

Stakeholders' Perceptions of a Human Resources Development Intervention

Bertha Letsoalo
Jos Coetzee
Wilfred Ukpere

Department of Industrial Psychology and People Management,
Faculty of Management, University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg, South Africa
E-mail: wiukpere@uj.ac.za

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Abstract

The aim of this research was to establish the stakeholders' perception of a Human Resource Development (HRD) intervention. This was prompted by the fact that the Mpumalanga Department of Education (MDoE) has been regarded as one of the provinces that performs poorly on grade 12 results as compared to other provinces. A qualitative methodology was adopted in this study where in 20 participants were interviewed as internal stakeholders in the MDoE. This research established that the human resource development and training services were not properly managed due to a shortage of staff, insufficient budget, HRD practitioners' competencies, inaccurate information keeping and lastly the fact that the recommendations made by the internal auditors were not implemented. An HRD audit process was constructed to assist private and public sector organizations to improve service delivery. The proposed HRD audit process will hopefully ignite interest of scholars to test it, customize or even expand it.

Keywords: Development, Education, Human Resources, Intervention

Introduction

Human Resource Development (HRD) is a powerful lever for improving both individual opportunity and institutional competitiveness. Governments and employees recognize the critical role a skilled workforce can play in being relevant. It all depends on the quality of an organization's human resources. Conversely, success for the HRD function is dependent on the contribution of stakeholders and how well the stakeholder relationships are managed to have a direct impact of the HRD Department (Mankin, 2009).

Altman and Mayer (2003) contend for the development of public sector investment in the non-traded sector. This is a way forward since, in the context of a global economy, South Africa needs to be able to generate domestic demand in areas of low skills to mop up unemployment. Hence, the key to ensuring that the state does not create a segmented low-skills market is for public investment in the non-traded sector to be accompanied by training so that workers, once recruited, will have a range of skilling options open to them. In essence, such a public investment policy would have the effect of creating an internal market in which skilling takes place in response to demand (Kraak, Lauder, Brown & Ashton, 2006).

Although there is a considerable body of literature on HRD, there is little done especially in South Africa about HRD auditing. This research is positioned as exploratory work and will produce an HRD audit process which could assist organizations to achieve their strategic objectives. The principal focus of this research is to establish the stakeholders' perception of an HRD intervention. For the purpose of this research, the stakeholders referred to are internal stakeholders, who are the senior managers, line managers, employees, organized labour (recognized trade unions in the Mpumalanga Department of Education) and HRD practitioners. Freeman (1984, p. 31) define stakeholders as "those groups without whose support the organization would cease to exist". On the other hand Garavan (2007) indicates that the effectiveness of HRD is being evaluated by looking at its impact on stakeholders.

Background

The background to the problem described above, namely the MDoE is performing poorly yet it has an HRD unit with the HRD systems, structures, styles, policies / legislations and spends significant amount of money on human resource development and training, is explored by jointly looking at the fact that MDoE has continuously obtained poor grade 12

results in the country despite measures in place such as the Internal Audit and the Auditor General, compliance to legislations including the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) and the Treasury Regulation and the internal control deficiencies.

Unpleasant compliance and performance audit reports have become a normal and acceptable practice in the South African public sector. There is no indication that this status will improve because of the continuous use of similar systems and strategies, yet expecting dissimilar results. As King III reports, the economic value of a company is no longer based on a balance sheet only but rather on various non-financial issues such as the company's reputation, stakeholder relation, goodwill, an evolving forward looking strategy, social responsibility and the quality of governance (King III, 2009). It is imperative that organizations consider introducing new initiatives and interventions such as HRD auditing in order to improve business performance.

Organizations often feel that they are not getting value for the money spent on the development of human resources and are still not achieving their strategic objectives and as a result, a need for comprehensive HRD auditing has risen. The Mpumalanga Department of Education (MDoE) has continued to get poor grade 12 results in the country; this means that it is unable to achieve its mission of providing quality education for all. Internal and national auditors were conducting audits in the Department and there was no significant improvement with regard to service delivery. This was evident through the 2007/2008, 2008/2009 and 2009/2010 annual reports as well as the grade 12 results for the past nine years.

