The Prevailing Skills Crisis in South Africa: An Exploration of the Skills Development Strategy of the City of Cape Town
Bradley Davids and Michelle Esau
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ABSTRACT

This article examines the skills development strategy of the City of Cape Town, a metropolitan government located in the Western Cape Province in South Africa. The strategy is largely integrated in nature and embraces the principles of Strategic Human Resources Development – an approach essentially borrowed from the private sector. In developing societies such as South Africa, the primary criticism is that the peculiar challenges prevailing in these societies make importation of “developed world models” highly complex and problematic. More specifically, the implementation of private sector models is even more complex when applied in public sector institutions. Therefore, this article critically examines the skills strategy of the City, its key components, and challenges confronting successful implementation in an effort to understand whether the Strategy is viable and appropriate in addressing the skills crisis confronting many municipalities in South Africa. The methodology is primarily qualitative and relies on both primary and secondary data sources.

Keywords: Skills and capacity shortages, skills development, human resources development strategy, training and development, employment equity, local government

Introduction

The service delivery protests and demonstrations almost 18 years into democracy are but one illustration of the many challenges confronting a country that has only recently undergone political reform. The state, academic scholars, and civil society organizations, amongst others, have
embarked on various investigations to understand the reason behind these protests. In this regard, the shortage of skills and its negative impact on the ability of the state to meet its goals and objectives have emerged as a contributing factor. In fact, a skills audit conducted in 2004 across the 283 municipalities in South Africa revealed the number one challenge in the context of service delivery as that of a lack of skills.

Even more recently, the State of Local Government in South Africa overview report and Local Government Turnaround Strategy refer to this ongoing problem. The State of Local Government report makes mention of the problems of governance, financial and administrative dysfunctionality faced by municipalities that resulted in national intervention (Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, 2009b, p. 18). Similarly, the Local Government Turnaround Strategy refers to a myriad of problems facing local government. These include, inter alia, the model of local government; policy and legislative factors; weaknesses in accountability systems; and capacity and skills constraints (Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, 2009a). This context of dysfunctionality places skills and capacity at centre stage vis-à-vis the development mandate of local government.

More specifically, the lack of skills has fundamentally affected service delivery in two ways. In the first instance, the quality of service delivery is affected. With regard to the provision of services such as water, the shortage of qualified engineers in approximately 33 municipalities across South Africa, for example, has impacted the quality of water provided to the consumer. The lack of engineers has resulted in sewerage leaks into dams and rivers (Centre for Development and Enterprise, 2010). According to a water quality expert at Rand Water, these leaks resulted from the inability to replace the skills of retired and senior staff that left the employ of the municipality.

In the second instance, the skills and capacity crisis has resulted in noncompliance to statutes and policies. Evidence reveals that municipalities are struggling to comply with mandatory reporting and accountability laws. The report on the State of Local Government in South Africa refers to the challenges inherent in the municipal financial management system. It emerged from municipal assessments that many municipalities were guilty of noncompliance, poor quality of audit reports, and the inability to manage financial systems and processes (Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, 2009b).

These challenges raise important questions concerning the skills crisis and its impact on service delivery in South Africa. Prominent,
others, is why and in spite of a detailed regulatory framework supporting skills development, is South Africa still contending with skills and capacity problems? In attempting to explore this question, we narrow our skills and capacity focus to the level of local government with specific reference to the City of Cape Town. Our choice of case is influenced by three considerations. First, local government is the sphere of government that is closest to the people. It is at this level that people’s experiences and perceptions of government are shaped and influenced. Second, evidence suggests that local government, as a result of skills and capacity shortages, is struggling to fulfill its constitutional mandate in many respects. The burgeoning protests and demonstrations are considered a manifestation of citizens’ frustration at the slow pace of service delivery. Third, the City has adopted a Human Resource Strategy that embraces the principles of strategic human resources development. The strategy adopts a holistic approach to development, capacity-building and retention of local government officials in the City.

The article purports to understand whether a strategic human resources development paradigm can assist in addressing the skills and capacity crisis that confronts many municipalities in South Africa. In this regard, we examine the intentions of the skills development strategy, identify the challenges influencing the achievement of the strategy’s objectives, and propose some suggestions to overcoming these implementation challenges. The methodological approach is qualitative in nature and utilizes both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary sources such as the employee relationships survey, semi-structured interviews, and personal observations of one of the authors are used. Secondary sources include books, journal articles, and government documents. The article is organized into three parts. The first part contextualizes the skills and capacity crisis at the local government level. The second part critically explores the Human Resources Development Strategy with specific reference to the skills development strategy adopted by the City of Cape Town. In the third part of the article, we identify the strengths and challenges inherent in the skills strategy and provide some suggestions for improvement.

**Contextualizing the Skills and Capacity Shortages at the Local Government Level**

The skills and capacity crisis confronting many municipalities is largely a result of the differing standards of education and service delivery provided to black people in South Africa. For all intents and purposes, the
variable skills and capacity evidenced across organizations and races in South Africa can directly be attributed to the introduction of the Bantu Education Act of 1953. This statute denied blacks access to educational institutions that were well-resourced and reserved for whites. The system was advocated by the Minister of Education at that time, Hendrick Verwoerd, who argued that blacks should not be integrated into the so-called “European” community “above the level of certain forms of labour” (Clark & Worger, 2004, pp. 48–52). The Act resulted in the state, inter alia, reducing its financial allocation to learning institutions for black Africans; controlling the curriculum of schools of the segregated schools; using literary materials to reinforce the apartheid ideology; and widening the gap between the white minority and black majority in South Africa (Clark & Worger, 2004).

The disproportionate funding allocation was blatantly biased towards white learners. In 1969 the government spent 18 times more on the education of each white child than that of each black child. As a result, the legacy of apartheid education and training has contributed to the high levels of illiteracy in South Africa and perpetuated the skills and capacity crisis (Department of Labour, Presidential Report, 1996, p. 42). Therefore, in 1994 the incoming democratic government inherited an economy divided by race, gender, and skill level. According to Freund (2006, pp. 305–306), reorganizing the administration of cities resulted in a combination of bureaucrats from the apartheid regime and inexperienced officials who were entering the official public domain for the first time. While the former may have had the competence and experience, their experience was limited to serving the interests of the minority. It follows, therefore, that the administration and management of local communities was daunting for both the experienced and the newly appointed official.

