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Human capital development as a line manager responsibility in the South African education sector

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Orientation: Human capital development (HCD) initiatives are crucial in the education sector to improve the delivery of quality education. At the centre of quality teaching and learning are educators and lecturers who are competent and well-equipped to adapt to the changing environment.

Research purpose: To explore whether HCD was the key responsibility of line managers in the South African (SA) education sector.

Motivation of the study: Line managers are expected to continuously develop the competencies of educators and lecturers by implementing HCD interventions. There is limited empirical evidence that explored HCD responsibilities performed by line managers in the SA education sector.

Research approach/design and method: This study adopted a qualitative research method underpinned by the interpretivist paradigm. Semistructured interviews were conducted with $n = 12$ purposively selected participants. The data collected were analysed using thematic analysis.

Main findings: The findings of this article indicated that line managers are responsible for identifying training gaps, implementing HCD interventions and monitoring performance. The study also found that support from key stakeholders is imperative for line managers to effectively implement HCD activities. Furthermore, the study revealed that line managers do not utilise evaluation models to determine the effectiveness of HCD interventions.

Practical/managerial implications: The study proposed reciprocal support for HCD stakeholders' model that can assist policymakers, line managers and HCD professionals within the education sector. The model provides for the division and allocation of HCD tasks.

Contributions/value-add: This study contributes to the body of knowledge in HCD within the SA education sector. In the practical context, this article proposed a reciprocal support for HCD stakeholders' model to improve the effectiveness of HCD initiatives implemented by line managers.

Keywords: human capital development; line managers; human resource development; key performance or responsibility areas; interventions; education institutions.

Introduction

In the South African (SA) context, skills shortages have continued unabatedly to hinder and negatively affect the participation of the majority of people in the economy of the country. This can be associated with the past discriminatory laws that targeted black people, who are the majority population, as well as the slow pace of transformation and opportunities for the previously disadvantaged groups. This is despite the legislation and policy reforms introduced to enhance skills and ultimately reduce inequality, poverty and unemployment. The *Skills Development Act*, No. 97 of 1998, aims to develop the skills of the SA workforce, encourage employers to utilise the workplace as an active learning environment and provide employees with an opportunity to acquire new skills (South Africa, 1998). According to Le Grange et al. (2006), while it is crucially important to put in place measures that will correct the ills of the past SA regime, it is equally important to also focus attention on the constant changes in the global world in order to remain economically competitive, and as such, higher education institutions (HEIs), as a knowledge production subsector within the education system, should be ready to respond to such changes.

Human capital development (HCD) in the SA education sector formed the basis of this article. The research question for this current study was: what are the HCD key performance areas (KPAs) of line managers in the SA education sector? Previous studies have claimed that the involvement of

line managers in human resource management (HRM) decisions, HRM activities and processes and HRM budgeting processes enhances organisational performance (Waseem et al., 2020). The research objective of this article is to explore whether HCD is a KPA in line manager performance contracts in the SA education sector. Line managers from basic education (i.e. primary and secondary schools), public technical and vocational education and training (TVET) colleges and private HEIs within the SA education environment participated in this current study and provided their insights and experience on the phenomenon under investigation.

Various organisations have used human resource development (HRD) interchangeably with terms such as education, training and development; employee training; and/or learning and development, among others in the literature (Meyer et al., 2016). Furthermore, Mara (2020) indicated that HCD is the term used to refer to training and development in organisations. Human capital development is the main terminology used in this study. Human capital can be defined as the knowledge, skills, abilities and experience that an individual employee possesses and the sharing of such competencies with the entire organisation towards the creation of value (Baron, 2011). Considering this definition, HCD can be summarised as the development of the workforce's skills, knowledge, abilities and experience, which is ultimately disseminated throughout the organisation. Noe (2020) asserts that HCD in an organisation includes the formation of knowledge and the sharing of such knowledge. An organisation has at its disposal a variety of HCD initiatives that range from continuous learning and development programmes to informal and formal workplace programmes that induce creativity and advance skills and acquiring of knowledge that results in enhanced performance by employees (Erasmus et al., 2016; Noe, 2020). Le Grange et al. (2006) indicated that for the education institutions to become learning organisations with a culture of lifelong learning for lecturers as well as educators, HCD programmes should be strengthened and prioritised.

Sthapit (2017) asserts that performance management and various other HCD activities are independently effective. Moreover, adequate integration between them can yield positive results and improve employee competencies for any organisation. Kareem and Hussein (2019) indicated that to achieve organisational effectiveness, managers, especially at the top echelons of the organisations, should strive to develop well-specified and focused HRD practices that are aimed at improving the skills, knowledge, abilities and experience of individual employees.

Literature review

The HCD trends are presented under the following subheadings: HCD in the SA education sector; line managers' role in HCD; HCD as a KPA of line managers; and line managers' effectiveness with HCD.

