**UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE**
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**MASTER'S IN EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT ADMINISTRATION AND POLICY**

# LEARNERS' EXPERIENCE OF THE INTEGRATION OF THEORY AND PRACTICE IN A WHOLESALE and RETAIL GENERALIST (NQF LEVEL 2) LEARNERSHIP



**by**

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*"With God all things are possible"*

Matthew 19:26

## ABSTRACT

Skills development is essential for every country to keep abreast with, at least one aspect of globalisation, namely, changes regarding production in the modern world. The way in which each country implements its skills development programme will depend on the unique history and circumstances of that country. Germany and Japan are amongst those countries that opted for a high skills strategy, whilst the United Kingdom opted for a low skills strategy. Kraak (2005) argues that South Africa would benefit by implementing a 'multi-pronged' skills strategy because many of its citizens are unskilled or have very low skills. This approach would cater for low-skills, intermediate-skills and continue to develop high skills.

South Africa's inputs-based education and training system has been replaced by a controversial outcomes-based approach. Many authors view an outcomes-based programme as lacking theory or content (Kraak, 1998; Young, 2004; Brown & Keep, 2000; Boreham, 2002), as reductive and mechanistic (Bates & Dutson, 1995, in Boreham, 2002) and mainly work-based and assessment-driven (Boreham, 2002). These criticisms question the quality of outcomes-based programmes.



New laws promulgated by the South African government have introduced learnerships that form part of this new Skills Development strategy. This study reviewed the general policy on skills development and explored the experiences of learners who completed a Wholesale and Retail Learnership in the context of the structured college-based learning, the practical work-based learning as well as the integration of theory and practice, in South Africa.

A qualitative approach was selected to enhance the researcher's understanding of the personal perspectives and experiences of learners who completed the learnership. The case study approach was used with a focus on analysing the subjective opinions of this group of learners. The research methods employed to clarify the understanding of how these learners experienced the learnership were semi-structured interviews, observations and analysis of documents.

The research shows that South Africa's multi-level National Qualifications Framework provides for academic as well as vocational training and promotes a 'multi-pronged' skills strategy. The findings suggest that the learners on this learnership experienced the theoretical learning in the college and the practical learning on the job as an integrated whole. The study concludes that the structured college-based learning enabled the learners on this learnership to implement what they learnt at college in the workplace.

## DECLARATION

Herewith I, the undersigned declare that the work included in this mini-thesis, **Learners' experience of the integration of theory and practice in a Wholesale and Retail Generalist (NQF Level 2) Learnership**, is my own original work that has not previously, in its entirety or in part been submitted to any university in obtaining a degree.

Karen de Mink 07 August 2007



SIGNED: ……

## KEY WORDS

1. Globalisation
2. Skills development
3. Apprenticeship
4. South African National Qualifications Framework
5. Learnership
6. Structured college-based learning
7. Work-based learning
8. Simulated Enterprise
9. Integration of education and training
10. Outcomes-Based Education/Competency-based Education

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

| | |
|---|---|
| ABET | Adult Basic Education and Training |
| ANC | African National Congress |
| ANTA | Australian National Training Authority |
| AQF | Australian Qualifications Framework |
| ARF | Australian Recognition Framework |
| CCFO | Critical Cross-Field Outcomes |
| COSATU | Congress of South African Trade Unions |
| COTT | Central Organisation for Trade Testing |
| DfES | Department for Education and Skills (United Kingdom) |
| DoL | Department of Labour |
| ETQA | Education and Training Quality Assurer/Education and Training Quality Assurance bodies |
| FET | Further Education and Training |
| GET | General Education and Training |
| GEAR | Growth, Employment and Redistribution Policy |
| HET | Higher Education and Training |
| HoD | Head of Department |
| HPWO | High Performance Working Organisation |
| HR | Human Resources |
| ICT | Information and Communication Technology |
| MA | Modern Apprenticeship |
| NATED | National Education |
| NFER | National Foundation for Educational Research |
| NIC | National Intermediate Certificate (equivalent to Grade 11) |
| NMC | National Manpower Commission |
| NQF | National Qualifications Framework |
| NSC | National Senior Certificate (equivalent to Grade 12) |
| NSDS | National Skills Development Strategy |
| NSW | New South Wales |
| NTB | National Training Board |
| NTS | National Training Strategy |
| NTSI | National Training Strategy Initiative |

| | |
|---|---|
| NVQ | National Vocational Qualifications |
| RPL | Recognition of Prior Learning |
| SAQA | South African Qualifications Authority |
| SAR | South African Railways |
| SARS | South African Receiver of Revenue |
| SE | Simulated Enterprise |
| SETA | Sector Education and Training Authority |
| SMME | Small Medium and Micro Enterprises |
| TVET | Technical Vocational Education and Training |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| USA | United States of America |
| VAT | Value Added Tax |
| VET | Vocational Education and Training |
| WCED | Western Cape Education Department |
| WSP | Workplace Skills Plan |
| W&R | Wholesale & Retail |
| W&RSETA | Wholesale and Retail Seta |

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

3. Consent forms:
   All interviewees: learners, workplace facilitators, workplace facilitator who completed a questionnaire in writing and college-facilitators
4. List of pseudonyms
5. Report on implementation of Learnership: April 2004 – March 2005
6. Time table of learnership
7. Demographics of all learners who enrolled for this learnership
8. General overview report of Programme Manager
9. Transcript of one learner interviewed
10. Extract of Chapter 4 of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998
11. Procedure followed by Hillside College to get learnerships and skills programmes in place
12. Objectives and requirements of this learnership
13. Programmes offered at Northern campus and North-West 1 of Hillside College before and after amalgamation
14. Unit standards researcher was involved in on this learnership

**LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES**

# *INTRODUCTION*

> *The organising principle, which has been used to cohere the various components of the HRD Strategy, is the concept of "work". This is not a narrow understanding of work, and must be understood as being the full range of activities that underpin human dignity by achieving self-sufficiency, freedom from hunger and poverty, self-expression and full citizenship. Nationhood and productive citizenship are interdependent, and it is in this sense that we speak of a nation at work for a better life for* all (extract from the HRD Strategy, Tsolo, 2001:73).

Never before in the turbulent history of South Africa has the government been more determined to uplift the skills of its people – especially those who have been severely oppressed and violently stripped of the opportunity to excel economically and academically.

The new democratic government of South African has committed itself to an integrated approach to education and training that is underpinned by the need for human resource development strategies and the drive for equity. The South African government as promulgated new legislation in order to give those who have been disadvantaged by the previous apartheid system a chance to obtain a formal qualification.



The new legislation includes the South African Qualifications Authority Act, Act 58 of 1995 (SAQA Act) the Skills Development Act, Act 97 of 1998 the Skills Development Levies Act, Act 9 of 1999 and the Further Education and Training Act, Act 98 of 1998 (FET Act) (Tsolo, 2001:46).

Learnerships form part of the new system of formal, contractual education and training prescribed by the Skills Development Act. The learnership system builds on the apprenticeship system. It is meant to eradicate the negative effects of the apprenticeship system in general and on training in particular (see Chapter One). The learnership is based on unit standards and qualifications registered by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) on the National Qualifications

Framework (NQF) [1]. The learnership system is established in the context of the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS) which seeks to link education and training to the demands of a changing labour market. One of the aims of the learnership system is to enable learners to perform effectively in occupations for which the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) have identified a clear demand in the labour market. Learnerships are not only introduced in the traditional technical fields, but provide formal learning routes in occupations across the entire economy. A learnership consists of 30% structured learning and 70% workplace experience that ultimately leads to a qualification registered on the SAQA and is related to an occupation.

The Wholesale and Retail (W&R) sector differentiates between two kinds of learnerships, namely 18.1 and 18.2 learnerships. 18.1 Learnerships refer to the training of employed learners who are upgrading their skills for the purposes of advancement and remain with the company after completion of the learnership because they are already in permanent employment. 18.2 Learnerships refer to training learners who are not employed in a *permanent capacity* for the duration of the learnership. They are simply referred to as learners. At the end of the learnership it is the prerogative of the host company to employ those learners who have successfully completed the learnership on a permanent basis or not. For a more detailed description of an 'employed' learner on a 18.2 Learnership, refer to the footnote in Chapter Four (section 4.2). One of the indicators of the objectives in the NSDS (regarding assisting new entrants into the labour market) to have been achieved by March 2005, was that within six months of completion a minimum of 50% of learners who successfully completed a learnership should be employed, (that is, either have a job or be self-employed), in full-time study, further training, or in a social development programme (DoL, 2001:22).

I have been teaching commercial subjects for more than ten years. Since 2003 I have been facilitating learning for learners undertaking the occupationally specific

[1] NQF refers to the National Qualifications Framework approved by the Minister for the registration of national standards and qualifications (RSA 1995).

programmes, that is, Learnerships and Skills Programmes, in the Further Education and Training[2] (FET) sector. I am gravely concerned that these learners might not be adequately equipped to be proficient in their companies and ultimately contribute to the productivity of the economy. The workplace facilitators have not undergone any type of training by the Wholesale & Retail Sector Education and Training Authority (W&RSETA) and therefore learners might not receive proper training in the workplace. Another concern is that workplace facilitators might be more interested in immediate goals of the company than in training the learners and helping them attain a qualification. Based on my experience as a teacher in the business field I am also perturbed that the structured college-based learning in this W&R Generalist (NQF Level 2) Learnership might not cover sufficient theory or content.

It is an excellent idea in theory to try to alleviate the disparities of our ignominious past by developing an education system that allows previously disadvantaged people a chance to obtain a qualification, however, I think that many of the unit standards, that I have taught lack content. Some authors (Kraak, 1998; Young, 2004; Brown & Keep, 2000 and Bates & Dutson, 1995, in Boreham, 2002) have criticised unit standard-based approaches (also referred to as outcomes-based or competency-based approach) in that the learning programme contains too little theory or content.



By looking at the experiences of learners in a case study I propose to explore the issue whether the knowledge component in the formal learning is adequate because it raises the question of whether the policy objective of integration (that is, the combination of theory and practice) is being met in this programme. This study will not look at all criticisms of unit standard-based approached learning programmes only those relating to the integration of theory and practice.

[2] Further Education and Training refers to all learning programmes leading to qualifications from levels 2 to 4 of the National Qualifications Framework as contemplated in the South African Qualifications Authority Act, Act 58 of 1995, which levels are above general education but below higher education (RSA 1998b).

**Main research question**

I embarked on this study to explore how a group of learners who had completed the 18.2 Wholesale and Retail Generalist (NQF Level 2) Learnership experienced the programme of structured college-based learning, the work-based learning as well as the integration of the two (that is, the integration of education and training or the integration of theory and practice). In addition I examined whether the Learnership met the expectations of the learners in relation to achieving a qualification and securing permanent employment.

Did the learners experience the theoretical learning in the college and practical learning on the job as an integrated whole? Did the structured college-based learning, that is, theory and Simulated Enterprise (SE) enable the learners to implement the theory in the workplace?

**Subsidiary questions:**

What have learners' experiences been in this Learnership in relation to learning, work and integration of learning and working?

Have learners' expectations been met in relation to achieving a qualification and securing permanent employment?

Considering the above, what insight does this Learnership provide on learnerships as a strategy for contributing to improved proficiency in the workplace, equity and redress and broader social goals of improving prospects for youth?

**Outline of thesis**

*Chapter One* provides an overview of some of the literature relevant to my research questions. It explores the new apprenticeship systems introduced by the United Kingdom (UK), Germany and Australia in the context of a high skills thesis and the routes taken by the Asian Tigers, the United States of America

(USA), the UK, Germany and Japan. Chapter One also briefly explores the debates about South Africa's skills strategy. A brief account of the old apprenticeship system and South Africa's new education and training system are given. Finally Chapter One looks at various authors' views on structured college-based learning (theory), work-based learning (practice) and the integration of the two.

*Chapter Two* examines the general policies that support the new education and training system in South Africa and provide guidelines for implementation of learnerships, such as the SAQA Act, Act 58 of 1995, the Skills Development Act, Act 97 of 1998, the Skills Development Levies Act, Act 9 of 1999 and the FET Act, Act 98 of 1998. It also provides an overview of literature on learning within work-based programmes.

*Chapter Three* describes the methodology of this study.

In *Chapter Four* the analysis of data focuses on the background to this Learnership and its implementation in a specific FET College. It also presents the profiles and perspectives of role-players in this Learnership, in particular the learners. Finally the chapter summarises the research findings about the experiences of the group of learners who completed the Learnership in relation to the structured college-based learning, the workplace experience and the integration of the two.



C*hapter Five* presents a summary of the conclusions of this study, makes recommendations for future learnerships of this kind and identifies issues for further research.

# *CHAPTER ONE*

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1.1 Introduction

Policies adopted since 1994 attempt to move South Africa away from a 'low-skills equilibrium', associated with apartheid (Kraak, 2004) to a 'multi-pronged' strategy (Kraak, 2005) in order to improve South Africa's competitiveness in a globalising world.

In the first section of this chapter I look at routes taken by the Asian Tigers, the United States of America (USA), the United Kingdom (UK), Germany and Japan to move towards a high skills strategy in order to remain globally competitive. I discuss apprenticeships in the UK and Germany as well as traineeships in Australia. I then summarise different authors' views on how we learn, that is, structured college-based learning, work-based learning and the problem of effective integration of the two.



In the second section of this chapter I discuss the route taken by South Africa regarding its skills strategy with a view to ensure global competitiveness in keeping with the Growth, Employment and Redistribution Policy (GEAR)[3]. I also give a brief account of the old apprenticeship system, its strengths and weaknesses and the objectives of a new education and training system. Finally I look at various authors' views on work and learning, that is, structured college-based learning, work-based learning and the integration of the two with reference to restrictive and expansive learning.

[3] GEAR policy was implemented in South Africa between 1996 and 2000 as a five-year plan, but continued to 2004. The macro-economic policy was intended to generate growth of 6% per annum, create jobs and bring down inflation.

## 1.2 International literature review

### 1.2.1 Globalisation and skills

Lubbers (1998 in Wilson, 2001:158) describes globalisation as 'a process that widens the extent and form of cross-border transactions among peoples, assets, goods and services and that deepens the economic interdependence between and among nations.'

With regard to skills the idea of a high skills economy has arisen in response to pressures of globalisation. Brown (2001:235) argues that industrial capitalism depended on knowledge and skill applied only by a cadre of managers, professionals and business elite. Today, the situation is very different. The demand for high skills is essential throughout the whole economy, that is, the talents and skill of all must be harnessed (*ibid.*).

Green & Sakamoto (2001, in Ashton, 2004:100) define a high skills economy as follows:



> *A high skills economy is defined as an economy with a wide distribution of workforce skills where these are fully utilised to achieve high productivity across a wide range of sectors, at the same time producing high wage rates and relative income equality. A high level of workforce co-operation supported by civic trust and social capital is seen as an important part of the model.*

A high skills economy does not only promise creation of wealth, but will also lead to a more even distribution of income. Consequently issues of social justice, equity and social cohesion are included in the economic policies of governments.

Until the Second World War, the USA, the UK and other European and Anglo-Saxon countries dominated world markets by exporting all their high-value and/or low-value manufactured goods to one another and to the developing world (Ashton, 2004:99).

The situation changed after the Second World War. These powerful countries lost their supremacy and consequently lost their favoured access to colonial markets too. Other countries such as Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea, referred to as the Asian Tigers, with no material or mineral resources, had no major resources to develop their own countries and compete globally, but their labour. Many of these countries applied Fordist systems of production using low-cost relatively unskilled labour to mass-produce. They were able to compete globally by undercutting the older industrial nations on the basis of lower labour costs. Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan had great success in implementing this strategy. Very soon countries like Malaysia, Indonesia and later China followed suit (*ibid*.).

The older industrial countries could not compete with these low wage economies and had to liquidate their businesses or transfer their production to the low cost economic venues. Countries, such as the UK and the USA, were hardest hit. Germany and other countries, such as Switzerland, that used high skilled labour were not affected to the same extent (*ibid*.).



The USA and the UK had developed new enterprises in areas where the new industrial countries could not compete, namely in the higher value-added, more knowledge-intensive industries. In the USA, information technology based industries developed, bringing with them new highly skilled, well-paid jobs in the new industries. The UK saw the information technology industries as their solution as well (*ibid*.).

The British government granted employers the liberty to hire and fire employees and to concentrate on training for their immediate needs (Ashton, 2004:102). Ashton argues that this was a short-term approach, and that the strategy will '… sustain an orientation to low-cost forms of production for which they employ low skilled labour' (*ibid*.:102).

The high skills society has not yet emerged fully in both the USA and the UK. Although there has been an increase in high skilled jobs, low skill jobs have increased dramatically leading to a 'polarisation in the labour market' (Green & Sakamoto, 2001, in Ashton, 2004:105). This means that the middle of the labour market (that is, intermediate skills) has virtually disappeared.

Germany and Japan followed the high skills route by investing substantial resources in training their workers. Germany developed a national system that produced a relatively large supply of workers with highly portable skills. Japan implemented plant-based training within the context of strong internal labour markets (Thelen & Kume, 1999:34).

Germany's training takes place via public or state vocational schools, coordinated and monitored apprenticeships or a combination of the two. In Japan workers are trained in company-specific skills inside the company. Training is accompanied by promotional possibilities. Employees are therefore less likely to leave.



Both systems, although different, have contributed to the global competitive success of Germany and Japan. The difference between German and Japanese employees is that the former obtain a nationally recognised qualification whilst the latter's qualification is plant-based/enterprise-based (Streeck, in Thelen & Kume, 1999:35). The German employee is thus more mobile in the national labour market because the qualification he obtains is broader than that of his Japanese counterpart. However, the Japanese employee's exit will still be costly to the employer because of his investment in the employee's training.

Ashton (2004:103) emphasises that 'the state and political processes play a central role in determining the route taken and …the level of skill formation is the outcome of a political struggle.'

According to Ashton (2004:104) a high skills strategy, as experienced by Germany and Japan, has numerous advantages for various stakeholders. For

business it could lead to economic growth, new markets with higher returns on capital. For middle and working classes it could mean better-skilled and better-paid jobs and for unions it could represent a more egalitarian society. He argues that governments need not be afraid to apply a high skills strategy, as they will not alienate the various role-players in the economy.

Brown argues that whereas in the past employees were 'rule followers', today 'individual initiative and self-reliance that challenges the routine' are emphasised (2001:258). Furthermore he identifies the key skills needed to ensure economic efficiency such as communication, teamwork, problem solving and creativity' (*ibid*.). Similarly in the UK, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES)/Key Skills Support Program fact sheet (in Turner, 2002) has identified seven key employability skills. Employers want people who are computer literate, able to relate well to customers, good team workers, flexible in their job functions, able to organise their work activities, decision makers and problem solvers as well as able to communicate effectively. An important question is whether Modern Apprenticeships (MAs) can develop the desired skills in employees.



### 1.2.2 Apprenticeships and learning

#### a) Apprenticeships

Modern Apprenticeships (MAs) were introduced in the UK in 1994. Various authors (Wagner, 1999; Macun, 2001; Jobert, 1997; Field and Dubhchair, 2001 in Fuller & Unwin, 2003a) identified the following reasons to change the old apprenticeship system: the changing nature of the national economies; increasing demand for a multi-skilled and knowledgeable workforce; decreasing commitment shown by employers for substantive training programmes; more young people continuing with and moving on to higher levels of full-time education; persistent problems of some young people experiencing difficulty in entering the labour market; and the need for lifelong learning strategies.

MAs were ostensibly introduced to strengthen the work-based learning route for young people and to contribute to addressing the shortfall in the UK's intermediate-level skills. MAs are usually based in the workplace and last at least one year in contrast to traditional apprenticeships that often lasted for five years. MAs work towards a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at either Level 2 (for a Foundation MA) or Level 3 (for an Advanced MA), key skills and eventually a technical certificate to assess their relevant knowledge (Spielhofer & Sims, 2004). MAs, unlike apprenticeships in the past, are available in a wide range of occupational sectors and are equally accessible to males and females (Fuller & Unwin, 2003b:6).

Spielhofer & Sims (2004) reported the findings of a study that was conducted by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) between May 2002 and December 2002. The main focus of the study was to explore the views of key stakeholders, namely employer-bodies, training providers, employers and apprentices of MAs in the retail sector. These stakeholders identified the primary barriers to the successful implementation of MAs. One reason that some learners do not complete MAs and that employers are reluctant to implement MAs is that little value is placed on the full apprenticeship (that is the theory and the practical) (DfES, 2001 in Spielhofer & Sims, 2004:540, 541). Young people consider the MA as an employment opportunity but do not consider completing the theory as crucial. Both the learner and the employer do not completely understand the requirements of the apprenticeship framework and therefore their participation is on an informal basis (*ibid*.). In other words, they do not recognise the importance of structured college-based learning and in turn obtaining a qualification.

Research undertaken by Sims, Golden, Blenkinsop and Lewis (2000, in Spielhofer & Sims, 2004:542 - 545) give further reasons why MAs are not implemented successfully. They are: the MAs are not relevant to the training and skills needed by employers; employers do not support learners fully (for example they are reluctant to allow employees time off to meet with their trainers because it could lead to a loss of sales); and there is a lack of suitable young employees in terms of age and ability. They have discovered that young people in the retail sector are

not interested in a career. Most young people are only interested in earning more money. Obtaining a qualification has no significance to them. Spielhofer & Sims (2004) found that 'job hopping' was a primary reason for young people not completing the MA. Gamble (2003:50) has also stated that successful implementation of MAs may be more difficult in the non-traditional sectors, where courses usually only consisted of a theoretical component, such as MAs in the business field.

Fuller & Unwin (2003b) have investigated the structure, content and implementation of MAs. They argue that the government policy is more concerned about the 'social inclusion potential' of MAs (granting employment opportunities to youths who drop out of school or keeping down unemployment numbers) rather than with a 'high quality work-based route to a qualification.' Their study has found that the completion rates of MAs have not matched government expectations. In other words, the number of learners who complete the qualification in industries such as retail, hotel and catering is way below those who were initially recruited. This is not the case for those industries that have a long history of apprenticeships, such as construction and engineering.

The Adult Learning Inspectorate in the UK (2002, in Maynard & Smith, 2004) stated that only 40% of work-based learning providers were considered adequate in 2001/2002, but the situation had improved to 60% during 2002/2003. Maynard & Smith (2004) examined aspects of retention and achievement in modern apprenticeship programmes. Drawing on twelve projects, they recommended the following approaches to improving success in MAs to improve learner motivation by improving teaching and learning instead of rewarding employers financially; arrange more visits by the assessor to the learner at work; to discuss learner progression from a Foundation Modern Apprenticeship to an Advanced Modern Apprenticeship; and to apply a learner-centred approach. Maynard & Smith (2004) have also highlighted certain lessons to be learnt. These include: commitment by the organisation to continuous change; the provider has to plan

for realistic change; and the role of key players has to be recognised so that the learner can progress.