Not only has apartheid impacted the quality of education provided to black people but it also influenced service delivery to black communities. Ismail, Bayat, and Meyer (1997) highlight the negative impact of apartheid on black communities where access to basic services was concerned. Accordingly, they argue that local government was an agent of the state and therefore, had to execute its affairs in terms of the apartheid framework (Ismail et al., 1997, p. 47). Autonomous local authorities were established for white and black communities despite the reservations expressed by the black communities. This approach to organizing local authorities was naturally counterproductive to development in these communities. In some cases, two to four financially and organizationally challenged
local government bodies were in close proximity to one another. These apartheid policies and practices were deliberately intended to bring about acute inequalities and deficiencies across services such as housing, water provision, sewerage, refuse removal, and so on. The lack of consistency in the provision of services by local government culminated in ethnic, geographical, racial, human, and financial resource inequalities (Ismail et al., 1997, p. 57).

Local government, in a post-apartheid South Africa, is therefore faced with the challenges and the demands of service delivery to communities who were either denied access to services or provided poor quality services. Institutional transformation is necessary to facilitate the demands of service delivery and economic development in these communities in particular. Ismail et al. (1997) describe this process as complex in two ways. In the first instance, the peculiar context of municipalities must be acknowledged since challenges and realities differ from one municipality to another. To this end, the resource and funding base of each municipality must be taken into consideration. In the second instance, management and technical skills are unevenly distributed across the municipalities as a result of statutes such as the Bantu Education and the Job Reservation Acts, amongst others. These laws led to the marginalization of black people in the most important spheres of local government since the highest echelons were occupied by white people even in the black local authorities.

**Political Reform and Human Resources Development**

The political regime in South Africa changed dramatically when the African National Congress (ANC) won the first democratic elections in 1994. The advent to democracy brought with it hopes of political, social, and economic liberties for all citizens of the country. On the one hand, these liberties resonated with global ideals of democracy and good governance. On the other hand, it demanded that the state embark on a process of institutional reform that speedily advanced the experience of democracy and good governance for all citizens. In this regard, the RSA Constitution details several arrangements and provisions to foster the ideals of democracy. Amongst others, it provides for cooperative governance where national, provincial, and local government must cooperate towards the well-being of the people of South Africa (RSA Parliament, 1996, Constitution, Section 41(1)). In the specific context of
local government, municipalities are expected to provide for democratic and accountable government of local communities; provide for basic services to communities in a sustainable manner; advance social and economic development; advance a safe and healthy environment; and foster participatory relations with communities and community organizations (RSA Parliament, 1996, Constitution, Section 152).

Municipalities are expected not only to create and transform institutions but also invest in human capital amidst many prevailing challenges. The Human Development Report of 2000 cites outdated, costly, and inefficient managerial and organizational systems as impediments to the service-driven and developmental ethos envisaged by the democratic state (Taylor, 2000, p. 84). Amongst other concerns expressed in the Report was the fact that almost 70 percent of the more than 800 municipalities functioning at that time were in financial distress (Taylor, 2000, p. 85). This resulted in a number of problems relating to municipal capacity for service delivery. Local authorities were burdened with large wage bills and barely had enough resources to provide services to local communities (ibid.). Consequently, municipalities were reorganized, several reviews on the state of local government were conducted and various initiatives to facilitate service delivery were introduced.

The development of human capital (or as is traditionally referred to the management and development of human resources) has since the early twentieth century preoccupied the minds of behavioral scientists, amongst others. In this regard, issues of motivation, organizational efficacy, and leadership have been at the forefront of scholarly debates. For the private sector, these issues are important since it has the potential to influence their competitiveness in a global market. And since human resources is arguably an organization’s most important asset, the effective management and development of human resources is vital to the survival of any organization. Delaney and Huselid (1996, p. 949), therefore, assert that progressive human resources management (HRM) practices positively impact an organization’s performance. They refer to the value of employee participation and empowerment, extensive employee training, and performance-based evaluation on organizational performance (ibid.). Moreover, they argue that comprehensive training programs can improve the quality of existing employees after the recruitment and selection process. Delaney and Huselid (1996) add a cautionary note when stating that the efficacy of skilled workers is limited where they are not
motivated sufficiently. Consequently, it is their opinion that progressive HRM practices are integrated in nature and encompass a varied range of functional HR activities.

Horwitz (1999, p. 180) presents a similar argument when he refers to the construct of “strategic human resource development” (SHRD). He views strategic human resource development as an approach that links a company’s competitive strategies to human resources practices. He notes that successful human resources development practices have the potential to distinguish an organization’s labor force competencies from those of competitors (ibid.). The development of human resources, in this context, entails the transfer of learning, new knowledge, and developing of intellectual capital. Horwitz (1999) describes SHRD as a contingency approach that distinguishes the external from the internal. In other words, it is an approach that aligns its external market strategies to its vision, behavior, and policy performance at an operational level (Horwitz, 1999, p. 180). Therefore, SHRD has been identified as an important part of HRM with the end purpose of improving organizational performance and effectiveness (ibid.).

In the public sector HRD is equally important, but with a different end goal. Unlike its counterpart, the public sector is not profit-driven. However, issues of quality, efficiencies, and effectiveness have assumed significant status on the state’s agenda. More specifically, various institutional reform efforts demonstrate global commitment to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the state’s machinery. In fact, the Northcote Trevelyn report of 1854 marks the genesis of civil service reforms. The primary intention of these reforms was to ensure that individuals appointed to the civil service possessed the necessary attributes to perform their job. Notable amongst these reforms were that the civil service be organized according to the nature of the job and intellectual attributes needed to perform the job; young men appointed to the civil service receive on the job training; and that competitive recruitment strategies be developed to identify the most suitable candidate for the job (Kingdom, 1990, p. 14).

