami, 2003, Armstrong, 2009). The system theory and institutional theory both imply that developing human resources while guided, contributes to building of competent management and performing organization (Wright and Snell, 1991). It is further argued that HRD should be integrated in an organization for the same to deliver high quality products and services. The capacity to acquire, utilize, train, develop, retain and displace the needed competencies for the organization recognizing that phenomenon interact and influence each other.

Tanzania has always seen decentralization as an ideal approach to rural and urban development (Ngwilizi, 2001)1. While central government administrative structures improved through these decentralization initiatives. The improvement is in terms of improved central local relationship. The ministry is assumed to play a regulatory role (Hussein, 2013)

Local Government Reform Program in Tanzania is one among the major reforms in the Public Sector Reform Program which includes the Public Financial Management Reform Program and The Legal Sector Reform Program. The Local Government Reform Programme (LGRP) in Tanzania aims to restructure local government authorities so that they can respond more effectively to local priorities of service delivery in a sustainable manner. Various sector reform programmes are undertaken in line with the Local Government reforms to complement the LGRP by focusing on specific sectors. These are such as the

Health Sector Reform and the Primary Education Development Program are subsequently targeted to improve service delivery directly. ( Katera and Ngalewa, 2008)

The Tanzania Government Poverty Reduction Strategy (TGPRS) document clearly spells out these reforms and the main objective being to improve service delivery to the public.(URT. 2000). According to Ngwale (2005) and Lukamai (2006), the Local Government Reforms as part of the major public sector reforms are used as a driving vehicle of Decentralization by Devolution (D-by-D) policy to strengthen the local government authorities with the overall objective of improving service delivery to the public .Thus, made it through transferring power of the decision making, functional responsibilities, and resource from central government to local government authority (ibid). Shukuru (2006) however, points out that there have been cases including lack of involvement of stakeholders in planning process, on the side of the human resources involved in the process. To achieve this well trained, compensated and motivated human resource is imperative.

This Study made an attempt to explore how these elements happen under the decentralization reforms in Tanzania at Local Government level specifically looking on the importance, achievements and challenges facing human resources development in LGAs in Tanzania.

## Methodology

The methodology for the study was influenced by the presence of multiple actors in the public organizational setting, hence the adoption of an exploratory design was considered imperative. Primary and

secondary sources of data were collected for the study. Observation method was used to collect primary data. Documentary source was done through review of various documents related to human resource development and decentralization. Triangulating sources and data, qualitative and quantitative methods were used to analyse the data. Qualitative analysis took the form of transcribing recorded notes and content analysis of observation and documents.

## Results and Discussion

The paper had three specific objectives and questions. This section documents the findings in a logical flow with reference to those specific objectives and questions. The questions were: What specific importance is placed on Human Resource Development under decentralization is LGAs in Tanzania?, What are the documented achievements on human resource development under decentralization in LGAs in Tanzania? And What are the documented challenges on Human Resource Development concerns and decentralization in LGAs in Tanzania?

## Specific importance placed on Human Resource Development under decentralization is LGAs in Tanzania

Human Resource Development (HRD) provides for a strategic approach and development within an organization on human resource. It provides a framework that is useful for identifying skills needed by employees within the organization for both current and future employees' development requirements, and for the identification and incorporation of individuals training and other related development needs(Hope, 2001). The ultimate aim and vision is to have a workforce that has the pre-requisite skills and knowledge to undertake the tasks required by staff for the organization, and a workforce that is eager to learn and accommodate new skills in order to meet current and future challenges. Thus Human Resource Development under decentralization in Local Government Authorities in Tanzania placed emphasis as its strategic importance in achieving Vision, Mission and Strategic Objectives of Local Government Authorities. LGAs as organizations must demonstrate their relevance and value to stake holders (government, private sector and citizens), and ensure that the values and principles are adhered to (URT, 2004).

The HRD also serves the following purposes and objectives:

i. To enhance the skills and capacities of the human capital of LGA employees in order to carry out targets of development plans and program to achieve the vision and mission of LGAs. This position is also shared by Armstrong (2006) who pointed out that HRD makes a major contribution to the succesful attainment of organization objectives.

ii. To further human resources management towards productive contributions to vision achievement and efficient service delivery.

iii. To sharpen the recruitment, promotion, retention, personnel relations, rewards and incentives as well as succession planning and retirement practices and policies beneficial to both individual employees and to the LGAs at large.