Traineeships were introduced in Australia in 1985 to complement apprenticeships or as Dumbrell (2003, in Kirby, 2004:5) states 'articulated into' apprenticeships. The old apprenticeship system was restricted to skilled trades and mostly catered for young males. During the late 1980s a wider range of training opportunities became available to all groups of young Australians (Kirby, 2004:2). Traineeships was regarded as part of labour market programmes aimed at 'soaking up the growing number of young unemployed that had developed following the recession of the early 1980s' (Dumbrell, 2003 in Kirby, 2004:5).

The purpose of the Modern Apprenticeship and Traineeship System, according to the new Australian Federal Coalition Government, was that:

> *(The) Modern Australian Apprenticeship and Traineeship System is a package of measures aimed at making the apprenticeship and training system more responsive to industry and employer needs, thereby increasing the competitiveness of Australian enterprises. It focuses on enhanced workforce skills and expanding training opportunities for young people* (www.budget.gov.au, in Kirby, 2004:11).

In 1998, the Modern Apprenticeship and Traineeship System was officially renamed the New Apprenticeship system. The key features of this new system were: no legal and administrative differences between apprenticeships and traineeships, the integration of apprenticeships and traineeships into the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), the full coverage of apprenticeships and traineeships by training packages, the introduction of User Choice[4] principles (previously only available for traineeships), the abolishment of training in certain vocations only except in New South Wales (NSW) and the establishment of the Australian Recognition Framework (ARF) (NCVER, 2001, in Kirby, 2004:11)

[4] User Choice refers to choosing the Training Provider.

Saunders (2001, in Kirby, 2004:11) demonstrates the important link between the New Apprenticeships and the ARF as follows:

> *… the New Apprenticeships system took effect from January 1998. So did the Australian Recognition Framework (ARF), the formal mechanism introduced to take the system beyond the limitations of the 1992 National Framework. ANTA[5] began to endorse new training packages whereby industry training advisory bodies (ITABs) and similar bodies developed the qualifications, competencies and assessment guidelines for industries and occupations. A new Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) has finally subsumed the TAFE certificate-diploma qualifications framework that had been used nationally since 1984.*

By 1996 enrolled apprentices and trainees represented 2% of the Australian labour force. By 2003 it was 4,3% (Brooks, 2004, in Kirby 2004:13). Brooks further estimates that between 1996 and 2002 the number of learners in traditional apprenticeships grew by approximately 7%. In contrast, during the same period, she estimates that the number of learners in traineeships had grown by more than 300%.



Whilst growth in the traditional areas of apprenticeships has remained relatively constant, tremendous growth has occurred in traineeships-dominated 'intermediate' level occupations, such as production, transport, clerical, sales and service occupational sectors. Furthermore by 2003 57% of trainees were over 25 years old (Kirby, 2004).

Although there have been a number of concerns raised regarding the issue of quality in traineeships in Australia, there have been many successes. It was highlighted by Robinson (NCVER, 2001 in Kirby, 2004:19) that 80% of employers, with at least one new apprentice, were satisfied with the training provided. Two-thirds of new apprentices rated the quality they received in their new apprenticeship programme, as excellent. 94% of the new apprentices rated the relevance of the training to their job as excellent as well.

[5] ANTA refers to the Australian National Training Authority.

Over the past five years, Schofield (1999a, 1999b, 2000a, 2000b, in Kirby, 2004:19) has undertaken studies in Queensland, Tasmania and Victoria. She used the following criteria to test the quality of traineeships: effectiveness, fitness for purpose, efficiency, accountability and ethical practice and fair dealing. She identified a number of strengths pertaining to the implementation of traineeships. She also discovered many weaknesses, such as management shortcomings, non-compliance by employers and training providers regarding their legal and moral obligations to apprentices and trainees, inadequate auditing of workplace training and insufficient emphasis on judging the suitability of the workplace for training, inability to deal with trainee complaints, problems with user choice as well as administrative inefficiencies. Weaknesses in the relationship between the Commonwealth and state administrations were also identified.

In her Queensland report on traineeships Schofield (1999a, in Kirby, 2004) concludes that 'for many thousands of trainees and their employers, traineeships are a positive experience, delivering on their promise of enhanced skills and improved employment prospects.'



The German education system comprises a general education sector and a professional or skilled occupational training sector. This dual system combines practical training in a business entity with education in a vocational school, referred to as a Berufsschule. These Berufsschulen have been part of the German education and training system since the 19th century.

Approximately 400 occupations, ranging from industrial mechanic to baker to fitness trainer, doctor's assistant, banker, dispensing optician or oven builder within this vocational system offer apprenticeships (Rawe, 2006; www.answers.com). An apprenticeship consists of nationally standardised curricula. This means there is a general system for all. External bodies, such as chambers of crafts, administer examinations. The average time frame to complete an apprenticeship is 35 months (www.answers.com). Approximately 75% of

young Germans opt to do an apprenticeship. The remaining 25% enter universities (Port Jobs, 2004).

The federal government funds the theoretical component of the apprenticeship whilst the cost of on-the-job training is fully covered by the industry (Port Jobs, 2004). Companies are not subsidised by tax concessions or any other subsidies (Rawe, 2006). The uniqueness of the German system lies in the fact that 'government and industry have a shared obligation to support the development of the workforce' (*ibid*.:2). This training is available to all qualifying individuals. German private entities have a responsibility to the economic development and success of the country to create employment for these individuals. The head of personnel at Volkswagen expressed the following view: "Training costs money; not to train costs a great deal more money" (*ibid*.:2).

The young Germans can start an apprenticeship at the age of sixteen when they leave the Hauptschule, that is, the lowest level of secondary education. Learners work in the enterprise for four days of the week and are at school for one day. This apprenticeship training lasts three to four years and upon completion many learners enter the workforce or they have the choice of attending intermediate technical schools for further training. Within their first few years at the Hauptschule learners can enter the Realschule. Here apprentices train for three to four years and can receive further training at higher technical schools. Learners who do not fall in the above categories continue with their advanced general education at the Gymnasium, and upon completion continue their studies at a university (*ibid*.: 2).

The German model has proved to be extremely successful (Port Jobs, 2004). Less than 9% of young German learners drop out of high school. This is not surprising because apprenticeships can earn an average salary of $19 913,00. More than two-thirds of learners are appointed full-time after their apprenticeship training. Apprenticeships are not only offered by mega-corporations, but also by sole traders (Rawe, 2006).

This section examined programmes such as apprenticeships and traineeships as part of the skills strategy in certain countries. The next section focuses on the issue of learning within work-based programmes.

b) Views on learning

In the UK NVQs, that is, outcomes-based qualifications, introduced in 1987, compete with numerous traditional qualifications, that is, broad-based vocational programmes. The numbers of people who obtain traditional qualifications by far exceed those obtaining NVQs (Robinson, 1996, in Brown & Keep, 2000:87). Where traditional qualifications are widely accepted by firms, they are also popular with individuals as they have a greater labour market utility (Brown & Keep, 2000:87).

There are many reasons for the ineffectiveness of outcomes-based or competency-based training in the UK. A few of these reasons reported by Brown & Keep (2000:86) are: the narrow understanding employers have of the content, rushed implementation of an untested model, the word 'competence' was never clearly defined and teachers, trainers and assessors were, for the most part, not consulted in the process of making policy and transforming vocational training. Some other areas of concern are that these programmes have a highly detailed criteria-based assessment of occupational competence and that too much direct attention is paid to competence and assessment, while the primary focus of the inter-relationship between education, training and employment needs to be upon *learning* and *towards the future* (*ibid*.).

Boreham (2002: 226) says that: '…. in these programmes learning is mainly work-based, the courses are assessment-driven, the assessment consists of compiling evidence of competence in the work-place and the theoretical content has been reduced to the bare minimum'. Bates & Dutson (1995, in Boreham, 2002:227) refer to the concept of competence-based education and training as 'mechanistic, reductionist and as denying the importance of human agency in the

process of learning'. According to Prais (1989a,b in Brown & Keep, 2000) the productivity of German employees, who have undergone vocational education and training, is superior to their UK counterparts because of the emphasis their vocational training system placed on technical knowledge and theoretical knowledge.

Australia has been offering Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses that do not contain an endorsed curriculum component or learning outcomes. The training packages only contain qualifications that can be undertaken, industry-derived competencies and assessment guidelines. Wheelahan & Carter (2001:303) argue that:

> *Training packages may result in poorer student learning outcomes and that they may threaten the end of effective credit transfer between the vocational education and training and higher education sectors… national training packages are not a good model for other countries and that Australia's current vocational education and training policy needs to be reviewed.*



Many authors have described traditional apprenticeships as 'lacking an explicit theory of instruction and not dependent upon any formal teaching' (Coy, 1989; Scribner & Cole, 1971 in Guile & Young, 2002). Modern apprenticeships are meant to be different. Authors tend to emphasise the notion of 'mediation' as a vital aspect of the learning process (Scribner & Cole, 1971 in Guile & Young, 2002:149). Lave (in Fuller & Unwin, 1998:162) does not consider learners as 'passive recipients or as mere reproducers of mechanical skills and the knowledge produced by experts'. She believes that learners should be given authentic tasks in the workplace that are structured, planned and goal-oriented. The learner should be able to apply theory to solve problems in real situations. Ashworth & Saxton (1990, in Fuller & Unwin, 1998:163) refer to the ability of theory to be applied to solve problems in real situations as 'authentic theory'.

After analysing data collected on workplace learning Fuller & Unwin (2003a) propose that instead of a 'restrictive approach' an 'expansive approach' should be

encouraged. 'Restrictive' or 'adaptive' learning includes conditioning and imitation, where the learner focuses on copying readily available correct behaviours (Engestrom, 1994, in Fuller & Unwin, 1998). 'Expansive' learning is used to capture what the learner perceives to be a crucial facet of learning, where learning is also criticism of the given, as well as innovation and creation of new ideas, artefacts and forms of practice (*ibid*.).

Fuller & Unwin (2003a) predict that an expansive approach will lead to broader goals being set. In addition they forecast that it would foster workplace learning and contribute to the 'creation of productive workplace learning environments' (Fuller & Unwin, 2003a:42). Furthermore they believe that an 'expansive' approach will provide learners access to and participation in a wide range of learning opportunities that will enable them to progress within and beyond their current workplace and therefore, become lifelong learners.

An added, yet very important, dimension to effective learning is the attitude of the facilitator. According to Rogers (2002:27) '… the facilitation of significant learning rests upon certain attitudinal qualities that exist in the personal relationship between the facilitator and the learner'. The facilitator has to be real. He has to show that he cares for the learner. A relationship of trust will develop if the facilitator is real.

Avis (2004) embarked on a study that explored work-based learning in the context of current changes in vocational education and training in England. The author tried to place these within an understanding of the economy and the way in which work-based knowledge is interpreted. Avis used literature that examines the work-based experiences of young people to analyse these issues. He states that 'real learning takes place when it is acquired in the context where the resulting knowledge can be practically used' (*ibid*.:211). Furthermore he says that there is a correlation between practice, context and the production of knowledge.

Bagnall (1990, in Garrick, 1999:219) offers another way of looking at work-based learning, that is, learning at work can be 'accidental'. He says that learning can occur 'unconsciously' while working. One only learns the significance of a particular incident after it has occurred (*ibid*.).

Barnett (1999, in Garrick, 1999:17) presents the argument that learning at work exists in conditions of 'supercomplexity'. This means that many factors influence the way we learn at work, such as, organisational structures, organisational cultures and new digital communication technologies (*ibid*.). The complicated dynamics in the workplace cannot be taught in a classroom.

According to Guile & Griffiths (2001:126) '… host organisations ought to consider how they can provide environments for learning if they are to maximise the learning potential of these activities for themselves and for learners.' Knasel & Meed (1994, in Brown & Keep, 2000:48) affirm this by stating that 'the wrong organisational culture would significantly inhibit effective learning.'



Ashton & Sung (2002:83) emphasise that the work design, for example, 'self-managed work teams, multi-skilling, job rotation and cross training and the devolution of decision-making' will produce 'high performance working organisations' (HPWOs). The work design affords the employee the opportunity to develop additional skills and it also enhances the level of the new skills (*ibid.:*87).

Ashton & Sung (2002:93) also mention that some HPWOs use formal courses to train their employees for extensive multi-skilling, cross training and a high level of technical skills. These courses usually transpire in a classroom. The USA is already using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to train their employees. Some organisations, for example, Motorola, have established universities to deliver formal courses to their employees (*ibid*.). They stress that workplace learning should not only take place at the start of an employee's career, but that it should happen throughout a person's career (*ibid*.:98).

Studies undertaken by Green *et al*. (2001, in Ashton & Sung, 2002:93 – 94) have revealed that computer skills can be learnt most effectively in education and training programmes, while 'work-based learning … is more effective in delivering problem-solving, team-working and some communication skills'. Therefore, the role of formal education cannot be ignored completely, but training in the workplace is far more important for some areas (*ibid*.).

Fuller & Unwin (1999, in Gamble, 2003:48) and Young (2001, in Gamble, 2003:48) caution that formal learning should not simply be replaced by work-based learning in all sectors. Certain professions, such as accounting, electrical installation and engineering manufacture, still require in-depth knowledge and this can only be done in the classroom.

The literature indicates that although work-based learning is important, its effectiveness is only possible when combined with formal classroom teaching (Gott, 1995, in Fuller & Unwin, 1998; Engestrom, 1995, in Fuller & Unwin, 1998; and Gamble, 2003:50).



Guile & Young (2002:159) have expanded on Vygotsky's (1978) theory regarding how learners progress in their studies as they relate to 'everyday' concepts. They have used this theory as a basis for advocating that 'the learning process explicitly involves the use of both scientific and everyday concepts'.

Ashworth & Saxton (1990, in Fuller & Unwin, 1998:164) state that:

> *… theoretical knowledge can be merely 'detached theory', unconnected with the knower's daily life; but it can – and should – be engaged theory … (such) … theory plays the role of an interpretive resource; it is a system of tools with which to make sense of his or her work experience, so that experience is raised to the level of reflection partly through the employment of theoretical concepts, and theory is related to things which have real significance.*

Guile & Griffiths (2001) analysed how students learn and develop through work experience. In their paper they discuss how, firstly, students learn and develop through work experience and, secondly, how students relate the learning that happens within and between the different contexts of education and work.

According to them it is important not to view vertical (formal) and horizontal (informal) development separately. For many years education and training systems have classified subjects into separate disciplines. They suggest that the curriculum should encourage learners to make the connection between work experience, the knowledge component, skill, and the context within which all of this takes place. They propose that work should not be viewed only as a context that students learn *about*, but that work, like education, should be considered a context *through which* students can learn and develop (*ibid*).

In their quest for a 'new curriculum framework' they have analysed five different models, namely the Traditional Model, the Experimental Model, the Generic Model, the Work Process Model and the Connective Model. They favour the latter because this model does not only allow learners to 'develop the capacity to participate within workplace activities and cultures', but they also learn 'how to draw upon their formal learning and use it to interrogate workplace practices' (Guile & Griffiths, 2001:126) (Refer Appendix Table 1).



Engestrom (1994, in Fuller & Unwin, 1998:159) clarifies the link between learning and modern work organisation or production issues. He argues that:

> *Although there are many occasions of productive learning in everyday situations, most of everyday learning consists of conditioning, imitation and trial and error. Investigative deep level learning is relatively rare without instruction or intentional self-instruction. For that very reason, instruction is necessary. Its task is to enhance the quality of learning, to make it purposeful and methodical.*

High-level performance of an employee can only be determined when thinking skills, critical reflection and the transfer of knowledge are observed in the

workplace (Brown & Keep, 2000). Harkin (1997, in Brown & Keep, 2000:46) clarifies this by stating that: 'skills such as effective communication or problem solving can only be developed in a lengthy process of practice, in demanding and realistic situations.' What we learn in a classroom can only be fully mastered when put into practice in the workplace.

## 1.3 South African literature review

According to the international literature review, countries such as the Asian Tigers, the USA, the UK, Germany and Japan, are grappling with the problem of developing an appropriate skills strategy in order to remain globally competitive.

South Africa is in the same dilemma. In this section I discuss two themes regarding the route taken by South Africa regarding its skills strategy to ensure global competitiveness. These themes are globalisation and the South African response and a brief history of the apprenticeship system in South Africa.



### 1.3.1 Globalisation and the South African response

During the 1970s and 1980s South Africa was marginalised from the international economic arena. While the rest of the world was concentrating on attracting foreign capital, transferring new technology or developing their own capital and technical expertise to allow them to compete internationally, South Africa persisted with inward-looking import substitution policies[6]. Until the 1980s certain jobs in the labour market (usually high skilled jobs) were reserved for whites. Coloureds, Indians and blacks were only allowed to do lower-skilled lower-paid jobs and prevented from participating in the same educational programmes as whites.

[6] Import substitution policy endeavours to develop industrial capacity within a developing economy by replacing imported goods with domestically produced goods (Mayer & Altman, 2005)

Racial segmentation became a decisive factor of the labour market in South Africa with high skilled jobs being reserved for whites (Ashton, 2004:106). No strategy existed to develop low-skilled jobs to highly skilled and highly paid jobs. 'Essentially, the combination of racial segmentation in the labour market and racial discrimination in education and training produced a racially-defined low skills model' (*ibid.*:106). The apartheid policies eventually led to serious unemployment and extreme poverty of the vast majority of its people. In 1994 the expanded unemployment level[7] in South Africa was 28,6% (Mayer & Altman, 2005:42).

In South Africa whites were the main beneficiaries of technical and vocational education and training during apartheid. For black learners under apartheid education and training was associated with the Department of Education and Training. Ironically it had 'very little to do with training' (Badroodien & Kallaway, 2003/4:8) and instead focused on developing blacks into 'manual labourers' that would force them to remain in the rural areas, factory workers or doing routine work related to mining (Paterson, 2003, in Badroodien & Kallaway, 2003/4:8). This led to technical and vocational education being stigmatised in South Africa.



Although South Africa gradually moved away from its import substitution policy toward an outward-looking export-oriented policy[8] in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the unemployment rates did not improve (Ashton, 2004; Mayer & Altman, 2005). In February 2000 the expanded unemployment rate was quoted to be 35,5% (Statistics South Africa, 2001 in Ashton, 2004:106) and in 2002 it was 41,8% (ILO, 2004, in Mayer & Altman, 2005:42). Many new jobs were created after 1994, but the unemployment rate seemed to only worsen. Bird (2002, in Ashton, 2004:106) highlights that although the economy generated 1,1 million

[7] Expanded unemployment rate includes those who are not employed as well as those who are actively searching for work (Mayer & Altman, 2005).
[8] Export-oriented policy seeks to build an industrial base with production geared to external markets (Mayer & Altman, 2005).

new jobs between 1994 and 1999, 3,1 million people of all races entered the labour market.

Davies & Farquharson (2004:336) demonstrate the need for a new education and training system in South Africa with statistics, namely a major unemployment crisis at 29,5% or 4,5 million people (World Competitiveness Report, 2001;2002 as cited by Davies & Farquharson, 2004: 336); economic pressures and downsizing that resulted in many retrenchments, particularly in medium and large-scale enterprises; structural transformation of the economy away from activities based in the primary sectors of agriculture and mining and towards more knowledge-based activities in the secondary and tertiary sectors. The type of skills needed by the labour market have therefore changed and a significant proportion of the population lacks the basic competencies or skills required to meet the new challenges.

Although the situation in South Africa regarding changes in the economy, that is, globalisation, the demand for higher skills, structural changes, organisation of industry and business, growth of small businesses and societal changes (DoL, 2001) is similar to the rest of the world, the country cannot follow the same high skills strategy as other countries because of its unique past (Ashton, 2004). South Africa has to develop a skills strategy to overcome the low level of skills and social imbalance inherited by the apartheid policies (*ibid.*).

The new South African government was apprehensive to continue with a low skills strategy because it was associated with the negative connotations created by the old apartheid regime (Ashton, 2004:98). At one level the high skills strategy seemed appropriate, but the unemployment figures were too high (refer Mayer & Altman, 2005; Davies & Farquharson, 2004; Bird, 2002, in Ashton, 2004 above). Too few jobs were generated to match the growth in the number of new entrants into the labour market. Considering the reality of the labour market, Ashton therefore suggests that South Africa re-visit the low skills strategy that proved to be very successful in the Asian Tigers that presently have unemployment rates

averaging 3%. Economic growth has continued to the point where they are producing higher value-added goods, for example, electronic goods, and in turn the standard of living of their people has increased. The Singaporean, South Korean and Taiwanese governments have led skill reform in their respective countries and have consequently upgraded the education and training systems to accommodate the new skills required in the new industries (Ashton, 2004:106 - 109). Similar to the Asian Tigers, labour is South Africa's greatest asset.

Mayer & Altman (2005:48, 49) argue, however that South Africa cannot only apply a low skills strategy if it wants to be globally competitive. They state that this route would mean that the low-skilled low-paid employees would have to be paid even less in order to increase labour-intensive exports and compete with other low wage competition. They therefore argue that one way for South Africa to absorb its labour into the market is simultaneously to expand the higher-value traded sectors and low productivity non-traded subsectors. Non-traded subsectors refer to industries such as construction and social services. Mayer & Altman (2005:50) mention that the non-traded sectors have 'significant potential for job creation among unskilled and semi-skilled workers', primarily since South Africa has a great demand for basic goods and services. They predict that long-term jobs, skills formation and social cohesion will result if this strategy is followed (*ibid.*).

Similarly, according to Kraak (2005), South Africa could not simply follow the rest of the world in their high skills strategy, because many of its citizens were unskilled or possessed very low skills. Kraak argues for an 'multi-pronged Human Resource Development' approach that consists of a 'joint high-skill and intermediate-skills strategy on the supply side, underpinned by a demand-driven strategy that seeks to stimulate large-scale labour-absorbing employment growth and is supported by appropriate input of training for the unemployed' (Kraak, 2005:57). In this way, South Africa would simultaneously be providing training to the multitude of unskilled and/or low skilled unemployed and employed

citizens. In addition the country could continue to provide training in the high skills sector.

The creation of mass employment opportunities for low and medium skilled workers require strong interventions from government in the area of skills development as well as the introduction of other social support mechanisms to facilitate economic participation. A discussion of the laws that South Africa has promulgated to uplift the skills of its people follows in Chapter Two.