In the Education for All Country Report (2010), the Department of Education acknowledged that there is a dire need to improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools. The Department also acknowledged that teaching of poor quality takes place in many schools and it is aware that in many schools is often weak and lacks leadership and commitment. The systems are also inefficient. The Department also indicated that it is determined to ensure that steps are taken to improve systems so that the goals of quality learning and teaching are realized. However, some educationalists argue that the comparability of Grade 12 examination results over years is inherently flawed, due to changes in the curriculum over time; the decline in the national pass rate remains a worrying phenomenon (Department of Education, 2010).

Most of the HRD activities in the MDoE are centralized at the head office and this, according to Mankin (2009) makes the management of stakeholder relationship challenging because a centralized function may operate at a too much of a distance from line managers and other stakeholders. It will be shown in this research that some of the stakeholders felt left out and undermined by MDoE when processes like strategic planning takes place. Mankin (2009, p. 71) argues that "ongoing strategic level collaboration between the HRD function and key stakeholders, for example, senior managers and line managers, is needed to maximize the effectiveness of the HRD strategy". This can be achieved if HRD practitioners have developed a range of inter-related skills and an ability to think strategically (Gilley, Egglund & Gilley, 2002). The research conducted by Lee (2009) on HRD professionals confirms this by endorsing the Delphi survey and further indicating the critical nature of skills such as strategic thinking, communicating effectively.

Research problem

The problem statement formulated for the purpose of this research is the fact that the MDoE is performing poorly, while it has an HRD unit with HRD systems, structures and policies/ legislations and spends significant amount of money on human resource development and training. Internal auditing done in the MDoE particularly within the HRM directorate is not effective.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are as follows:

- To establish the stakeholders' perceptions of an HRD intervention.
- To construct an HRD auditing process.

Research design

This research was exploratory, descriptive and interpretive in nature, using a qualitative approach. Bloomberg and Volpe (2008, pp. 7 – 8) argue that "qualitative research is suited to promoting a deep understanding of a social setting or

activity as viewed from the perspective of the research participants'. Since HRD is highly context dependent, the power of a qualitative method to explore, describe and interpret these contexts needed to be applied.

Research approach

A good research design is an iterative, not a linear process (Lampel, 2004). In order to obtain descriptive data of the stakeholders' perceptions of a HRD intervention, a qualitative research approach was followed. Henning (2004) and Schurink (2010) indicated that to ensure the integrity of a social research project, it is important that the philosophy of the researcher is clearly stated and forms the foundation for consistency in the investigation, analysis and interpretation of the research problem.

Creswell (2009) stated that researchers should unambiguously explicate their philosophical worldview. From this perspective, the researchers worked from constructivist influences. Bloomberg and Volpe (2008, p. 9) contends that "the central assumption of this paradigm [constructivism] is that reality is socially constructed, that individuals develop subjective meanings of their own personal experience, and that this gives a way to multiple meaning". The researcher chose a qualitative research approach because it offered flexibility and spontaneity. For example, as a qualitative researcher, the researcher was able to collect data using a semi-structured interview, with predetermined questions (Robson, 2002) yet still with "openness to changes of sequence and forms of questions in order to follow up the answers given and the stories told" (Kvale, 1996, p. 124). The flexibility in the research design is in keeping with the goal of qualitative research; to generate explanatory theory and create understanding. The research process allows the emergence of relational concepts and patterns, so the process is both interpretative and inductive (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003).

The researcher chose to use a qualitative research method because of the complexity of the research problem and the fact that the main research objective is to establish the stakeholders' perception of the HRD intervention. HRD is highly context dependent and therefore the power of qualitative methods to explore, interpret and describe these contexts needs to be acknowledged. The qualitative methodology is preferred by the researchers who have an orientation of the interpretive social science in that they observe the social reality subjectively through a detailed study of the text. "In the interpretive social science the researchers interact with the respondents in order to extract detailed information about their attitudes, opinions and feelings regarding their circumstance" (Neuman, 2000, p. 67).