Human capital development in the South African education sector

The SA HRD status report indicated that 20% of the total national budget is spent on the education sector. In comparison, this percentage is the highest budget allocation of any other sector (Human Resource Development Council, 2016). The report further stated that the SA developmental agenda acknowledges the need to enhance the quality of education which will ultimately result in developing a competitive national workforce, improved quality of life and feasible economic growth which actively involves the citizens. The strategic investments in HCD at both national and organisational levels have the potential of enhancing the competitiveness and productivity of the nation and organisation's workforce, respectively (Swanson, 2021). The achievement of this goal can be hindered by the lack of investment in HCD interventions by education institutions such as universities, colleges and schools (Musakuro & De Klerk, 2021). The constant enhancement of quality in the SA education sector and the attainment of strategic objectives for each education institution can be achieved by strategically implementing HCD interventions for lecturers and educators, such as continuous professional development (CPD) and the cultivation of lifelong learners (Le Grange et al., 2006).

The education sector in SA has undergone tremendous transformation since 1994. The Education, Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority (ETDP SETA), which is an institution established in terms of the *Skills Development Act*, 1998, is mandated to, among others, compile a sector skills plan for the SA education, training and development sector. The ETDP SETA has indicated that it is still struggling to adjust to the transformation that has inundated the SA education sector (Education, Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority, 2017a). The issues included the provision of quality learning programmes that are in line with the current changing needs, the utilisation of technology and the professionalisation of the educational workforce. A collaboration from various stakeholders, including ETDP SETA, participated in the introduction of a system that permits lecturers to be placed in relevant industries on a regular basis (Van der Bijl & Taylor, 2016). The sector skills plan acknowledges that inadequate teacher training renders the quality of education in the sector ineffective (Education, Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority, 2017b; Maddock & Maroun, 2018).

Kareem and Hussein (2019) described HEIs as organisations that are responsible for the delivery of education as their principal focus. This assertion may be extended to public schools and colleges that provide similar education services. They further indicated that these institutions, to deliver their services successfully, would largely be affected by the quality of their workforce. Jasson and Govender (2017) indicated that managers are tasked with the promotion of employee learning and the transfer of acquired skills which enhance productivity and overall organisational performance.

Developmental needs of educators and lecturers in the education sector

Le Grange et al. (2006) pointed out that the needs of the education sector and learners at large must be considered in proportional to the needs of the education institutions and individual educators or lecturers. Since 2016, qualifications required for TVET college lecturers are different from those of the school educators (Van der Bijl & Taylor, 2016). To effectively develop teachers at schools, HCD interventions such as coaching, mentoring, peer observation and lesson study should be developed and implemented (Macheng, 2016). Van der Bijl and Taylor (2016) stated that the first qualification of the TVET college lecturers must embed a work-based learning component that serves to prepare the lecturer to be effective with teaching and learning. Le Grange et al. (2006) argued that the attitude of educators or lecturers should be on answering the question of what more should be learned rather than to immerse themselves in what they already comprehend.

Professional development programmes should be developed on the basis of thorough analysis of the needs to ensure that they respond to cultural, political and institutional contexts, respectively (Jeannin & Hallinger, 2018). Czerniawski et al. (2017) assert that lecturers are motivated and encouraged if appropriate time is made for adequate induction and continuous development programmes. Macheng (2016) argued that the crucial aspect that hinders the effectiveness of CPD is the absence of a take-in-charge approach by educators for their own development. Self-development implies that employees continuously improve their skills, knowledge and abilities out of their own will and initiatives (Podsakoff et al., 2000).

The adult learning theory postulates that adults have an intuitive need for self-development (Macheng, 2016). Lecturers are willing to participate in continuous development programmes that occur regularly and focus on experiential learning (Czerniawski et al., 2017). To accelerate and provide a CPD programme within the college education system, an approach was developed to research and implement an in-service industry-based workplace (Van der Bijl & Taylor, 2016). Every educator or lecturer should have a mentor appointed to provide guidance on administrative issues or processes, updating of record-keeping forms, curriculum application and acclimatisation with relevant departmental trends and needs (Le Grange et al., 2006).

Line managers' role in human capital development

Line managers assist employees to enhance and improve their work-related knowledge and skills by making training and development opportunities available to them (Fu et al., 2018). When performing the delegated HR functions, line managers – including supervisors, managers and departmental heads – liaise and report to their HR departments (Yusliza et al., 2019). A good relationship between the HR department, line managers and employees plays an important role in the successful implementation of HRM practices (Bos-Nehles & Meijerink, 2018). This relationship is premised on the social exchange between HRM stakeholders. Support and capacity development provided by the HRM department to line managers will engender line managers who are motivated to engage in HRM matters and, ultimately, encourage cooperation by employees towards the success and achievement of the organisational objectives (Bos-Nehles & Meijerink, 2018; Mahmood et al., 2017).