This section looked at the route taken by South Africa regarding it skills strategy in response to globalisation. The next section gives a brief account of the old apprenticeship system in South Africa.

### 1.3.2 A brief history of the apprenticeship system in South Africa

The discovery of gold and diamonds in South Africa in the nineteenth century brought in many skilled artisans from Britain together with their trade unionism and their labour traditions. The formal contract used to train artisans in Europe, were known as apprenticeships, a formally structured education and training programme that provides a combination of theoretical and authentic work-based learning. One of the first industries to implement this system in South Africa was the mining industry.

The apprenticeship system, as implemented in apartheid South Africa after 1948, prevented access to learning opportunities based on race, a division between theory and practice and an unequal allocation of funding between white state-aided colleges and black state colleges (DoE, 2001:3). According to Lewis (1984:24 in Gamble, 2003:9) it was not the Apprenticeship Act of 1922 that directly excluded blacks from entering an apprenticeship instead it was 'the high educational requirements set down in the Act and the requirement to attend a trade school, when few existed for apprentices who were not white'.

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s the theoretical component of the apprenticeship system was offered via an extensive network of Technical Colleges in the public VET system as well as through large parastatal organisations, including South African Railways (SAR) (now called Transnet), Post and Telecommunications (Telkom), Eskom and Iscor (DoE 2001:3) to up-skill white apprentices in South Africa. Apprenticeships were found in trades such as carpentry, motor mechanics, spray-painting, fitting and turning, plumbing, boiler making and electrical trades. The apprenticeship system only covered certificates N1 to N3[9] and the theory was often unrelated to the practical training (Kraak, 2004:121). The provision of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in South Africa was to a large extent shaped by the belief that blacks, coloureds and Indians did not possess the 'intellectual capacity to be trained at higher levels' (Badroodien & Kallaway, 2003/4:7).

In the 1970s the government's industrial decentralisation policies that encouraged employers to move their businesses to the 'homelands'[10] or to adjoining 'border areas' meant that there was now an increased demand for skilled labour. More black workers had to be trained, but were still not accepted as formal apprentices (DoE, 2001:3, 4).



Only in 1981, with the promulgation of the Manpower Training Act, were blacks formally accepted into the apprenticeship system. Before that they were simply 'tool boys' and later 'artisan aides' (Potgieter 2003).

After the political activity of the late 1970s, two commissions were established, namely, the Wiehahn Commission[11] – that investigated labour and training

[9] N1 to N3 courses were previously referred to as NIC and NSC. Presently these courses are equivalent to Grades 10 to 12.
[10] Homelands were the tribal regions set aside by the South African apartheid government as separate states.
[11] Some of the recommendations of the Wiehahn Commission regarding the indenturing of apprentices in South Africa are: no discrimination or unfair advantage on the basis of race, colour or sex; special provision be made for the provision of practical and theoretical training of black apprentices at public centres as specified in the Black Employees' In-Service Training Act, 1976, or other similar conveniently situated or suitable facility; propagation of apprenticeship training;

legislation, and the Riekert Commission – that investigated black urbanisation. These commissions proposed the 'streamlining and rationalising of labour and training legislation, which culminated in the enactment of the Manpower Training Act of 1981' (Kraak, 1993 and McGrath, 1996, in Akoojee, Gewer & McGrath, 2005:110). The National Manpower Commission (NMC) and the National Training Board (NTB) were established to advise the Minister of Manpower on labour and training matters (*ibid*.).

The apprenticeship system had many positive features but it also had some negative features.

Omar (1998:17) points out that the apprenticeship system worked successfully for many years because of its positive features, namely apprentices developed their ability to do work by performing in a real work context; apprentices had the opportunity to observe experts in action; apprentices could draw on the support and mentoring of experienced mentors and master craftsmen; apprenticeships provided opportunities for learners to take responsibility for their work and recognise lines of accountability in a workplace; and apprenticeships provided real opportunities for integration of formal and workplace learning.



Omar also identified some negative features, namely apprenticeships often emphasised repetitive tasks and drills; its duration was long; examinations only took place at the end of each year, therefore the final goal of attaining a certificate was very distant, which meant that the dependence of the apprentice on the trainer or college was extended for the entire duration of the apprenticeship; and the apprentice – as learner – was often regarded as a nuisance in work situations where a choice had to be made between supporting learners and getting the work done *(ibid.*:17).

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and provision of incentives for the attainment of higher qualifications by apprentices (The Complete Wiehahn Report, 1982: 277 – 282).

The apprenticeship system slowly began to show signs of decline. During the 1980s artisan employment in the economy was approximately 170 000 (Mohamed & Kimmie, 1992, in Lundall, 1997:2). In the mid-1980s this figure declined to just under 12 500 and in the early-1990s it declined even further to a low of 10 000 (South African Labour Statistics, 1992, in Lundall, 1997:2). Bird (2001) states that by 1999 the number of new apprentice contracts was 3 129. The deliberate prevention of black labour performing skilled jobs stunted the country's economic growth because there were not enough white skilled workers to fill existing vacancies (Lundall, 1997). An imbalance therefore existed between demand and supply of skilled labour in certain trades (Potgieter, 2003).

Various authors have identified reasons for the decline in the apprenticeship system. They argue that there was often very little correlation between theory and practice (Babb & Meyer, 2005; Cave, 1994 in Tsolo, 2001). The large number of people who completed the theoretical component of the apprenticeship could not find a company to give them work experience. This was mainly because of the withdrawal of 'tax concessions on employee training on 31 July 1990' (Bird, 2001).



After an investigation into the training of artisans in 1985 the NTB argued for an institutionally based apprenticeship instead of the old time-based system. In 1991 the National Training Strategy (NTS) began to put in place a process of raising the profile of vocational training (NTB/HSRC, 1991, in Akoojee, *et al.*, 2005:111). This process was, however, silent on equity and redress (Kraak, 1993 and McGrath, 1996, in Akoojee, *et al.*, 2005: 111). This resulted in the NTS being rejected by the African National Congress (ANC) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and replaced by a new National Training Strategy Initiative (NTSI) on the eve of the 1994 elections and the introduction of new policies on education and training after 1994. In the next chapter I examine these policies, particularly the South African Qualifications Act 58 of 1995, the Further Education and Training Act 98 of 1998, the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 and the Skills Development Levies Act 9 of 1999.

## 1.4 Conclusion

### 1.4.1 The integration of theory and practice in a unit standard-based programme

A criticism against unit standard-based programmes or competency-based programmes is that educators were not consulted (Brown & Keep, 2000). In other words, educational issues were not considered. Brown & Keep (2000) are also concerned that competency-based programmes place too much emphasis on competence and assessment.

The literature has shown that an apprenticeship would be incomplete if work-based learning is done without the theoretical component. Authors have argued that an apprenticeship that focuses mainly on work-based learning will be too company specific, too narrow (Boreham, 2002) and places little emphasis on learning towards the future (Brown & Keep, 2000). Other authors state that certain professions, such as accounting, electrical installation and engineering manufacture, still require in-depth knowledge that can only be taught in the classroom (Fuller & Unwin, 1999, in Gamble, 2003; Young, 2001, in Gamble 2003).



The literature has revealed that an apprenticeship would also be incomplete if structured college-based learning is done without the practical component. An apprenticeship that focuses mainly on structured college-based learning will mean that companies have to do extra training. Some authors argue that work-based learning is an important component for effective learning to occur because certain situations or conditions cannot be simulated in a classroom (Avis, 2004; Bagnall, 1990, in Garrick, 1999; Barnett, 1999, in Garrick, 1999; Ashton & Sung, 2002; and Green *et al.*, 2001, in Ashton & Sung, 2002).

Other authors argue that theory and practice have to be combined for effective learning to occur (Gott, 1995, in Fuller & Unwin, 1998; Engestrom, 1995, in Fuller & Unwin, 1998; and Gamble, 2003).

Fuller & Unwin (1999, in Gamble, 2003) and Young (2001, in Gamble, 2003) caution that one cannot only depend on work-based learning because some professions need in-depth knowledge that can only be acquired in the classroom. Rogers (2002) has indicated that a relationship of trust between the facilitator and learner leads to the success of a learning programme. Fuller & Unwin (2003a) has pointed out that an 'expansive' approach rather than a 'restrictive' approach to learning is needed for a high quality programme.

### 1.4.2 Expectations of role-players in an apprenticeship

The literature has revealed that the learners working in the retail sector are not interested in building a career and that they are more interested in earning an income than obtaining a qualification (Sims, *et al*., 2000, in Spielhofer & Sims, 2004). An additional point in the literature was that employers provided little support to learners when they had to attend college for the theoretical component of the apprenticeship.



Regarding the expectations of employers the literature has shown that Modern Apprenticeships are not appropriate for the type of skills needed in the workplace, companies cannot find suitable candidates to do an apprenticeship and the theoretical component should not interfere with productivity or profits (Sims, *et al*., (2000, in Spielhofer & Sims, 2004).

The literature has shown that the British government is more concerned about the 'social inclusion' potential of MAs than with a 'high quality work-based route to a qualification' (Fuller & Unwin, 2003b).

Each country has to develop a skill strategy to be able to compete globally. The literature has indicated that whilst the high skills strategy has been implemented successfully in many countries, such as Germany, Japan and the Asian Tigers, the UK opted for a low skills strategy. Because of its own unique history, South Africa has opted for a 'multi-pronged' skills strategy as suggested by Kraak

(2005) and Mayer & Altman (2005). Kraak argued that a 'multi-pronged' strategy would provide training to the unskilled and/or low skilled unemployed and employed people in South Africa and continue to provide training in the high skills sector (2005).

### 1.4.3 Key points researched

The key points relevant to this study that I have explored are:

a) Expectations of learners

The literature shows that learners undertaking apprenticeships in the retail sector in the UK are more interested in earning an income than building a career. The reasons why learners undertook this Learnership were explored through interviews by means of open-ended questions. The views of learners and workplace facilitators regarding experience of theory, on-the-job training and the ability of learners to apply the theory in the workplace was explored through interviews by means of open-ended questions. The views of learners regarding whether or not sufficient time was spent on the theory was also determined through interviews. The views on integration of different teaching and learning activities, such as, college-based theoretical activities, simulations, practical activities (excursions) and work-based learning were explored by interviewing a college facilitator, workplace facilitators and through my own observations as a college facilitator. The views on integration of different teaching and learning activities were also explored by analysing certain documents, such as the Wholesale & Retail Seta Guide and the Implementation Report and through interviewing learners regarding how they experienced the teaching and learning activities

b) Expectations of employers

The expectations of employers were determined through interviews by means of open-ended questions. I wanted to establish their motivation for employing a learner. I did not explore what type of skills are required by employers neither did I explore whether the learners were suitable candidates for a company nor whether granting the learners time off to do the theoretical component interfered with productivity or profits.

c) Policy objectives

I tried to determine government perspective on the new skills strategy by examining government policies on skills development. I also looked briefly at how quality is maintained. However, quality was not the main focus of the research. The main focus of this study is to determine whether the learners experienced the theoretical learning in the college and practical learning on the job as an integrated whole and whether the learners could implement the theory learnt at college, that is, theory and SE, in the workplace.



Chapter Two examines the new skills policies with emphasis on the integration of education and training. Chapter Four focuses on how the learners on a W&R Learnership experienced the integration of theory and practice. The study concludes whether this programme, namely the W&R Learnership, achieved integration as part of this Learnership that is designed by the skills development strategy.

# *CHAPTER TWO*

## SOUTH AFRICA'S NEW SKILLS DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

> *The youth are the most valued possession of the nation. Without them there can be no future. Their needs are immense and urgent. They are the centre of reconstruction and development*
> (Nelson Mandela, 1994 in Tsolo, 2001).

### 2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I analyse the skills development policies introduced by the South African government since 1994 and learnerships as part of the new system of skills development. Lastly I focus on the issue of learning within work-based programmes.

South Africa needed a new philosophy of education and training – one that would expunge the poignant memories of apartheid policy and practice, include all its citizens and 'provide the basis around which the system could be legitimately reconstructed' (Chisholm, 2003). The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa encapsulates changes to be brought about in our society. It makes provision for fundamental rights and equality to all South African citizens, irrespective of race, colour or gender. It signals the right of all individuals to participate in and contribute to change that would bring about the meaningful transformation of South African society. The objective of the new policies was, therefore, to develop an education and training policy that would be beneficial to all, especially the previously marginalised majority, in South Africa. The new system would be advantageous to those - mainly black workers – who often had the necessary skills and knowledge to execute a task but had previously been discriminated against because of a lack of formal qualifications. By testing them on what they know and can do, that is, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) they can ultimately be remunerated or promoted accordingly.

## 2.2 Post-apartheid skills policies

In response to the call for a new system of education and training, the Inter-Ministerial Working Group drafted the NQF Bill, which was passed into law as the SAQA Act (Act No. 58 of 1995) on 4 October 1995. The FET Act, (Act No. 98 of 1998) was promulgated in 1998. The Skills Development Act, (Act No. 97 of 1998) and the Skills Development Levies Act, (Act No. 9 of 1999) were made public in 1998 and 1999 respectively (Tsolo, 2001).

The NQF was designed to create an integrated national framework for learning achievements; to facilitate access to, and mobility and progression within education, training and career paths; to enhance the quality of education and training; to accelerate the redress of past unfair discrimination in education, training and employment opportunities; and thereby contribute to the full personal development of each learner and the social and economic development of the nation at large (RSA 1995). The South African NQF stretches across eight educational levels. Level one comprises of the General Education and Training (GET) Band, level two, three and four comprise of the FET Band and levels five to eight comprises of the Higher Education and Training (HET) Band (refer Table 1 below). In addition level one includes sub-levels for Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET). The new policy therefore provides a framework of qualifications for low skills, intermediate skills and high skills.

**Table 2: STRUCTURE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK**

| NQF LEVEL | TYPE OF QUALIFICATION | | TYPICAL LEARNING PROVIDERS |
|---|---|---|---|
| **HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING BAND (HET)** | | | |
| 8 | Doctorate & Further Research Degrees | | Universities, Professional Institutions |
| 7 | Master & First Research Degrees | | Universities, Professional Institutions |
| 6 | First Degrees & Higher Diplomas | | Universities, Professional Institutions |
| 5 | Diplomas & Occupational Certificates | | Universities, Colleges, Workplace, etc. |
| **FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING BAND (FET)** | | | |
| 4 | Std 10 / Grade 12 | High School, College & Workplace Certificates | Public & Private High Schools, Public and Private Colleges, Occupational Colleges and Training Institutions, National, SETA & Organisation-based Education & Training Schemes |
| 3 | Std 9 / Grade 11 | High School, College & Workplace Certificates | |
| 2 | Std 8 / Grade 10 | High School, College & Workplace Certificates | |
| **GENERAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING BAND (GET)** | | | |
| 1 | Std 7 / Grade 9 | Senior Phase | Public & Private Primary Schools and High Schools, Private Colleges and Training Centres |
| | Std 5 / Grade 7 | Intermediate Phase | |
| | Std 3 / Grade 5 | Foundation Phase | |
| | Std 1 / Grade 3 | Pre-school Phase | |

The SAQA was established to oversee the NQF by providing the necessary structures and systems to generate and register standards and qualifications and a quality assurance approach to be implemented by the Education and Training Quality Assurer (ETQA).

After the Apprenticeship Act of 1922 the technical colleges (as they were called at the time) played a prominent role in the theoretical training for white apprentices. Even after the Manpower Training Act of 1981 the number of blacks at these colleges was insignificant and they remained racially segregated (McGrath, 2004c, in Akoojee, *et al.*, 2005:106). By 1994 the college sector was still racially fragmented and it was weakly linked to the labour market (King & McGrath, 2002, in Akoojee, *et al.*, 2005:107). Courses offered at colleges did not always correspond with the type of work needed in the labour market. The old FET curriculum focused on transmitting existing knowledge, had a fixed framework (that is, learners could not enter or exit at any point), value was placed on knowledge and learning for its own sake, a high value was placed on subject knowledge instead of relationships between subjects and school knowledge could not always be applied to solve problems in the workplace (Angelis & Marock, 2001 in Gamble, 2003:6).



It was widely argued that the sector as a whole needed drastic improvements. Some of these technical colleges were dysfunctional and did not meet the needs of the people, communities or enterprises (*ibid.*). The situation where FET colleges did not cater for the needs of the labour market had to be reversed. To bring about these changes the FET Act was promulgated in 1998.

In response to the needs of the labour market the FET Act provides a broad framework within which the FET system is to be developed and implemented, i.e. declared, established, governed, funded and registered. In addition it provides a legal framework and a suitable environment for the implementation of

government programmes and projects at a public or private FET institution (Tsolo, 2001).

The FET Act was formulated to establish a national co-ordinated FET system that promotes co-operative governance and provides for programme-based FET. The FET sector was identified as the ideal sector that will 'meet South Africa's social development and economic challenges' (Asmal, 2000, in Powell & Hall, 2000:6). The government believes that the FET system will provide the crucial intermediate and higher-level skills and competencies South Africa needs in order to compete globally (DoE, 1998b in Gamble, 2003:2).

An important step for technical colleges was the merger process. In order to create bigger 'more efficient' FET institutions, government policy has directed the merging of a few of the old technical colleges into new multi-site mega FET institutions. The reforms introduced in South Africa's technical colleges brought about a new institutional landscape for public Further Education and Training Colleges (Gamble, 2003). Currently there are 50 FET public institutions nationwide with 6 of them located in the Western Cape (Fisher, Jaff, Powell and Hall, 2003). To ensure better utilisation of resources previously disadvantaged colleges were integrated with previously advantaged colleges (Akoojee, *et al.*, 2005). The sharing of resources will lead to equity and improved training.



Colleges are no longer bound by the racial education and training policies of the past. The FET Act, Act 98 of 1998 provides for access to further education and training and the workplace by persons who have been marginalised in the past, such as women, the disabled and the disadvantaged (RSA 1998b).

Two additional laws promulgated in response to uplifting the standard of living of more people in South Africa, are the Skills Development Act, Act 97 of 1998 (RSA 1998a) and the Skills Development Levies Act, Act 9 of 1999 (RSA 1999).

The overall aims of the Skills Development Act are to increase the quality of working life for workers by developing their skills as well as to improve

productivity and promote self-employment and the delivery of social services (Omar, 1998:16).

The Skills Development Act, Act 97 of 1998, together with the Skills Development Levies Act, Act 9 of 1999, promotes a new system of formal, contractual education and training, known as learnerships. Mercorio (2001:124) defines a learnership as "… a planned combination of fundamental, core and elective unit standards which leads to a qualification and which is directly applicable to the world of work".

One of the main reasons for the South African government implementing learnerships is 'to equip South Africa with the skills to succeed in the global market and to offer opportunities to individuals and communities for self-advancement to enable them to play a productive role in society' (Minister of Labour, Mr MMS Mdladlana, at the occasion of the launch of the National Learnership Programme on 26th June 2001 in Johannesburg as cited by Potgieter, 2003:173).



The criteria for a learnership are set out in the Skills Development Act (RSA 1998a). These criteria are that the learnership must:

- consist of a structured learning component;
- include practical work experience;
- be governed by an agreement between the learner, employer and education and training provider; and
- lead to a qualification registered on the NQF and must relate to an occupation.

Appendix 10 provides a detailed outline of the requirements of the learnership agreement according to the Skills Development Act (RSA 1998a).

The Skills Development Act requires a SETA to establish and promote learnerships. In other words a SETA is responsible for education and training needs. Each SETA has to oversee a particular sector of the economy. The Skills

Development Act also makes provision for Skills Programmes. These are shorter, occupationally based programmes that lead to a credit[12] towards a qualification[13] registered[14] on the NQF. Skills Programmes are not contractual therefore it is not a requirement for learners to be employed when registered on such a programme. These programmes are funded via a skills levy stipulated by the Skills Development Levies Act. The Skills Development Levies Act requires every business entity to pay 1% of its total remuneration package to the South African Receiver of Revenue (SARS) each month (W&RSETA, c2004b) (also refer Appendices Table 3 and Fig. 1).

Learnerships are meant to build on and improve on apprenticeships. Learners undertaking a learnership cover theory pertaining to their industry. The main differences between learnerships and apprenticeships are that learnerships apply to all parts of the economy; they fit into the NQF; a learner receives a qualification that is registered by SAQA; and they cover a wider range of levels than apprenticeships (Kraak, 2004:121). People who successfully complete a learnership can move on to a professional and other qualification. A higher or different qualification can be obtained because the NQF allows vertical progression and horizontal movement.



The challenge to many FET Colleges offering learnerships are that they have to appoint freelance facilitators and/or assessors because they cannot use their own full-time staff, as explained in Chapter Four. Colleges also have to upgrade the qualifications of some of their staff because new pedagogical and curricular requirements are implemented. Learner support systems have to be improved. Colleges also need to address the reality that most learners are learning in a second language, and that they enter the college with poor mathematics and

[12] A credit is the value that SAQA gives to a unit standard and qualification. Credits are measured in 10-hour units that are based on the time an average learner would take to achieve the standard or qualification.
[13] A qualification means the formal recognition of the achievement of the required number and range of credits and such other requirements at specific levels of the National Qualifications Framework as may be determined by the relevant bodies registered for such purpose by the South African Qualifications Authority (RSA 1995).
[14] Registered means registered in terms of the National Qualifications Framework (RSA 1995).

science grades (McGrath, 2004c, in Akoojee, *et al.,* 2005:109). In addition colleges have to respond more aggressively to the HIV/AIDS prevention programmes (Gamble, 2003 and McGrath, 2004c, in Akoojee, *et al.*, 2005:109). Furthermore, colleges have to be adequately resourced and maintained (Badroodien, 2003 and Gamble, 2003, in Akoojee, *et al.*, 2005:109).

Learnerships in FET colleges are the result of college responsiveness to the new skills laws. A learnership is meant to integrate theory and practice as well as the academic and vocational aspects of learning. A fundamental difference between a learnership and an apprenticeship is that a learnership is expected not only to include trade theory, but also communication, numeracy skills and computer skills – referred to as the Fundamental (compulsory) unit standards. It should also include Critical Cross-Field Outcomes (CCFOs), for example identify and solve problems using critical and creative thinking, work effectively with others as members of a team, group, organisation or community, communicate effectively using visual, mathematical and/or language skills in the modes of oral and/or written presentation.



