

## Developing a Strategic Human Resource Training and Development Framework to Optimise Performance in Zimbabwe's Local Authorities

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### Abstract

*The study establishes a strategic human resource development training and development model for the local authorities in Zimbabwe. A sequential mixed-method design that was explanatory was pursued. It has a combination of both survey data (n=312) and interviews (n=11). The target population of the study included managerial and non-managerial employees who were selected within local authorities in Zimbabwe. The SPSS 21.0 software was used to analyse the quantitative data and present them in a tabular and graphical format. Thematic analysis was applied to qualitative data. The study findings identified several fundamental key elements of a customised training framework, one of which is the ability to integrate technologies, engage with the stakeholders, mobilise resources, customise the programme and align it with performance and talent management among others. The suggested framework is premised on nine integrated steps with the goal of maximising performance in local authorities. For practical implementation, the study concludes that local authorities should integrate training into human resource policies, allocate clear budgets for staff development and track results through establish monitoring systems*

**Keywords:** human resource, training and development, stakeholder engagement, technology integration, local authorities

### Introduction

Local governments have become legal bodies and loci of communal growth worldwide. They serve as key institutions for grassroots development, service delivery and socio-economic transformation. At the global level, the advent of extremely competitive and complex environments, pushed by topical global and growth-oriented policies, has made it more pressing

to improve how local governments perform. Schwab et al. (2017) aver that in Europe, the way local services are delivered has changed a lot since 1980, mainly because of market liberalisation, public sector reforms and EU legislation. Across the globe, sustainable development ushered by local governments is at the forefront. In Pakistan, Ahmand and Haq (2021) pointed out that local governments' employees should have adequate knowledge of sustainable urban development aspects (social, economic, environmental and urban governance). This knowledge will help them manage urban growth responsibly and it can be built through proper training and development initiatives (Ahmand & Haq, 2021).

Within the African context, constitutions and policies in different countries have spelt the role of local authorities. In Nigeria, the local authorities are an essential tool that the government can use in the socio-economic grassroots development and this is offered by the 1999 Constitution. In Tanzania, the local government authorities (LGAs) were introduced in the articles 145 and 146 of the constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania of 1977 (Rugeiyamu, 2018). In Uganda, the government launched a decentralisation policy which seeks to transfer essential services from national government to local level in terms of Article 200(1) of the Ugandan Constitution. All these increased obligations called for new skills and competencies from local authorities' staff to perform their duties efficiently, leading to a high demand for employee training and development (Apolot & Emuron, 2024). Similarly, in Kenya, local authorities have the mandate to provide the necessary services as per the Local Authority-by-laws (Government of Kenya, 1986). In this regard, the major roles of local authorities are said to be the provision of the public health services, economic planning, water and sanitation as well as maintenance of infrastructure utilities among others (Akinola & Matlosa, 2025; Jegede, 2022; Munyade, 2022).

In Zimbabwe, Section 276 of the Constitution grants the right to a local authority to govern, in its own initiative, the local people in its area of policing. As such, the successful and efficient implementation of this mandate depends on not only political leadership and legislative systems but also administrative equipment, especially human resource that introduce programs and policies (Jegede, 2022). However, a persistent challenge lies in the human resource capacity of local governments. The increased obligations of decentralised governance demand new skills and competencies from staff, creating a high demand for training and development. Yet, training and development in Zimbabwean local governments are not very cohesive and aligned neither to the organisational strategic objectives nor to the national interests (Mhaka, 2024; Mojaki, 2024). This

gap erodes workforce capacity and makes it harder for them to support sustainable economic growth. Resultantly, a lot of challenges are cropping up in the performance of local authorities, and they are not limited to capacity gaps, inefficiency, poor service delivery, infrastructure decay, and customer dissatisfaction. Therefore, there is an urgent need for strategic realignment and refocus of training and development within local authorities in Zimbabwe. Custom-made and contextual training and development programs will enable the institutions to adapt, innovate and enhance service delivery.

Thus, this paper focuses on creating a strategic human resource training and development (SHRTD) model that would enhance the best performance of the local authorities in the Zimbabwe context. The central research question guiding the study was: *“What are the key components and features of a practical strategic human resource training and development framework tailored to the specific needs and context of local authorities in Zimbabwe?”*