The successful implementation of institutional reforms is dependent on a number of considerations. These include inter alia, a clear strategy that guides the introduction of skills development interventions; willingness from staff to participate in skills training programs; and committed leadership that embraces a holistic approach to skills training. It is this last consideration that is of utmost importance in championing
institutional reform efforts. According to B.J. Davies and B. Davies (2004, p. 30), strategic leadership encompasses various abilities to undertake organizational activity. These abilities include strategic orientation, translating strategy into action, aligning people to organizations, determining effective strategic intervention points, and developing strategic competencies (ibid.).

Consequently, such leadership comprises certain characteristics vital to the success of the reform process. First, staffing strategies must be directed towards the longer-term ideals of the organization. In other words, leadership must possess the vision to relate daily activities to future outcomes. Second, strategies must be realistic and achievable. This implies that leadership must be able to translate strategies into action (B.J. Davies & B. Davies, 2004, p. 31). This characteristic requires leadership to get “buy-in” for reforms from staff by engaging with the latter on the need for change, encouraging their participation in the change process, and motivating them towards change. Third, leaders as visionaries of the organization are responsible for matching individual skills and competencies to organizational needs and objectives, both in the short and longer term. According to B.J. Davies and B. Davies (2004, p. 32), a key element of this ability is to encourage commitment to the organization through shared values and ideas – placing effective communication at the pinnacle. Fourth, leaders must have the ability to identify strategic points for introducing change in an organization. In other words, leaders must find the right time to “develop new visions, create new strategies and move in new directions” (B.J. Davies & B. Davies, 2004, p. 33). And finally, strategic leadership abilities require the leader to identify or develop core competencies needed in the longer-term.

**Challenges to Institutional Reform in South Africa**

The challenges to institutional reform where skills and capacity shortages in South Africa are concerned are best understood in the context of the Employment Equity Act (EEA) of 1998 and the Skills Development Act (SDA) of 1998. Essentially, the rationale behind EEA is based on the need to achieve a representative public service. Accordingly L.G. Nigro and F.A. Nigro (1994) and N. Nigro (2003) argue that those who make and administer public policies are expected to understand and identify with the needs of the communities they serve. Moreover, communities must have trust and confidence in the institutions of the state to deliver
on their everyday needs. It is argued that the introduction of employment equity strategies facilitates representativeness of state institutions, accelerates access to occupations and professions for those whom such access was denied, increases state responsiveness to community needs, and increases trust between communities and the state.

The EEA is essentially twofold in purpose as it aims to (a) eliminate unfair discrimination, and (b) introduce specific measures whereby designated groups are given preference where recruitment and selection are concerned. Thomas (2002) refers to the diversity created within companies and organizations through employment equity. But he also cautions against equity measures that perpetuate racial and ethnic divisions. In other words, measures that in effect reverse discrimination and result in non-designated groups feeling excluded, are tokenistic in its purpose and do not facilitate meaningful empowerment of individuals. In Thomas’ opinion these potential scenarios can be prevented where management and leadership have a creative vision and the will to fully tap into the potential of all employees of the workforce against the backdrop of advancing equal opportunity (Thomas, 2002).

This perspective on employment equity highlights three elements influencing successful implementation. The first one refers to the strategy eradicating unfair discrimination of any kind with regard to the recruitment and selection, promotion, compensation, and rewards. The second one requires that measures are put in place to encourage employers to undertake organizational transformation that removes unjustified barriers to employment for all South Africans. And the third element refers to a strategy that accelerates training and promotion of individuals from historically disadvantaged groups. Consequently, recruitment and selection of individuals to organizations cannot be considered solely on the basis of merit and years of experience, but must be balanced with approaches that include the recognition of prior learning, potential ability to do the job, and so on.

With regard to the SDA, the Act provides for an institutional framework to devise and implement strategies to develop and improve the skills of the South African workforce (RSA Parliament, Skills Development Act of 1998). Further to this emphasis, the Act encourages increased investment in education and training through using the workplace as an active learning environment, providing employees with the opportunities to acquire new skills, and providing opportunities for new entrants to the
labor market to gain work experience. The Act provides for the establishment of a National Skills Authority to advise the Minister on policy and strategy; Sector Education and Training Authorities responsible for the development of sector skills plans within the framework of the national skills development strategy; skills programs and learnership that provide for workplace learning in a structured way (ibid.).

Evidently, both statutes illuminate the principles of redress and equal opportunity. Yet, while evidence shows progress in some sectors where employment equity and skills development are concerned, the retention of scarce skills remains problematic.

In Table 1 the number and relative proportion of skilled immigrants and emigrants in the periods 1988 to 1992 and 1994 to 2000 are illustrated. While these statistics do not indicate the losses to gains per racial category, it shows an increasing trend in losses in all the occupational categories listed. The greatest mobility of highly skilled people both into and out of South Africa during these two periods was among those in education and humanities occupations, followed by engineers and architects and the country’s top legislative, executive, and managerial personnel. The concern is that in the post-apartheid period, emigration appears to have more than trebled. According to Bailey (2003), this is particularly the case in education and humanities and managerial occupations.

Consequently, organizations should adequately plan and prepare for the implementation of such strategies. Four considerations are important in this regard. First, the employer must find the right balance between equity targets and competence of the candidate. Second, the employer must facilitate the development of skills of those from designated groups by introducing a culture of coaching and mentoring where more experienced staff are partly responsible for the development of newer staff. Third, the employer must consider the overall impact of employment equity and skills development measures as it relates to the functions of human resources. And fourth, the employer must strive to develop an organizational culture that advances a holistic approach to change and transformation.