Learnerships are meant to provide an alternative access route to a qualification through the workplace. Employed workers as well as unemployed recruits can register for a learnership (Akoojee, *et al*, 2005). Learnerships are also meant to grant youth from a disadvantaged socio-economic background access to a qualification and entrance into the labour market with the possibility of permanent employment upon successful completion thereof. National Education (NATED) programmes offered in FET colleges do not provide immediate entrance into the labour market. Usually students doing the NATED programmes first complete the theory then they do the practical, that is, in-service training. Unlike apprenticeships that only catered for designated trades, learnerships can be done in all occupational fields, for example, plumbing, wholesale and retail, accounting, hospitality. A learnership therefore promotes two broad goals (also mentioned by Fuller & Unwin, 2003b), of 'social inclusion' and a 'high quality work-based route to a qualification'.

A learnership consists of a three-way partnership. A partnership is contracted between the employer and the learner, the learner and the college, as well as between the college and the employer (Akoojee, *et al.*, 2005). Similar to apprenticeships this ensures that the learner gains the necessary practical skills in the workplace.

In an apprenticeship all practical assessments were done at a central location, namely, the Central Organisation for Trade Testing (COTT), in Olifantsfontein, near Pretoria. In a learnership assessments of a practical nature are done at the learner's workplace and assessments of a theoretical nature are usually done at the college.

The role of the Training Provider in a learnership is to deliver training programmes according to the curriculum, provide the learner with support, record, monitor and retain details of training provided for the learner, conduct off-the-job assessment and provide reports for the employer on the learner's performance (Babb & Meyer, 2005:200). The specific role of the Training Provider in this case study, who the facilitators and assessors were and their role in this case study, as well as how the curriculum was offered, will be discussed in Chapter Four.



## 2.3 Lessons learnt from South African learnerships

Although studies on learnerships have been undertaken in South Africa, a paucity of research still exists because it is still a relatively new programme. In this section I draw attention to a few studies on learnerships and their relevance to this research.

A study conducted on learnerships by Davies & Farquharson (2004) in KwaZulu-Natal was done through examining a series of pilot projects, implemented between 1997 and 2001. The study focused on recruitment and selection of learners.

The authors, Davies & Farquharson, (2004:350 - 351) have identified many lessons to be learnt regarding recruitment and selection of learners from the KwaZulu-Natal Pilot Projects, namely, (i) that the process needs to be carefully designed if it is to achieve the desired outcomes of the learnership; (ii) it should be inclusive, involving key stakeholders; (iii) it should consist of a clearly defined selection process that specifies who can apply (keeping equity targets in mind), advertising of learnership positions and the components of a formal selection process; and (iv) how recruitment and selection processes play an important role in influencing learner participation. They have suggested that 'an effort should be made to find proactive ways of increasing learner interest through raising general business awareness in the target group to promote the idea of starting a business, involving large companies in promoting intrapreneurship internally … and through linking participation in a learnership with existing business opportunities and initiatives that could provide immediate business opportunities for learners' (*ibid*.).

Stemmers (2005) investigated learnerships and the transformation in the insurance industry. She explored the lessons arising from the implementation of the Insurance Preparedness Project with special focus on whether learnership implementation is the vehicle that will lead to transformation and employment equity in the insurance industry in South Africa. Her study concludes that many learners lacked sufficient prior knowledge and skills in Mathematics and Communication. Extra time was thus spent on building this foundation into the learnership. This meant that the cost to the company to implement the learnership turned out to be higher than originally anticipated.

Babb & Meyer (2005) have collated studies on learnerships implemented by different SETAs in South Africa. They emphasise the role of the private sector:

> W*hilst the role of the government is to lay down policy, to provide a systematic framework for skills development and to ensure that institutions produce people with the necessary generic skills, it is the private sector which will need to identify and build the skills the economy requires (ibid.:9).*

Babb & Meyer (2005) found that learners on the Consol Glass Learnership began to develop a culture of continuous learning within the organisation, their skills levels increased, there was a tremendous improvement in their performance and labour turnover decreased.

The outcome of a survey conducted across various job categories of the Amalgamated Beverage Industries, reflected '… positive results' (*ibid*.). They include the following tangible and intangible results: increase in sales, increase in the market share, increased the levels of self-confidence, improved relationship between manager and subordinate, improved Customer Service Measures and improved relationships with other customers, increase in confidence levels with regard to learning and enhanced relationship between the union and management because of the support from the trade union (*ibid*.).

In the Eskom Project Management Learnerships the following general observations were noted: improved workplace practices mainly due to 'the acquisition of knowledge of systems thinking theory and of a holistic approach to project management' and improved relationships with work colleagues because through systems theory they had acquired the ability to consider other people's perspectives and world-views (*ibid.*).



Other areas in which these learners improved remarkably are: strategic insight; vision and purpose; values and ethics; commitment; innovation; motivation; influence; holistic thinking and initiative (*ibid.*).

## 2.4 Views on learning

Kraak (1998) and Young (2004) have both criticised a unit standard-based approach as indicated in Chapter One. They claim that the learning programme contains too little theory or content.

Kraak (1998) believes that the unit standards methodology should be abandoned in schools and that it is better suited to the workplace. Sultana (1997b, in Gamble 2003 47) and Resnick (1987, in Gamble, 2003:47) believe that the standard-based approaches to curriculum are more appropriate to assessing learners in the workplace, than in the classroom. Colleges do not have the sophisticated or modern equipment used in companies thus cannot compete with creating direct experiences of production. Young (2004) argues that unit standard-based programmes should be syllabus-based and not competency-based. He points out that syllabus-based programmes 'offer progression to higher education' and 'develop the kind of generic capabilities that are increasingly valued by employers' (Young, 2004:1).

Gamble (2003:13) maintains that the curriculum demand aimed directly at preparation for the workplace is 'narrower than the demand on general education where issues of moral citizenship, democracy and general training of the mind have historically been the intention of the curriculum'. She cautions that if courses lead to inadequate 'concept formation and consolidation' their longer-term educational value is questionable, especially science-based knowledge that becomes more complex as a learner progresses to the higher levels. In addition she says that one needs a solid understanding of the 'formal scientific principles and concepts in their own right and in domain-specific terms' to provide a foundation for problem –solving and predictions beyond familiar environments (*ibid*.:51).

Gamble (2003) differentiates between *workshop learning* and *workplace experience*. She refers to workshop learning as an extension of the theory, whereas workplace experience occurs on the job itself and teaches procedures of a specific company. Gamble (2003:44) poses the question whether one can actually learn theory from simply executing daily tasks in the workplace or whether it should be taught. Young (2002, in Gamble, 2003:45) agrees that 'practical workplace knowledge is situation-specific knowledge that has no meaning outside a particular context … (and that) on its own, workplace knowledge keeps learners

trapped in their everyday contexts'. Young therefore argues for interdependence between theory and practice - the one cannot be reduced to the other. According to Gamble (2003:11) integration of knowledge and skill will not be easily attainable. She warns that the possibility exists for the practical ('everyday problems') to be considered more important than the theory ('formal knowledge') (*ibid*.). Workshop learning cannot always provide learners with sufficient skills to simply transfer to and apply in the workplace because most colleges do not possess the modern equipment used in industry (Resnick, 1987, in Gamble, 2003:47). Workplace experience without workshop learning is not the answer. It might be too company specific, the company might exploit the learner and only use him/her for one specific task - the organisation stands to gain financially if the learner becomes proficient in a certain task (Mjelde, 1997b, in Gamble, 2003:48) - and supervisors often show little commitment to the training task (Huddleston, 1999, in Gamble 2003:48).

## 2.5 Conclusion

The literature has shown that granting employment opportunities to youths who drop out of school or keeping down unemployment numbers is also one of the objectives of the new education and training system in South African (RSA 1995). The focus on quality is a strong concern of SAQA and the ETQAs. Problems have been experienced but determining whether systems are working or not is beyond the scope of this study.

The South African NQF provides for academic as well as vocational training. It therefore formally promotes the integration of education and training. Unlike other countries, for example the UK and Germany that have a dual system of education and training, South Africa's NQF is a single qualifications framework that promotes high skills, low skills and intermediate skills. Kraak (2005:57) argues for a 'multi-pronged' skills strategy to be implemented in South Africa. The literature has revealed that the South African NQF does indeed promote a 'multi-pronged' approach because it consists of 8 levels that embrace GET (this level makes provision for ABET as well), FET and HET. In the new education

and training system the largely inputs-based system has been replaced by an outcomes-based system that consists of Core, Fundamental and Elective unit standards as well as CCFOs. By insisting on the CCFOs it was hoped that the NQF would promote an 'expansive' approach. This study explores whether this indeed is true for this Learnership.

Learnerships, which are incorporated into the NQF, form a part of the new education and training system in South Africa. The purposes of introducing learnerships in South Africa are, amongst others to solve the skills crisis, create mechanisms to deal with poverty, unemployment and access to the labour market.

The literature shows that the views of various authors on structured college-based learning and work-based learning are diverse. However they do agree that for effective learning to take place, the theory must be combined with the practical. Gamble (2003) distinguishes between 'workshop' learning and workplace learning. She argues that colleges need to incorporate 'workshop' learning (technical knowledge) into their learning programmes for it to be successful.



Interesting results and lessons learnt were revealed from local learnerships. A result of the study undertaken by Stemmers (2005) is of some benefit to this research since many of the learners on this W&R Learnership also lacked basic Mathematics and Communication skills. Some of the results of studies compiled by Babb & Meyer (2005) are also useful to this research. In most cases the results of studies undertaken by Babb & Meyer (2005) led to an increase in productivity.

The next chapter deals with the research design and methodology of this study.

# *CHAPTER THREE*

## RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I explain and justify the choice of research design and techniques employed for gathering data. It is important to emphasise that I was a facilitator in this Learnership. I facilitated and assessed all the learners who were interviewed in this study in various unit standards. This personal involvement afforded me opportunities of observation that are rarely available to other researchers. In section 3.4.3 I explain exactly what my role was in this Learnership that took place between 1 April 2004 and 31 March 2005. All interviews with learners, workplace facilitators and college staff took place after completion of the Learnership.

### 3.2 Research question

I embarked on this study to explore how a group of learners in the 18.2 Wholesale and Retail Generalist (NQF Level 2) Learnership experienced the structured college-based learning, the work-based learning as well as the integration of the two. In other words, whether they implemented the theory they learnt at college, at work. In addition I examined whether the Learnership met the expectations of the learners in terms of assisting them to achieve a qualification and secure permanent employment.

In a key study on MAs in the UK, Fuller & Unwin (2003b) found that the government is more concerned about the social inclusion goals of MAs rather than with a high quality work-based route to a qualification. My research does not engage in this debate, rather it is concerned with what learners expected and experienced in this Learnership. This study focuses on their experiences of the theory and practice. It does not look at other constraints, such as implementation difficulties, referred to in the literature, neither does it focus on the new skills

strategy adopted by South Africa nor does it focus on a comparison between learnerships and apprenticeships. This study looks at whether the theory and practice in this Learnership was experienced as a whole and whether the theory learnt at college was indeed implemented at work.

### 3.3 Research design

In this study I used a qualitative approach in relation to how the learners experienced their "natural settings" (Firestone, 1987, in Merriam, 1998; and Patton, 1987) or as Morse (1994:1) calls it "everyday life". The two places the learners found themselves in during this Learnership are the college, for the theoretical component, and the workplace, for the practical component. For the purpose of this research, the college and the place of work can therefore be referred to as the "natural setting" of the learners.

Qualitative research has the ability to generate detailed data with rich descriptions of what is being studied (Fraenkel and Wallen, 1993:382). The research is in-depth and relies on direct quotations reflecting people's personal perspectives and experiences (Fraenkel and Wallen, 1993:382; Denzin and Lincoln, 2000:3). I used a qualitative approach because I wanted to find out what learners' experiences of the Learnership were as a whole, that is, how they experienced the theoretical component, the practical component as well as the integration thereof. In other words, how they experienced learning and working simultaneously.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000:137 – 241) speak about eight types of educational research styles. They are: naturalistic and ethnographic research; historical research; surveys, longitudinal, cross-sectional and trend studies; case studies; correlational research; ex post facto research; experiments, quasi-experiments and single-case research; and action research.

In this study I have used the case study. Adelman, *et al* (1980, in Cohen, *et al., 2*000:181) refers to the case study as 'the study of an instance in action'. Smith

(1978, in Merriam, 1998:27) defines a case study as a 'bounded system'. Stake (c1995:2) describes a case study as 'an integrated system'. In an earlier edition Merriam (1988, in Merriam, 1998:27) describes a case study as '… an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit'. Merriam (1998:27) concludes that a case study is 'a thing, a single entity, a unit around which there are no boundaries'. The documents I consulted, the group of learners, college facilitators and workplace facilitators I interviewed and my own observations regarding a specific Wholesale and Retail Learnership offered at a particular FET college can be referred to as a 'single entity', a 'social unit' or a 'single instance' and therefore constitutes the case study.

I chose to use the case study as it allows one to enter situations in ways that are not always conducive to numerical analysis (Cohen, *et al.,* 2000:181). The feelings, thoughts and experiences of people cannot be recorded in numerical terms. I wanted to ascertain how this Learnership was implemented, that is, what actually happened, and the relationship between some of the learners, college facilitators and workplace facilitators. Furthermore, I wanted to obtain thick descriptions (*ibid.*) of the learners' understanding of their experiences, thoughts and feelings during the Learnership. I did not want to judge or evaluate their opinions but simply wanted to know what their experiences and personal perspectives were about the Learnership.

Stake (c1995:3) divides a case study into 'intrinsic and instrumental'. He says that when we have an intrinsic interest in the case we want to learn about that specific case and not about any other problem or issue that can arise or may be solved because we are studying that particular case. On the other hand, he mentions that when we have a research question and want to gain 'insight' into this 'puzzlement' or have the 'need for general understanding', we refer to our investigation as an instrumental case study.

In this study the case is of secondary importance – 'it plays a supportive role, and it facilitates our understanding of something else' (Stake, in Denzin and Lincoln,

2000:437). I have embarked on an instrumental inquiry since I wanted to understand how the experiences of the learners in this Learnership/case study, can shed light on learnerships.

I have employed a variety of research methods, namely semi-structured interviews, observation and document analysis. I have obtained valuable information from key people involved in the Learnership, namely the learners, their workplace facilitators, the Programme Manager of the Learnership and one of the college facilitators. The opinions of all these people have supported the eventual findings of the research.

## 3.4 Research techniques

### 3.4.1 Validity and reliability

Validation and reliability involves the way in which data is collected, how it is analysed, interpreted and how the findings are presented (Guba and Lincoln, 1981, in Merriam, 1998).



In qualitative research validity is 'largely a quality of the knower, in relation to her/his data and enhanced by different vantage points and forms of knowing – it is then, personal, relational and contextual' (Marshall, 1986, in Bannister, Burman, Parker, Taylor & Tindall, 1994:143).

In qualitative research reliability has to do with 'reinterpreting the findings from a different standpoint or exploring the same issues in different contexts …' (Bannister, *et al*.,1994:143).

Merriam (1998*)* refers to reliability, internal validity and external validity as a means of validating and ensuring that one's findings are consistent. Internal validity 'demonstrates that the explanation of a particular event, issue or set of data which a piece of research provides can actually be sustained by the data'

(Cohen, *et al*., 2000:107). This means that 'the findings must accurately describe the phenomena being researched' (*ibid*.). Merriam (1998) states that the following strategies can be used to enhance internal validity, namely triangulation; member checks; long-term observation; peer examination; participatory or collaborative modes of research; and researcher's biases.

According to Merriam *(ibid.)* and Cohen, *et al.* (2000) external validity deals with the extent to which the results of one study can be applied to other situations. The findings of this study cannot be applied to other situations hence I have not applied external validation (refer section 3.9).

In this study I have mainly used triangulation to enhance internal validity and ensure reliability.

Cohen *et al.* (2000:113) distinguish between six types of triangulation, that is, time triangulation; space triangulation; combined levels of triangulation; theoretical triangulation; investigator triangulation and methodological triangulation.



I have employed methodological triangulation because I have used the 'same method on different occasions (and) different methods on the same object of study' (Cohen, *et al*., 2000:113). I conducted interviews with learners, workplace facilitators and college facilitators, that is, the same method on different occasions. This enabled me to consider three different perspectives on the same Learnership. I also used different methods on the same object of study, that is, in addition to the interviews I have employed observation and document analysis.

Since a case study concentrates on the subjective opinions of people (in this case study it refers to the experiences, thoughts and feelings of mostly the learners who were interviewed) it was imperative to apply triangulation in order to validate the data. Data can be collected from various sources, using a variety of methods (Measor, in Burgess, 1985:73 and Cohen *et al.*, 2000:112).

The research methods I have used in the collection of data in order to obtain sufficient data about the aspects investigated as well as to 'clarify meaning' (Stake, 1995, in Denzin and Lincoln 2000:443) are: semi-structured interviews, observation and document analysis.

### 3.4.2 Semi-structured interview

Semi-structured interviews were employed to obtain the most important information from the learners, workplace facilitators, college facilitators and Programme Manager. Amongst others, the interviews provided answers on the integration of the theory and practice that the documents consulted could not supply. In total, I conducted twenty-three interviews, eleven with learners (this includes seven first time interviews and four follow-up interviews), seven with workplace facilitators, two with a college facilitator (this includes one first time interview and one follow-up interview) one with the Programme Manager, one with the HoD: Learnerships & Skills – Business Studies and Utilities and one with the Senior Human Resources & Finance Manager.



I engaged in face-to-face interviews because I wanted to acquire specific information (Dexter, 1970, in Merriam, 1998). I wanted to discover what is 'in and on someone else's mind' (Patton, 1990, in Merriam, 1998).

Patton clarifies the purpose of interviewing as follows:

> *We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe… We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe behaviors that took place at some previous point in time. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer. We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about those things. The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective* (Patton, 1990:196, in Merriam, 1998:72).

I prepared an interview schedule, but 'pursued what is relevant to the interviewee' (Freebody, 2003). Although I did not follow the interview schedule rigidly, but explored what is important to the interviewees, I ensured that the questions corresponded with similar points in the literature. The interview was recorded, with permission from the interviewee, and transcribed in full afterwards.

The interview schedule for the learners was organised into categories and used to enquire what their expectations of the Learnership were, how they experienced the structured college-based learning and workplace experience as well as the integration thereof, whether they could suggest any improvements to the structured college-based learning or workplace experience and whether or not their expectations were realised and what their future plans are (Appendix 1). I could therefore use this data to examine whether the learners experienced the structured college-based learning and work-based learning as an integrated whole and whether they could indeed apply the theory learnt at college in the workplace.

The questions relating to the structured college-based learning, included whether it served as a basis or whether it was more than sufficient for the skills needed at work, what they thought about the length of day, the materials used, the content, the method of instruction and the language of instruction, the usefulness of the work done in the SE and whether the college facilitators assisted them sufficiently.

The questions relating to the work-based learning, included what their daily duties were at work, what kind of support they received and who helped them, how exactly did their workplace facilitator assist them, what they learned at work, whether there was a specific time set aside for training or whether it was mostly on-the-job training, and what their contribution to the workplace was.

In relation to the question whether their expectations have been met or not, the learners had to comment on whether they achieved the qualification, whether they have been employed full-time or not, what kind of work they were doing at the

time of the interview and whether they thought that the Learnership had prepared them sufficiently.

The questions put to the Programme Manager focused on her expectations regarding bringing together the college, the learners and the workplace facilitators, her expectations with regards to managing the Learnership, her experiences in dealing with the learners and workplace facilitators, the activities involved in bringing together the three parties effectively and a few comments on her opinion of learnerships in general (Appendix 1).

The interview schedule used for the workplace facilitators was designed to elicit information on their background with regards to working for the company, their expectations of the learners, how they assisted the learners with the practical workplace activities as well as the theoretical workplace activities in the learner guide, how they prepared the learners for assessments, whether or not their expectations of the learners were met, whether they employed the learners in a permanent capacity upon completion of the Learnership, whether they think the learning material is appropriate for their specific industry, their opinion on the integration of the theoretical and practical components of the Learnership and their general thoughts on a learnership as a means of training for the workplace (Appendix 1).



The interview schedule used for the simulated enterprise facilitator enquired what her expectations of the learners were, what exactly the learners did in the SE, whether her expectations were met or not, what the role of the SE in this Learnership is, what possible improvements could be made to the SE programme, whether the time spent by the learners in the SE was sufficient or not to complete the programme and what her general opinion about a learnership is with regards to training people to be efficient and effective in the workplace (Appendix 1).

Before embarking on the interviews I spoke to four workplace facilitators at four different companies telephonically to determine why they actually enrolled

learners on this Learnership as well as what the expectations of these learners were. I also interviewed two senior officials at the college, namely the HoD: Learnerships and Skills - Business Studies and Utilities as well as the Senior Human Resources and Financial Manager. The former was a face-to-face interview and the latter was conducted telephonically. The purpose of these initial interviews with the college officials was to gain background information regarding learnerships at the college.

The main sample for the face-to–face semi-structured interviews consisted of seven out of the eighteen learners who completed the Learnership at Hillside College in March 2005, three workplace facilitators from two companies, two college facilitators (including myself) and the Programme Manager of the Learnership at the college.

Table 4 below provides a list of all interviews conducted. The table highlights the name of the interviewee, the name of the organisation at which the interviewee is employed, the interviewee's position at the organisation, the date of the interview, the time of the interview and the method used to record the data. (Note: pseudonyms were used for the interviewees and the organisations.)



At the time I arranged the interview I sketched an outline of the different sections of the interview schedule to the interviewees so that they had a broad overview of the type of questions I would ask them. Of the eighteen learners who completed the Learnership, the seven I eventually interviewed were most eager to participate in the research. It was also fairly easy to arrange an appointment and appropriate meeting place with them since they were not scattered across the Western Cape, but situated within close proximity to where I stay. Four learners (Debbie, Nelson, Princess and Andrew) were interviewed at their workplaces, that is, The Liquor Store, The Tool Man and The Art Shop respectively. The other three learners (Neliswa, Mary and Benjamin) were all interviewed in a restaurant, because Neliswa and Benjamin were unemployed and Mary was interviewed on a

public holiday. They were not comfortable with the idea that we conduct the interview in their homes. Most of the interviews occurred during December 2005.