Research strategy

This research is explorative-descriptive and interpretive because the researcher explored, described and interpreted the participants' perceptions of the HRD intervention. The research includes contextual, exploratory, descriptive and interpretive approaches. Irrespective of whether the research adopted a qualitative, quantitative or a mixed method approach, reliability and validity should always be of primary consideration. Qualitative studies strive towards an understanding of people meanings (Schurink, 2005) and this emphasis falls into internal validity which is about producing accurate findings of the subject's world. There are no procedures that guarantee objectivity. Instead researchers should always try to find a balance between interpretive openness and rigour. Merriam (1998, p.151) contends that "rigour in qualitative research derives from the researcher's presence, the nature of the interaction between the researcher and participants, the triangulation of data, the interpretations, and rich, thick descriptions". "Rich, thick descriptions" as descriptions which give the reader a feel for the setting and convey a shared experience, providing many perspectives.

The researcher chose analysis of documents as an additional source of information that is invaluable to qualitative researchers. The documents which the researcher analyzed included official records, reports, circulars, policies / legislations as well as the published data used in a review of literature. In his research of technology teachers in training, Hansen (1995) analyzed journal entries and memos written by participants, in addition to interviews.

Research methodology

The most common definitions suggest that methodology is the overall approach to research linked to the paradigm or theoretical framework while the method refers to systematic modes, procedures or tools used for collection and analysis of data. Therefore, research methodology is a general strategy followed in collecting and analysing data required to solve a research problem (Ary, 2003). It is the overall approach to the research process, from its theoretical underpinnings to the collection and analysis of data (Collis & Hussey, 2003).

Sampling

- **Participants**

The population is simply every possible case that could be included in a research. When the population is too large to undertake a census, then a representative group which is a sample needs to be selected. David and Sutton (2004) argue that as long as the sample is representative of the population, surveying only a fraction of the entire population can still yield results that would be found if the entire population was surveyed. The population for this research was derived from the Mpumalanga Department of Education. Participants were selected according to purposeful and criterion-based sampling, while striving for maximum variation within those criteria choices (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002). Purposeful sampling is the dominant strategy in qualitative research. Purposeful sampling seeks information-rich cases which can be studied in depth.

Data gathering method

"To answer some research questions, we cannot skim across the surface. We must dig deep to get a complete understanding of the phenomenon we are studying. In qualitative research, we do indeed dig deep; we collect numerous forms of data and examine them from various angles to construct a rich and meaningful picture of a complex, multifaceted situation (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005, p. 133). Data was gathered by the researchers through semi-structured interviews. The face to face interviews were conducted with twenty two interviewees.

Research procedure

In this research, participants were contacted by email and by telephone to request their participation and interviews were set up at the participants' workplace. Most of the participants were available for the interviews during working hours, lunch time and after working hours. Marshall and Rossman (2006) have suggested that the researcher should carefully consider the rationale for why a specific setting is appropriate for the conduct of the study, considering what characteristics are particularly unique and compelling that will inform the study. In this research, the researcher chose the participants' workplaces in order to afford them the benefit of remaining in their work setting to speak if they so choose, and be able to reference work-related resources that can assist during the interview. The participants were reassured of confidentiality of their responses in order to ensure a meaningful outcome of the research. Permission to audio-record the interviews were given by all the interviewees and supported by notes in case of equipment failure (Myers, 2009).

Data analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research is a continuous, evolving and nonlinear process. All the data from the interviews and the Departmental documents were analyzed using qualitative data analysis method. Creswell (2009, p.175) stated that qualitative researchers use inductive data analysis where they "build their patterns, categories and themes from the bottom up by organizing data into increasingly more abstract units of information". Furthermore, Patton (2001, p. 433) also argue that "qualitative analysis ultimately depends on the analytical intellect and style of the analyst" and that even though many guidelines exists for analyzing qualitative data, applying those guidelines takes judgment and creativity. Therefore, the researcher must report the analytical processes as fully as possible.

The researchers utilized thematic analysis which is also referred to as content analysis by Henning (2004). Content analysis is also regarded as a flexible method for analyzing text data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005, p. 1278), qualitative content analysis refers to "a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns". Mayring (2000, p. 2) defines it as "an approach of empirical, methodological controlled analysis of texts within their context of communication, following content analytic rules and step by step models, without rash quantification".