It is also important to consider and identify the potential threats that may hamper the successful implementation of measures furthering corrective action. These refer to the “softer” human resources management issues such as the fears and anxieties of staff that may feel threatened by these measures. The employer must provide for participatory structures.
### Table 1.
**Immigration and Emigration Statistics**

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<td>Immigrants</td>
<td>Emigrants</td>
<td>NET Gain/Loss</td>
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<td>Number</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engineering and architecture</td>
<td>2,645</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1,460</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1,185</td>
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<tr>
<td>Natural sciences</td>
<td>1,019</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>631</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical, dental, and health services</td>
<td>1,546</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>915</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>631</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and humanities</td>
<td>2,155</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1,779</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>376</td>
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<tr>
<td>Legislative, executive, and managerial</td>
<td>3,393</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1,246</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2,147</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>10,758</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>6,031</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,727</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>1,063</strong></td>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,891</strong></td>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
<td><strong>17,549</strong></td>
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that will facilitate meaningful discussion amongst stakeholders. In this way employees are brought into the process at an early stage, have a clearer understanding of merits and need for corrective measures, are nurtured to adapt to the new organizational culture, have an opportunity to participate in discussions about potential challenges inherent in the process, and are provided a platform to debate issues that may have a direct bearing on their everyday roles and functions. Let us now examine the strategy introduced by the City in an effort to address the prevailing skills and capacity crisis.

The City of Cape Town’s Human Resources Development Strategy

The City is responsible for providing efficient and effective services to a population of approximately 3.4 million people. It envisages to be prosperous and enable growth and economic development; to achieve effective, efficient, and equitable service delivery; and to provide service to the people of Cape Town in a well-governed and efficiently run administrative environment (City of Cape Town, 2008a, *Annual report 2008/9*). In this regard, the City has developed a five-year Integrated Development Plan (IDP) that seeks to address the key challenges confronting it. At the same time, however, the plan speaks to issues of growth and development that is intended to benefit every Capetonian.

It is important to note that the City is one of the few well-performing metropolitan governments. Moreover, the City’s performance can be linked to it being located in the second wealthiest province in the country, namely, the Western Cape Province. In its turnaround strategy, government makes reference to this fact when listing the progress of municipalities in reducing infrastructure backlogs and delivering basic services in each of the provinces. The Western Cape notably outperforms all of the other provinces in areas of electricity provision, access to piped water and sanitation, and refuse removal (Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, *Local Government Turnaround Strategy*, 2009a). In its 2008/9 annual report the achievements of the City in areas of provision of essential services, economic growth and development, and relations with citizens of Cape Town are showcased. The City performed very well in the provision of services such as refuse removal, water and sanitation services, libraries, community centers and civic halls. Fire and emergency services were also ranked very highly. Insofar as its relations with residents and business, a research survey involving 3,000 residents and 500 businesses across the City highlighted positive opinions about the City.
More than 50 percent of residents were happy with the levels of service provided. In the case of the businesses surveyed, 77 percent responded that they were happy with service levels.

With reference to economic growth and development, the City has created 10,613 direct permanent jobs and 16,379 temporary jobs; secured R1.24 billion in direct new investment; was one of the cities to host the 2010 Soccer World cup (City of Cape Town, 2008a, Annual report 2008/9). The City installed subsidized electricity connections to 5,199 homes in informal settlements in this same period. It was also awarded the Blue Drop Status (for drinking water) indicating the quality of water provided to people living in Cape Town. Consequently, developments and achievements with reference to its skills strategy should be considered in this peculiar context.

The City’s biggest single budget item is its staff costs. Therefore, its most valuable asset, when optimally utilized, motivated, and developed, is its people. The City currently employs 21,231 permanent staff. The staff budget is R3,685 billion. The training budget to meet the needs of this staff complement is R34,836 million. The staff budget to operate/total budget ratio for 2006/2007 was 32 percent (City of Cape Town, 2007a, Human Resource Strategy). In the light of the constitutional mandate and policy framework influencing local government therefore, the City is obligated to invest in its staff, both to develop new skills and retain scarce skills.

In 2006 the City of Cape Town introduced an elaborate plan to transform the organization into a sustainable and high-performance organization. In particular, the plan adopted a holistic approach to developing its staff. This entailed, amongst other things, developing a culture where employees are not only equipped with the necessary skills and competence to perform their jobs. It also referred to a culture where employees were motivated towards specific service delivery outcomes and wanted to remain in the employ of the City. The plan comprises a number of strategic focus areas, inter alia, a corporate staffing strategy, leadership strategy, and the skills development strategy. However, for the purposes of this article we will only be focusing on the skills development strategy, to which we now turn.

The Skills Development Strategy of the City

As part of its Skills Development Strategy adopted in 2007, the City introduced a Human Capital Development Programme. This program
essentially incorporates the principles of talent management by focusing on a number of aspects related to the development of skills and capacity of staff. The overarching objective of talent management is to ensure that the City has the right people with the right skills and competencies in the right place at the right time. More specifically, talent management focuses on strategic staffing; personal development plans (PDPs) competency frameworks; career and succession planning; performance management; and the review of business processes, policies, and systems to support and enable integration. Consequently, the City is of the view that talent management is a strategic initiative that advances the development of new skills and retention of scarce skills.

The successful implementation of a talent management approach is influenced by three things. First, the functions of human resources management must be aligned and consolidated. Second, a clearly defined strategy and process that advances talent management must be developed. Third, leadership must have a clear understanding of the strategy and commit itself to implementing the strategy. Fourth, the rationale behind the talent management model must permeate the various organizational levels and form part of its culture. Fifth, efforts to developing a model must involve all organizational stakeholders. An integrated model of talent management, therefore, forms the foundation for employee satisfaction and motivation (City of Cape Town, 2010, Talent Management Strategy).

Against this background let us consider three key facets of the talent management approach, namely, mentoring and coaching, training and development, and strategic leadership.

**Mentoring and Coaching**

One of the strategic aims of the Skills Development Strategy is the repositioning of the education, training and development practices, processes, and focus within the City. The City has identified mentoring and coaching as a training intervention or tool to assist in achieving its education and training objectives. The benefits of mentoring and coaching in this regard are numerous. First, it can accelerate the skills and capacity development of the person being mentored or coached. Second, it can contribute to a greater sense of accomplishment and reward for both the mentor and mentee. Third, it can increase employee loyalty to the
organization. Fourth, it can facilitate career pathing and succession planning. And finally, mentoring and coaching can increase the confidence and effectiveness of the employee.

The City has demonstrated, through the introduction of its Management Rejuvenation Programme (MRP), its commitment to using coaching and mentoring more strategically. More discussion on this project will be embarked upon later in this article.