**Table 4: LIST OF ALL INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED**

| No. | Pseudonym of interviewee | Organisation pseudonym | Position at company | Date of interview | Time of interview | Method of recording data |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Elsabe | Hillside College | HoD: Learnerships & Skills – Business Studies and Utilities | 5 Aug 2004 | 11:00 – 12:00 | Face-to-face interview - short notes |
| 2. | Byron | Hillside College | Senior HR & Finance Manager | 19 Nov 2004 | 11:00 – 11:10 | Telephonic – short notes |
| 3. | Lynne | The Meat Co. | HR Manager | 15 Apr 2005 | 11:00 – 11:05 | Telephonic – short notes |
| 4. | Gilbert | The Art Shop | CEO | 15 Apr 2005 | 12:00 – 12:08 | Telephonic – short notes |
| 5. | George | The Liquor Store | Branch Manager | 15 Apr 2005 | 12:10 – 12:15 | Telephonic – short notes |
| 6. | Charlotte | The Tool Man | Co-owner | 15 Apr 2005 | 15:30 – 15:40 | Telephonic – short notes |
| 7. | Neliswa | The Meat Co. | Learner | 06 Dec 2005 | 15:30 – 16:00 | Face-to-face – tape recorder |
| 8. | Benjamin | The Mini-market | Learner | 07 Dec 2005 | 12:45 – 13:20 | Face-to-face – tape recorder |
| 9. | Debbie | The Liquor Store | Learner | 08 Dec 2005 | 17:11 – 17:35 | Face-to-face – tape recorder |
| 10. | Andrew | The Art Shop | Learner | 14 Dec 2005 | 10:20 – 11:00 | Face-to-face – tape recorder |
| 11. | Mary | The Meat Co. | Learner | 16 Dec 2005 | 15:55 – 15:45 | Face-to-face – tape recorder |
| 12. | William | The Tool Man | Co-owner | 17 Dec 2005 | 12:30 – 12:45 | Face-to-face – tape recorder |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 13. | Nelson | The Tool Man | Learner | 19 Dec 2005 | 07:43 – 08:08 | Face-to-face – tape recorder |
| 14. | Princess | The Tool Man | Learner | 19 Dec 2005 | 08:13 – 08:35 | Face-to-face – tape recorder |
| 15. | Pauline | Hillside College | Programme Manager | 19 Dec 2005 | 11:08 – 11:25 | Face-to-face – tape recorder |
| 16. | Angel | The Tool Man | Head: Shipping (SA) | 28 Dec 2005 | 11:35 – 11:50 | Face-to-face – tape recorder |
| 17. | Ilse | Hillside College | SE Facilitator | 10 July 2006 | Not Applicable | Interview schedule - written |
| 18. | Lynne | The Meat Co. | HR Manager | 21 June 2006 | Not Applicable | Interview schedule - written |
| 19. | Debbie | The Liquor Store | Learner | 20 June 2006 | 09:20 – 09:35 | Follow-up face-to-face interview – short notes |
| 20. | Andrew | The Art Shop | Learner | 21 June 2006 | 09:10 – 09: 15 | Follow- up telephonic interview – short notes |
| 21. | Neliswa | The Meat Co. | Learner | 27 June 2006 | 10:20 – 11:00 | Follow-up face-to-face interview – short notes |
| 22. | Benjamin | The Mini-market | Learner | 10 July 2006 | 11:15 – 11:40 | Follow-up face-to-face interview – short notes |
| 23. | Ilse | Hillside College | SE Facilitator | 29 Nov 2006 | 12:05 – 12:10 | Follow-up telephonic interview - short notes |

It was also easy to arrange interviews with all the other interviewees for the same reason. The Programme Manager at the college was on holiday and welcomed my interview at her home. One workplace facilitator (Angel) was also on holiday and I interviewed her at her home. When I went to The Tool Man to interview their two learners (Nelson and Princess) on Saturday 17 December 2005 at work, I discovered that they were not there for our scheduled meeting at 12:00. In fact they had not turned up for work at all that day. I then took a chance and asked whether I could interview the workplace facilitator, Charlotte. She was still wrapping up the day's work and she suggested I interview her husband, William, who is the co-owner of The Tool Man. (The details of the interview with William will be discussed in Chapter Four.)

It was not so easy to get hold of the workplace facilitator from The Meat Co. since she was much too busy during the festive season. In February 2006 I sent her a copy of the interview schedule and I asked her to complete it and then fax her written response back to me. She gladly obliged since this was not such a busy period for the company.



One of the learners, who completed the Learnership, simply did not want to be interviewed. Three learners really wanted to participate in an interview but our meetings never materialised since they work shifts. The telephone numbers of four learners had changed and none of the other learners or the Programme Manager at the college had their latest contact details. I had an unpleasant incident with one of the learners, right at the end of the Learnership, so I did not think that he would agree to an interview. Another learner cannot speak English very well and I did not ask her to participate in an interview. By the time I got the telephone number of another learner she had just started a new learnership and was not available for an interview. (An interesting point is that this learnership was in the electronics field. This is perhaps an indication that some people are so desperate for money that they are not concerned about whether they do a learnership in an area that really interests them.)

I would also have liked to interview all the workplace facilitators at the five different companies. I only managed to interview two mentors at one company and asked one at another company to complete a questionnaire because she did not have time, in her hectic schedule at work, for an interview. I resorted to the questionnaire since I tried to arrange an interview with her for about one year - to no avail.

For the purpose of this research it was not necessary to interview all the learners, workplace facilitators or college facilitators, but rather to interview a manageable number of people having different associations with the programme. The crucial factor here was 'the potential of each person to contribute to the development of insight and understanding of the phenomenon' (Merriam, 1998:83). The learners I selected to interview were willing to participate in the research and were available. Another reason I selected them was that I got along with them very well in class and I knew that they would feel comfortable speaking to me and not be apprehensive about giving their own opinion. Again, in this way I was assured of obtaining 'rich information' or 'thick descriptions'.



Although Seale (1998) believes that interviewing can be a time-consuming exercise, I actually enjoyed interviewing the participants since I was able to gather interesting information relating to the learners' experiences of the structured college-based learning, work-based learning, the integration of the two, suggestions for any improvements to the formal learning and/or informal learning, whether or not their expectations were met and what their future plans are. I found transcribing the interviews afterwards particularly time-consuming. However, it still remains the best method to obtain rich information from the participants.

### 3.4.3 Observation

According to Merriam (1998:95) observation occurs in a number of ways. These are: being a 'complete observer in a public place, being an observer in one's work or social settings or even by watching films or videotapes'.

Approximately six months into the Learnership I decided to use this group of learners as part of the case study for my research. It was at this point that I also asked them whether they would be willing to participate in an interview once they had completed the Learnership. They agreed. It was therefore not difficult at all to gel with the learners since I had already been with them for a half a year. A relationship of trust had started at that time already.

My job entailed facilitating and assessing learning in various unit standards. At the end of each facilitation session I made written notes of the manner in which the learners participated in the discussions, how often they completed the learning activities, their general attitude towards learning and the manner in which they executed their tasks at work. I was therefore 'an observer in (my) work setting' (Merriam, 1998:95). It was very easy to gather the information I needed for this study because I simply had to do my work, that is, communicate with the learners and list (my own) suggested improvements to the learning material. I later compared my observations with those of the learners, college facilitators, workplace facilitators and some of the documents I consulted with relevance to how the learners experienced the formal learning, the informal learning and the integration of the theory and the practical.



I also made written notes of those I would interview and started to draft an interview schedule.

Merriam (1998:100) states that 'at some point, time and money will run out …'. On the contrary, it did not cost me anything because I had to be at work. I did not have to make special trips to observe the learners. It was not at all hard for me to

detach myself from the learners as Merriam (1998:100) suggests that 'leaving the field may be even more difficult than gaining entry' because my research as an observer ended when the Learnership ended. The learners therefore did not feel 'offended, betrayed or used' (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984:67 in Merriam, 1998:100). They knew that our time together was over. They also knew that I would be contacting some of them concerning my research.

During the Learnership I battled with the roles of a facilitator on the one hand (an employee of the college) and an observer (a researcher) on the other hand. This was not a separate research project. I was personally involved in the learning programme. My role in the classroom was not as a researcher. It was actually my job – an activity I was being remunerated for. I felt guilty every time the researcher wanted to surface. It was a 'schizophrenic' experience for me, but not quite in the same way as Merriam (1998:103) and Gans (1982, in Merriam, 1998:103) describe. They describe this 'schizophrenic' experience with the emphasis on the researcher whereas for me, I was primarily a facilitator. My role as researcher enjoyed less significance, while the Learnership was in progress. My role as researcher assumed greater prominence when I embarked formally on writing up the research.



### 3.4.4 Document analysis

Guba and Lincoln (1981:234 in Merriam, 1998:126) state that document analysis as a data source 'lends contextual richness and helps to ground an inquiry in the milieu of the writer. This grounding in real-world issues and day-to-day concerns is ultimately what the naturalistic inquiry is working toward'.

The documents I have used in this study are: Policy documents; a summary of the Demographics of all learners who enrolled for this Learnership (Appendix 7); Report on the Implementation of the Learnership – April 2004 to March 2005 (Appendix 5); Time table for the Wholesale & Retail Generalist (NQF Level 2),

Learnership – April 2004 to March 2005 (Appendix 6); and the General Overview Report of the Programme Manager (Appendix 8).

The SAQA Act provided background information on the objectives of the NQF and defined certain terms, such as the NQF, qualification, registered and standard. The FET Act provided background information on FET institutions and the new programmes that they offer, that is, the new FET landscape. The Skills Development Act introduces the new legislation on uplifting the skills in South Africa, via learnerships and skills programmes and the Skills Development Levies Act outlined criteria for a learnership as well as requirements for a learnership agreement. These documents were relevant to this research because it provided legal information pertaining to policy changes South Africa introduced in order to develop a new skills strategy to ensure that all its citizens are included in skills development.

The W&RSETA – Skills Development for Economic Growth, Learnerships – Wholesale & Retail Generalist NQF Level 2 FACILITATOR GUIDE was used to illustrate all requirements and guidelines of the W&RSETA concerning this Learnership.



The summary of the Demographics of all learners who enrolled for the Learnership was used in writing up a profile for each learner interviewed. The time table was consulted so that I could accurately determine the amount of time allocated to classroom activities and in the SE. The Report on the Implementation of the Learnership was used to extract certain information regarding the names of the companies that enrolled the learners, the assessment process of the college, the assessment tools used as well as the moderation process of the college. The General Overview Report of the Programme Manager confirms my statements on improvements needed in the theoretical component of some of the unit standards. This document also mentions the reasons that some learners did not complete the Learnership and highlights a few problems experienced with learners who completed the Learnership.

I obtained the documents by simply asking the Programme Manager whether I could use them for this study. I knew that they existed because I was part of the programme and these documents were mentioned in some of our regular meetings. She gladly obliged since she was also excited to see the results of the study.

I have used the documents mainly to verify or validate other data, such as learners' comments during interviews about the content and quality of theory modules or about the role of workplace facilitators. They were also used to confirm my own observations about improvements needed in the theoretical component of some of the unit standards. The documents were 'easily accessible' and saved me precious 'time and effort' (Dexter, 1970 in Merriam, 1998).

In relation to this case study, document analysis has provided background information on the learners and enriched my understanding of the context in which this Learnership has taken place, including the policy environment, the requirements of the SETA and the college context. However, the documents did not provide any further information about the companies where the workplace component of the Learnership took place. This information was gathered from interviews with the workplace facilitators and my own observations whilst conducting the workplace assessments.



### 3.5 Analysis of data

Data analysis involves examining the raw data collected during the study and interpreting it into useful information to conclude the topic being researched.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000:780) believe that the literature review and the researcher's own experience of the subject matter, are sources for themes. I have organised the data into the same themes that appear in the research question, the literature review and the interview schedule, namely the structured learning; the workplace experience; and the integration of the two. A few sub-themes also

emerged from the literature (Willms *et al.*, 1990 in Denzin and Lincoln, 2000:781). These sub-themes are globalisation, apprenticeships and learnerships and views on learning.

The analysis of the data did not happen after all raw data was collected. It happened simultaneously. Already after interviewing the first learner, I reviewed the interviewees' responses to the questions. In the following interview I had to add a few questions. I followed this method throughout the interviewing process. Merriam (1998:161) believes that this is the more 'enlightened' approach to analysing qualitative data. In this way one can immediately determine whether you should add or delete questions. It is disheartening to discover that one has not asked enough questions or wasted one's time on unnecessary questions after one has gone through the whole interview process with all one's interviewees. Towards the end of my data collection, I had to do a few follow-up interviews with learners I had interviewed right in the beginning. This method is much better than first doing all one's interviews and only then discovering that one should have asked many more questions.



I analysed the content of the transcripts by grouping similar responses to the questions (Bennet, Glatter & Levačič, 1994:345). The responses were again arranged in the same categories as the themes in the interview schedule. I also indicated what each interviewee said by writing down the initials of the interviewee(s) next to the response. If another interviewee made the same statement, I added that person's name. This allowed me to clearly determine how many times a certain statement was repeated as well as who said it. Hence, similar and different opinions of the interviewees were highlighted in this way. I then compared the themes in the literature review to certain themes in the data.

### 3.6 Ethical issues

Ethical issues in this case study were consent and the issue of confidentiality. I drafted consent forms for all interviewees to inform them of the purpose of this

research and to obtain permission to interview them (refer Appendix 3). In this form I guaranteed that their names and the names of their companies or the name of the college would not be mentioned and that sensitive information will be treated with the strictest confidence. Furthermore, I used pseudonyms for all learners, workplace facilitators, college facilitators and any other person interviewed. In this way I tried to 'protect the anonymity of research participants' (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1992, in Cohen, *et al.*, 2000:61) as far as possible. As I have mentioned in section 3.5.2 the learners did not feel used. They willingly participated in this research project and knew that their identity would remain anonymous and their opinions or statements confidential.

### 3.7 Limitations of this study

I would have liked to interview all the learners who completed the Learnership as well as those who did not. It would have been interesting to find out what each person's experience of the Learnership was and also to find out first hand why they did not complete it. I would also have liked to determine why the host company did not employ some learners permanently or why some learners did not find permanent employment elsewhere. However, this was not possible as explained earlier.



In view of the small sample and focus on a specific Learnership, the findings of this study cannot be generalised. The experiences of the learners on the same 18.2 Wholesale & Retail Generalist (NQF Level 2) Learnerships at other training providers might have been different since not all training providers used the SE in the delivery of their theoretical training. Also their methods of teaching might have been different.

The learners' experiences at their workplaces, especially the attitude and methods of workplace facilitators, might be different. The sample of workplace facilitators was very small. Out of approximately twelve workplace facilitators, I only interviewed three.

This research only focuses on how the learners experienced the integration of theoretical and practical learning in this Learnership. I have not commented on how the learners' competency should be assessed. That is an area for future research. The scope of this study does not allow me to compare learnerships and the normal NATED programmes at the college. At the time this Learnership was being implemented it was very different to the NATED programmes in that the latter was more theoretical. In the NATED programmes learners first completed their theoretical component and then went on to the practical component or in-service training. There was no SE component in the NATED programme. The two components were seen as separate. The methodology of all NATED programmes has changed in 2007. As prescribed by the DoE, FET colleges now include the SE in all their programmes as a means of integrating the theory and the practical.

Despite these limitations this study provides valuable insight into the experiences of a group of learners on a W&R Learnership.



The findings of this research will be valuable to the W&RSETA. They will be able to adjust the content of and/or time allocated to the learning material and perhaps the structure of the workplace experience if deemed necessary. It will also be useful to the college because they will be able to draw on information and insights about the recruitment process, teaching methods, additional material used and counselling of learners who had some personal problems.

### 3.8 Conclusion

We as educators always have so much to say about a new programme – albeit positive or negative. We seldom ask learners for their opinion. This qualitative study reflects the views of (mostly) the learners regarding its usefulness and practicality. I found the qualitative approach rewarding since it served as constructive feedback from the learners, the Learnership in its entirety as well as feedback on my own teaching methodologies.

The next chapter presents the analysis of data. It starts with a description of this Learnership. Secondly it gives a brief account of the background of the college that offered this learnership. Thirdly it illustrates how the Learnership was implemented at this FET College. Fourthly it briefly discusses the comments of the role-players of this learnership. Finally it summarises the research findings about the experiences of the learners who completed this Learnership.

# *CHAPTER FOUR*

## THE WHOLESALE & RETAIL GENERALIST (NQF Level 2) LEARNERSHIP

### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I describe this Learnership, explain the background of the College that offered this Learnership, illustrate how the Learnership was implemented at this FET college and give a description of all learners who originally enrolled on the programme. I also discuss the comments of the Programme Manager, SE facilitator as well as my own comments as an observer. Finally I give an account of the learners' experiences of this Learnership.

### 4.2 Description of this Learnership

The 18.2 Wholesale and Retail Generalist (NQF level[15] 2[16]) Learnership is designed for individuals who are employed[17]. It is a contractual agreement between the employer, employee and training provider. It consists of 30% structured college-based learning and 70% work-based experience.



The entire Learnership is divided into unit standards[18], which in turn, are split into specific outcomes[19]. Each specific outcome consists of theory/content as well as exercises the learners have to complete on their own – either in the classroom (that is, learner activities based on the theory) or at work (that is, workplace

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[15] A level is a layer of qualifications under the NQF. There are eight levels in the NQF, from 1 (general and adult basic education and training) to 8 (higher education). (Refer Table 1 for illustration of the various levels on the NQF).

[16] A level descriptor is a statement about the kind of learning that can be expected at a particular level of the NQF. A level descriptor is broad and generic and helps to show what a qualification at a level will demand of a learner. Outcomes can be compared against the level descriptor.

[17] Employed learners refer to

a) learners who were not working before the learnership and were especially appointed to do it; or
b) learners who were already employed, but as casuals. In other words learners who were not employed in a permanent capacity before they embarked on this learnership.

[18] Standard (or unit standard) means registered statements of desired education and training outcomes and their associated assessment criteria (RSA 1995).

[19] Specific outcome describes what the learner must know, do and be able to apply in context.

activities based on their observations regarding their workplace experience). The theory is designed to support the learner in achieving the specific outcome and relates to all retail environments. For example, the receiving of stock is explained as a generic process. The learner has to determine how his/her store deals with this aspect. The learner activities are completed in class by each learner and eventually included as part of the portfolio of evidence that the learners will be assessed on. The workplace activities relate specifically to the learners' workplace and should ideally be completed with the assistance of their workplace facilitator.

Assessment is done throughout the training. It can be formative and/or summative. Formative assessment is ongoing and is conducted during the training. Summative assessment occurs after a unit standard has been completed. It can comprise a knowledge test and on-the-job observation[20] or only a knowledge test. If the learner experiences tremendous difficulties in writing the knowledge test, the facilitator can also assess this learner by using an interview as the assessment instrument. The college facilitator, workplace facilitator and learner agree on an appropriate date for on-the-job assessments to take place.



The W&RSETA prescribes the Fundamental and Core unit standards[21] and suggests the Elective unit standards[22] to be covered (Appendix 12). It also outlines specific objectives of this Learnership for the employers (for example, reduce hiring, selection and training costs, improve employee performance and productivity), for the employees (for example, become a productive member of a team and company, understand potential for success in retail career in a commercial organisation) and for the facilitator (for example, incorporate industry requirements in curriculum and programme designs, identify a foundation of "employability" skills). Appendix 12 provides details of objectives for the employer, employee and facilitator.

[20] On-the-job observations are also referred to as behavioural observations.
[21] Fundamental and Core unit standards are compulsory unit standards.
[22] An Elective unit standard is chosen by learners according to the industry in which they work.

In order to promote an 'expansive' approach to learning, this Learnership, as well as all other unit standard-based programmes, included CCFOs.

## 4.3 Hillside College

### 4.3.1 Background of Hillside College

The college that was contracted as one of the providers of this Learnership is Hillside College, a multi-campus FET institution situated in the Western Cape. It is the new name chosen after the amalgamation in 2003, of the old East College, North College, North-East College, North-West College (this college consisted of two campuses, namely, North-West 1 and North-West 2) and South College (this college consisted of three campuses). In this study 'Hillside' and all names given to the various satellite campuses are pseudonyms.

In the discussion that follows I only refer to North-West 2 (being the campus at which the Learnership took place). I discuss the profile of this campus as well as the various business-related courses offered just before and after amalgamation. East College, North-East College and South College only offer engineering-related courses and therefore have no relevance to this study. For a detailed profile and discussion of business-related courses offered at North College and North-West 1 refer to Appendix 13.

The learner demographics, at North-West 2, just before the amalgamation, used to be approximately 40% white, 30% coloured and 30% black. This campus used to offer the following business courses, namely Business Studies (NIC, NSC), Public Management (N4, N5, N6), Management Assistant (N4, N5, N6). After amalgamation the courses offered are Business Studies (NIC & NSC – Accounting Administration/Secretarial), National Certificate in Business Administration (NQF level 2), Public Management (Introduction – optional, N4, N5, N6) and Management Assistant (Introduction – optional, N4, N5, N6). This

campus now also offers W&R Specialist (level 4) and W&R Generalist (Level 2) Learnerships as well as the SMME Project. This was the site for my research.

According to Elsabe, the HoD: Learnerships & Skills – Business Studies and Utilities, the impact the Skills Development Act, (Act 97 of 1998) would have on the college was recognised way back in 1998/99 (Interview: 5 August 2004). They could see how the FET Act, (Act 98 of 1998), the SAQA Act, (Act 58 of 1995) - which uses the NQF as its vehicle - and the Employment Equity Act, would affect the college. The Employment Equity Act basically prescribes that all South Africans should be afforded an equal chance regarding the job market in an attempt to redress inequalities based on race and gender. This is difficult when so many people do not have the required competencies and qualifications for the jobs that were historically reserved for white workers. Therefore, the opportunity for the college, since it falls within the FET band of the NQF, to train previously disadvantaged people, became very clear.

After realising that this change was long overdue the college then set out to determine how it could benefit from and become involved in these new Learnerships and Skills Programmes.



According to Elsabe (Interview: Elsabe, HoD, 5 August 2004) the staff would be involved with activities they had not participated in before, such as drawing up a Workplace Skills Plan (WSP) for the college, aligning existing college programmes with various SETAs, identifying new FET occupationally-based qualifications. The staff had to be convinced that if they did not contribute to this change they would be left behind. Elsabe also related that this was a golden opportunity for the college (seeing that they already had the infra-structure – that is, qualified lecturers and facilities) to get involved in upskilling the nation.

Hillside College had to align its programmes with the NQF, for the programmes to be nationally recognised and funded. The college had to identify appropriate outcomes and qualifications and to engage in curriculum and programme development processes.

For programmes to be aligned to the NQF, Hillside College had to identify clear programme needs and offer programmes that are appropriate to the target learners. They had to overcome the imbalances between theory and practice (or knowledge and skill) to prepare learners for the workplace. Programme provision influences the level of funding FET Colleges are able to access.