In order for LGAs to effectively and efficiently implement its core functions (service delivery to the citizenry), there is a crucial need to continuously improve the current workforce by promoting its

qualifications and professional portfolios. The intended improvement would be based on service offerings, as well as future business expansion as per national and constitutional mandate.

In addition, the need to have a Human Resource development executed by a plan is necessitated by the changing of working conditions, test of clients, technological change, global dynamics and hence changing schemes of service to accommodate those changes under the Local Government Reforms using Decentralization as a service delivery model.

HRD provides opportunities for an individual worker to improve current and future job performance, while simultaneously best utilizing human capital in order to improve the efficiency of the organization itself. Ideally, well-developed and well-implemented HRD systems are integral to the organizations' strategic plan and benefit both the employee and the employer.

*Documented achievements on human resource development under decentralization in LGAs in Tanzania*

The emergence of the New Public Management and Decentralization model has changed the landscape, and public sector organizations face comparable levels of complexity. There is more demand for quality and reliable services from the public and there is more competition for competitive and productive human resources. Institutions have to legitimize their existence, necessitating the adoption of complex outcome-focused systems and procedures.

NPM model is a result of the quest for minimal government, it is about reinventing government through an emphasis on steering, as opposed to rowing; empowering communities rather than only delivering services; encouraging competition rather than monopolies; enabling public services to be driven by their missions rather than rules; concentrating on earning, not just spending; decentralizing authority, and solving problems by leveraging the market-place, rather than simply creating public programs (Gaebler,1992; Ndumbaro,2006).

*In Tanzania Decentralization has affected Human resource management and specifically HRD through*

HRM under decentralization  is seen to support organizational business strategies through internally consistent practices and policies and expected to contribute to the following goals: productivity or service quality enhancement through increased contributions of individuals and teams; statutory compliance; gaining competitive advantage through employee participation; workforce flexibility and empowerment; and developing a supportive organizational culture through organizational and Human Resource Development (Schuler and MacMillan, 1984; Schuler, 1992). This is vivid and evident in Local Authorities in Tanzania as emphasized by the Decentralization policy  which puts emphasis on participation in planning and decision making for improved governance URT,2000 and REPOA, 2010).

Public Service Reform Program under which decentralization was one of the key issues, was aimed  to assist MDAs deliver improved services (in terms of quality, timeliness and efficiency), implement relevant, priority policies, and establish a predictable and well regulated environment for private sector growth and social development, with an overriding theme of

''Enhancing Performance Results and Accountability'' (Issa,2011). To achieve these, deliberate efforts were made to develop human resource capacities for steering the process and obtain the expected results.

The New Public Management as an institutional and reform frame work for decentralization, has impacted on Human Resource Development in Local Government Authorities in Tanzania and hence several changes related to Human resource management and development have taken place as summarized in the table below.

Other achievements includes civic competence among citizens which has been continuously improving under decentralization through various education and training programmes, including grassroots level for leaders and technical staff both at district/municipal and sub district/ municipal levels. This has contributed to making citizens more aware of their rights and responsibilities for their own development and that of the nation. There is steadily emerging and convincing evidence from some parts of the country that people are now moving from supply to demand level of governance.

The above documented achievements and strides are facts that the Public Service of Tanzania including LGAs has made through a very elaborate framework for effective human resource management and development. These are a result of a well formulated and implemented Public Service Reform Program under which decentralization is part and parcel. This position is substantiated by (Issa, 2011) who opines that, the HRD and management framework created and continuously improved, supports the realization of the

goals of efficient delivery of effective public services which is an overriding objective of the African Charter of Public Services and also a necessary condition to achieving the national socio-economic goals and the National Development Vision 2025 – Tanzania to become a middle income country.

## Documented challenges on Human Resource Development concerns and decentralization in LGAs in Tanzania

Generally speaking the paper found that the HRD challenges under decentralized local government in Tanzania are multi-faceted and integrated in character. They comprise policy-induced challenges; skill, task and organization induced challenges and performance motivation induced challenges. To be more specific they include Low job-satisfaction due to poor salaries, inadequate funds for training and development, and unequal training and development opportunities for all employees.