Line managers must be aware of their roles, responsibilities and accountability for the HRM and HRD function of their immediate employees (Rupcic, 2017). In HEIs, it was found that immediate managers play a crucial role during the needs assessment for training and development for academic staff (Sušanj et al., 2020). Employee performance appraisals and performance feedback are regarded as key HR line management practices that can be integrated with other processes to obtain optimal performance and constant improvement by employees. The performance management function should be a tool used by line managers to achieve the strategic objectives of the institutions. Line managers can effectively implement a performance management system by successfully performing both their operational and performance appraisals functions (Van Waeyenberg & Decramer, 2018). Pulakos et al. (2019) argued that effective managers regularly meet employees, assist them to solve problems, coach and develop their employees.

Supervisors who support HCD interventions ultimately influence motivation to participate in learning (Park et al., 2018). According to Noe (2020), manager support can be described as a range of activities, from the importance of training programmes for employees, to the transfer of learning into the job and the organisation. Table 1 outlines the level of support that the manager can provide for HCD activities. The transfer of learning is possible and effective when the support for HCD interventions is high. The success of training is also high when the manager is actively involved, and this includes participation in mentoring and coaching programmes if the manager is a mentor him- or herself. Line managers with the coaching leadership style demonstrate a high level of support for their subordinate and ensure that the

TABLE 1: Levels of management support for training.

Levels		Description
HCD programmes	high support	Participate as a mentor or coach; assign mentors and induct employees
Practise skills or transfer of learning		Allow subordinates an opportunity to practise what they have learnt
Reinforcement		Discuss progress with subordinates; ask how to support subordinates' use of new capabilities
Participation in HCD interventions		Attend session with the subordinates
Encouragement and support		Accommodate attendance at training through rearranging work schedule; endorse employees attending training
Acceptance	low support	Permit employees to attend training; acknowledge the importance of training; budget for training programmes

Source: Adapted from Noe, R.A. (2020). *Employee training & development.* McGraw-Hill Education
HCD, human capital development.

employees' contribution and improvement is acknowledged (Redeker et al., 2014). At the lowest level of support, the manager budgets and approves the training and ensures that selected employees attend identified training programmes (Table 1).

Human capital development as key performance area of line managers

For line managers to undertake HR-related responsibilities with exceptional diligence, they need to be competent and motivated (Op de Beeck et al., 2017). Yusliza et al. (2019) assert that, notwithstanding the fact that organisations differ in various aspects, it is feasible to develop and implement clear and precise job specifications that consist of HR functions for line managers. For line managers to be successful with their HCD responsibilities, good relationships with HR should exist (McGuire et al., 2011). This suggests that the success of line managers with the execution of HCD tasks depends largely on various stakeholders across the institution, that is, colleagues, HCD professionals and other managers at the middle and senior levels.

The point of emphasis is that of classifying HR activities, which should culminate from a joint decision taken by all stakeholders specifying which HCD tasks should be performed by line managers (Blayney et al., 2020). When conducting a needs assessment, it is important that all stakeholders are involved in the process (Noe, 2020). Furthermore, stakeholders in this context are the people in the organisation who have a keen interest in the HRD interventions and for whom support is needed for these interventions to be effective (Noe, 2020). Collin et al. (2020) found that clearly articulated supervisory roles and well-described structures are fundamental to HCD practices that lead to more employee creativity in the workplace. If the relationship between the key role players in HCD (i.e. line managers, employees and HCD professionals) is good, line managers are motivated to implement HCD practices effectively (Bos-Nehles & Meijerink, 2018). Moreover, employees with motivated managers tend to be more committed and productive in their work.

Line manager effectiveness with human capital development

Noe (2020) describes training effectiveness as the benefit obtained by the organisation and its employees after implementing training. The evaluation of training is referred to as a process of gathering information required to determine whether the training implemented was effective. There are several reasons that make it important to conduct an evaluation of the training or HRD interventions. These include the assessment of learning and actions undertaken during the implementation of the HRD intervention to determine its success or failure (Oguntimehin & Bukki, 2020).

Training or HCD evaluations also help managers to receive feedback which is necessary for their functionary HCD processes (Oguntimehin & Bukki, 2020). Taking HCD

evaluation steps regularly tends to inform future action and improvements. Govaerts et al. (2017) emphasise that the integration of HCD in departments should begin before the training of employees, during the training and after the training. Supervisors do not commonly offer pretraining support and only supported their subordinates after the training programme.

The more stakeholders are involved in HCD decision-making, HCD practices and HCD policies, the more participation in HCD at an organisational level improves as well. It is in that context that HCD is perceived to be a strategic intervention for management in an organisation. Literature trends indicate that line managers associate the improvement of work as one of the long-established and supported goals for HRD in an organisation (Poell & Van Der Krogt, 2017). Moreover, Mehale et al. (2021) indicated that HCD or training evaluation tools are convenient in determining the effectiveness of HCD interventions.

Research design
Research approach

This article is exploratory in nature in that the researchers discovered and interpreted the views, beliefs, thoughts, knowledge and perceptions about the HCD phenomena from the perspectives of the participants. The research engaged in a qualitative approach to explore how HCD is the responsibility of line managers in the SA education sector. This research is underpinned by the interpretivist paradigm. Interpretivism assumes that the discovery of facts occurs in a subjective manner through the social construction between participants and researchers (Makombe, 2017; Saunders & Tosey, 2015). Interpretivism holds that individuals possess distinct views; thus, the responsibility lies with the researchers to get as close as possible to the actual setting of the participants to elicit these multiple views (Creswell, 2016).