In addition to using their full-time lecturers, the college has to contract various freelance facilitators and assessors to facilitate and assess the learners on these new programmes, that is, learnerships and skills programmes. Finding the qualified staff to work on the above-mentioned programmes is a major problem. All facilitators on these programmes are paid by the SETA, which in turn, falls under the auspices of the Department of Labour (DoL). The college cannot, therefore use their full-time Western Cape Education Department (WCED) staff – those working on the NATED programmes - to facilitate on these programmes during the day because double-dipping (receiving payment twice) is not allowed. The college cannot appoint facilitators full-time either because, again, they are not remunerated by the WCED. There may be a slight possibility that the DoL could appoint these facilitators in the future, since a Memorandum of Understanding exists between the two departments (Interview: Senior HR & Finance Manager, Byron, 19 November 2004).



### 4.3.2 Implementation of this Learnership at Hillside College

At Hillside College the instructional offering of this Learnership stretches over forty weeks plus three weeks to finalise all outstanding assessments. Learners attend college for one day in the week and spend the rest of the week at work. A normal day at the college consists of four two-hour sessions with two tea breaks and one lunch break in between (Appendix 6). College facilitators use a variety of learning strategies, for example, brainstorming, group work, role-play, games, discussions as well as lecturing.

Hillside College included a practical component as part of the structured college-based learning, namely the SE in this Learnership. A SE simulates work-related activities. Not many training providers include this work-based component into a learnership. The SE forms part of the time table and is considered as an extension of the theory – much like what Gamble (2003) refers to as 'workshop learning'. The Department of Education (DoE) has prescribed that as from 2007 the SE has to be included in all programmes offered by FET Colleges.

A SE operates according to the principles of a real business entity. The positions catered for in the SE for this Learnership are: Cashier; Floor Manager; Stock Controller; Storeman; Purchaser; Finance Manager (Payments clerk, Invoice clerk, Bank deposits clerk, Debtors clerk, Creditors clerk); Sales and Marketing Manager; Receptionist; Personnel Manager (Attendance registers clerk, Internal documents clerk, Staff benefits clerk, Training officer. The personnel function was not used in this Learnership because level 2 learners do not perform these tasks. Each student gets the opportunity to work in the various positions. They perform business activities related to the above-mentioned functions, for example, they learn how to operate a cash register, what to do when new stock arrives at the store or when large amounts of stock has to be delivered, ordering new stock, how to answer the telephone, deal with queries and difficult customers.



The SE runs for thirty-seven of the forty weeks of the learnership. The first three weeks are used for orientation and training. The next thirty-three weeks are spent in the eleven positions – three weeks per position. The remaining week is used for finalising outstanding assessments. All assessments are aligned to the Unit Standards of Wholesale and Retail Generalist (NQF Level 2) (Appendix 6). Assessments are done by observing learners as they perform various activities, such as telephone etiquette and greeting visitors, and by learners filling in certain forms, for example, invoices, order forms, and cheque requisitions (Interview: SE facilitator, Ilse, 29 Nov 2006).

During the Learnership an official representing the W&RSETA made frequent visits to the training provider as well as the workplace provider. This was done in order to determine whether both parties are providing quality education and training and also to determine whether the levy claims have been calculated accurately. At the end of the Learnership an official from the W&RSETA visited the training provider again to assess whether it has followed the correct procedure and whether the learners are indeed competent.

During the year fourteen contracts were terminated. According to the General Overview Report some reasons were that the learners did not want to work hard, they simply did not turn up at their place of work, they were not punctual for work, some stayed absent too often, some found other jobs, one fell pregnant, one pursued the idea of starting his own business and one was dismissed (Appendix 8).

4.3.3 General description of all learners enrolled on this Learnership



All the learners came from a disadvantaged socio-economic background. Sixteen learners did not complete Grade 12. It is not certain exactly how many learners were unemployed before the Learnership because not all of them were interviewed. However, of those who were interviewed, four were unemployed and three were employed on a casual basis. There were also young single mothers. It is not known exactly how many young single mothers were in the group because I could not interview every learner. One of the single young ladies and a single young man became parents (of the same child) during the Learnership. This young lady unfortunately had to terminate her contract whilst the young gentleman successfully completed the Learnership, albeit with continuous persuasion and encouragement from the Programme Manager and college facilitators. Toward the end of the Learnership another two young ladies fell pregnant. Both of them completed the Learnership. They were both bright young ladies and decided to complete the Learnership seeing that they just had

approximately three months to complete the learnership before their babies would be born.

Many of the learners, who were older than twenty and unemployed, expected to receive a free wholesale and retail qualification and to be employed permanently upon completion of the Learnership that would lead to financial independence. Interestingly all of them were only too glad to simply work and earn a salary. It did not matter how much or rather how little they earned seeing that they did not have any income to start with.

Out of the original thirty-two enrolled learners, eighteen eventually completed the Learnership. Of these eighteen learners, the host companies employed ten learners full-time. Of the latter ten learners, two resigned for personal reasons. Four others have subsequently found employment in the W&R industry. One did not find employment for more than a year. She has subsequently been enrolled on another learnership, albeit in the electrical field. Three learners could not be contacted at all because their contact details have changed and none of the other interviewees knew anything about them.



The General Overview Report (Appendix 8:2) also states that 'most of the learners gained confidence and stronger self-esteem'. One of the heartfelt success stories is that a learner, who really struggled with assessments due to a mental block toward any formal theoretical evaluation, completed the Learnership. The Programme Manager and the Student Support lecturer counselled him on numerous occasions at college. In this regard the Programme Manager states in her report that 'perseverance and support eventually bore fruit' (Appendix 8:2).

Six companies started out on this Learnership (Appendix 5) but due to reasons that will be mentioned later in this chapter only five were involved right up to the end. Two companies withdrew and another joined. The reason for the latter company joining will also be explained later in this chapter. The learners

involved in this study were chosen from all five companies, but the workplace facilitators from only three companies were involved.

Table 5 below provides a profile of learners interviewed by gender, age at enrolment for this Learnership, home language, job during Learnership, whether the learner completed the Learnership or not and current employment status of the learner.

**Table 5: DEMOGRAPHICS OF LEARNERS INTERVIEWED**

| No. | Name of Learner | Gender | Age at enrolment for Learnership | Home language | Job during Learnership | Completed Learnership | Current Employment Status |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Debbie | F | 22 | Afrikaans | Cashier | Yes | Permanent cashier at the same company |
| 2. | Benjamin | M | 21 | Afrikaans | Perishable controller | Yes | Permanent merchandiser at another company |
| 3. | Nelson | M | 20 | Xhosa | General worker | Yes | Permanent tool repairer and he services tools at the same company |
| 4. | Princess | F | 23 | Xhosa | Shipping clerk | Yes | Permanent shipping clerk at the same company |
| 5. | Neliswa | F | 21 | Xhosa | General worker and later promoted to Invoicer-Packer | Yes | Unemployed at time of interview |
| 6. | Mary | F | 30 | English | General worker and later promoted to Invoicer-Packer | Yes | Permanent invoicer-packer at the same company |
| 7. | Andrew | M | 23 | Afrikaans | General worker and later promoted to Warehouse Manager | Yes | Permanent warehouse manager at the same company |

### 4.3.4 Views of college staff involved in this Learnership

The Programme Manager's expectation of managing this Learnership was that it would be "a challenge to work closely with the SMME companies since many of them don't have training departments unlike the bigger wholesale and retail companies" (Interview: Programme Manager, Pauline, 9 December 2005). She reported that the challenge was "to train the learners using the material provided by the SETA that concentrated more on activities in bigger companies, especially retail companies, but also to specifically look at the training needs of the individual SMME".

Pauline found that her biggest problem was working with learners who had not worked before. She related that since profits and productivity remain the primary objective of the SMMEs, who were workplace providers, they do not spend enough time on training the learners. This is not because they are not willing to train them but because SMMEs are understaffed. One therefore, had to take every situation in class and turn it into a learning opportunity applicable to the workplace.



Pauline believes that communication was of vital importance in bringing together the three parties effectively. She ensured effective communication by arranging monthly meetings with the companies, faxing the attendance registers every week, and sending weekly e-mails informing the workplace facilitators what the learners had done in every unit standard.

She emphasised that "a learnership is a wonderful tool, but workplace mentors and coaches in SMMEs need proper training" because they have not done formal on-the-job training before[23]. She added that companies should not "shove their training responsibilities into the minimum time" but that they "need to listen to the educators".

[23] The W&RSETA has started to train workplace facilitators since 2006.

She continued to praise the learnership as a way of learning by saying that the old-fashioned school system that concentrates on knowledge needs to be phased out. She said that a person needs to be holistically prepared and therefore has to come out with learned skills as well. She also said that she would not like "to see us go back to a knowledge-based and fully exam-based system". She felt that including the SE into the learnership is a clever way of delivering in the college sector. She added that the learnership has taught the traditional teacher that one does not have to be in a physical classroom all the time, for example, the college took the learners to a shopping centre with a checklist. (The purpose of the excursions will be discussed in the section that describes the researcher's personal observations below.) Her final comment was that "exciting methods win the hearts and minds of learners".

Ilse, one of the SE facilitators, has been involved with the SE programme since its inception at North-West 2 in 1999 (Interview: SE facilitator, Ilse, 29 November 2006). She assumed that learners would not have any experience in the workplace, therefore she "did not expect them to be able to work in the SE right from the start". Her opinion of the SE is that it "most definitely" plays an integral part in a learnership. In the SE the learners are afforded the opportunity to implement practically what they have learnt in each unit standard – and this whilst still in a learning environment. They worked in different departments of a business. These positions are: Reception, Cashier, Marketing, Floor manager, Finance, Storeman, Stock controller and Order clerk.

The College has had positive feedback from learners as well as employers regarding this programme. Ilse reported that the employers have mentioned that the practical work and experience in the SE can be implemented in the workplace immediately, such as carrying out duties as a receptionist, a cashier and a goods receiving clerk.

She does not know of any improvements that can be introduced in the programme. They have been running this programme since 1999 and "everything is in place

and working effectively". The two hours per week allocated to the learners to work in the SE were enough.

Her final comment on learnerships was that learnerships are "simply wonderful". She said that: "What they've learned today at college, can be implemented tomorrow". She continued to say that: "This has always been a dream in my teaching profession and the learnership plus the SE, made this dream of mine come true".

I was involved in the facilitation of ten unit standards, the assessment of five knowledge tests and eight on-the-job assessments. Appendix 14 provides details of the unit standards I was involved in on this Learnership. The assessment procedures prescribed by the W&RSETA are recorded in the Implementation Report and were strictly followed (Appendix 5).

I expected every learner to work hard, complete the Learnership and in so doing obtain a qualification for which they did not have to pay, gain valuable practical or workplace experience (that would stand them in good stead if the 'host company'[24] does not employ them permanently and they have to look for work elsewhere) and as an added bonus earn a salary, although not much.

A variety of teaching methods were implemented. Sometimes I would have to explain the theory to the learners in the classroom. They would also share many of their own experiences. The learners did lots of role-play activities, group work as well as individual activities. On two occasions I took the learners to the nearby shopping centre on practical excursions.

Although the material provided by the W&RSETA for each unit standard was presented very professionally and in simple English in a neat book I think that the content is insufficient. "Performing basic business calculations in retail and

[24] Host company refers to the company at which the learner was employed for the duration of the learnership.

wholesale practices" for instance simply had an Income Statement, but no other background to accounting was included. We had to supplement this unit standard with explanations on the background to the income statement as well as additional exercises for learners to calculate certain aspects, for example, selling price, cost price, gross profit, net profit and percentage increase and decrease in turnover.

The unit standard, "Attending to customers", also had to be supplemented with additional notes, for example, business etiquette. Numerous role-play activities were built into the latter unit standards. We also designed our own questionnaires or worksheets that we used during our practical excursions to shopping centres to record the behaviour of sales assistants in action and on another excursion/occasion for learners to record the different ways of promoting and displaying merchandise. As I have mentioned before I also showed the learners a few videos on how to communicate effectively as well as how to improve one's service to customers.

One section in the "Communication" unit standard requested that learners write a report. The college decided that the learners should simply write a report on an accident that they witnessed at work - since level 2 employees will most probably not have to write reports. The same unit standard requested that the learners write out a memorandum. Again, the college simply let them read and understand what a memorandum is and what they should do when they receive it. "Communication" and "Attending to customers" could be integrated very well because one has to speak with customers while assisting them.

The time allocated for me to facilitate the unit standards was adequate, however another session would have been appreciated in especially "Promotion", "Display" and "Speciality merchandise" – these three unit standards were integrated.

Due to the thorough planning of assessments of learners in the workplace by the Programme Manager, it usually proceeded smoothly. I noticed that learners were

more enthusiastic about the Behavioural Observations than they were about writing a test.

Some Behavioural Observations[25] were simulated at The Meat Co. with the assistance and commitment of the workplace facilitators. The rest of the Behavioural Observations[26] were simulated at the college for the same learners. This was done because these activities do not form part of the learners' job. The learners at The Liquor Store, The Tool Man, The Art Shop and The Mini-market did not have to simulate any Behavioural Observations since these activities formed part of their daily tasks.

As far as possible assessments took place under normal working conditions, however (even at the Liquor Store, The Tool Man, The Art Shop and The Mini-market) because of the lack of time I sometimes had to impersonate a customer and conduct a role-play.

Learnerships can be an efficacious tool, to train people for the workplace – to fast track the previously disadvantaged people into employment. Its effectiveness, however, also depends on the co-operation between the learner and the facilitator, the facilitator and the Programme Manager, the Programme Manager and the workplace facilitators as well as the learner and the workplace facilitator.



### 4.4 Company profiles and learner perspectives

As I have indicated earlier, five companies participated in this Learnership. I have conducted face-to-face semi-structured interviews with the workplace facilitators of three of these companies therefore I have only discussed these.

[25] "Handling stock", "Attending to customers", "Communication", "Processing retail documents" and "Safety, security and housekeeping".
[26] "Display and marking merchandise", "Promoting merchandise", "Applying speciality merchandise in retail and wholesale practices" and "Handling cash".

### 4.4.1 Company 1: The Liquor Store

This is a small- to medium-sized branch of a retail company that sells liquor in small to medium quantities to the public and other smaller retail outlets or entrepreneurs. It is situated in the Northern suburbs of Cape Town. The company enrolled one learner on this Learnership, namely Debbie, who had already been working for them on a casual basis for three years.

George, the Branch Manager, was appointed as her workplace facilitator. Sandra, a Human Resources Officer stationed at the Head Office, was appointed as her second workplace facilitator.

George stated that the company participated in the programme because they wanted to provide a learner, from a disadvantaged socio-economic background, with the opportunity to acquire a nationally recognised qualification and the possibility of permanent employment. This was achieved (Interview: Branch Manager, George, 15 April 2005).



*The Liquor Store learner: Debbie*

Debbie is an Afrikaans-speaking coloured young lady who had been employed as a casual cashier at The Liquor Store for three years before she was instructed, by management, to go on this Learnership. She turned 23 soon after she started the Learnership. Debbie was in possession of a Grade 12 certificate. Her goal was to gain theoretical knowledge and permanent employment via the Learnership. Toward the end of the Learnership she fell pregnant unexpectedly. This did not deter her from finishing all her assessments and eventually completing the Learnership. However, her situation served as an impetus to complete the Learnership in order to secure permanent employment and financial security for her and her unborn baby.

Debbie knew what was expected at work every day because she had been working at the company for three years prior to the Learnership, although it was only as a casual employee. She followed the same routine every day. For most of the day she worked as a cashier. This job involves ringing up items sold, taking money from customers, handing them a receipt, giving them change if necessary and packing their items. The skills needed for this job are numeracy and literacy skills, ability to operate a computerised cash register, customer service and communication skills.

Furthermore she assisted the men on the shop floor with tidying the shelves and sweeping the floors, in general, maintaining a clean and orderly store. According to Debbie most of what she learned in the practical component was not really new because she had already been working for the company for three years (Interview: Learner, Debbie, 8 December 2005). Her workplace facilitators assisted her readily. George assisted her with the workplace activities in the learner guide. He also asked her to explain to the other staff members what she had learnt the day before at college. He was present during these discussions at work. Sandra, her second workplace facilitator, was not stationed at the branch but she called Debbie very often and explained or cleared up queries telephonically. When she needed extra information, Sandra sent it via facsimile. All her training occurred during normal working hours. Debbie made a tremendous contribution to her company. When she learnt anything new at the college she would share it with her colleagues. This enthused them so much that they also wanted to have an input in the answers to the workplace activities. They were also inspired to implement improvements to the way the products were displayed. In conclusion to the section on the workplace experience, Debbie related that she was very happy with the practical component of the Learnership and mentioned that there should not be any changes in the manner in which it was done.

Her knowledge of what she would learn at college was non-existent. She had absolutely no concept of the theory she was to learn. Unlike the other learners she did not learn much more than she already knew because she had been working for

the company for three years prior to the Learnership. She already knew how to serve customers, how to communicate with the customers and how to keep the shop floor clean and tidy. However, she felt that there were certain aspects, such as how to create an attractive display of products on promotion, that she did not know and others, such as payments, invoicing, bank deposits, debtors, creditors, reception duties, that she cannot implement at her workplace, but can certainly be used in another retail outlet.

She had a negative view of the length of day at the college. She said that the sessions were too long and should be shortened. However she mentioned that the duration of some sessions, for example computers and the Simulated Enterprise, were justified.

Her opinion on the materials provided by the SETA was positive. She stated that it was user-friendly and easy to understand. She mentioned that the college facilitators balanced the theoretical and practical activities, that they did not talk too much and that the learners did not get bored easily. Her opinion about the assistance of the college facilitators coincided with most of the other learners' statements on this matter. She mentioned that they were willing to help the learners whenever they needed assistance. She confidently ended by saying that the manner in which the theory was delivered was fine.

> "Dit was alles alright gewees…nie heeldag gepraat nie…ons het gewerk…ons het group work gedoen…nie eintlik'n lang gepratery aaneen gewees nie".
>
> (Interview: Learner, Debbie, 8 December 2005)

She believes that she learnt much more regarding the activities in a wholesale and retail concern, specifically how they complement one another. She further considers that the work done in the SE was much more than what was needed at her specific company. She believes that the extra knowledge gained and skills learnt in the SE can be used in other wholesale and retail outlets. She mentioned

that it is better to know more and be able to do more than what is currently needed in one's job. One of the "extra" skills learnt in the SE was how to operate a computerised cash register. She stated that the activities done in the SE were very useful.

Debbie's view on the integration of the theoretical and practical components was positive. Firstly she said that there was a "good balance between what was learnt at college and on-the-job training at the workplace" (Interview: Learner, Debbie, 8 December 2005). Secondly she said that one "can't forget what you learnt" because one could "implement the theory almost immediately after learning it at college".

> "Ek sal nie enigiets verander nie, want wat ons by die college geleer het kan ons weer môre kom toepas by die werk… Die wat jy by die werk geleer het, kan jy weer by die college gaan vra. So ek dink dit was ok so".
>
> (Interview: Learner, Debbie, 8 December 2005)



When asked whether her expectations have been met she responded positively by saying that she "was a casual for three years but after the Learnership became a permanent staff member". Her goals were therefore achieved. She has learnt more than she expected and has been inspired by this Learnership. She said that the Learnership has inspired her to "dream bigger dreams". She now has aspirations of perhaps becoming a Personal Assistant one day. Her final comments were that she "had fun while learning" and that it was "a good experience".

### 4.4.2 Company 2: The Tool Man

A Canadian couple, William and Charlotte, own The Tool Man. They repair pocket-knives and other similar and also larger tools. In addition they sell an impressive variety of the most useful tools as well as swords and other little gadgets. They are the only company of its kind in South Africa. They have been

operating in the Northern suburbs of Cape Town for fifteen years. The company enrolled two learners, Princess and Nelson on the Learnership. Princess worked in the shipping department and Nelson serviced tools.

Charlotte mentioned that they wanted to give people from a disadvantaged background the opportunity to acquire a qualification and possible permanent employment. They especially wanted people who would fit in with the extremely busy family environment (Interview: Workplace facilitator, Charlotte, 15 April 2005).

William and Angel were the two main workplace facilitators with Charlotte assisting where necessary. William was mostly involved in training Nelson with regard to the practical workplace activities, such as servicing the tools. Angel was responsible for training Princess with regard to the practical workplace activities, such as packing goods for customers according to the invoice. Angel had an added responsibility, that is, to also assist both learners with completing the workplace activities in the learner guide.



*The Tool Man workplace facilitator: William*

William is a co-owner of The Tool Man that has been in operation for fifteen years. He was the obvious choice as Nelson's workplace facilitator because he has been repairing this type of tools more than fifteen years. His role as workplace facilitator included training Nelson to service tools. He expected Nelson to 'try to help the company' by being friendly to the customers and assist other colleagues. His expectations of Nelson were met and consequently he appointed him (Nelson) as a permanent employee. He commented that: "After checking his work on a consistent basis and improving any shortages (that is, tasks that he could not master) … Nelson finally became competent to do the job in a fairly reputable fashion" (Interview: Workplace facilitator, William, 17 December 2005).

William had no idea what the theory done at College entailed and also did not assist the learner with any of the theoretical workplace activities that had to be completed in the learner guide, nor was he involved in preparing the learner for assessments. Angel assisted both Nelson and Princess with these activities. William only did on-the-job training regarding servicing the tools and instructed Nelson regarding new tools. He first showed Nelson how to service the tools. Here they went through the tools together, he showed him how the tools are serviced and on a gradual basis allowed him to do certain aspects of servicing the tools, for example, buffing and cleaning. They then selected the parts for replacement and finally put them all together. While Nelson was learning, they spent dedicated time examining and/or experimenting with new tools to determine exactly how they fitted together. When new tools came in William and other colleagues told Nelson what they knew about these tools. In some cases they worked through the process of assembling new tools when they first arrived. Together they figured out how these tools actually worked. According to William, Nelson learnt how to solve problems in this way. He said that this is "… what I would like him to develop".



As regards the integration of theoretical and practical components William agreed that the way the Learnership is designed is a good way to learn. "It's probably the best way". He added that "the college has an opportunity to teach some attitudinal skills or perceptions or ways of thinking … the concept of delivering more, not expecting quite as much, is the most under-rated, under-trained concept …over-delivery is a requirement". In a time where the unemployment rate is over 40% it is important that every employee surpasses the performance to secure his/her job" (Interview: Workplace facilitator, William, 17 December 2005).

*The Tool Man workplace facilitator: Angel*

Angel, Head of the Shipping Department, has been working for the company for five years. Her role as workplace facilitator included training Princess in the activities involved in getting the product to the customer as well as assisting Princess and Nelson with completing the workplace activities in the learner guide.