## **Literature Review**

### **Theoretical Framework: Human Capital Theory**

The Human capital theory (HCT) is a product of the original work done by Becker back in 1964. The theory as comes out by Aliaga (2001) tries to give an explanation of outcomes of education and training as an investment in people. It suggests that human resources are taken as development capital (Aliaga, 2001; Nafukho, 2004). Simply, HCT argues that education raises the output and incomes of the individual; hence, it is an investment (Tan, 2014). Pfeffer (1994) agrees with this fact as in the United States of America (USA), the growth in productivity between 1929 and 1982 was attributed to education by 26 percent and on-job learning by 55 percent. As a matter of fact, this is a significant investment to both the individual and the economic development of a country. According to Marshall (1920) in Tan (2014), the capital invested in human beings is the most useful one (p.564). That is, HCT reconsiders human competencies as operation inputs and strategic resources enhancing the service delivery and organisational performance. Based on these assumptions, the spirit behind HCT implies that education, training and experiential learning enhance the human capital. This causes an increased productivity and hence an increased wage. Resting on such reasoning, it can further be concluded that training/education and earnings are correlated directly (Tan, 2014). Training/education should therefore be promoted. In addition, Karia and Asaari (2006) as referred by Acho Elendu and Nelson (2024) hint that training and

education are associated with job satisfaction, organisational commitment and job involvement. This is indicative of the fact that regardless of how developed the organisations can be, it will be hard to maintain the growth and effectiveness unless strategies that complement its operations are put in place as cited by Mahoney and Kor (2015) in Acho Elendu and Nelson (2024). This renders human capital as an essential instrument that contributes to the performance of institutions (Mahoney and Kor, 2015; Acho Elendu and Nelson, 2024). In this respect, individuals are now becoming understood as the source of wealth creation in organisations.

Human Capital Theory is valuable for this study because it reveals how training acts as an investment which improves the performance of both employees and organisations. The theory explains training outcomes by linking skills and learning to higher productivity, better service delivery and stronger economic growth. Within Zimbabwean local authorities, the theory helps to create the Strategic Human Resource Training and Development framework. It highlights that employees are not just workers but strategic resources whose knowledge and skills drive performance. This supports the idea that customised training programs which use technology, involve stakeholders, mobilise resources and align with performance goals can reinforce workforce capacity. Human Capital Theory therefore anchors the study's objective of creating a SHRTD model for local authorities in Zimbabwe.

### **Existing Training and Development Frameworks**

Learning programs are based on training and development models. They provide recommendations on how institutions design, implementing as well as evaluating training. A lot of such training frameworks have been presented in the literature. Nevertheless, they demand a glimpse analysis, which would derive their relevancy and applicability to the current public sector training and development aspiration.

The methods that have influenced the development of training over the decades are traditional models such as ADDIE (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, Evaluation). The advice given by scholars is to design the instruction in a more efficient and effective way by following the steps in a logical order wherein each step output adds information to the other (Molenda and Reigeluth, 1996). The model offers a systematic approach to training, whereas its opponents claim that it is excessively strict in regard to various and changing educational requirements (Molenda and Reigeluth, 1996; Suravi, 2024).

Equally, the Model of Kirkpatrick is a widely applied model of evaluating efficiency of training courses (Ambu-Saidi et al., 2024). Donald Kirkpatrick was its founder in the 1950's. It quantifies training and learning on four levels viz; reaction, learning, behaviour and results (Kirkpatrick, 1959). The model provides a concept to evaluate the impact of training initiatives on trainees and their institutions (Ambu-Saidi et al., 2024). However, the model was criticized. In Ambu-Saidi et al. (2024) by Bates (2007) and Guerci et al. (2010) argue that the framework offered by Kirkpatrick gives an overgeneralized perspective on training effectiveness, which does not fully encompass the complicated process of training evaluation. They also reveal its inability to include the role of individual and organisational factors on training evaluation.

Moreover, the Five Levels Evaluation model created by Kaufman and Keller appeared in 1994. It is a wider approach that encompasses value addition to society and unremitting improvement and goes beyond outcome-based evaluation (Watkins et al., 1998). According to Kaufman et al. (1996), the framework proposed by Kirkpatrick undermines the influence of training in society and in the process, undermines resources and methodologies of training. Nevertheless, the model is also criticized because of its theoretical background and low practical implementation (Topno, 2012; Ambu-Saidi et al., 2024).

On top of that, the Bushnell input process and output model was also presented in 1990. It is possible to use this model both prior to and after training with the formative and summative evaluation considerations (Ambu-Saidi et al., 2024). The framework has a way of articulating the training value in monetary terms, by including measures like profitability, productivity and customer satisfaction (Bushnell, 1990). Nevertheless, the model is criticized because of offering insufficient insights on how the programs will work (Passmore & Velez, 2012).

More to the point, the Six-Stage Model elaborated by the Brinkerhoff was designed back in 1987. It has six stage training assessments referred to as; goal setting, program design, program implementation, immediate outcomes, usage outcomes and impacts and value assessment (Brinkerhoff, 1987). The model works well when there is no budget constraint and no time constraint on the deadline (Passmore and Velez, 2012). However, a trade-off between rigour of the model and the constraints of the real-world institutions is essential in the successful application of the model (Ambu-Saidi et al., 2024).

Based on the analysis above, we can assume that most of the well-known training and evaluation models are now obsolete by the requirements of the up-to-date business world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In this regard, therefore, the success of training is contingent on context knowledge, cultural fit, technological-driven and organisational congruence. This means that customization of the training and development models appears to be a viable solution for the best performance of the local authorities in the world.