Research strategy

The research followed an exploratory strategy, as it is relevant and suitable to address the research question. The exploratory study can produce data that are robust and reliable (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Although the multicase study imposes intriguing difficulties, it can also provide an ample view of what is being researched through the process of comparisons of differences and similarities (Remenyi, 2012).

Research method

This article adopted a qualitative research method to explore whether HCD is a KPA of line managers in the SA education sector. The research process began by identifying the problem, followed by the development of research questions which were structured in anticipation of answers to that problem through the use of a qualitative data collection method. The data gathered from participants were thereafter analysed in order to answer the research question (Creswell, 2016). The semistructured interviews were utilised to collect data with

the purpose of achieving the research objective. The transcribed data were coded and categorised to develop themes that relate to the research objective of this study. The following subheadings are discussed to elucidate further the research method adopted in this article.

Research setting

Several educational institutions, as per Table 2, were identified within the Gauteng province, wherein line managers who met the set criteria were invited to participate in the study. The participants from these educational institutions were regarded as appropriate, as they can provide insights that will enable the study to answer its research question.

Entrée and establishing researcher roles

The researchers obtained permission from gatekeepers at the identified educational institutions prior to the interviews with the participants. The researchers ensured that participants were well informed about the purpose of the study. This approach allowed the participants to seek more information about the study and their roles. Moreover, the participants were made to feel at ease and to share openly their perspectives, experiences and views about the implementation of HCD within their scope of practice.

Research participants and sampling method

The participants of this study were line managers in the SA education sector. A total of $n = 12$ participants was selected to participate in the study using purposive sampling method (see Table 2). Purposive sampling is also referred to as judgemental sampling (Gray, 2014; Saunders et al., 2009). Purposive sampling allowed the researchers to select participants based on the preliminary criteria, and it is also suitable for a qualitative study with a small sample size. The participants had to meet the set key criteria of 5 years' or more experience in a supervisory or managerial position within the education sector to be included in the present study.

Data collection method

Semistructured interviews were conducted with the participants in their working environment. An interview guide was developed and utilised to direct the interview sessions. Semistructured interviews were beneficial because

TABLE 2: Research participants' job titles and relevant education subsectors.

Job titles	Education subsectors	Subsector codes	Total
Head of department (HOD)	TVET college	B	3
HOD	Private higher education institution	C	2
HOD	Primary school	A	2
HOD	Secondary school	A	1
Deputy principal	Private combined school	A	1
Deputy principal	Primary school	A	1
Senior lecturer	TVET college	B	1
Curriculum coordinator	Private higher education institution	C	1

TVET, technical and vocational education and training.

probes and clarity-seeking questions were posed to participants if the answers were vague and ambiguous. Interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Strategies employed to ensure data quality and integrity

In a qualitative study, researchers are expected to ensure credibility, transferability, confirmability and dependability of their research study and findings (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2011). The findings of this study were validated using the above-mentioned criteria by the researchers. In brief, credibility was obtained through prolonged engagement with participants as well as recapping some of the important notes for participants to comment on and validate as their actual views. Transferability entails the provision of all processes that the researchers undertook during the study, including the full details of participants. Moreover, the quotations by participants determine the extent to which the findings can be transferred to other similar environments. The researchers used an audit trail to ensure that all engagements with the participants and other steps taken throughout the study are recorded and incorporated into the final report of the study. An audit trail attests that every aspect of the research process (from conceptualisation to execution) has been properly documented for access by anyone with an interest of such a trail of the research (Gray, 2014). A research journal was used for audit trail purposes, and it was updated as the research progressed and notes taken were included in the analysis and, subsequently, in the research findings. Finally, the findings of the study were premised on the data collected rather than the values and views of the researchers. Findings and conclusions of the study were supported by quotations of the participants to demonstrate that they are value-neutral and unbiased.

Data analysis

The qualitative data collected were analysed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis involves the identification of codes and categories. The researchers read the transcripts and label codes in each sentence that represents a specific view or idea. Patterns and themes emerged from the data coded. In addition, ATLAS.ti software (Scientific Software Development GmbH, Berlin, Germany) was used to sort, store and retrieve data more quickly and easily. The analysis of the collected qualitative data was conducted using an inductive approach, which moved from raw data into codes and, subsequently, themes (Creswell, 2016).

Ethical considerations

This article considered and adhered to the general ethical issues of research. The clearance certificate was issued to the researchers by the Industrial Psychology and People Management. Research Ethics Committee on 16 October 2018, with clearance code IPPM-2019-275-(M). The certificate was also provided to the gatekeepers during the request for permission to conduct research at various targeted educational institutions. Participants in this study were provided with sufficient information about the purpose of the study, and their informed consent was requested in

writing before the interviews. Furthermore, participation in this study was voluntary and the identities of participants and their contributions will remain anonymous and confidential. The transcripts and recordings of semistructured interviews were kept secured and only accessible to researchers through passwords. Permission to record the interview sessions was requested from the participants prior to the beginning of each interview.