Other challenges observed include rapid expansion of services and employment. Recently, in Tanzania Local Governments under decentralization policy there has been a concerted effort to increase accessibility to the public social services which include education, health and agricultural sector. The quest to achieve the Millennium Development Goals is possibly a contributor to the expansion where in every ward there should be a secondary school and the efforts to achieve universal primary education and every village to have a dispensary for health services.

According to Issa (2011) Tanzania up to 2010 had achieved 97% primary school enrolment rate. Between 2005 and 2010, 146,000 positions were approved for recruitment and in 2010/11, 49,593 positions

were approved and permits issued to recruit mostly to serve the health and teaching services. This coupled with limited and decreasing financial resources seem to affect recruitment of new staff and their development.

Leadership quality desired has not been achieved as a result of some debilitating weaknesses affecting leadership effectiveness. These, if worked upon, can greatly enhance leadership capacity and HRD in Local authorities under decentralization in Tanzania. This position is also shared by Issa (2011) who pointed out that inability to hold subordinates accountable for meeting targets; failure to create a shared vision; insufficient attention to client needs and customer care; tendency to micro manage, inadequate delegation and encouragement of subordinates, inadequate collaborative skills are some of the challenges facing HRD in public service in Tanzania including LGAs.

It is apparent that with a system in place, effectively functioning, to hold the superiors accountable for the results of their actions, superiors may equally demand result from subordinates. As a result there are three linked developments taking place: (i) creation of a Senior Executive Service, (ii) management accountability framework which will support the system, and (iii) leadership development programs which are now being developed so that in a more systematic manner leadership capacity is continuously built.

The public service reform program and particularly decentralization was dependent on external resources. This dependence has been affected the reform agenda in numerous ways. In the first instance it has led to one conduit for the reform resources. The conduit is setting the agenda and

dishing out resources, albeit somewhat involving the other party in agenda decisions. For this reason, ownership of the reform agenda by the resource recipient party has been cited as a problem affecting reform performance. A lower level of attention to HR issues has been noted in other public institutions, especially when a robust framework is absent to ensure desired involvement of senior organizational leaders in HRD.

## Conclusion

This study investigated the human resource development capacity challenges facing local governments in Tanzania under decentralization. The overall purpose of the study was to describe and understand how new public management approach using decentralization reform has been embraced. The paper sought to explore the major human resource development capacity building challenges facing local government administration in Tanzania. The key objective explored was to explore the documented challenges that constrain human resource development under decentralization in Local Government Authorities in Tanzania

The main research conclusions suggest that human resource capacity challenges manifest in three-dimensions as: policy-related, task/skill/organization-related and performance motivation-related. Confronting these challenges has far reaching implications for policy and human resource management development practice. One of the policy conclusions is that decentralization has the potential to improve local public service delivery and ensure good governance through having competent and skilled human capital.

| Human Resource Management  Issue | CHANGE ELEMENT AND IMPACT |
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| **Human Resource Plans**<br>- HR Planning Manual<br>- Relevant Schemes of Service<br>- Job lists<br>- Strategic Plans<br>- Training Plans<br>- Guideline for Restructuring of Ministries, Independent.<br>Departments and Executive Agencies | • Three year HR plans reviewed every year<br>• HR plans to forecast on quantity and quality of staff Requirements.<br>• HR plan linkage to the Strategic Planning process<br>• Job lists prepared and revised to inform on HR needs<br>• Build staff capacities to develop and implement HR plans<br>• Show evidence for decisions made on HR plans<br>• Undertake personnel emolument budgeting |
| **Succession Plans**<br>- Succession planning guide<br>- Relevant Schemes of Service<br>- Organizational structure | • Succession Plans in place<br>• Regularly update seniority list<br>• Succession plan must guide decisions on HR such as promotion, capacity building, etc<br>• Build staff capacities to develop and implement succession plans<br>• Monitoring implementation of the plans and reporting |
| **Medium Term Training and Development Plans**<br>- Training Needs Assessment Tools<br>- Training Needs Assessment report<br>-Human Resources Development/ Training Plans<br>- Strategic Plan | • Conduct organization wide TNA every three years<br>• Undertake TNA whenever there is change of structure, organizational focus, perceived need to solve problems through training<br>• Use TNA results to develop and review three years annual training plan<br>• Have a three year Medium Term Training and Development plan in place<br>• Annual plans extracted for implementation<br>• Training plans must be linked to employee performance appraisal results, Plans must be linked to the Medium Term Strategic Plans (MTSP)<br>• Capacity building for developing and implementing training plans<br>• Monitor implementation of the training plans and reporting |