**Training and Development Plan**

Another of the strategic aims emerging from the Skills Development Strategy concerns the repositioning of the workplace skills plan (WPSP). The City has designed a process which involves adopting a new approach to the planning of training and development. This approach sees the City as having a top–down, bottom–up approach to the development of its WPSP. Figure 1 depicts the process flow for developing the workplace skills plan within the City.

Overall, the revised process contributes to a more interactive approach between leadership and staff towards the planning of training and development strategies. First, the process allows for the development of staffing strategies that facilitate the targets and outcomes of the IDP. In this regard, individual skill needs are identified and appropriate training strategies introduced. In the case of staffing strategies, the City has developed the methodology and “tool kit” for implementation. Training to all line departments for developing their own strategies is completed. Individual departments are now preparing their unique staffing strategies (interview conducted with Programme Manager: HR Strategy, City of Cape Town, October 15, 2010).

Individuals falling within the T14 2 and above salary grades have all been assessed and personal development plans have been developed. These assessments will assist in ensuring that training is individually targeted. In this regard the PDP is a personal action plan, jointly agreed to by the employee and the manager. It is intended to identify short- and long-term development goals and accompanying interventions. The PDP acts as a vehicle to address the needs of the individual and department, directorate, and ultimately the City of Cape Town. Essentially, the PDPs have brought to the fore the specific skill needs, strengths as well as competencies of those already assessed. In this way, interventions facilitating
Develop Departmental Staffing Strategies, wherein the IDP targets and deliverables are matched to skills needs, skills gaps are identified and strategies to meet them are developed.

Departmental plans are to incorporate EE plans.

Annual skills audits, based on updating individual skills records are to be conducted.

Corporate intervention to establish current skills baseline through full assessment of each employee.

Workplace Skills plan to be developed, using a process of focus groups.

Departmental staffing strategies and skills audit to provide key inputs into Departmental plans.

Departmental plans to be matched to budget.

Consultation and input from Local Labour Forums to be obtained.

Departmental plans to be consolidated and approved by Executive Directors.

Directorate plans to be presented to Executive Management Team (EMT) by each directorate. EMT to incorporate into plan any key corporate training needs. Plan to be adjusted to match budget. Additional budget to match discretionary grant training to be approved. EMT to approve plan for consultation.

Source: City of Cape Town (2007b).

Notes: EE = Employment Equity; IDP = Integrated Development Plan; SETA = Sector Education and Training Authority.
long-term growth and development can now be introduced by directorates. At the time of writing, 36 percent of the personal development plans of individuals in the T10–T13 salary grades were completed. Competency frameworks have all been completed and are now being rolled out across departments.

Second, the workplace skills plan introduces a participatory approach to the planning of training and development. Local labor forums are involved in the development of workplace skills plans. Currently, there are five labor forums in the City. These forums comprise of representatives from departments within various directorates. Essentially, these forums are tasked with discussing key issues related to training and development, amongst other things.

Third, it facilitates the introduction of training and development strategies through activity-based budgeting. Hence funding is deliberately appropriated to realizing these strategies. These strategies may take the form of internship programs, graduate programs, workshops, seminars and conferences, and the bursary scheme. With reference to the City’s bursary scheme, provision is made for study assistance to both permanent employees of the City and individuals from the local community. The training and development vision of the City, therefore, speaks of two things. First, the City is directed towards developing and improving the skills of its current employees. Second, the City has embraced a social responsibility context as part of its skills development strategy. In this regard, the City adopts a visionary approach that takes cognizance of the future staffing needs of the organization.

Against this context the City has committed itself to support individuals financially through its bursary scheme. In the case of internal bursaries, the field of interest that the employee has identified must be aligned to the organizational priorities and needs of the City. In 2008, the City administered a total of 1,340 bursaries to its staff. The City allocated a further 161 external bursaries to members of the local community (City of Cape Town, 2008b, Corporate Services and Human Resources Portfolio Committee).

And finally, it facilitates the monitoring and evaluation of training and development plans. After the draft plans have been approved by the Executive and Management Team, it is submitted to the Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA), portfolio committee, and Education, Training and Development committee. Once this process is complete,
the final plan and budget is approved by the City Manager (City of Cape Town, 2007b, *Skills Development Strategy*).

**Strategic Leadership**

In the paradigm of SHRD, leadership emerges as an important factor influencing the successfulness of institutional reform and change. Moreover, strategic leadership requires that those who have influence over decision-making processes consider both the short- and longer-term goals of the organization. In other words, strategic leaders must be visionary in their efforts to transform the organization. Accordingly and in the context of skills development, the efficacy of leadership is paramount in identifying the skills needs, gaps, and constraints/barriers that confront their staff. Also, the leadership is responsible for collaborative pathing of future career ambitions of staff.

Arguably, most South African workers quit their jobs because of a lack of career advancement and effective utilization of their knowledge and skills (Horwitz, 2008). In this regard, it is assumed that a rigorous career pathing process will increase retention of employees. Rabin, Vocina, Hildreth, and Miller (1995, p. 472) also refer to the importance of career pathing and the role of leadership. They argue that management cannot efficiently maximize the return in human resource investment if it is not carefully and individually targeted. Furthermore, individuals will not be motivated by training unless there is a clear indication that it is a path to a desired goal. Therefore, through interventions such as workplace skills plans (see Figure 1), the City provides for the unique needs and career plans of individual employees in the City, amongst other things.

Clearly, the Strategy adopted by the City embodies the principles of strategic human resources development. The talent management approach is well suited to advance the mandate of the City by aligning individual’s skills to organizational goals. However, the organizational climate (as evidenced through staff morale, turnover, and approach to training), in our opinion, poses a threat to the successful implementation of the skills strategy. The key factors that threaten skills development and retention emerged from a survey first conducted in 2007 exploring employee opinions about the City. It is important to note that the skills strategy was implemented concurrently with the administration
of a survey. The survey was administered again in 2009. A comparison between the 2007 and 2009 results reveals changing perceptions among respondents, however.