Findings

The themes and subthemes that emerged during the data analysis were aligned with the research objective for this article. This subsection discusses the three themes and six subthemes as findings of this article.

Theme one: Key responsibilities

The participants provided three contrasting opinions in response to the question about whether they are responsible for HCD implementation in their area of work. Firstly, the notion was that line managers are responsible for the HCD activities. Secondly, the participants indicated that line managers are not responsible for HCD. The last sentiment from participants constituted both yes and no in their answers. The last group of participants felt that some responsibilities should be performed by line managers, while others argued that HCD should not be the function of line managers but for the HRD departments or HCD professionals. Below are two quotes from the participants in their own words:

> 'Within our institution, yes, it is my responsibility to make sure that the people that I am working with, they are trained, they are highly trained appropriately so that they can be able to, you know, execute their duties.' (Participant 3B, male, HOD)

> 'I will say yes and no, it is my responsibility to train and develop my subordinates, but I was supporting department which does the administration part.' (Participant 1B, male, HOD)

Moreover, the participants were asked about their HCD KPAs and the relevant key performance indicators (KPIs). While it was easy for the participants to indicate their KPAs as far as HRD are concerned, they struggled to provide the KPIs associated with such KPAs. In this study, it was revealed that the line managers do not understand the KPIs in relation to the HRD KPAs. These are some of the quotes recorded from participants:

> 'No, Maybe I am not getting it, no.' (Participant 3B, male, HOD)

> 'I am not quite sure what you want for, what is the key, the indicators, like the criteria?' (Participant 5A, female, HOD)

> 'My personal ones? Okay, I think, what … basically if I understand you correctly, is what is my strong points what is that thing that I contribute best in the school?' (Participant 4A, male, deputy principal)

> 'There's a couple of things that we do make use of, for example, I like to use the lecture module survey it gives you a lot of feedback with regards to lecturers conducted in class and things like that and they have a couple of questions that otherwise we

can gauge whether the lecture is informed or not.' (Participant 1C, female, academic coordinator)

> 'I don't know the learners, can you also put it there?' (Participant 1C, female, academic coordinator)

Subtheme one: Needs analysis

Most participants indicated that they identify performance gaps and problems experienced by their subordinates. Line managers within the education sector use performance management or appraisal as a tool to identify problems and also observed their subordinates when performing their tasks. Poor learner results were also used by other line managers as a measure to determine performance problems. This is what some of these participants said:

> 'So, for me is to develop the training needs.' (Participant 1B, male, HOD)

> 'I need to identify them, and I need to either send that person on departmental courses of development or I need to do in-service training.' (Participant 7A, female, HOD)

Other participants expanded further to state that there is a constant discussion between them and the employee about the performance gaps or performance problems during the performance appraisals meeting. In both the schools and TVET colleges, a performance appraisal used by line managers is called an integrated quality management system, also known as IQMS. This is a quotation from the participant:

> 'Find the need first, does those people really need to be at those courses, do they really and I through IQMS, the teachers and sit, we can find out, okay this is a need, this person needs training in here and send them there.' (Participant 2A, male, deputy principal)

Subtheme two: Performance improvement

Participants were of the view that they are responsible for the improvement of their subordinates' performance in general and most importantly when there is a performance deficiency. This was revealed and justified by their understanding as well as the main purposes of HCD, which were subsequently complemented by the cause of action taken by these line managers when there is a performance gap or performance problem. Below are some of the participants' words in this respect:

> 'When they say what they want to improve in themselves, they also at the end of the year, they have to say what did we do to improve ourselves.' (Participant 5A, female, HOD)

> 'Lecturers, we believe you can always improve your skills, there's always something you can do, you know to better yourself at teaching.' (Participant 3C, female, HOD)

The study found a commonality among the participants that in an attempt to improve the work performance of their subordinates, line managers implement appropriate HCD interventions. The belief held by most line managers was that the HCD interventions facilitated by them are more effective. The responsibility is to both identify and direct employee development as well as implementing the HCD interventions

directly. This is what the participants said about implementing the HCD interventions:

'So, there's a lot of mentoring and supporting here, so we coach, we mentor, we support, we do everything to develop a person.' (Participant 2B, female, HOD)

'You will also you know check out how they are doing, do the coaching part as well.' (Participant 2C, female, HOD)

'We normally request teachers who are more experienced to mentor the new teacher if it's a new teacher, that you mentor, and say guide him or guide her.' (Participant 6A, male, deputy principal)

Theme two: Guidance and support

The participants in the study indicated that they need constant support and guidance when performing HCD interventions. Line managers, in these educational institutions, have gained more experience as teachers and lecturers and consequently lack HCD knowledge, skills and technical experience. Other participants indicated that they were overwhelmed by other work that is expected of them. This is a quote from one participant in this regard:

'HR Department needs to have policies and processes in place to assist line managers in empowering their people.' (Participant 2C, female, HOD)