### **Impact of Training and Development on Performance of Local Authorities**

Public sector organisations face increasing pressure worldwide to improve employee performance and productivity. This is owing to the fact that their workforce depends on government funding, donor support and taxes from the citizens (Manu et al., 2025). As such, local authorities' performance optimisation is a complicated issue. It needs powerful human resource systems of which one such system is strategic training and development. Vanitha and Ganesh (2024) maintain that there is a positive relation between training and employee performance. In this article employee performance is defined as the achievement and fulfillment of definite and determined tasks within an organization. Wachiuri and Makokha (2024), in their study on training and development within the County Government of Kiambu in Kenya, established that the methods used in training significantly influence employee performance. They further observed that development programmes also play an important role in enhancing performance among public sector employees. Mwakasangula (2023) examined the role of training and development in Tanzania's local government authorities. The study revealed that training and development explain about 25% of performance, while other factors account for the rest. This implies that training and development are important even though not the only drivers of success. The study concludes that well-planned programmes, guided by Training Needs Assessments (TNA), are key to building of employee commitment and improving performance. These findings indicate that LGAs should put resources into both training and development. Doing so will build a stronger workforce and improve overall performance.

Nkpurukwe et al. (2020) argue that good and tailor-made training programs enable employees with innovative methods and mechanisms in addressing institutional problems. This is further expounded by Wachiuri and Makokha (2024) who affirm that employees who gain proper training and development are more assured, driven and prepared to undertake complicated activities hence enhancing organisational performance. In a study carried out by Arugu (2020) to establish the

effectiveness of service delivery by the local government employees under strategic training programs, it was determined that the training programs also minimise the risks of skills obsolescence as they make the workers remain acquiescent to future challenges. This means that, with continuous strategic training interventions, firms will be able to maintain a competitive advantage and achieve sustainable success.

Moreover, Noe (2017) confirms that training provides superior know-how regarding best practices and standards to the employees to enhance the quality of work with minimal errors. In addition, Kalli et al. (2023) have the same opinion, stating that organizations investing resources in employee training also place themselves in a position to retain the employees. This is because training and development will result in job satisfaction among employees, which leads to organisational loyalty.

### **New Trends in Training and Development**

Human resource training and development is evolving at a high pace. The emergence of new technologies such as advanced analytics, artificial intelligence (AI) and cloud platforms is changing the way training is provided (Bhumika et al., 2024). Nowadays, computer-based training such as simulations or virtual training techniques has become the reliance of organisations. These trainings prove a game-changer particularly when LGAs are aiming to reduce expenses and increase the impact of training and development (Huseynova & Mazanoya, 2023). Linje (2026) observes that, although national frameworks set out ambitious goals for digital governance, it is still uncertain how far LGAs have reshaped their structures, norms, operations and training programs to meet these digital demands. Yigitcanlar et al. (2024), in their study titled “*Unlocking Artificial Intelligence Adoption in Local Governments: Best Practice Lessons from Real-World Implementations*,” establish important findings. They show that use of AI in local authorities has grown steadily over the past 10 years, with China, USA and UK on the lead. Natural language processing and robotic process automation are the most common adopted technologies. The study also notes that LGAs apply AI in 28 different services, mainly in, information management, back-office operations and transport and traffic management. This calls for the need of proper technology-driven training and development programs within the LGAs.

Bhumika et al. (2024) hand in the submission that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the training of employees is undergoing a significant transformation, brought about by technology, shifting workforce demands

and the necessity to engage in constant learning. They say even more that; more flexible and nimble training systems have overtaken old ones. Through this perspective, the latest global corporate trends are centred on applying organised patterns in training and development to improve organisational effectiveness (Bhumika et al., 2024; Linje, 2026). According to Sarwar et al. (2023), the development of virtual courses, webinars and e-learning modules requires workers to be trained in the content anywhere at any time. The adaptive learning systems were more or less superior to one-size-fits-all training. Bhumika et al. (2024) claim that such systems use AI and data analytics to dynamically change the content of the difficulty module, depending on the individual's progress.

Stakeholder engagement also adds to the current training and development. These are on the in-house (managerial and non-managerial staff) and on the outside stakeholders (e.g., academics, development agencies and civil society). In this connection, as Schnepf et al. (2024) hint, the lack of bottlenecks in the implementation of training programs can be avoided by a good stakeholder integration and knowledge exchange. Using the needs of the stakeholders, they deduce solutions that increase the likelihood of success and training adoption (Schnepf et al., 2024). In their study titled *“Much at stake: the importance of training and capacity building for stakeholder engagement in evidence synthesis,”* Eales et al. (2017) conclude that seeing every stakeholder engagement as a chance for training and capacity building is necessary, both in specific reviews and across reviews as a community of practice in evidence synthesis. Recent studies suggest that local government authorities need to rethink how their institutions are structured. Instead of relying on narrow, inward-focused administrative routines, they are encouraged to adopt more open and inclusive governance approaches that actively involve stakeholders (Sarwar et al., 2023; Huseynova & Mazanoya, 2023).