She was selected to be a workplace facilitator because she had completed the same Learnership the year before (Interview: Workplace facilitator, Angel, 28 December 2005). She expected Princess to be able to perform the basic activities involved with getting the product to the customer. Her expectations of Princess were met since she can pack a customer's order, according to the invoice, without the assistance of her colleagues.

Her training/coaching included more than just practical on-the-job training or special meetings held with the learners to clear up any nagging questions. She assisted both Nelson and Princess with completing the workplace activities in the learner guide. If she did not have time to help Princess with either the practical work or the workplace activities in the learner guide, she would ask one of the other staff members to assist. She also prepared both learners for assessments at college, especially in aspects of basic calculations, such as Value Added Tax (VAT).

She thought that the learning material is appropriate for their specific industry. She mentioned that Princess could even "teach the other staff". She had a very positive view of the way the Learnership is designed, and felt that the combination of theoretical and practical components is a good way to learn. "… it's awesome, it's like a plait, the two meet each other". Her final comment was "… keep up with the good work" (Interview: Workplace facilitator, Angel, 28 December 2005).

*The Tool Man learner: Nelson*

Nelson is a Xhosa-speaking young man who had completed Grade 12. He was 20 years old when he started the Learnership. Nelson was already working as a casual at The Tool Man doing general cleaning of the workshop, when they enrolled him on the Learnership. He agreed to do the Learnership because he thought that it would lead to a better job, wanted to learn more about the business industry and obtain a good qualification. In the beginning of the Learnership he

wanted to terminate his contract because of peer pressure from his friends. They dropped out of the Learnership because they did not enjoy working for their specific companies. Because he did not like working for his company, he thought he would also leave. Fortunately he did not terminate his contract and completed the Learnership. Nelson is a quiet gentle young man whose confidence and self-esteem increased tremendously during the year.

Nelson knew what was expected at work every day because he had been working at the company for a while before the Learnership, even if it was only as a casual employee. His daily schedule consisted of a variety of activities. Every morning he had to clean the workshop. His main duty was to service tools (for example cleaning, buffing, replacing faulty parts). In addition he learnt how to sell products to customers. He works in the workshop the whole day. One has to have some technical skills to be able to repair these small tools. His workplace facilitators assisted him gladly. William mostly demonstrated how he should service various tools during normal working hours, but this also happened one hour before or one hour after work. Angel especially helped him when he had problems with the workplace activities in the learner guide. Every Friday at approximately half past four the owners held a meeting with all staff, especially with the learners. (The company had learners who were studying with another training provider as well.) This was not really a training session, but rather a meeting to determine how the learners were coping in general. Nelson made a sizeable contribution to his company. Not only did he learn how to service the tools, but his confidence had increased so much, especially after doing the unit standards "Communication" and "Attending to Customers", that he attempted and succeeded in selling a few products to walk-in potential customers. Nelson said that he would not change the way in which the practical component was done.

He had a vague idea of what he would learn at college. Firstly he thought that he would be attending college only, that is, Mondays to Fridays. He thought that he would learn about business skills. He had absolutely no idea that he would be studying and working simultaneously. His opinion of the usefulness of the theory

learnt at College was that it was more that sufficient. He said that he learnt more at college than he did at work. Certain aspects, such as, how to deal with problem customers and how to draw up an income statement, were not explained at work but were taught at college. As regards the length of day at the college, he said that it was too long and suggested that they actually should have attended college three times a week instead of only once a week. His feedback on the materials provided by the SETA was constructive. He stated that the materials were professionally set out, that the simple English used made it easy to understand and that he liked the combination of learner activities and workplace activities. He did not really say much regarding the content of the theory. He only said that it was satisfactory. He mentioned that the countless group activities that the college facilitators made them participate in, as way to make them understand the theory, were helpful. He thought that the work done in the SE was beneficial in that it prepared him for much more than what was needed at The Tool Man. He ended by saying that there is "no need to improve" the theoretical component since it is "… fine as it is" (Interview: Learner, Nelson, 19 December 2005).



Nelson's opinion on the integration of the theoretical and practical components is very positive. He said that "they meet together", that the "theory fits with the practical" and that it is a "good way of learning".

In response to the question on whether his expectations have been met he responded by saying "yes" because he has been "employed full-time" and that the "Learnership helped a lot". Nelson would really like to study further. He has already made enquiries about the possibility of applying for a more advanced Learnership in the W&R industry. He plans to stay with the Tool Man because he enjoys working there and he gets along with his colleagues. His final comments were that the "activities in wholesale and retail processes are clear now".

*The Tool Man learner: Princess*

Princess is a Xhosa-speaking young lady who had completed Grade 12 before entering the Learnership. She had to put her studies as a Management Assistant at Hillside College on hold because of financial constraints. At the time of the Learnership she was unemployed. The Programme Manager knew that she was looking for a job and asked Charlotte at The Tool Man to employ her and enrol her on the Learnership. She had never worked before and was 23 years old when she started the Learnership. Her motivation was to gain experience in the workplace, obtain a qualification and at the same time to earn some money that she could later use to complete her Management Assistant Diploma. She is a very determined and cheerful young lady. She completed the Learnership.

Princess did not have any idea of what to expect at work. She did not like working at The Tool Man in the beginning and wanted to terminate her contract because she simply did not enjoy the work. She said that if she had known what her job entailed she would not have enrolled for this Learnership. Princess worked in the shipping department. Her work consisted of routine activities for example, packing parcels according to invoices and postage of parcels. The skill needed for this type of work mainly consists of numeracy and literacy skills. One also needs to pay careful attention to detail because the goods packed for a particular order has to match the invoice. Whilst on the Learnership she also learnt how to complete an invoice as well as some reception work. Princess' workplace facilitators assisted her eagerly. Not only did Angel demonstrate how to execute her daily tasks on-the-job, but she also assisted her with the workplace activities in the learner guide. She had no idea what special contribution – besides just doing her job – she made to the company. In response to the question on how she would improve the practical component she said that: "it was ok" (Interview: Learner, Princess, 19 December 2005).

She did not know what to expect regarding the theory she would learn at college. She viewed what she learnt at college in a positive light. She thought that she

learnt more than the skills needed in her current job. She pointed out that those aspects not used at her present company, for example basic calculations, computers, telephone skills, reception skills and customer service, will definitely help her if she is employed at another wholesale and retail outlet. However she felt that the day was too long, that it was tiring and that she struggled a bit at the end of the day – that is if she survived. In the end though, she got used to it. She mentioned that the theory learnt in one day was too much and proposed that they have shorter days twice a week at the college. She thought the material provided by the SETA was set out professionally, was simple, easy to read and that she could cope with the level of English. She considered the content of the theory to be on the right level. She stated that the "group activities" executed by the college facilitators were "helpful" and that "they did not just stand … they were helping a lot". She added that she felt as if she were part of a family because she could go to them with any query and they would help her.

Princess affirmed Nelson's sentiments regarding the usefulness of the work done in the SE. She too thought that it prepared her for much more than what was needed at The Tool Man. When asked how she thought one can improve the theoretical component she responded that there is "no need to improve" since it is "fine as it is".

Princess regarded the integration of the theoretical and the practical components in a positive light. She said that the "combination of theory and practical" is a "better way of learning". She added that one could not forget what one has learnt at college because it can actually be implemented at work the very next day.

Her response to the question on whether her expectations have been met echoed that of Nelson's. She too replied that "yes" she had been "employed full-time" and that the "Learnership helped a lot". She has decided to stay with the company because she enjoys working there now and she gets along with her colleagues. She still plans to complete her Management Assistant course. Her final comments were that she would like to thank the Programme Manager for being instrumental

in her enrolment on the Learnership and as well as the college facilitators, for doing "a great job" especially with "Customer Care, Calculations and Communication".

It came to my attention that both these learners would often arrive late for work with a lame excuse or without a valid reason. They were almost not employed permanently because of this problem. I had come to know of their possible dismissal via informal conversations with the Programme Manager and Charlotte. I decided to have a serious discussion with both of them just before the end of the Learnership. I sketched the scenario and gave them a few options – they either change their negative attitude toward their work and they will be employed permanently or maintain this attitude and not be hired at all. I told them to think about it. Their attitudes changed overnight. Eventually they were both employed permanently. This scenario highlights the special relationship between the learners and their college facilitators that might not exist between the workplace facilitators and the learners. This is possible because the college facilitators do not have a supervisory role as workplace facilitators do and can therefore form a different relationship with them.



4.4.3 Company 3: The Meat Co.

This wholesale company sells a large variety of meat products to local retail outlets. They are situated in an industrial area near Cape Town. This company initially enrolled twenty-three learners on the Learnership. According to Lynne, the HR Manager at The Meat Co, they enrolled disadvantaged learners from the area on this Learnership to give them a chance to be employed permanently and hence improve themselves and their standard of living (Interview: Lynne, 15 Apr 2005).

Some of the learners terminated their learnership contracts and consequently their employment contracts, within the first few months – mostly because they did not want to do the extremely hard routine work. Their jobs entailed making and

packing a variety of sausages as well as cutting up and packing different meats. One's hand and eye co-ordination has to be in sync and one needs to know how to use the cutting machines. Some learners were not punctual for work and one learner fell pregnant. Eventually the company was left with thirteen learners who persevered and completed the Learnership.

The workplace facilitators were James, the supervisor on the factory floor, Lynne, the Human Resources Manager, and Lulu, an experienced employee who worked in the office and who had done the same Learnership at another training provider the year before.

*The Meat Co. workplace facilitator: Lynne*

Lynne has been working at The Meat Co. for four and a half years as the HR Manager. She was selected to be one of the workplace facilitators because of her experience. She expected all the learners to "complete the course and excel in their theoretical and practical studies" (Interview: Workplace facilitator, Lynne, 21 June 2006). Her expectations of the learners were met indeed. She commented that she was pleasantly surprised that thirteen out of the original twenty-three learners actually completed the Learnership and that five of these learners were eventually appointed as permanent employees.



She mostly mentored Neliswa and Mary when they were promoted to work (mostly) in the office. She motivated them on an on-going basis and coached them by communicating on-the-job functions, such as filing various documents, doing the sales analysis or the wages, by giving them practical sessions on how to file documents and apply basic computer skills.

Her comments on the appropriateness of the theory and the integration of the theoretical and practical components were positive. She agrees that the way the Learnership is designed is a good way to learn. She stated that: "… the learners could relate to the theory because they actually did the work themselves". She

added that: "… maybe they should concentrate on persons who are already employed because the success rate will be higher – people who have been unemployed for a long period of time can become unemployable". According to Lynne if one has been unemployed for a very long time, one can easily fall into a rut – not wanting to work, undisciplined, cannot stick to the strict routine of the workplace. Permanently employed workers are used to the routine. All they need to do is improve their knowledge and skill so that they can be more productive.

Lynne agreed that the learning material is appropriate for their specific industry. She further stated that: "… when learners complete a certain level they should be put onto the next level". However, the college cannot automatically put learners onto the next level. The employer has to nominate suitable candidates because the next level, a Level 4 Learnership, trains employees to be supervisors or first line managers.

*The Meat Co. learner: Neliswa*



Neliswa is a bright and very confident Xhosa-speaking young lady who completed Grade 12 as well as a Diploma in Journalism. (A noteworthy point is that she did not indicate that she holds a Diploma in Journalism when she applied for this Learnership. Perhaps she was not interested in a career in Journalism any longer or she was simply desperate to start earning a salary.) She applied for this Learnership when she heard that a big company situated near her home was recruiting learners. Her application was successful. She was already 21 years old and had never worked before, except during her in-service training to qualify for her Diploma in Journalism. Her goal was to gain workplace experience, theoretical knowledge from the college, a certificate and possible permanent employment after the Learnership.

Neliswa's experience of the workplace was quite different from what she had expected. She thought that she was going to do administrative work. In the beginning her work was very routine but she eventually did a variety of tasks.

She worked on the factory floor making and packing sausages, packing the trays of sausages into boxes and packing these boxes into the fridge. She also packed red meat and cold meat for other stores. Further she had to differentiate between cold meat and frozen meat.

A few months into the Learnership Neliswa was promoted to invoicer-packer. Consequently her daily activities took place mainly in the office. She says that she thinks she was promoted because she is a hard-working person. I think the fact that she had some workplace experience and was much higher qualified than the other learners contributed to her promotion. She completed the Learnership. Once a week she had to learn to use the computer as well as do some filing. Her workplace facilitators assisted her willingly. They questioned her on how specific tasks are performed, while she was doing it. When they were occupied they requested other experienced staff to lend a hand. She says she must have made a useful contribution to the company because she was promoted from a normal general factory worker to a permanent position approximately six months into the Learnership. Neliswa thinks that the practical component would have been more beneficial if the "workplace facilitators teach learners how to operate more machines" (Interview: Learner, Neliswa, 6 Dec 2005).



As regards what she would learn at college, she thought that she was going to learn about computers, communication and general theory that relates to working in the business environment. She stated that the theory learnt at college was more than sufficient for what was needed at the workplace. Her opinion on the length of day at the college was that it was too long, that it drained her mentally and that she got bored. She recommended that the periods be shortened. She said that the material provided by the SETA was good and that the simple English used made it easy to understand. She thought that she gained enough knowledge in one session.

She mentioned that the college facilitators explained the work very well in simple English that was easy to understand and that there was a balance between the

theory and practical activities. She added that college facilitators offered their support even if it did not concern the Learnership. Her exact words were: "I think they assisted us big time even if you did not come to college maybe you had a personal problem. They also ask you what is your problem and they assist you how to solve that problem even if it's not about the work. Very concerned". Her view on the usefulness of the work done in the SE coincides with those of learners of other companies, that is, Debbie, Nelson and Princess. She too thinks that she gained many more skills in the SE than what was needed on the factory floor, such as, to complete invoices, receptionist duties and computer skills. Neliswa, just like Nelson and Princess at The Tool Man, said that there is "no need to improve" the theoretical component.

Neliswa's view concerning the integration of the theoretical and practical components of the Learnership is positive. Firstly she agrees with Princess that the "combination of theory and practical" is a "better way of learning" (Interview: Learner, Neliswa, 27 June 2006). Secondly she affirms Debbie's sentiments that one "can't forget what you learnt" because one "can implement theory almost immediately after learning it at college" (Interview: Learner, Neliswa, 27 June 2006).



Neliswa's response regarding whether her expectations were met, was also positive. She mentioned that she "gained practical experience at work and theoretical knowledge from the college" (Interview: Learner, Neliswa, 6 Dec 2005). She added that she "achieved more than what was expected" since she was promoted during the Learnership. Neliswa has been motivated by her family, college facilitators, workplace facilitators, her colleagues as well as the Learnership itself to study further. She would like to study further by correspondence.

At the time of the interview she was looking for a new job. She had resigned from The Meat Co. since she started developing back problems because of working in too cold temperature. She had since completed a six months course in

Metro Police and Traffic Signs at the Traffic College. In a brief follow-up interview she mentioned that she actually worked for another company doing administrative work, on a temporary basis for a few months. However, at the time of this follow-up interview she was unemployed and looking for another job (Interview: Learner, Neliswa, 27 June 2006).

*The Meat Co. learner: Mary*

Mary is an English-speaking white female. She had completed Grade 10 many years ago. Her family could not afford to send her to college. She was unemployed just before she started the Learnership and was therefore desperate to work and earn a salary. She was 30 years old. She heard about this Learnership via another job she was applying for at The Meat Co. She thought that it would be a golden opportunity to be trained to use a computer, gain valuable work experience, obtain a free qualification, earn whilst doing it and possibly be employed permanently at the end of the Learnership.



Mary's experience of the workplace was quite different from what she had imagined. She thought that she was going to learn more about meat, for example, cutting and packing the meat. Her work would have been very monotonous had she not persuaded her supervisor to allow her to work at different stations on the factory floor. She did this because she wanted to learn as much as possible about the company. She started out working on the factory floor making and packing russian sausages and viennas. She also assisted with the deli line but most of the time she helped with the sausage line. Eventually she worked in the meat section. Later she assisted with some filing in the office and even learnt how to do the wages and a sales analysis report on the computer. In between she also helped the truck drivers with on- and off-loading of stock. The latter task she did voluntarily. She took her own initiative because she wanted to be a truck driver. Approximately six months into the Learnership Mary was promoted to invoice-packer that entailed working mostly in the office. She says that one of the managers simply asked her whether she would like to apply for a permanent

position that became vacant after one of the employees resigned. Mary accepted this position. She is a very committed and hard-working person and is determined to learn as much at the company as possible. She completed the Learnership.

Mary's workplace facilitators assisted her with pleasure. They had many teaching sessions on-the-job. Her facilitators in the office demonstrated how to do many little administrative activities. Because of Mary's enthusiasm she took her own initiative and tried new activities on her own. She must have impressed her employers because she was promoted from a normal general factory worker to a permanent position approximately six months into the Learnership.

Mary suggested that in order for the practical component to be even more effective, their workplace facilitators "need to see that learners gain experience in many more areas and not only concentrate on one type of activity" (Interview: Learner, Mary, 16 December 2005).



Her idea of what she would learn at college was inaccurate. She thought that she was going to learn about the meat trade. Despite this she believed that she learnt more at college than what was needed at the workplace. She learnt how the wholesale in retail industry functions as a whole.

Her view of the length of day at the college was that it was too long, that she was drained mentally and that she got bored. She proposed that the periods be shortened. In her analysis of the material provided by the SETA she affirmed that it was set out professionally and that the simple English used made it easy to understand. Mary, however, did not think that the theory was applicable to the activities in her company. She thought that the theory focused too heavily on activities in a retail outlet. Very little information regarding a wholesale outlet was provided. She wanted to learn more about how the wholesale industry functions. On the method of instruction of the college facilitators she mentioned that she enjoyed the numerous group activities that the learners participated in. Mary wholeheartedly agreed with Debbie, Benjamin and Andrew pertaining to the

assistance of the college facilitators. She concurs that whenever the learners needed help the college facilitators would assist. She reiterated the sentiments of Debbie, Nelson, Princess and Neliswa that the SE prepared her for many more skills than what was needed at The Meat Co. With regards to the improvement of the theoretical component she mentioned that the "SETA needs to look at the fact that they concentrate on retail much more than wholesale".

Mary's thoughts on the integration of the theoretical and practical components are two-fold. She thinks that the separate components "fit in very well with each other" and, agrees with Benjamin, that one "learns something at college and then implemented it at work".

Mary's opinion on whether her expectations have been met, were positive. She mentioned that she has been "employed full-time after the Learnership" that she has "obtained a qualification without having to pay for it" and that she "was promoted during the Learnership". She has been enthused to study further. She would like to do a Learnership in Accounting since this is the field she is interested in. She is extremely grateful to "those who made it possible" for her "to receive a free qualification and also to be employed as a permanent staff member". Her final comments were that she would "recommend that the way the programme is designed continues", but that the company and training provider have to "make sure learners who are selected … are really learners who need it the most, that is, those who cannot afford to pay for a qualification".



### 4.4.4 Company 4: The Art Shop

This privately owned (mainly) wholesale company sells paint and paint related products to individuals (mostly artists) and other retail outlets. They are situated in an industrial area near Cape Town. Two brothers, Gilbert and Larry, manage the company. They enrolled one learner on the Learnership, namely Andrew. Generally his job entailed executing tasks related to warehousing, for example, receiving stock and packing it into the warehouse.

According to the CEO, Gilbert, The Art Shop was looking for someone who would not be afraid of responsibility and could delegate duties to others. They were looking for someone who exuded authority and who would, at the same time, be respected by his co-workers (Interview: Gilbert, 15 April 2005). The learner they eventually contracted turned out to be exactly the one they were looking for. They promoted him to Warehouse Manager toward the end of the Learnership. Both Gilbert and Larry were Andrew's workplace facilitators.

*The Art Shop learner: Andrew*

Andrew is an Afrikaans-speaking coloured young man who had completed Grade 12. In addition he completed all the theory for his N6 Marketing Diploma at Hillside College. He still had to complete his in-service training for this diploma, but could not get work. One of his former lecturers at the college arranged that a company appoint him as their learner on this Learnership. When he joined the Learnership he was 23 years old. He said that his main reason for doing this Learnership was to gain workplace experience that would allow him to qualify for his Marketing Diploma and possibly to be employed full-time thereafter. Halfway through the Learnership his employers were so impressed with Andrew that he was promoted to Warehouse Manager. He is a very confident young man who is determined to achieve set goals. His employers are very impressed with his performance and with the type of person that he is. He is liked and respected by his colleagues. He completed the Learnership, qualified for his Marketing Diploma and is still working at The Art Shop.

Andrew had worked before, therefore he knew that an employee should always be punctual for work, always complete tasks with diligence and be committed to the job. But he did not have any idea of what to expect regarding the type of work he would be doing at The Art Shop during the Learnership. However, he enjoyed working at this company so much that if he had known what his job would entail, he would have still gone on the Learnership. Andrew was fortunate not to have a very routine job. He did a variety of activities throughout the day. He had to

label the stock, pack the stock away, see that the stock is kept clean as well as check the stock coming in and stock going out of the warehouse. He also had to complete order forms and leave forms. In addition to his normal work on the computer he also learnt how to make labels and barcodes for the products. He learnt how to communicate with different kinds of people, how to speak to customers, speak to a colleague or simply deal with different situations he found himself in at work, such as solving a query for a customer telephonically or face-to-face.

His workplace facilitators assisted him readily. Both Gilbert and Larry explained how to execute a task on-the-job. Gilbert also set aside a special day in the week to assist him with completing the theoretical workplace activities in the learner guide.

He made a huge contribution to his company because he turned out to be exactly what they were looking for. Approximately eight months into the Learnership he was promoted from a normal general factory worker to the Warehouse Manager. This is a permanent position. In response to the question how he thinks the workplace component can be improved he said that he "needed more specific instructions" (Interview: Learner, Andrew, 14 December 2005).



Regarding the theory he would learn at college, Andrew thought that he would learn how this specific factory operated, for example, how the paints were mixed and other art materials were manufactured. As time went by he realised that he was mistaken – that he learnt how the wholesale and retail industry functioned in general. He mentioned that those aspects not implemented at work could be used in another retail outlet. As regards the length of day at the college, he thought that the sessions were too long, drained one mentally and that he got bored. He proposed that the periods be shortened. He also stated that college facilitators spent too much time doing revision. Andrew affirmed Neliswa's statement on the language of instruction of the college facilitators. He mentioned that that simple English was used and that it was easy to understand.