Qualitative content analysis enabled the researcher to analyze data during the early stages of data collection. What is interesting is that the early immersion allowed the researcher to move back and forth between concept development and data collection. Miles and Huberman (1994) states that the early involvement of the researcher in content analysis assists in giving direction to subsequent data collection toward sources that are more useful for addressing the research questions. In data analysis, it is important to differentiate between terms used by the

respondents and the technical terms that the researcher associates with the phenomena. According to Gasson (2003), this will reduce the bias that could be introduced into the analysis by the researcher's preconceptions.

Major findings

- **Research objective 1: To establish the stakeholders' perception of the HRD intervention.**

In order to establish the stakeholders' perception the interview questions of various contextual aspects even though most of them emerged as and when the interviews progressed. The main themes are outlined in the table below. Some of the interview responses are presented as excerpts and the researcher's comments are also outlined in each table.

Table 1: Themes and excerpts

Themes	Excerpts	Comments
Departmental mission, vision and HRD objectives	P1: Hmm... the mission of this Department is to improve the quality of life of the South Africans by providing quality education to the learners. ...HRD section is working towards achieving the strategic objectives because it is training the teachers or employees to carry out their duties of providing quality education to learners. The problem is that there are many challenges that make us not to reach our vision	The participants' responses displayed an understanding of the vision and mission of MDoE as well as the objectives of HRD. They also highlighted the fact that the vision, mission and HRD objectives are not accomplished
Transparency in HRD.	P16: Transparency is one of the values of this Department but you will be surprised when you hear that your educator is nominated to attend training somewhere without your involvement, in some cases the very employees nominated are not interested.	The participants aired their concerns differently regarding transparency in the MDoE.
Effectiveness of HRD unit	P2: HRD seem to be ineffective because there are managers who arrange training without informing HRD practitioners. Some of the incidences happen because the roles and responsibilities of line managers are not clearly outlined and this causes HRD to appear as ineffective. I also believe that the high vacancy rate is the cause of high work overload.	Some participants say that the HRD unit is ineffective due to the shortage of staff post not filled, others say it is due to HRD staff incompetency, and are saying despite the shortage, HRD is effective.
Participation of HRD practitioners in strategic planning.	P3... as long as you are not a manager you will not be invited to a strategic planning meeting. This negatively affects us as production workers within HRD... we feel undermined. The problem is that the Department does not realize the value of HRD unit because without appropriate training and development of employees you cannot achieve the strategic objectives.	HRD practitioners are not participating during the strategic planning process.
Organizational culture	P6: HRD and management need to introduce a culture of continuous learning and development. Once that culture becomes effective in the Department, employees will know that training is for their own benefit as well.	The participants indicated that the culture in MDoE is not good nor encouraging learning and development.
Management style	P7... in any organization, the style of management has an impact on the employees. Their happiness depends on the style of management. Whether they would want to terminate or accept counter offers depend on the style of management. In our Department I will say most of our employees are not satisfied or happy because of how the managers are managing them	The management style affects employees performance, behavior, culture, values, and attitudes which in turn affect HRD practices.
Performance management and development system	P3... the managers are afraid of appearing unpopular to some employees. They just give scores that qualifies some preferred special employees to get incentives even though they don't deserve... what a person is trained on is not always what is identified as a need in the PMDS	Performance management and development system is not implemented properly
Legislations/policies	P14. There are some policies and procedures or directives that are not available, for example, skills audit and when other managers or unions ask you the procedure in black and white	Some of the policies are available but not implemented

	you become an idiot.... at times the higher authorities are not following the policies themselves and it frustrates all of us.	
Communication	P12: Training workshops are not fully attended because the information does not reach people in time	Communication is a problem in MDoE.
HRD systems	P17: ...like the skills audit for example, it was there since I can remember, we complete the forms every year but when training comes you are trained for something else	The HRD systems in the MDoE are not integrated
Unions	P7: I can say the organized labour supports HRD activities because they are employees, and they are members of the training committee at the head office. They in most cases raise concern about the budget matters and question the criteria and the way in which employees are sent for training	MDoE is involving unions in HRD activities
Funding resources and	P16: The money is not there, they only say money on paper but when you have to use it is not available you are not given permission.	The budget is insufficient
Monitoring and evaluation	P3: At the school level other managers don't want their people to be trained because they say they don't see the difference after training	Monitoring and evaluation is not taking place in the MDoE

- **Research objective 2: To construct an HRD audit process**

Various elements and viewpoints were raised by the participants particularly those who are at management level. These formed the basis for the construction of the HRD audit process. Table 2 below displayed the identified topics leading to the HRD auditing process.