In addition, the concept of talent management (TM) is a noble new trend in the field of training and development within local governments. In this study, TM is defined as a set of integrated organisational human resource processes designed to attract, develop, motivate and retain productive engaged employees. A strategy that promotes the development of talented employees in such a way that the latter can help boost high performance in an organization. Foteini and Karen (2019) support this view and opine that TM has emerged as a valuable source of competitive advantage that generates value to all institutions. In this regard, the integration of TM into strategic training and development models will place local authorities into high-performing organisations

within the current global business environment. In their study on talent management within Botswana's local government institutions, Barkhuizen and Masale (2022) highlight the importance of leaders embracing the right mindset. They argue that by doing so, leaders can effectively apply TM practices that help retention of skilled and capable workers in the public sector. Building on this idea, Mthintos et al. (2024), in their study "*Exploring the Talent Management Strategies and Practices at a South African Municipality*," point out that municipal leaders should give priority to putting TM practices into action. They particularly underline the importance of using e-recruitment methods and embracing technology as part of these efforts.

Summing up, these current trends in training and development discussed above also influenced a lot in formulation of a strategy for the human resource training and development framework to be used in local authorities in Zimbabwe.

### **Research Methodology**

This research was guided by a pragmatist philosophy in as far as the methodological process is concerned since pragmatism promotes practical problem solving and is well-suited to mixed-methods research. It was also based on a mixed-method approach and explanatory sequential research design. Creswell and Plano Clark (2017) explain that explanatory design is aimed at applying qualitative data to assist in shedding more light on quantitative findings. In this study, quantitative data were collected first, followed by qualitative data, which helped to explain and enrich the quantitative results.

The target population used in the study was managerial and non-managerial employees in four local authorities in Zimbabwe namely Chitungwiza Municipality, Harare City Council, Manyame Rural District and Epworth Local Board. These authorities were chosen because they reflect different categories of local governance: urban, metropolitan, peri-urban and rural. Their inclusion matters because, together, they give a fuller picture of local government operations in Zimbabwe. Qualitative information was also included through the incorporation of experts and policymakers in the domain of local governance. The research was carried out between January 2024 and August 2025, a time that was characterized by a direct shortage of workforce capacity.

The Raosoft online sample size calculator was used to calculate a sample size of 377 respondents, based on a default population of 20 000 employees within the four selected local authorities. After establishing the sample size, stratified random sampling was applied to ensure that both managerial

and non-managerial staff were represented proportionately in the study. On the qualitative level, 11 crucial informants were selected purposively. Online and ordinary structured questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews were utilized as methods of data collection. On the one hand, SPSS version 21.0 was used to analyse quantitative data and report them in tabular and graphical forms. Conversely, the qualitative results were analysed using thematic analysis. Inference statistics were drawn as well, where relationships between variables were tested.

The study also followed basic ethical principles. Informed consent was obtained from all participants and participation was voluntary. Confidentiality was maintained by protecting participant identities. Clearance to conduct the study was sought and granted by the Ministry of Local Government and Public Works as well as by the four selected local authorities.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Demographic Analysis of Respondents**

This section presents the demographic profile of the study respondents, namely, gender, age group, level of education, organisational affiliation and work experience. Out of the 377 sampled respondents, 312 participated, giving a response rate of 82.8%. Table 1 presents the results.

**Table 1.** Demographic characteristics of respondents (N=312)

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Respondents Gender</b>		
Male	162	51.9%
Female	150	48.1%
<b>Age of Respondents</b>		
Below 30 years	62	19.9%
31 - 40 years	116	37.2%
41 - 50 years	106	34.0%
51 - 60 years	19	6.1%
Above 60 years	9	2.9%
<b>Highest Level of Education</b>		
Secondary School Level	77	24.7%
Professional Certificate	80	25.6%

Professional Diploma	94	30.1%
Bachelor’s Degree	39	12.5%
Master’s Degree	17	5.4%
PhD	5	1.6%
<b>Name of Your Local Authority</b>		
Harare City Council	83	26.6%
Chitungwiza Municipality	78	25.0%
Epworth Local Board	79	25.3%
Manyame Rural District	72	23.1%
<b>Position in Local Authority</b>		
Top Management	25	8.0%
Middle Management	50	16.0%
First Line Management	94	30.1%
Non-Managerial Employee	143	45.8%
<b>Work Experience</b>		
Less than 1 year	35	11.2%
2-5 years	62	19.9%
6- 10 years	86	27.6%
11-15 years	76	24.4%
More than 16 years	53	17.0%

Source: Survey Data (2025)

Gender distribution is quite equal as indicated in Table 1. There are 51.1 % males and 48.1 % females. This balance reduced the chances of gender bias on the findings of the study. According to the age profile, 71.2 % of the respondents fall in the 31 to 50 years age range. This is an indication that this survey involved professionals, mostly in the middle of their careers, who are in the height of their productivity and in a position to give informed opinions. There is a skewed educational qualification in the form of a vocational qualification. This implies the critical importance of training in the development of skills of local authorities’ staff. It also cites a problem of poor higher education qualifications. There is a relatively equal institutional representation. This equilibrium of the urban and peri-urban local authorities enhanced inclusiveness and made the results of the study represent different organisational realities. Moreover, 45.8 percent of the

respondents are in non-managerial positions. This proved useful since the frontline employees are the ones directly dealing with the practice of policy and service delivery. Their perspectives support the practicality of the suggested SHRTD framework. The level of work experience demonstrates that 69.0% of the respondents have over five years of work experience. This denotes an experienced workforce that has deep roots within the institute.