**Challenges to the Implementation of the Skills Development Strategy**

In spite of a strategic approach that details key elements influencing the development of skills, responses from the employee relationships assessment surveys highlight potential challenges that impede the strategy’s objectives. The survey probed two areas. In the first instance, it tried to gain insights into officials’ opinions about their jobs and working environment. In the second instance, the survey attempted to identify barriers to the successful implementation of the skills development strategy. More specifically, officials were asked to express their opinions on how the City treated its employees, their attitudes of loyalty towards the City, their relations with their supervisors/managers, and opportunities for career progression within the City.

Four key factors emerged from the survey. These were categorized as follows: (a) low feelings of accomplishment, (b) poor relations with management, (c) lack of concern and care for employees, and (d) unfair treatment of employees (IPSOS Markinor, Employee Relationship Assessment, 2007, 2009). These issues led to the City introducing the MRP. The specific outcome of this project was to build the capacity of those in leadership/management positions in an effort to address some of the concerns that surfaced through the survey. Amongst other things the MRP focused on the following:

1. The role of coaching and mentoring in facilitating both the skills and personal development of officials.
2. Integrated performance management systems linked to a recognition and rewards program.
3. A change management capacity program, to build change management capacity of those in management positions (City of Cape Town, 2008c, *Management Rejuvenation Project*).

The MRP ran for approximately two years. Subsequent to the project ending, the City has demonstrated efforts to incorporate the functions
of coaching, mentoring, and performance management into its mainstream human resources management functions. Numerous pilot projects encouraging coaching and mentoring are being rolled out across line departments, a performance management system has been developed, and change management programs aimed at promoting the system are underway (interview conducted with Programme Manager: HR Strategy, City of Cape Town, October 15, 2010). However, at this stage, it is somewhat difficult to identify the gains and benefits emerging from the MRP, since experiences across the line departments of the City have been different. Nonetheless, the results of the surveys administered in 2007 and 2009 do reveal changes in staff perceptions. In most instances, we can infer that the attitudes of staff in the areas probed have become more positive. When considering responses to statements about fairness, equality, and trust, we can also infer that relations between management and staff seem to have improved.

**Staff Morale**

Staff morale was explored by probing the insights of employees in two ways. In the first instance, employees were asked to express their opinions about whether the City treated its employees with fairness, equality, and trust. We can infer from the 2007 results that the respondents’ opinion was that of the City not treating them fairly and equally, nor demonstrating trust of its employees (Table 2). Only 31 percent responded that the City treated them fairly and 30 percent responded that the City treated people of all races equally. When asked whether the City treated people as important assets, only 26 percent agreed with this statement. On the question about genuine care and concern for its employees, 27 percent of respondents agreed that the City demonstrated these attributes. On the question of trust, 32 percent responded that the City truly trusted its employees. However, the results from the 2009 survey reflect more positive opinions in all of the areas earlier probed. For example, 41 percent responded that the City treated them fairly. About 30 percent responded that the City treated its employees as its most important asset. Moreover, on the statement on genuine care and concern for employees, the responses were up by 7 percent.

In the second instance, employees’ loyalty toward the City was probed by asking them whether or not they would continue to work for the City (Table 3). In 2007 the results leaned more toward disloyalty than loyalty.
For example, when respondents were asked whether they would seriously consider better job offers, 58 percent responded that it was likely. Approximately 64 percent responded that they did not want to continue working for the City. Only 25 percent of respondents indicated that they would continue working for the City (IPSOS Markinor, 2007). The results from the 2009 survey highlight a slightly improved opinion of the City. For example, 54 percent responded that they were likely to consider better job offers compared to the 58 percent in 2007. The number of responses of those who indicated that they did not want to continue working for the City decreased by 6 percent between 2007 and 2009. There was a slight increase in the percentage that indicated that they wanted to continue working for the City but could not.

**Staff Turnover**

Another challenge to the successful implementation of the City’s human resources development strategy concerns staff turnover. Organizational change and transformation is largely dependent on the drivers of such change. Therefore, stability in leadership and those championing change in the organization is of utmost importance. However, the effects of the
various local government reforms since the first democratic elections in 1994 have impacted leadership and the retention of scarce skills, as pointed earlier.

The staff turnover rates for the period July to September 2008 are high (Table 4). In the Directorate of Utility Services for example, 137 individuals terminated their relationship with the City. In the Metro polices services, 101 of 775 staff members left the City. In the Finance Directorate, 23 people left the employ of the city. Community Services is another directorate where terminations are high. A total of 80 individuals have left this directorate over a three-month period. Service delivery integration and strategy and planning are also at risk where staff turnover is concerned.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Directorate</th>
<th>Total terminations</th>
<th>Base total</th>
<th>Gross termination rate for the period (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Services</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>3,639</td>
<td>2.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1,393</td>
<td>1.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro Police Services</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>775</td>
<td>13.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Delivery Integration</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>377</td>
<td>2.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy and Planning</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>764</td>
<td>2.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utility Services</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>6,948</td>
<td>1.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>21,898</td>
<td>2.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: City of Cape Town (2008b), Corporate Services and Human Resources Portfolio Committee.

Upon closer investigation of these figures, the scarce skills terminations are of even greater concern. In particular, in the directorate of Utility services, 4 professionals and 24 technicians and associate professionals left the employ of the City. In the case of the Metro police, five technicians and associate professionals left. In the directorate of Finance, one professional and nine technicians and associate professionals left the employ of the City.

While the gross termination rate may appear low, it should be borne in mind that these are quarterly statistics. Hence, the number of terminations is of particular concern in the context of skills development and leadership. In the case of skills development initiatives, the lack of staff to coach and mentor both new and existing employees impedes the objectives of the skills development. Where leadership is concerned, Table 5 depicts
Table 5.
Terminations per Scarce Skills Category per Department for the Period July to September 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Directorate</th>
<th>Total terminations</th>
<th>Professionals</th>
<th>Technicians and associate professionals</th>
<th>Legislators, senior officials and managers</th>
<th>% Scarce skills terminations to all terminations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City Health</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>59.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Services</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>43.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety and Security</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>46.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Delivery Integration</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>63.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy and Planning</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>43.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: City of Cape Town (2008b), Corporate Services and Human Resources Portfolio Committee.
the exodus of scarce skills such as technicians and associate professionals. This category is necessary to (a) facilitate the objectives of coaching and mentoring programs, and (b) drive the overall process of change within their directorates. With this high turnover the ideals embedded in coaching and mentoring programs, amongst other things, are jeopardized.