Table 2 - Key elements of HRD audit process

Topic	Interview excerpts
Communication	P18: Get your house in order. Show us communication strategy or policy which is approved, the one which is not a desktop thing then you can talk to us about communication channels.
Cooperation and leadership	P16: If our principals up there at the provincial office can show that it appreciates us as head masters at school level by consulting us or at least informing us in advance it will encourage us to work and manage our schools properly
Stakeholder participation	P19: No Department can go forward or succeed while it is leaving the stakeholders behind. You see we are the main stakeholders representing the masses so this Department needs us, organized labour must be consulted in everything the Department does so that we can support
Legislations / policy review	P5: Some policies which are used now are very old and were never reviewed
Integration of systems	P4: The truth is systems in our Department are not talking to each other
Review of organizational structure	P14: This staff establishment has been so useless, what is the use of having posts that are not filled
Implementation of auditor's report	P8: We make recommendations, thereafter it is approved by the executive authority no literal checking of the implementation.
Monitoring and evaluation	P18: No monitoring

Interpretation and synthesis of findings

The major research findings of this research were discussed and presented in the previous section. The research objective was addressed along with the related topics that emerged. Evidence to prove that the MDoE was performing poorly was also presented and the excerpts from the research participants' responses were also presented and analyzed indicating that the HRD intervention has no impact on service delivery

Empirical findings and theoretical evidence

- **The vision, mission and HRD objectives**

All the participants were able to in one way or another articulate the vision of the MDoE, even though the wording was not the same, the core of the MDoE is known. They were also able to relate the vision and mission to the HRD objectives. The researcher made an assumption that the vision of the MDoE is shared by all stakeholders but the issue of whether or not the MDoE is realizing its vision is a concern to many. A shared vision is the one that is clearly understood at all levels of the organization. A vision can be considered a shared vision if it has meaning for employees. All public institutions have vision and mission statements, but many employees are not committed to it because it is not part of the organizational culture and as such, has no significance for them. Further, constant changes in leadership often result in new strategy and direction which affects commitment, standards and achievement of goals (Public Service Commission, 2007). A well-developed strategy is the one which effectively expresses the mission statement and meets the needs of all stakeholders. Public Departments cannot accomplish their strategic plans if leaders do not know where they want to be after a period of time or what kind of organization they want to create. A case in point is the numerous cases of corruption in the tendering process by various government Departments (Dorasamy, 2010).

The MDoE 's vision and mission statement was available but not published in the various native languages, which means that other stakeholders who are not familiar with English may not understand what it is all about. This is what has been raised by a participant (P18) and also added that the vision and mission statement is not displayed in many strategic points.

This goes further because there are offices where the name of the Department for identification is not there, let alone the vision and mission statement. Many people know the vision by common sense.

When applying the Ashridge model to the Department of Education one would argue that not all the key elements are reflected in the MDoE's vision and mission statement. The purpose and values are clearly specified but the behavior standard and strategy need to be revisited. The proposed HRD auditing process could assist in determining whether the organizational structure, policies and systems that are in place in the MDoE are geared toward realizing the vision and mission of the Department. It will be assisting in realigning of the HRD practices in place.

- **Transparency**

The participants indicated that there is no transparency in the MDoE. Out of 20 participants interviewed, 4 participants (20%) said that there is transparency in the MDoE. One participant (P20) indicated that in most cases where there is no transparency, there is corruption. Minister for the Public Service and Administration, Masenyani Richard Baloyi when calling corruption by its proper names (Service Delivery Review, 2011) indicated that the Transparency International 2010 Corruption Perception Index ranks South Africa 54th out of 178 countries. In the same index, South Africa is ranked 5th on the African continent, with Botswana occupying 1st position in Africa and 33rd position in the world. Furthermore, according to the survey, the score below 5 indicates that we have a growing corruption problem. Governments should embrace a new culture of participation, accountability and transparency. All stakeholders must be involved in the policy development process for support and ease of implementation (Van Dyk-Robertson & Abdullah, 2009).