**Reliability Test**

Cronbach's alpha was used to test the reliability in this research. As indicated in Table 2, the construct “Essential Components of a Tailored Strategic HRTD Framework”, which consists of 18 items, gave Cronbachs’ alpha of 0.751. This is higher than the acceptable research value of 0.70 in the social sciences. Thus, it shows that the items are highly internally consistent (Izah et al., 2023).

**Table 2.** Cronbach’s Alpha

Variable	No. of Items	Cronbach Alpha
Essential Components of a Tailored Strategic HRTD Framework	18	0.751

Source: Survey Data (2025)

**Essential Components of a Strategic HRTD Framework**

The Table 3 contains the quantitative results which demonstrate the major components of a strategic HRTD structure. The data is analyzed based on the responses of 312 respondents, who rated 18 descriptive items on a five-point Likert scale.

**Table 3.** Components and features of a tailored SHRTD for Local Authorities (N=312)

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error
Integrate training and development into Human Resource Management strategy	312	4.21	.597	-.470	.138
Align with strategic goals	312	4.22	.612	-.337	.138

Utilize needs assessment to address skills gaps	312	4.28	.597	-.280	.138
Integrate with talent management strategy	312	4.38	.598	-.472	.138
Align with performance management	312	4.38	.594	-.460	.138
Incorporate technology and innovation	312	4.37	.597	-.452	.138
Engage key stakeholders in training design and implementation	312	4.39	.622	-.670	.138
Customize training programs to meet specific employee needs	312	4.24	.664	-.577	.138
Utilize multiple training delivery methods	312	4.33	.613	-.590	.138
Flexible and responsive to change	312	4.23	.611	-.261	.138
Encourage trainee feedback on training effectiveness	312	4.31	.629	-.516	.138
Implement robust program evaluations	312	4.24	.649	-.637	.138
Promote a culture of continuous learning	312	4.31	.628	-.508	.138
Develop skills aligned with community needs and local priorities	312	4.12	.735	-.625	.138
Incorporate Zimbabwean cultural context for relevance and acceptance	312	4.10	.676	-.437	.138
Ensure financial sustainability for Zimbabwean local authorities	312	4.09	.686	-.482	.138
Integrate succession planning	312	4.09	.686	-.482	.138
Foster leadership/ managerial support	312	4.38	.598	-.462	.138
Valid N (listwise)	312				

**Source:** Survey Data (2025)

The statistical findings indicated in Table 3 portray the measures of mean, standard deviation and skewness. The average scores of all the items are 4.09-4.39. This means that there is always a high

consensus on the applicability of all the components. The most rated item, involving the key stakeholders in training design and implementation, had a mean of 4.39. This indicates high congruence among the respondents.

The remaining items: “Integrate with talent management strategy”, “Align with performance management”, and “Foster leadership/ managerial support” all had a score of 4.38, and the standard deviations were low and the skewness of the items was negative. The findings attest to the high degree of consensus and preclude the necessity of integrating training into the broader HR functions. Likewise, the technological element, namely, “Integration of technology and innovation” (mean = 4.37), indicates an increase in the awareness of training tools of a digital nature. Items like “Utilization of multiple training strategies” (mean = 4.33), “promote trainee feedback” (mean = 4.31) expound versatility and employee involvement.

The other significant ones are “Promote continuous learning” (mean = 4.31) and “Customise training program” (mean = 4.24). This underscores the importance of constant learning and custom-made programs. The solid support of evidence-based assessment was also rated high with a 4.24 score on the exercise of strong program evaluations. The weakest-rated ones, although also positively supported, are the following: “Develop skills based on community requirements” (mean = 4.12), “Incorporate Zimbabwean cultural context” (mean = 4.10), “Ensure financial sustainability” (mean = 4.09), and “Integrate succession planning” (mean = 4.09). These scored slightly lower but their scores of above 4.00 show that they are still valued and may be challenged at implementing them.

These quantitative results show a strong agreement among respondents, as mean scores range from 4.09 to 4.39. The low standard deviations and skewness that are negative confirm a high level of consensus, showing that participants support the proposed SHRTD components vehemently. These findings align with the Human Capital Theory, which posits that investment in training improves organisational performance. High ratings for combining training with HR strategy, performance management, leadership support and technology highlight positions training as a strategic investment in human capital.