Subtheme one: Barriers

Participants mentioned several challenges that they encounter when implementing HCD activities, hence requiring assistance and support from relevant stakeholders. This is what the participants said about the assistance and support from stakeholders:

'There should be that one on one, which is time consuming and if you look at our set up, we do not really have a time to sit with one person.' (Participant 7A, female, HOD)

'We don't have any power to make sure that happens however, if funding is not given or allocated.' (Participant 2C, female, HOD)

Subtheme two: Key stakeholders

The participants explained what kind of support and guidance they expect from the HRD department, senior managers and employees to ensure the effectiveness of their HCD activities. Line managers rely on HRD specialists with outsourcing of training providers and provide necessary guidance, where line managers are not experts. Moreover, line managers ensured that their senior managers are included and informed about the plans for their approval and support of HCD interventions. The participants said the following about the support from stakeholders:

'Above all to make this to be effective it must be a teamwork, my seniors also they need to be informed on time and the plan must be given to them, take it to them, they must see it, they must question it because sometimes our seniors when they question this, our planning, you find that maybe they don't want to support us.' (Participant 4B, male, senior lecturer)

'I can then submit to HRD to say please assist me in sourcing out this particular skill I am short of this and that and that.' (Participant 1B, male, HOD)

'Yes, your line manager should be there, but your line manager should have support if there are certain areas where the line managers is not the expert.' (Participant 1C, female, academic coordinator)

Theme three: Evaluation of human capital development interventions

The participants indicated that the HCD tasks and interventions implemented within their scope were effective. In order to determine the effectiveness, participants were asked how they measured the effectiveness and were requested to mention HCD activities that were mostly effective. It was revealed that line managers who participated in this study utilise a performance management system to measure the change or improvement of the educators or lecturers. They also relied on predetermined evaluation criteria, namely observation during the class visits and, finally, the learner results. It was evident during the interaction with the participants that they did not use any of the evaluation models to measure the effectiveness of their interventions. This is what one of the participants said about the evaluation of HCD interventions:

'Assisting them to reach their potential cause in that way you can try and make sure that they are effective and efficient and that they are engaged and happy with their work.' (Participant 2C, female, HOD)

Subtheme one: Impact analysis

The participants provided some insight on the extent to which they can measure HCD interventions to determine the impact. This is a quote from the participant:

'We don't have any formal return on investment measurements that we put in place, from you know, in terms of the different levels that you can measure an intervention, so yeah, we don't specifically us Kirkpatrick or Phillips, it's really tracking on a more subjective manner.' (Participant 2C, female, HOD)

'When this person is taken to a training, he does the training when he comes back this person is going to be measured, measured in the way that we check from where he was as far as the results analysis are concerned.' (Participant 3B, male, HOD)

Subtheme two: Feedback and monitoring of performance

Participants indicated that they require feedback after the implementation of the HRD intervention, and they also monitor the performance of their employees. Observation through class visit was one way of monitoring the performance of employees. These are quotations from participants under this subtheme:

'We get feedback from the mentors and the mentees, to say, is it working, do you feel that it's valuable.' (Participant 3C, female, HOD)

'HoD will make a class visit to check on the effectiveness of the teacher in the topic that he was mentored in.' (Participant 6A, male, deputy principal)

Discussion

The research objective of this article was to explore whether HCD is a KPA for line managers in the SA education sector. Considering the above findings, the current study discovered that line managers are responsible for some of the HCD responsibilities. Firstly, line managers identify the performance gap and training needs of their employees. Sušanj et al. (2020) indicated that line managers at HEIs play a vital role in the assessment of training needs. Secondly, line managers are better placed to identify appropriate HCD interventions to address the identified skills gap. This finding is supported by Noe (2020), who indicated that the needs assessment should be rigorous and conducted in such a manner that the HCD interventions implemented will address the performance gap and improve the performance.

This study found that line managers believe that HCD interventions can address the performance deficiency if the needs analysis and the appropriate HCD intervention were identified by them. Ellstrom and Ellstrom (2013) asserted that the performance gaps identified by both the employee and the line manager are effective, because the new knowledge and skills can be transferred easily to the working environment. This study further found that stakeholders such as HRD departments or HCD professionals and senior managers are not providing the support and guidance expected by line managers; as a result, this hinders the effective performance of HCD functions by these managers. Bos-Nehles and Meijerink (2018) concurred with this finding by asserting that the line managers will be effective with the HCD implementation if they are given sufficient support by HRD departments. Human resource development departments support the implementation of CPD for educators and lecturers (Kapp & Cilliers, 1998). Moreover, line managers are overwhelmed by other operational functions and lack HCD technical skills and funds for HCD interventions. Line managers' success with the HCD functions relies on the level of support that they are likely to receive from relevant key stakeholders to address many of these challenges. Macheng (2016) indicated that school managers should support and promote the development of educators which will ultimately lead to improved quality education. In addition, senior managers who ensure and capacitate those who support educators or lecturers through the implementation of appropriate and effective HCD policies and procedures will subsequently enable and improve teaching and learning in education institutions (Le Grange et al., 2006).