- **Organizational structure**

All the participants agreed that posts are available at MDoE but they are not filled due to unavailability of funds. Organizational structure is defined as a formal system of task and reporting relationship that controls, coordinates and motivates employees so that they cooperate to achieve organizational goals (Underdown, 2003). Structures and systems must reinforce the vision of the organization. Many Departments have rigid structures and systems with little flexibility to adapt to environmental realities. This distorts the alignment between structures and a shared vision.

- **Effectiveness of HRD**

Seven participants (35%) indicated that HRD is not effective because most of the posts are not filled. The high vacancy rate within HRD makes the existing staff to be overloaded. Six participants (30%) say HRD is not effective because of

incompetency of the HRD practitioners. The remaining seven participants (35%) say HRD is effective despite the shortage of staff. Generally the MDoE's organizational structure is inappropriate and needs to be reviewed. The structure seems to be generic and does not support the specific service needs of the Department and most of the HRD functions are centralized at the provincial office whereas the point of need is at the District offices and the Circuit offices. One of the key activities highlighted in the DPSA strategic plan for 2010- 2014 is to design a blueprint for organizational structures within the education sector. The aim is to achieve the government's key priority Outcome 1 of quality basic education.

- **HRD Staff competencies**

Seven participants (35%) indicated that HRD practitioners are competent. All of the remaining participants (65%) indicated that the competency of the HRD staff is questionable. The HRD strategy suggests four interventions, each representing a set of strategic initiatives which will further strengthen human resource development in the Public Service. Of these interventions, the three which are building the capacity of human resource practitioners, organizational support initiatives and governance initiatives seek to improve the skills of human resource practitioners (Public Service HRD Strategy Vision 2015).

- **Participation of the HRD practitioners in strategic planning.**

Four participants (20%) agreed that HRD practitioners should form part of strategic planning whereas 16 participants (80%) are saying they do not see the need because managers are attending strategic planning. HRD staff is not prioritized in the Department. Some participants feel like they are looked down upon and not invited for strategic planning sessions because they are not occupying high positions at management level. Unfortunately, a large majority of organizations have yet to recognize the strategic importance of HR and HRD people have yet to be recognized as partners in the strategic planning process (Sikula, 2001). While in the new economy human capital is the foundation of values creation, this most important asset is poorly understood and poorly managed (Norton, 2001).

- **Organizational culture.**

Eighteen participants (90%) indicated that the organizational culture in the MDoE is not encouraging. It does not encourage continuous learning and development. The image of MDoE regarding the stealing of examination papers is also damaging the reputation of the Department. The HRD Strategy vision 2015's main objective is to develop a culture of high-quality life-long learning. The remaining 10% of the participants indicated that the MDoE is encouraging employees to further their studies and even grants bursaries. All public institutions have vision and mission statements, but many employees are not committed to it because it is not part of the organizational culture and as such, has no significance for them. Further, constant changes in leadership often result in new strategies and direction which affect commitment, standards and achievement of goals (Public Service Commission, 2007). When considering six interrelated key elements identified by Scholes 's cultural web (Johnson & Scholes, 1999), it becomes evident that the stories told about the Mpumalanga Department of Education are not good and creates a bad image, the control system, the routines and the power structure are not attractive and appealing to any outsider to join the Department. The organizational culture is regarded as the core process which in turn links to the HRD auditing process.

- **Management style**

All participants (100%) agreed that there is a challenge with the style of management in the MDoE and it affects employee behavior and attitude. This in turn affects the operation of the HRD unit.

- **Performance Management and Development system**

There was a consensus among all participants (100%) that performance management and a development system is not implemented properly in line with policy. All of them identified subjective assessment / evaluation as the problem. The other issue identified is the lack of understanding of the aims and objectives of the system.