**Strategic Training and Development**

The strategic development of human resources transcends enhancing skill levels to include other functions of human resources. As asserted earlier by Delaney and Huselid (1996), progressive human resources management practices are comprehensive by nature. And consequently, such practices positively impact the quality of work rendered by employees. However, the survey results suggest that training and education are perceived through a narrow lens; this seems more the case when considering the 2007 results. The results suggest that training and education is not aligned to the other strategic HR functions such as career pathing, succession planning, and so on. For example, the City invested extensively in training and education through its bursary scheme. Yet it has not invested in the reassessment of staff members subsequent to them completing their studies. Consequently, staff members who have improved their educational qualifications are still functioning at the same grade level. In the case of external bursaries, however, the City appears to be making better progress. Of the 40 bursars that completed their programs, 27 were offered employment by the City under its graduate and internship programs. Only 13 of the 40 bursars were not offered employment after completion of their studies (City of Cape Town, 2008d, Bursary statistics).

Table 6 reflects the opinions of respondents on a variety of statements pertaining to career development, acknowledgement and recognition, and creativeness and innovation, amongst others. To the statement on whether the City cared about developing people for long-term careers, only 34 percent responded that the City cared. Approximately 44 percent responded that the City made use of their talents and only 14 percent responded that the City acknowledged and rewarded their good ideas. On the basis of the 2009 survey, respondents’ opinions were more positive in the case of both these statements. Approximately 51 percent responded that the City made use of their talents, while 18 percent of the respondents felt that they were rewarded for good ideas. The majority of
respondents (65 percent) experienced very little achievement working for the City based on the 2007 survey. But this decreased to 59 percent in the 2009 survey.

Another response contradictory to the intentions of the City’s skills development strategy referred to the issue of feedback. Only 31 percent responded that they received feedback on their performance from their supervisor/manager. This did, however, increase marginally to 35 percent in 2009. On the statement about sufficient training opportunities to enable effective job functioning, 42 percent responded positively in 2007. In 2009 this number increased to 48 percent.

The opinions of respondents bring to the fore the importance of strategic leadership in driving skills training and development. Moreover, it shows the need for those in leadership positions to align training interventions to (a) other functional areas of HR, and (b) the longer-term organizational goals and objectives. Therefore, the WPSP raises concerns with specific reference to leadership/management. The WPSP summary (see Table 7) highlights the training priorities as identified by those involved in the planning process. Employees were asked to identify and prioritize the skills need areas of the City. Table 7 shows leadership/management as the number one priority identified by respondents.

Case Reflections

An examination of the HRD strategy reflects the commitment of the City to developing and retaining the skills and capacity necessary to achieve its developmental mandate. From a general perspective, the strategy embraces a holistic and participatory approach to skills development.
where employees’ development not only relates to their competence to perform the job but also their motivation towards service delivery outcomes. More particularly, the skills strategy encompasses a talent management approach where mentoring and coaching, individually targeted training and development, and strategic leadership are considered as important interventions. Earlier in this article, we presented the key benefits of these interventions and discussed some of the areas where the City has already made progress. For example, the City has initiated its workplace skills planning process in a number of directorates. This planning process has helped those in managerial and leadership positions to identify the specific training needs of individuals within their departments and directorates. The workplace skills plans have also assisted in aligning the individual skill levels to departmental/directorate objectives. In so doing, the City is ultimately able to advance its vision in a more integrated and realistic way.

In addition to these benefits, the workplace skills plans facilitate the ideals embedded in coaching and mentoring. Through linking the skills plans to departmental/directorate performance targets, employment equity plans, and personal development plans, those in leadership

Table 7.
Sector Priority Skills Areas and Corporate Priorities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WSP 10</th>
<th>COCT priorities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sector priority skills areas and corporate priorities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABET</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client service</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer literacy</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate, legal, &amp; support</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information technology</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life skills</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management/leadership</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational health and safety</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy development</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project management/planning</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social/community/economic development and planning</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist skills required by legislation</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist technical</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training skills</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

positions will have a clearer idea of the individual needs of employees in their departments/directorates. Consequently coaching and mentoring interventions that are suited to the unique needs of individual employees can be introduced. Furthermore, the skills plan forces managers and directors to embrace coaching and mentoring as part of their development plan. Figure 1, presented earlier, highlights the detailed process of consultation, participation, and accountability that the various structures – both within the City and through the Sector Education and Training Authority – are supposed to follow.

The City has also made progress insofar as leadership development is concerned. The MRP served to kick-start a new way of thinking about skills development. With its focus on coaching and mentoring, performance management systems and change management, the MRP raised awareness about these functions as it relates to the development of human resources. It also empowered those in leadership positions to drive these processes in their specific departments and directorates. As a result, leadership now has a clearer perspective on developing employee skills for the long term, the importance of developing and retaining scarce skills, and encouraging employees to participate in change initiatives through collaboratively discussing and agreeing on skills development plans.

Notwithstanding these gains, the case highlights a number of challenges. Essentially, these challenges can be categorized as (a) process-related and (b) people-related. Let us turn to process-related challenges first.

**Process-related Challenges**

*Strategic Leadership*

Introducing the Skills Development Strategy within the City was always going to be a very ambitious and protracted exercise. It was acknowledged by the leadership that the strategy would only bear fruit over the long term as the process, by its very nature, is one that is integrated. To this extent, those individuals in leadership positions are instrumental to the successful implementation of the strategy. We earlier alluded to the importance of leadership when we referred to the various abilities encompassing strategic leadership – one being the ability to translate strategy into action. Accordingly, leaders are required to first get “buy-in” for reforms from staff through encouraging their participation in the training and development planning process. Therefore, the fact that the
employee relationships survey was administered at the same time that the Strategy was rolled out is problematic for two reasons. First, factors such as staff morale and staff retention are fundamental to the success of such a Strategy. The survey, however, revealed low staff morale and high turnover. Therefore, these factors are likely to impede successful implementation. Second, relations between leadership/management and staff were not sound. Respondents believed that they were not rewarded and acknowledged for “good” ideas, indicated that they did not experience any achievement from their work, and responded that the organization did not make use of their talents. These are some indicators that illuminate feelings of employee unhappiness and can have a negative impact on work performance and attitude.