The study further uncovered that line managers use performance appraisals to monitor the performance of the employees after the HCD intervention has been implemented. It should be noted that the IQMS is the performance appraisal system implemented within the education sector, especially in public schools and TVET colleges. In this study, it was further found that this tool is effective in identifying the skills gaps. The National Education, Evaluation and Development Unit (2017) indicated in their report that schools with high performance place a higher emphasis on learning and development that addresses training needs identified with the IQMS processes.

Contrary to this, Pulakos et al. (2019) suggest that more attention should be on informal processes and actions that enhance performance on a daily basis rather than the overuse of formal performance management systems that are external to daily activities. These actions include setting goals, providing regular feedback that assists in achievement of results and continuous learning as well as eradicating any impediments that hinder the accomplishment of set targets and objectives.

Moreover, this study found that line managers were not familiar with evaluation models commonly used to determine the impact of the effectiveness of training interventions. None of the participants indicated that they utilise any of these models. Only one participant explicitly indicated that they neither use Kirkpatrick's model nor Phillips' return on investment. This finding is supported by Mara (2020), who found that managers are not aware of such models. Roberts (2017) argued that the measurement of ROI for HCD programmes can be conducted using a variety of methods, and organisations that invest in professional development are likely to reap the benefits of having employees with enormous morale. In addition, powerful tools such as Brogden–Cronbach–Gleser model can be modified to evaluate HCD programmes (Cascio et al., 2019). While line managers in this study were of the view that their HCD interventions are effective, it was apparent from their responses that they relied on feedback and reports from employees, observations during class visits and online sessions and the improvement in learner results. Baron (2011) indicated that there is no one way to measure HCD. The most important element in measurement is how the information gathered is used to improve HCD processes. The effectiveness of HCD interventions as outlined by these line managers is supported by Noe (2020), who indicated that training evaluation refers to the method of collecting the outcomes needed to ascertain whether the training was effective.

The study further revealed that the performance of HCD responsibilities by line managers is automatic. This means that line managers naturally execute these HCD responsibilities rather than as their KPAs, as encapsulated in their job descriptions or job profiles. The main goal or concern for these line managers is the delivery of teaching and learning by competent educators and teachers, which will ultimately improve learner results. This finding is in stark contrast with the assertion by Bainbridge (2015), who claimed that managers are responsible for HCD, and this should be documented in their job description. The study also found that the HCD tasks performed by line managers have no clearly defined indicators or standards of measure. This finding suggests that participants at the education institutions included in this present study are neither assessed when performing these HCD activities nor rewarded if their HCD interventions are implemented effectively.

Practical and managerial implications

It is the conclusion of this article that a clear allocation of HCD responsibility is a prerequisite for line managers to be effective and succeed with their HCD work. The division of

tasks should be supplemented by constant support from all key stakeholders which is based on mutual trust. The proposed reciprocal support for the HCD stakeholders' model in the education sector will ensure that HCD tasks are clearly allocated to each stakeholder to improve effectiveness of HCD interventions.

The proposed model in Figure 1 illustrates the division and roles of key HCD stakeholders.

In Figure 1, the division of responsibilities between the key stakeholders, particularly line managers and HRD departments or HCD specialists and other role players, is shown. Blayney et al. (2020) indicated that there should be an agreement between key stakeholders in respect of HCD responsibilities. The proposed model emphasises the importance of mutual support, which requires that each party performs their respective tasks and engages in meaningful and valuable discussions about HCD matters. Moreover, some degree of autonomy for line managers to determine HCD needs and interventions should be guaranteed. The division of HCD tasks and any associated decisions must be mutually taken and agreed upon by all relevant key stakeholders. Op de Beeck et al. (2018) found that line managers are motivated to perform HCD responsibilities when they clearly understand why these tasks must be performed within their area of work. Most importantly, these tasks should be captured in the job descriptions of the line managers. The standards, indicators and outputs should also be specified together with the details on how these are to be assessed. According to the proposed model, it is the responsibility of the HRD departments or HCD specialists to induct new line managers and/or train all line managers on a continuous basis on HCD functions to be performed. Furthermore, HCD specialists are accountable for the development of HCD strategies and policies for the entire institution. On the other hand, line managers are expected to implement these strategies and policies and ensure that employees within their supervision are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge through HCD interventions, such as inductions, on-the-job training, mentorship and coaching. Senior managers must ensure that the environment is conducive for line managers to be effective with their HCD responsibilities and should support HCD interventions by providing a sufficient skills budget. Moreover, senior managers must assess the HCD functions performed by line managers and reward outstanding performance as a motivation for continuous optimal performance. Human capital development responsibilities undertaken by motivated line managers tend to be more effective (Op de Beeck et al., 2017). Employees as targets and actual beneficiaries of HCD interventions implemented by their line managers are required to be receptive and participate willingly in these HCD initiatives. Moreover, Podsakoff et al. (2000) asserted that employees who engage in self-development through participation in advanced HCD interventions have a potential of contributing meaningfully to the organisation and enhancing its effectiveness.