In order to supplement these findings, qualitative interviews were held with 11 key informants (P1-P11). Their opinions expounded the statistical findings as illustrated below.

The key point that was brought up by all participants is the necessity to tie training to bigger HR systems. In this respect, **P1** demystified that *“Performance management and training ought to be united,”* noting that explicit indicators are used to measure training outcomes. **P4** buttressed that, *“Training should be linked with performance appraisal and career development to make the process smooth.* Also, **P6** emphasised that *“Training must be included in the overall HR strategy to help it have a long-term effect.”*

Most of the participants were also supportive of training programs that involve the needs of the community. **P7** elaborated this in the following words: *“In this perspective, our training ought to be in line with the needs of their communities.”* This demonstrates the relevance of social responsibility and organisational commitment.

According to some participants, needs assessment is a critical success factor for training programs. Indicatively, **P8** explained: *“A good training program starts with a proper needs assessment.”* On the same note, **P11** cautioned against failing to evaluate training needs properly since the resources are bound to be wasted on programs that do not address real needs.

Moreover, the majority of the participants of the study agreed that the utilization of technology is one of the most prominent characteristics of a custom training program as well. In this respect, **P3** opined that: *“Technology is transforming the manner in which training is conducted.”* This is an indication of the vital use of virtual learning, analytics and AI tools to make training more practical and relatable.

More importantly, the participants supported stakeholder engagement as the other important aspect of a personalized training and development program. **P5** had this to say: *“Engaging the key stakeholders during and after as well as before training development is one way to ensure that no opinion is excluded.”* **P9** also valued program customisation when he noted that: *“There is no two employees, or organisation the same.”* This supports the necessity of customised program material that optimises the influence as per an individual or team preference. And finally, feedback and evaluation were also endorsed as the key factors. Here is what **P2** said: *“Feedback is a useful tool to enhance training received by the trainees and trainers.”* **P10** further claimed that: *“Good evaluation systems should be in place to quantify results.”*

As shown above, the qualitative findings reinforced key themes such as linking training to: performance management, stakeholder engagement, technology integration, conducting needs

assessment and customising programs. The combination of these results indicates that the proposed strategic HRTD model can strengthen human capital development within local authorities by making training strategic, inclusive and responsive to organisational, communal and national needs.

### Inferential Statistics

**Table 4.** One-Way ANOVA results: Differences in perceptions of SHRTD components

Variable	Source of Variation	Df	F-value	Sig. (p)
Strategic Alignment	Education Level	5,306	4.12	0.001 **
Technology Integration	Education Level	5,306	3.76	0.003 **
Performance Management	Managerial Position	3,308	3.87	0.012 *
Stakeholder Engagement	Managerial Position	3,308	2.94	0.034 *

**Note:** \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ .

The ANOVA results in Table 4 revealed that the perceptions of SHRTD components vary based on education and managerial levels. The more educated the respondent, the more he or she was in support of strategic alignment and technology integration. Managers, however, emphasized performance management and engagement of stakeholders than the frontline staff. These variations indicate that, when considering the workforce in terms of level of educational and organisational position, when designing training strategies, ensure that programs are responsive to different perspectives and needs.

### Regression Analysis

**Table 5. Regression Analysis: Predictors of SHRTD perceptions**

Predictor Variable	Standardized Beta ( $\beta$ )	t-value	Sig. (p)
Education Level	0.29	4.21	0.000 **
Work Experience	0.21	3.02	0.003 **
Managerial Position	0.14	1.87	0.062 †
Gender	0.05	0.91	0.364

**Model Summary:**  $R^2 = 0.18$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.16$ ,  $F(4,307) = 16.92$ ,  $p < 0.001$

**Note:** \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \* $p < 0.05$ ;  $p < 0.10$  (marginal significance).

These differences can be further explained by the regression results in Table 5. The positive perceptions about SHRTD effectiveness were strongly predicted by education level ( $\beta = 0.29$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and work experience ( $\beta = 0.21$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Managerial position was found to have a lesser but significant influence ( $\beta = 0.14$ ,  $p = 0.062$ ) but gender did not have any impact. The model described 18 per cent of the variance ( $R^2 = 0.18$ ) indicating that demographic and professional attributes partly influence perceptions with other factors also contributing to influence. Practically, this implies that while education and experience should be considered in designing training programs, local authorities should also address other contextual factors to ensure that training initiatives are inclusive and effective.

## Discussion

The findings of the study regarding the major primary elements and attributes of an effective strategic human resource training and development model to adapt to local authorities' needs and situations in Zimbabwe are quite close to the literature reviewed. All respondents were very supportive of the stakeholder engagement in training design and implementation as one of the best discoveries. This supports the previous results of Schnepf et al. (2024) who established that an effective stakeholder integration process and knowledge sharing can avoid the bottlenecks in implementation of training programs. This emphasis also replicates the ADDIE model, whereby stakeholder input during the analysis and design stages safeguards training relevance and responsiveness to the needs of the organisations.