An organization’s success pivots on the competency of those in leadership/management roles. Hence it is vital that individuals in these positions are well-equipped to deal with the many diverse and often complex issues facing municipalities. To this end, a development framework or strategy that seeks to set the tone for guiding principles in terms of leadership development is crucial. Leadership development should not be implemented sporadically, but organizations should seek to have a well-defined leadership philosophy that is aligned to their vision, values, and goals as well as their strategic objectives. We acknowledge that at the time of writing the City was in the process of finalizing a leadership development strategy. However, the timing of the survey and the MRP were not well planned, in our opinion. We suggest that the City should have first rolled out the MRP to create awareness about the anticipated training interventions, develop the skills and expertise to implement these interventions, and properly prepare managers and leaders for implementation of strategies in their departments/directorates.

**Workplace Skills Plans**

The workplace skills planning process embraces the idea that skills development entails a continuous process of shaping the staff profile – both towards existing and future needs of the City. Respective departments/directorates are expected to forecast staffing demand/supply, conduct skill gap analyses, and introduce appropriate interventions to address these gaps. We, therefore, recommend that on completion of directorate/departmental staffing strategies, the corporate staffing strategy be rolled out as a matter of urgency. This strategy should highlight to staff
and other role-players to the City the broad overview and staff planning direction as it relates to the overall objectives and mandate of the City. In this way, respective departments and directorates have a clearer idea of their specific contribution and role towards improved service delivery. Furthermore, the intentions embedded in the workplace skills planning process, namely, to facilitate greater coherence within and between departments/directorates, are more achievable.

While the City has rolled out its skills assessment exercise and completed the PDP process for certain salary grades, several other grades still have to be completed. The City should make a concerted effort to expedite the assessment for all other departments/directorates. This will afford it the opportunity to have a clear overview of the skills or the lack thereof across all occupational levels. Talent pools within the organization then becomes more identifiable. As a result, the City can use these talent pools to embark on a more rigorous coaching and mentoring strategy. For example, directorates may consider partnering more skilled and experienced staff with less-skilled and experienced staff. This may also assist in advancing the ideals of EE plans, particularly where employees have been recruited under, inter alia, criteria of prior learning or potential ability.

Lack of Comprehensiveness of HRD Strategies

The City invested in training and education through its bursary scheme. Consequently, staff members have been afforded opportunities to improve their educational qualifications. In our opinion however, the City would yield a quicker return on its investment were it to strategically place and utilize recipients of bursaries within the organization once they qualify. This may positively impact employees’ opinions of the City on many different levels. Furthermore, it may even contribute to staff retention as employees experience growth and development with the organization. Another issue that refers to return on investment concerns the alignment of staffing strategies to future organizational needs and purposes. Albeit that only 13 of 40 external bursars had not been offered employment, the fact that not all recipients of external bursaries were offered employment in the City, reduces its return on investment. Through careful consideration of future needs and objectives, training and development interventions can have a longer-term impact, contribute to career and succession planning in the organization, and ultimately increase staff loyalty and reduce turnover.

People-related Challenges

Relations between Those in Leadership and Their Staff

A glance at the 2007 and 2009 survey results show subtle and marked improvements in all of the areas probed. On issues of fairness, equality, and trust responses have increased. More specifically, the results reveal a 10 percent increase in respondents’ perceptions that the City treats them fairly. A more nuanced increase of 4 percent indicates that more employees are of the opinion that they are important assets to the City. In the case of the City showing care and concern for their employees, 34 percent as compared to the previous 27 percent responded positively.

As shown earlier, employees were not very positive in their responses to statements about the City developing people for long-term careers, providing enough training and development opportunities, and noticing and rewarding good ideas. In addition, the problems linked to management/leadership were highlighted when employees identified this as the number one priority area for the City. These opinions draw attention to the significance of leadership in three respects. First, those in leadership/management positions can influence employees’ perceptions about the organization – either positively or negatively. Second, they can influence the attitude or willingness of individual employees towards skills training and development. Third, the extent to which skills development is rolled out as integrated and holistic is to a large extent dependent on the approach adopted by the leader/manager.

Conclusion

The case of the City of Cape Town shows that modeling the development of human resources strategies according to private sector principles is achievable. The City has indeed demonstrated efforts towards skills training and development that is integrated in its approach. Through its workplace skills planning process, initiatives to develop leaders/managers, and coaching and mentoring strategies, the City has attempted to align individual skills to organizational goals and objectives. The prevailing process and staffing-related challenges, however, bring to the fore the factors that potentially impede successful implementation of the skills strategy even in a privileged context such as that of the City of Cape Town. Municipalities in other parts of the Western Cape, or South Africa, for
that matter may have to contend with even more dire socioeconomic and political challenges. Consequently, the implementation of a strategic plan to skills development may seem almost impossible for some municipalities at this stage of its development.

NOTES

1. This program was launched by the Department of Water and Environmental Affairs in 2008 to measure the quality of drinking water in municipalities across South Africa (City of Cape Town, 2008a, *Annual Report 2008/9*).
2. T14 refers to the Task salary grading level at which an employee is performing and also influences the salary range of that employee.

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**Bradley Davids** is registered as a doctoral student at the School of Government, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, South Africa. His doctoral thesis focuses on strategic leadership. He is employed by the City of Cape Town as an Administrative Manager in their Strategic Human Resources Department. [email: BradleyWayne.Davids@capetown.gov.za]
Michelle Esau is an Associate Professor at the School of Government, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, South Africa. Her teaching and research interests includes issues on citizenship, democracy, and governance; legislative oversight; social capital; and human resources management and development. [email: mvesau@uwc.ac.za]