Limitations of the study

The scope of the study was limited to public and private schools, TVET colleges and private HEIs located in the Gauteng province, where the authors reside, and as a result, it was not feasible to include all institutions in the education sector across South Africa. Furthermore, the study excluded HCD professionals, who are the key stakeholders who would have provided other critical insights, and as a result, their views and perspectives are not part of the research findings and conclusions of the current study.

Recommendations for future research

The present study employed a qualitative research method. It is recommended that future research should consider the use
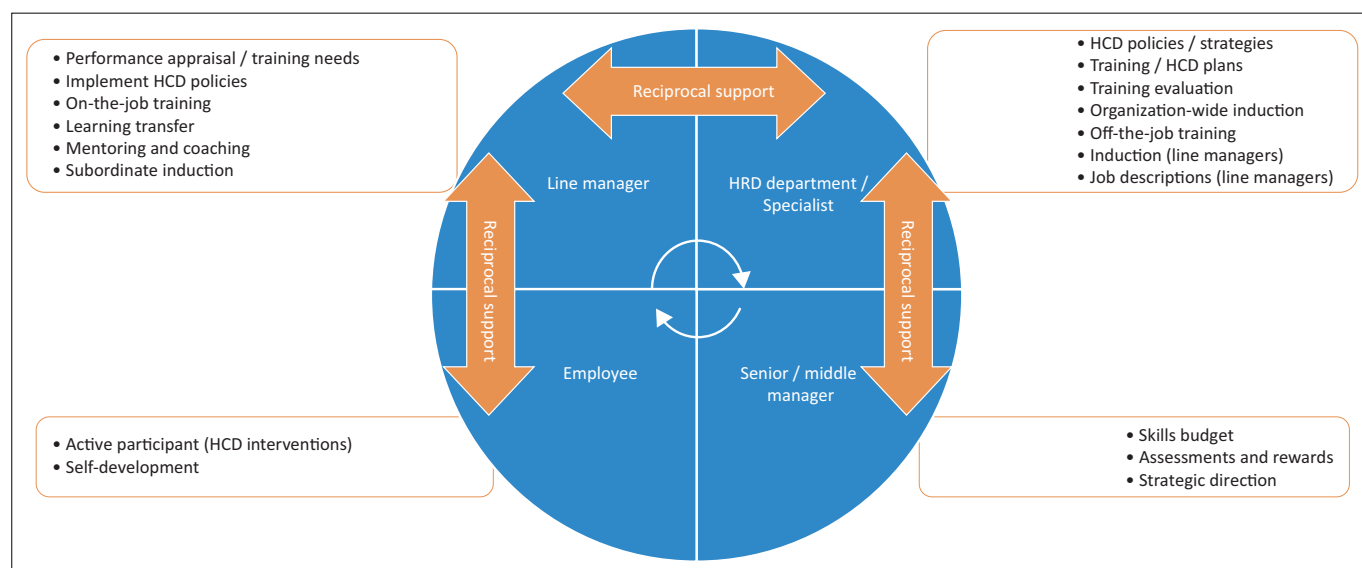
HRD, human resource development; HCD, human capital development.

FIGURE 1: Proposed reciprocal support for human capital development stakeholders' model.

of other research methods (quantitative or mixed methods) to determine or analyse the cost–benefit of HCD initiatives implemented in the SA education sector.

Conclusion

While line managers in the education sector perform some of the HCD KPAs, it is crucial that the decisions about the division of HCD responsibilities among the key stakeholders are mutual and should be accompanied by continuous support. The HCD responsibilities performed by line managers are not part of their job descriptions. Furthermore, line managers demonstrated a lack of understanding of KPIs associated with HCD responsibilities. This postulates that line managers are not assessed or rewarded for performing the HCD responsibilities. In this study, line managers are effectively capable of identifying performance gaps and subsequently implementing appropriate HCD interventions to address such performance deficiencies. Induction, in-service training, mentorship and coaching are effective HCD interventions implemented by line managers within their area of responsibility. The evaluation of HCD interventions using the most common evaluation models is not the responsibility of line managers. This is predicated on the fact that HRD departments or HCD specialists are regarded as experts with evaluations of HCD as a means to report on the financial benefits of HCD interventions. Line managers in the education sector measure the impact of their interventions through feedback and reports from their employees, observations during class visits and/or online sessions and learner results. The reciprocal support for the HCD stakeholders' model is proposed for the policymakers, line managers and HCD professionals in the education sector. The model will serve as a guide during the allocation of HCD tasks. It also encourages mutual support between all stakeholders in the HCD implementation processes to ensure the effectiveness of HCD interventions.

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Competing interests

Authors' contributions

M.T.G. and C.M.G. contributed to the completion of this study.

Ethical considerations

Ethical approval to conduct this study was obtained from the Industrial Psychology and People Management (IPPM) Research Ethics Committee of the University of Johannesburg (ref. no. IPPM 2019 275 [M]).

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Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article, as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

Disclaimer

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