- **Legislations / policies.**

Most of the participants (70%) indicated that policies are available but they are not fully implemented because of reasons like shortage of staff. Only 1 participant (5%) indicated that policies are not implemented because there is no management. Five participants (25%) indicated that the policies and procedures are in some cases violated by the superiors and it becomes difficult to enforce compliance while at the top there is defiance. The Public Finance Management Act (1999) indicates that the accounting officer for a Department, trading entity or constitutional institution must ensure that the Department has and maintains a system of internal audit under the control and direction of an audit committee complying with and operating in accordance with regulations and instructions prescribed.

- **Communication**

Sixteen participants (80%) indicated that the Department does not communicate when it comes to training issues. They do not communicate formally in writing and it creates a challenge when other logistics such as transport should be organized. Communication is key to any organization (Schweiger & DeNisi, 1991). There are cases where information is not cascaded to employees at the bottom. The latest Annual Report of the Department has also indicated poor communication as one of the factors negatively contributing towards the poor performance of the Department.

- **HRD systems**

All the participants (100%) agreed that the HRD systems are not integrated. This makes the entire MDoE to be ineffective and not reach its strategic objectives. The participants made various references to the link between Performance Management and Development System and the skills audit. 2 participants made reference to the fact that they are not yielding positive results; therefore the HRD systems should be reviewed. The issues of limited or lack of service delivery can be traced back to the lack of capacity or requisite skills within the Departments responsible for service delivery. There are more than one million people employed by the different Public Sector Institutions in South Africa (Public Service Commission Report, 2010), this includes the MDoE. In order to manage these huge numbers of employees it is important for the organization to have streamlined and standardized policies as well as sound policies, systems and processes. The organization's HRD systems should be effective in order to meet the strategic objectives of the organization. Trevino and Nelson (2004) maintain that organizational systems must be aligned so that the entire organization is committed to a culture of efficiency and effectiveness.

- **Unions**

Seventeen participants (85%) have confirmed that the unions in the MDoE are involved in various HRD activities. The MDoE to an extent is conducting training on HRD processes so that they can have common understanding especially when they form part of training committees in various institutions. The MDoE is complying with the Skills Development Act.

- **Funding and Resources**

Twelve participants (60%) indicated that the budget for training in the MDoE is always insufficient. Five participants (25%) said that funds are "completely not available". They referred to the fact that in many occasions the MDoE will allocate budget on paper but when you want to utilize it you find that it is not available. According to them it means that the money was never there in the first place. Section 195 (1) of the Constitution, 1996 states that public administration must: respond to people's needs, promote effective economic and efficient use of resources, and maintain a high standard of professional ethics. Therefore, in order to ensure that human resource development and training is effective in the Department, it must be funded and resources must be made available. The HRD audit will assist in evaluating whether there funds allocated to HRD and the resources are sufficient.