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| **Open Performance Review and Appraisal (OPRAS)**<br>-OPRAS guidelines | • Conduct annual assessment of all employees' performance using OPRAS<br>• Link Individual Performance Agreements linked to<br>• Strategic, Action/Business plans and MTEF<br>• Conduct midyear and annual appraisal meetings timely<br>• Keep record of all dully completed OPRAS forms<br>• Produce annual OPRAS report showing summary of assessment rates and performance trends<br>• Have Training linked to performance assessment |
| **HIV/AIDS Workplace Interventions**<br>- HIV/AIDS Policy<br>- Guidelines for Managing Diversity in the Public Service<br>- Guidelines for Managing People With Disabilities in the Public service<br>- National HIV/AIDS Policy<br>- Guideline for Management of HIV/AIDS in the Public service<br>- Circular No. 2 of 2006 on Support, Caring and Treatment of HIV/AIDS Infected Public | • Workplace interventions must be present<br>    o Create work place Technical Aids Committee<br>    o Have knowledgeable staff capable of designing and implementing HIV/AIDS interventions<br>    o Conduct situation analysis after every three years<br>    o Develop a three year HIV/AIDS plan and strategy<br>    o Annually budget for HIV/AIDS workplace interventions<br>    o Treatment arranged for staff living with HIV/AIDS<br>    o Provide evidence for reduction of attrition and infection rate<br>    o Provide evidence for reduction of time absent from work as a result of treatment for diseases caused by HIV/AIDS.<br>    o Monitor implementation of the system and reporting |
| **Restructuring for Human Resource Management (HRM) issues** | • Skilled and knowledgeable staff to manage HRM issues.<br>• Create superlative post responsible for HR<br>• Retool HR offices to facilitate HR |

| | management issues |
|---|---|
| | • Appoint and operate required Ad-hoc Committees to manage HR issues (for promotion, confirmation, etc). |
| | • Monitoring implementation of the system and reporting |
| **Good practice in recruitment and staff selection**<br>- Public Service Recruitment Code of Good Practice (one of the instruments guiding management of human resources it outlines what is required by the public service Act) | • Adhering to recruitment principles geared to maintaining a public service which is competent, ethical, motivated, apolitical, of high standard of integrity by:<br>• Finding the best available person for the job through selection on merit,<br>• Putting all appointments above suspicion of patronage<br>• Considering women with relevant qualifications and appoint in strategic positions (women in decision making position now make about 30.2% of total positions)<br>• Ensuring recruitment and appointment procedures reinforce the political impartiality of the public service |
| **Public Service Training Institutions** | • These are the public service college,<br>• Local Government Training Institute,<br>• Tanzania Global Development Learning Centre and the<br>• Leadership Institute.<br>All these are vested with the role including training and capacity building through: induction training, public service examinations, leadership development programs and providing support in the development, adaptation and implementation of systems and procedures.<br>The Tanzania Public service college is responsible for induction training and public service examinations (this includes Human Resource Management proficiency examination - a precondition for HR officers promotion after first appointment) |

SOURCE; Modified by the author after review of documentary information.

However, for this agenda to materialise, several human resource development policy interventions are critically necessary and required to be in place, including: establishing functional, well re-tooled and professional HRD institutional and integrated structures at all levels of local government administration and the nation at large.

The documented challenges and implications for human resource development practice, might be useful to focus on the following issues: Improving the core competencies of staff and management in decentralised local governments:- by promoting an integrated approach to organisational learning that would require the development of three inter-related human resource capabilities, including: human capital (knowledge, skills and competencies); social capital (network of reciprocal relationships and support); and corporate capital (embedded culture, assets and information system).

- ✓ Synchronising the nature and content of training offered by the different stakeholders contributing to local governments human resource capacity building.
- ✓ Designing strategies to focus on four dimensions of the local government institution or what is commonly referred to as the 'organisation human resource strategy', including its:
- o Culture – the beliefs, values, norms and management style
- o Organisation – the structure, job roles, and reporting lines
- o People – the skill levels, staff potential and management capability
- o Human Resources System – the people focused mechanisms which deliver the strategy: communications, training, rewards, career development.

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