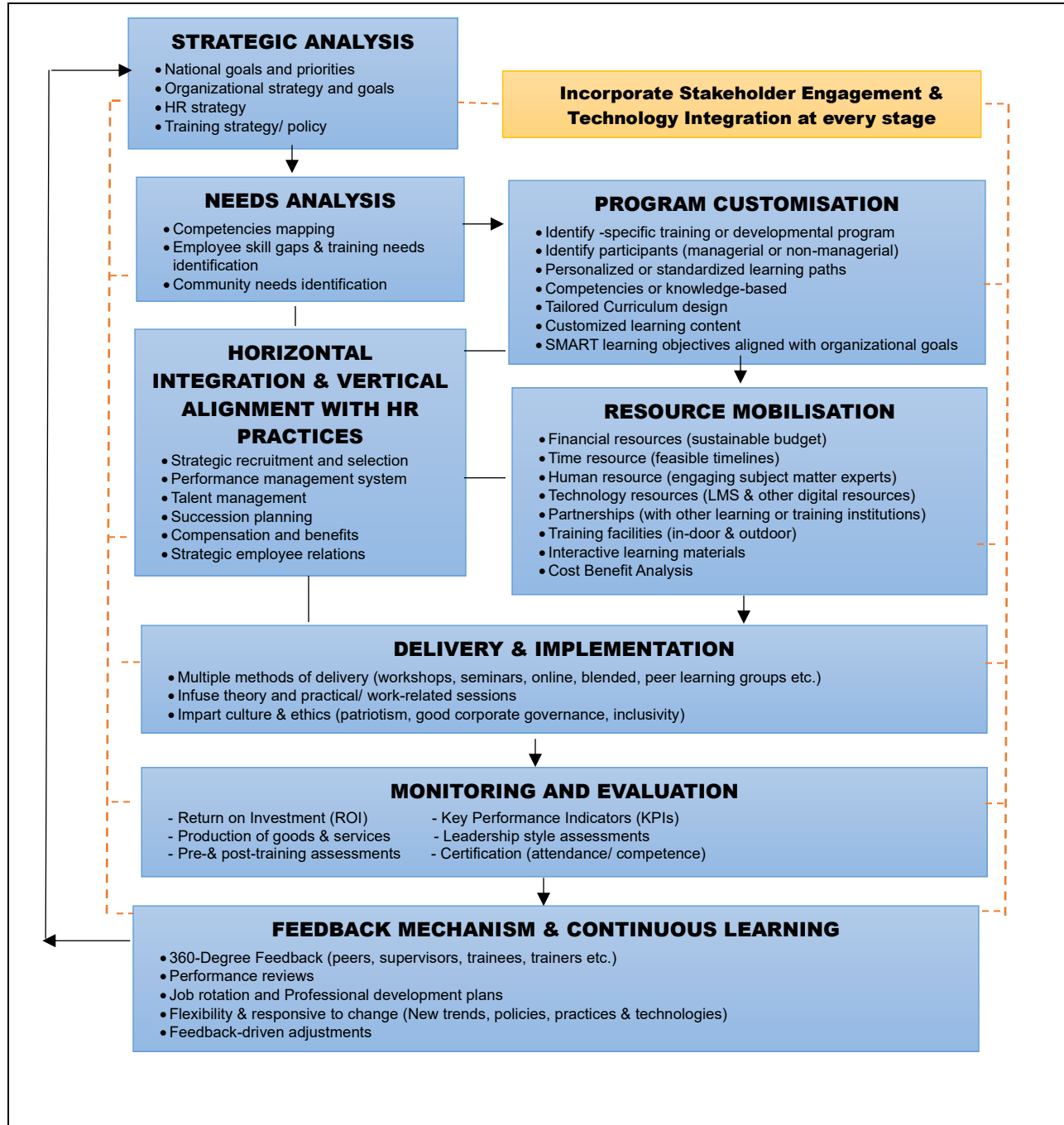
Moreover, the integration of the technology was also met with a massive support by everyone involved in it, making it an essential element of a personalized training program. This observation has been reinforced by Linje (2026) who resolute that with the development of virtual courses, e-learning modules and webinars, it is possible to have the staff receive training content anywhere and at any time. Similarly, Bhumika et al. (2024) reinforced that the efforts of staff training are registering an enormous turnaround in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, occasioned by the technological changes and the necessity of learning on the go with innovation. This finding can be linked to the Kirkpatrick evaluation model, where technology enhances the learning process and the measurement of outcomes at multiple levels.

Program customisation is also a program specialty that has been reflected in the study outcomes in relation to the proposed strategic HRTD framework. This is also consistent with the reflection of Nkpurukwe et al. (2020) that well-informed and tailor-made training programs enable workers with creative practices and procedures to address the company challenges. Moreover, it also supports the idea that Bhumika et al (2024) hold that tailored training programs meet the needs and interests of employees. This supports the wider theoretical assumption of Human Capital Theory, which views training as an investment that strengthens the capabilities of the workforce as well as organisational performance. In addition, mobilisation of resources was also set as an essential aspect of a personalized training and development program. This observation echoes what Kalli et al. (2023) state that organisations, which invest in staff training, reap the benefits of labour retention.