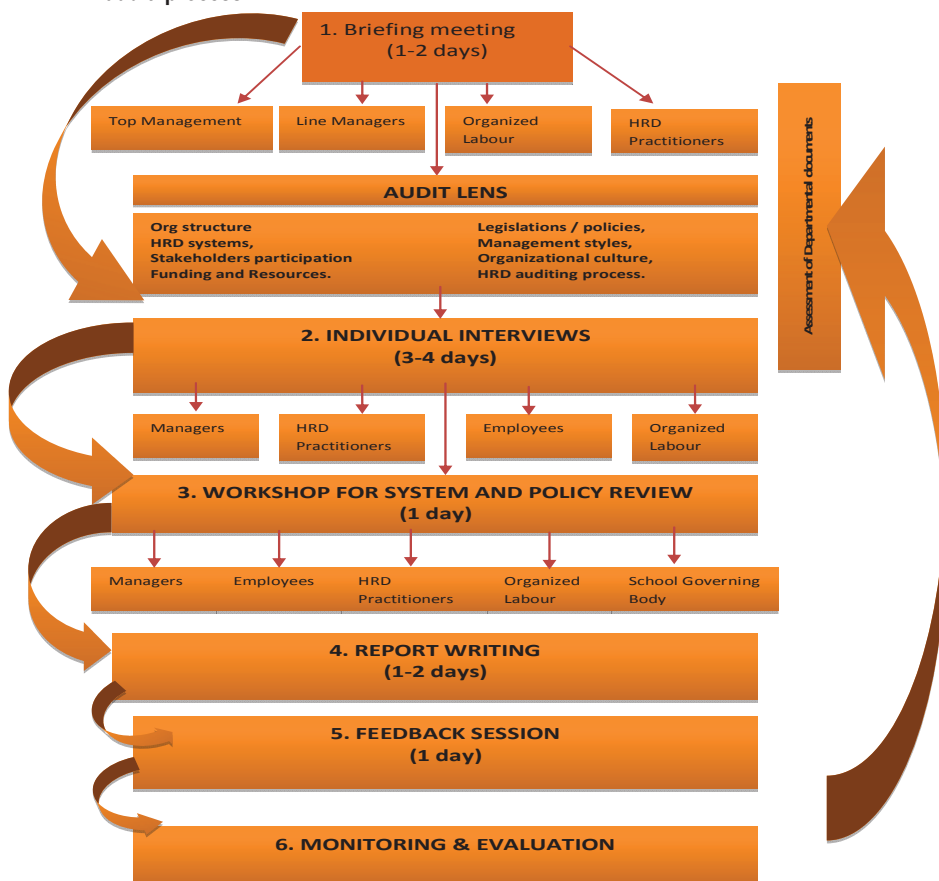
- **Monitoring and evaluation**

All participants (100%) indicated that there is no effective monitoring and evaluation in the MDoE. This means that there is no return on investment. The MDoE is spending money for training but no performance improvement.

- **HRD audit process**

The HRD audit process should foster accountability and transparency. This process includes interviews, review of key documents such as strategic plan, policies and procedure manuals. The critical component of the audit process is the engagement of the stakeholders and interviews with employees (Ezezika, Thomas, Lavery, Daar & Singer, 2009). This process must be comprehensive in order to be effective. The researcher constructed the HRD auditing process from the themes extracted during the data analysis. The researcher analyzed the different relationships between various concepts and reviewed them against the literature and Departmental documents until the HRD audit process was formalized. However, to construct the HRD audit process, the researcher started by creating a concept map that took into account the key elements within HRD. The researcher developed the HRD auditing process from the primary and secondary data. The secondary data such as the Department of National Treasury Internal Audit Framework (2009) provided the researcher with useful data about the key elements for consideration during the development of the HRD auditing process. (See figure 1 below)

Figure 1 - HRD audit process



Source : Own construction

Figure 1 highlights the steps of HRD audit process which are to be followed sequentially. Depending on the time in which the Departmental documents are provided to the auditors, the assessment of the Departmental documents may begin in step 1 during the briefing meeting. The overall audit is expected to take between 8 to 10 days. The actual time will depend on the size of the Department or unit to be audited. The various stages of the HRD audit process will now be discussed briefly.

Stages of the HRD audit process

The stages of the HRD audit process indicated below have been developed utilizing data obtained from the literature review and the participants during the interviews where the researcher was establishing the stakeholders' perception of the HRD intervention. The researcher also customized the stages contained in the Internal Audit Framework: National Treasury Republic of South Africa (2009).

- Stage 1: *Briefing meeting*
- Stage 2: *Individual interviews*
- Stage 3: *Systems and policy review workshop*
- Stage 4: *Report writing*
- Stage 5: *Feedback session*
- Stage 6: *Monitoring and Evaluation*

Conclusion

The researchers consider this research to have been a journey to explore and discover the actual perception of the stakeholders about the HRD intervention in the MDoE. Working on the research problem and the literature review, the researcher has been able to link the poor performance of the MDoE to the non-evaluation of the HRD system, policies, styles and structure. The HRD auditing process which was constructed in this research will add good value to organizations. It will be a valuable tool for organizations seeking to make the best out of their HRD units. Its implementation will maximize effectiveness and efficiency in that all stakeholders will be contributing to the development and amendments of various policies and systems. The HRD auditing process will allow organizations to comprehensively evaluate which system yields the best long term results. The importance and value of HRD auditing process in the MDoE cannot be overemphasized. There is a need for the policies, management style and systems within the MDoE to be reviewed and changed for the better as long as the Department intends to achieve its strategic objectives of ensuring a better life for all

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