Altogether, the study results infer that the proposed SHRD model should build on traditional models such as ADDIE and the Kirkpatrick models on a systematic foundation, though extends them by putting emphasis on flexibility, stakeholder involvement and situational adaptation. Unlike the traditional ADDIE applications, being criticised for rigidity, the proposed SHRD model integrates technology and communal needs. This makes it more adaptive to dynamic organisational and societal needs. The integration of technology, customisation and evaluation also aligns with Kirkpatrick's evaluation model. This ensures that the training outcomes are measurable and connected to institutional performance.

### **Proposed Strategic HRTD Framework**

The framework is built on nine interconnected pillars, as depicted in Figure 1 below.



**Figure 1.** Strategic Human Resource Training and Development Framework for Local Authorities

Source: Author (2025)

## **Narration of the Strategic HRTD Framework steps**

### **Step 1: Strategic Analysis**

The initial step aligns training efforts with the priorities of national development keeping in mind the presence of organisational objectives, HR strategy and the training policy.

### **Step 2: Needs Analysis**

This step determines training needs and skills gaps among the employees. It takes into consideration community needs. This makes training programs relevant to both the employees and the priorities of the local people.

### **Step 3: Program Customisation**

Training programs are customized to various positions at this stage (between managerial and non-managerial employees). Perfect content and SMART objectives along with core competencies, are the focuses of curriculum development as the means of overcoming performance gaps that are detected.

### **Step 4: Resource Mobilisation**

The step ensures the securing of financial, human and technological resources needed to implement the programs. It includes budgeting, professional interaction, preparation and partnering of infrastructure. The process is informed by cost-benefit analysis that will be used in the allocation of resources to maximise the effect of training.

### **Step 5: HR Practices Integration**

This action incorporates training programs with the overall HR strategies such as performance management, talent management and succession planning among others. This inter-departmental integration and vertical alignment promote consistency and long-term workforce growth.

### **Step 6: Delivery and Implementation**

The step entails program delivery by the use of a variety of training methods such as workshops, virtual and blended to accommodate the diversity in learning capability. It is stressed that theoretical lessons should be accentuated with practice.

### **Step 7: Monitoring and Evaluation**

At this point, evaluation is done by applying different evaluation instruments like ROI (Return on Investment), KIPs (Key Performance Indicators) and pre/post-training assessments. The impact of leadership style and the outputs of goods and services are also studied in order to identify the influence of training and its effect on improvements.

### **Step 8: Feedback and Continuous Learning**

Adaptive learning strategies are informed in this step by feedback from the trainees and trainers, as well as performance reviews. Job rotation and personalised development plans are some of the interventions that promote reaction and long-term development.

### **Step 9: Stakeholder Engagement and Technology Integration**

This is a cross-cutting step that ensures collaboration and innovation at every stage. Stakeholder involvement builds legitimacy, while technology boosts adaptability.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Like any other study, this study has its own limitations. It relied on self-reported data, which may have been influenced by personal perceptions or bias. The study was also limited to four selected local authorities in Zimbabwe. As such, the findings may not fully represent all local government authorities' country-wide. These constraints entail that the findings should be applied with caution. Future studies could expand the geographic scope and use additional data sources to strengthen the generalisability of the proposed framework.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

#### **Conclusions**

Finally, the paper offers a strategic HRTD model that would suit local governments in Zimbabwe. According to empirical data, the suggested framework combines strategic analysis, needs assessment, engagement of stakeholders, the use of technologies and mobilisation of resources into one rational model. An active learning system that can adapt to organisational, communal and national needs is supported by continuous feedback and numerous training delivery methods. For practical implementation, local authorities should integrate training into human resource policies, allocate clear budgets for staff development and track results through establish monitoring

systems. The Ministry of Local Government and Public Works can help local authorities through the provision of guidelines and resource mobilisation support. Above all, future studies could apply and test this proposed framework in other sectors or regions and see how well it adapts in different contexts. This would expand its relevance and contribute to improving strategic HRTD models both in Zimbabwe and beyond.

## Recommendations

In order to apply the strategic HRTD framework, the local authorities must:

- Introduce rigorous strategic planning involving national concerns and organisational interests that are projected to the overall HR strategy and society needs, to shape their training and development programmes.
- Market stakeholder involvement in the pre-planning, planning and implementation of staff training and/or developmental programs. This reduces bottlenecks.
- Invest in electronic infrastructure and integrate their training programme with new e-learning platforms and analytics technology that requires learners to get training from anywhere, any time.
- Integrate training and development with the HR core functions i.e., recruitment, succession planning, performance management and talent management. This creates an institutional elasticity and sustainability to manpower planning and development.

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