He thought the material provided by the SETA was user-friendly and easy to follow. He considered the content of the theory to be easy and simple. This was understandable seeing that he had completed all the theory for a Marketing Diploma. He said that the theory or content was "too little … what was learnt at college didn't go with the practical … just served as a basis". Since Andrew was promoted to Warehouse Manager this Learnership did not equip him with sufficient or applicable theory to execute complex tasks associated with this job.

He confirmed that the college facilitators were very helpful in that they assisted the learners whenever they as learners, needed help. He had quite a strong opinion on the usefulness of the work done in the SE. First of all he agrees with many of the other learners who were interviewed that he learnt many more skills in the SE than what was needed at his specific company. He concurred with Debbie that the extra knowledge and skills could be used at another wholesale and retail outlet and that it is always better to know more and to be able to do more than what is currently needed in one's present job. Therefore, he says that the activities undertaken in the SE were very useful. However, he asserts that the SE was dragged out too long and suggests that it could be shortened to approximately eight months. Andrew was exposed to many more and also different activities at work than any of the other learners. He has a better background in the theory, namely, a Diploma in Marketing Management, than any of the other learners. This put him a step ahead of them.

His opinion on the integration of the theoretical and practical components of the Learnership was very positive. He summed it up with the comment "the integration was spot-on" and that "whoever set up the learnership knew what they were doing". He added that the "theory interlinked with the practical" and that "it's an easier way to learn" seeing that "you gain practical experience". He also said that "it's hands-on and it's simple and easy". Furthermore he added that he has even "recommended that people do a learnership because it's the way to go now".

Andrew's response to whether his expectations have been met was favourable. He was unexpectedly promoted to Warehouse Manager during the Learnership. This is a permanent and very responsible position. The fact that Andrew already had some of the theoretical background of the business industry because of the theory done for his Marketing Diploma, as well as some of the personal characteristics and qualities for this job, aided his promotion. Since Andrew was actually a Manager, some of the content of this Learnership would not have been appropriate for him. Ideally he should have received RPL and enrolled for a Level 4, Learnership that trains supervisors or first line managers in the retail and wholesale industry. Andrew is determined to study further. He has already started making enquiries about applying for a degree in management.

### 4.4.5 Company 5: The Mini-market

This is a franchise retail outlet that sells convenience products – products needed by consumers everyday. They are situated in the Northern suburbs of Cape Town. They joined the Learnership later than the other companies.



Jacques, the Manager of The Mini-market and Olive, the Receiving Manageress, were appointed as the workplace facilitators. I did not interview any workplace facilitators at this company, therefore I cannot comment on the expectations they had for the learner.

*The Mini-market learner: Benjamin*

Benjamin is an Afrikaans-speaking coloured young man who completed Grade 10. He was employed as a casual employee at a franchise retail outlet when he was asked whether he wanted to go on this Learnership. He was 21 years old. He was very eager to learn more about the wholesale and retail industry. He hoped that this qualification would provide him with a better job that would eventually lead to a better future. A few months into the Learnership Benjamin was dismissed because of an unfortunate incident at work. Despite this he was really a good worker and found himself a casual job at a similar outlet, that is, The Mini-

market, soon after the incident. The new employers were willing to coach him, allow him to attend college and complete all assessments and eventually the Learnership. The owner of the Mini-market therefore gave Benjamin a second chance at the Learnership and also in life. Benjamin completed the Learnership and really enjoyed his work and executed each task with enthusiasm.

Benjamin knew what was expected at work every day because of his previous experience as a casual employee. He performed a variety of tasks every day. The first thing he had to do every morning was to remove all perishables, with an expired sell by date, from the shelves, then he had to pack out the new stock, check and change promotion dates, check whether all the prices are still correct and generally keep the shelves clean and tidy. The skill involved with this type of work is that one has to be orderly. It is also necessary that one be vigilant since one has to spot products that are still on the shelves past their sell-by dates. He mentioned that he learnt how to use the till but could not continue working as a cashier because the store needed a perishable controller. A perishable controller is someone who has to check whether perishable goods are still fresh enough to remain on the shelves or whether they should be removed. He also learnt how to complete an invoice and check deliveries, that is, invoices as well as the products. Literacy and numeracy skills are essential in order to execute these tasks efficiently.



Benjamin's workplace facilitators assisted him with enthusiasm. They had many training sessions on-the-job. He made a substantial contribution to the company because he used his own initiative to train the casual workers. He did this mainly to ensure that the products would be packed the way he wanted them to be packed. Consequently there would not be any confusion on a Monday morning when he returned to work and the casual was not there. Benjamin still wanted to learn much more regarding the practical activities at the workplace.

He did not have a clear idea of the theory he would learn at college. He simply thought that he would learn about the wholesale and retail industry, but did not

know specifically what it would entail. He mentioned that the theory learnt at college was more than sufficient for what was required at his workplace. Furthermore he added that he first learnt the theory at college then he applied it at work.

Benjamin's opinion of the length of day at the college was different from the other learners. He thought that it was fine. Moreover he was enthusiastic about the fact that there was so much to learn and that the theory could be implemented at work.

Benjamin agreed with some of the other learners regarding the method of instruction of the college facilitators. He thought that the practical/group activities were helpful. Like Debbie, Mary and Andrew, he too pointed out that the college facilitators were willing to assist the learners whenever they needed help. It was reassuring to hear him say that although English is not his first language, he could still understand the work. He felt that the material provided by the SETA was user-friendly, but encountered some difficult words. When he looked up the words in a dictionary he discovered that they were the same as the simple ones used at work. Therefore, he learnt the professional term.



Benjamin wholeheartedly agrees with Debbie in relation to the usefulness of the work done in the SE. He confirmed that he learnt much more regarding the activities in a wholesale and retail concern, especially how they fit into one another. He only has one little concern about the theoretical component, namely, that he would have liked to learn how the refrigerators function, for example, what their temperature should be for certain products. This aspect is not covered in the unit standard Benjamin did, that is, Speciality Merchandise.

Benjamin's opinion on the integration of the theoretical and practical components concurred with that of Mary. He too thinks that the theory and practical "fit in very well with each other" and that one "learns something at college and then implemented it at work" (Interview: Learner, Benjamin, 10 July 2006).

Benjamin's response to whether his expectations were met or not came as a surprise to me. He responded by saying that he "felt he had to be promoted after the Learnership" but that he "stayed in the same position" (Interview: Learner, Benjamin, 7 December 2005). In his eagerness to learn more at college and at work, for example, he wanted to know how to do certain activities that form part of the supervisor's or manager's job. I think that Benjamin did not realise that this Learnership is only aimed at level 2. At the time of the interview he was not exactly sure what he was going to do because he was waiting for the wholesale company to decide whether they were going to re-employ him or not. He mentioned that if they do, he would continue to work for them for another few years then seek employment elsewhere, but if they decide not to, he would start looking for a new job in the wholesale and retail industry as soon as possible. He is even thinking of starting his own small business buying and selling a few meat products if he does not find employment.

The Learnership gave Benjamin direction in life. His final comments were:

> "Ja … dis dinge wat ek nou nie geweet het nie … voor die Learnership het ek nie geweet watter rigting wil ek regtig … in die winkel bedryf … in die retail nie…maar toe ek sien hoe dinge werk in die wholesale en retail besigheid toe besluit ek nee wat, dis hier wat ek wil wees".
>
> (Interview: Learner, Benjamin, 7 December 2005)

He was employed full-time after the Learnership but resigned a few months later because he did not have any benefits, for example, medical aid and pension, and thought that his salary was too low. Soon afterwards he was appointed as a permanent employee at a wholesale company as a merchandiser. While he was delivering at the store at which he started the Learnership, they (that is, the first company) actually contacted the Head Office of his new employer and tried to get him dismissed – just because he was delivering to another company that belongs to the same franchise group. At the time I interviewed Benjamin he was waiting

for a response from Head Office as to whether he could continue working for the company or not.

In a follow-up interview Benjamin related that while waiting for a response about his job as a merchandiser, he actually found permanent employment elsewhere. He is now a merchandiser at a company delivering chickens to a major retail outlet.

### 4.5 Summary on findings of learners' experiences of this Learnership

The research has revealed that the overall expectations of learners were that they hoped to gain workplace experience, theoretical knowledge, obtain a qualification without having to pay for it and after successful completion of the Learnership be employed in a permanent capacity.

Many of the learners did not really know what they would learn at the college. Five out of the seven learners said that they learnt much more at college than what was needed at the workplace. One learner said that she only gained *some* extra knowledge. This learner had already been working for the host company for three years. One learner said that some of the theory he learned was not applicable to his job. This is the same learner who was promoted to Warehouse Manager. The theory in this Level 2, Learnership would not have been sufficient for him to deal with his new job. Considering that he has completed the theory for a Diploma in Marketing Management his qualifications he should have received RPL and enrolled on a more advanced learnership.

Six out of the seven learners considered the length of the day at college too long. Only one learner said that the length was "just right" because "there was so much to learn". One learner suggested that they spend two shorter days at the college, another suggested three days at the college and four learners suggested that the periods be shortened. This is unlikely to change because a day at the college is considered the same as a day at work including two short breaks and one long

one. Personally I think the periods can be shortened to one or one and a half hours instead of two. The time allocated for the SE can remain the same since this concentrates on practical activities.

Six of the seven learners said that the language used by the facilitators and the material supplied by the W&RSETA was easy to understand. One learner said that when he came across a difficult word he looked it up in the dictionary and discovered that it had the same meaning to some of the terms used at work. He said that he therefore learned the professional term. Five learners were satisfied with the content, seven learners were satisfied with the method of instruction and six learners were satisfied with the assistance of the college facilitators.

Four of the seven learners interviewed said that it is not necessary to improve on the theory. However, learners would not know the depth of the theory they are supposed to know in order to be proficient in the workplace. One of the seven learners said that the theory should not concentrate so heavily on the retail industry, but should include more aspects that relate to the wholesale industry. One learner, Benjamin, would like to have learnt how some of the refrigerators worked. As I have explained in section 4.4.5 this Learnership is not designed to cover that technical aspect. It will be covered in a different learnership.



As regards the work-based learning, the study has found that three of the seven learners interviewed knew what was expected at work because they had already been working for the host company for a while, albeit in a casual capacity. Four of them had no idea what to expect in the workplace. By the end of the Learnership, three of these four learners said that they would still have enrolled for the Learnership and one said that she would not have because it was “tough”.

The evidence points to the fact that the majority of the workplace facilitators went to great lengths to assist the learners whenever they could. Sometimes, if they could not, they would ask another staff member to assist. Most of the training at work occurred on-the-job with some workplace facilitators setting aside special

time to assist with queries and/or workplace activities in the Learner Guide. According to this feedback my thoughts about workplace facilitators simply being interested in profits and not assisting the learners to learning, were refuted.

Approximately six months into the Learnership, two of the learners at The Meat Co., Neliswa and Mary, were promoted from general factory workers to Invoicer-packers which were both permanent positions. The learner at The Art Shop, Andrew, was promoted to Warehouse Manager about eight months into the Learnership. These learners made a considerable contribution to their host companies. These learners were promoted not only because of what they had learnt on the Learnership, but their inherent attributes and leadership skills also contributed to their achievements.

Most learners were satisfied with the way the work-based learning transpired. One learner felt that her workplace facilitator should ensure that learners gain experience in more areas and not only concentrate on one type of activity. Another learner felt that workplace facilitators should teach learners to operate more machines. One learner, Andrew, would have liked his workplace facilitator to give him more specific instructions. As explained in section 4.4.4 Andrew was promoted to Warehouse Manager, therefore the theory in this Learnership was not sufficient for his duties at work. He had to rely on all his background knowledge to execute his tasks at work effectively.

The most interesting information that came to light was that six out of the seven learners said that the work done in the SE was very useful. They said that they learnt more in the SE than what was needed in their specific companies. A few learners said that they could use this *extra* knowledge and skills learnt in the SE at another wholesale and retail outlet one day. One learner, Andrew, said that the activities in the SE were "dragged out" and that the SE should be shortened to about eight months. Again, he was probably over-qualified to do this Learnership.

Not surprisingly all learners spoke about the integration of theory and practice favourably. Some of the comments made by learners are that integration was "spot-on", "hands-on", "easier way to learn", "good balance between … college … on-the-job training …", "theory fits with practical", "can implement theory almost immediately after learning it at college" and "can't forget what you learnt".

## 4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have described this Learnership, explained how Hillside College became involved in offering learnerships and how they implemented this Learnership. I have also illustrated and summarised the findings of the experiences of some learners who completed this Learnership. In addition I have analysed the comments of the Programme Manager, the SE facilitator as well as my own observations. Furthermore I have used specific documents that provided information to verify certain facts.

In Chapter Five I discuss and summarise the conclusions of this study.

# *CHAPTER FIVE*

## SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Introduction

I embarked on this study to explore how a group of learners in the 18.2 Wholesale and Retail Generalist (NQF Level 2) Learnership experienced the structured college-based learning, the work-based learning as well as the integration of the two. In other words, I set out to determine whether they implemented the theory they learnt at college, at work. In addition I have examined whether the Learnership met the expectations of the learners in relation to achieving a qualification and securing permanent employment.

The rationale for the study arose out of my concern that these students might not be sufficiently prepared for the workplace and employment, especially with regards to the theory. I was also perturbed that the workplace facilitators would not be suitable mentors for the learners because they had not undergone any special training. In addition I was worried that the workplace facilitators would be more interested in immediate company goals than in training the learners and helping them attain a qualification.



The subsidiary questions I explored were:

What have learners' experiences been in this Learnership in relation to learning, work and integration of learning and working?

Have learners' expectations been met in relation to achieving a qualification and securing permanent employment?

Considering the above, what insight does this Learnership provide on learnerships as a strategy for contributing to improved proficiency in the workplace, equity and redress and broader social goals of improving prospects for youth?

## 5.2 Expectations of Learnership

In Chapter One (section 1.2.2a) the literature has revealed that young people undertaking an apprenticeship in the retail sector in the UK are more interested in earning an income than building a career (Sims, *et al.*, 2000, in Spielhofer & Sims, 2004). The findings of this study are different. This research has shown that the general expectations, of learners interviewed, were that they wanted a qualification, workplace experience and a permanent job at the end of this Learnership. Chapter Four (section 4.3.3) shows that the learners interviewed were not concerned about how much they would earn seeing that they did not have any income to start with.

As shown in Chapter Four (section 4.3.3) eighteen out of the original thirty-two learners successfully completed the Learnership. Besides the ten learners who had been employed by the host companies, four other learners who had completed the Learnership also found employment in different companies in the W&R industry. One could not find employment for more than a year. Since this learner could not speak English very well it could be a reason why she was not employed. She eventually enrolled for another learnership in the electrical field. The remaining three learners could not be contacted.



This research can conclude that the expectations of most of the learners on this Learnership were realised. The seven learners interviewed gained theoretical knowledge and workplace experience and successfully completed the W&R Generalist (NQF Level 2) Learnership. Upon successful completion of the Learnership fourteen out of the eighteen learners were eventually employed in a permanent capacity, that is, ten at the host companies and four elsewhere in the W&R industry. This Learnership therefore succeeded in meeting the expectations of learners in relation to achieving a qualification and securing permanent employment. However, fourteen learners did not complete the Learnership for various reasons. The reasons why learners who did not complete the Learnership were not explored because it is not within the scope of this research.

This Learnership was not completely successful for one of the learners interviewed. Andrew, who worked at The Art Shop, was promoted from a general factory worker to Warehouse Manager approximately eight months into the Learnership. His new job entailed doing much more than what is expected of a Level 2 learner. He was in charge of a few staff members. He said that he needed more guidance and specific instructions from his workplace facilitators. This poses the question whether a learnership remains appropriate for learners if they are promoted before completing the learnership.

Two learners, Neliswa and Mary, who worked at the Meat Co., were also promoted during the Learnership. Both Neliswa and Mary were promoted from general factory workers to Invoicer-packers. Their new job entailed mainly administrative duties in the office and some packing of meat in the factory. In this case, the Learnership was more relevant to their new job.

Although Andrew, Neliswa and Mary were promoted during the Learnership this study cannot prove that it is solely because of the Learnership. All three learners have confident personalities, Andrew had already complete the theory as part of a Marketing Diploma, Neliswa had completed the theory and in-service training for a Diploma in Journalism and Mary was much older with some work experience and much more experience of life in general than the others.



This study shows that selection has to be done a lot more carefully, for example, learners should be placed in the appropriate level of a learnership and learners should be placed in a learnership in the relevant industry. For example, Andrew had already completed the theory of a N6 Diploma in Marketing Management and was selected to do this Learnership in order to complete his in-service training for his diploma. It is questionable whether Andrew was placed in a learnership in the appropriate industry. This Learnership focused on the wholesale and retail industry whereas Andrew's diploma was in the marketing field. It is also questionable whether Andrew's work in this Learnership would actually allow him to qualify for his Diploma in Marketing Management. However this matter is

beyond the scope of this research. In the case of the learners at The Meat Co., they worked in a large factory where they cut and/or packed meat. The learners at The Meat Co. should ideally have been placed in a learnership that deals with production in the wholesale industry.

Furthermore, the research can conclude that the expectation of the employers/managers to employ learners, from a disadvantaged socio-economic background in a permanent capacity and to grant them the opportunity to obtain a qualification was achieved. It is interesting to note that not one of the employers/managers mentioned their rebate of a portion of the skills levy through participation in the Learnership.

### 5.3 Role of facilitators

The literature has also revealed that Brown & Keep (2000) state that teachers, trainers and assessors, were, for the most part, not consulted in the process of making policy and transforming vocational training. The research has found that the Programme Manager also mentioned that the employers should pay attention to the suggestions of the educators.



This research has pointed out that a certain dynamic exists between the college facilitator and the learner that does not exist between the workplace facilitator and the learner. In Chapter One (section 2.2.2b) the literature shows a relationship of trust will develop if the facilitator is real (Rogers, 2002). Chapter Four (section 4.4.2) shows that during the Learnership I had come to know about a problem that could have led to two learners, Nelson and Princess, who worked at The Tool Man, almost not being employed permanently after the Learnership. These learners often arrived late for work with a lame excuse or without a valid reason. I sketched the scenario and gave them a few options – they either change their negative attitude toward their work and they will be employed permanently or continue their unacceptable behaviour and not be hired at all. I later learned that their attitudes changed overnight and they were both employed permanently.

A noteworthy point is that the college intervened when learners needed counselling seeing that this aspect was absent at their workplace. Counselling is an essential component of teaching nowadays especially when young people have to deal with so many (new) complicated issues, for example, low motivation, low morale, drug abuse, stress and HIV/AIDS.

The literature in Chapter One (section 1.2.2a) has revealed some reasons why MAs have not been implemented successfully in the UK. The reasons are that MAs are not relevant to the training and skills needed by employers, employers do not support learners fully and a lack of suitable young employees in terms of age and ability. This study did not explore the training skills required by employers nor did it explore the availability of suitable young employees in terms of age and ability. Instead I focused on how workplace facilitators supported the learners.

Chapter Four (section 4.4) shows that most learners felt that their workplace facilitators supported them fully, for example, at The Liquor Store George arranged a special weekly session where Debbie had to explain what she had learnt at college to the other employees (Chapter Four, section 4.4.1). At the same company, Sandra, Debbie's second workplace facilitator, who was stationed at Head Office, encouraged her to call her with any query and she would respond via facsimile. At The Meat Co. too when Neliswa's workplace facilitator could not assist her he asked another experienced staff member to do so and other learners had little training sessions on the job. The available evidence therefore shows that the workplace facilitators supported the learners in this Learnership, to the best of their ability.



## 5.4 Learners' experience of learning and work

In this section I discuss the learners' experiences in relation to integration and unit standards, content and method of instruction.

Some authors have criticised the unit standard or competency-based approach to education and training by saying that the learning programme contains too little theory (Kraak, 1998; Boreham, 2002; and Bates & Dutson, 1995, in Boreham, 2002).

In this Learnership the Fundamental unit standards (that is, compulsory unit standards) focused on "Using computer technology in retail and wholesale practices", "Compiling verbal and written communications in retail and wholesale practices" and "Performing basic business calculations in retail and wholesale practices". The Core unit standards (also compulsory unit standards) mainly focused on "Handling stock", "Attending to customers", "Displaying and marking merchandise", "Promoting merchandise" and "Handling cash". The Elective unit standards (that is, the unit standard that applies to the learners' type of work) focused on "Applying food handling in retail and wholesale practices" and "Applying speciality merchandise in retail and wholesale practices" (refer Appendix 12 – Objectives and requirements of this Learnership).



This study suggests that the theory learnt at college (that is, theory and SE) was sufficient for the learners to perform their daily tasks at work. It should be noted that this is an entry-level learnership and learners were only required to know and do the basics. It was not expected of them to do much problem solving or to deal with very difficult customers at work.

Five learners were satisfied with the content, seven learners were satisfied with the method of instruction and six learners were satisfied with the assistance of the college facilitators. The learners especially enjoyed the activities in the SE and found it extremely valuable. These activities have not only benefited them in their current workplace, but it would also benefit them if they were to work for another company in the wholesale and retail industry. Shortly after being employed permanently at The Meat Co., Neliswa resigned for personal reasons (Chapter Four, section 4.4.3). Thereafter she worked on a short contract doing administrative work for another company, but at the time of the interview she was

unemployed and looking for another job. Benjamin, who worked at The Mini-market, was also unemployed at the time of the interview, but during a follow-up interview he had found employment at another company in the wholesale and retail sector (Chapter Four, section 4.4.5). Both these learners felt that the activities they were exposed to in the SE helped them to find employment at another company in the wholesale and retail industry. The other five learners interviewed were still employed at the host companies at the time of the interview.

The responses of the learners indicate that they definitely experienced the theory and practice as an integrated whole. The theory learnt at college enabled most learners to implement the theory in the SE and practically in the workplace.

The literature in Chapter One (section 1.2.2b) has shown that Brown & Keep (2000) are concerned that these programmes emphasise the assessment of current occupational competence and neglects the inter-relationship between education, training and employment of learning for future. In Chapter Four (section 4.4) many learners have concluded that the SE has not only benefited them in their current workplace but they felt that it would benefit them if they were to work in another company in the wholesale and retail industry. This Learnership has therefore not only concentrated on the assessment of current occupational competence, but has nurtured the inter-relationship between education, training and employment of learning for future.

As shown in Chapter One (section 1.2.2a) successful implementation of MAs in the non-traditional sectors (that is, MAs in the business field) might be more difficult because these courses usually only consisted of a theoretical component (Gamble, 2003). Gamble (2003) differentiates between workshop learning and workplace experience. She refers to workshop learning as an extension of the theory, whereas workplace experience occurs on the job itself and teaches procedures of a specific company. According to the literature reviewed, in Chapter Two (section 2.4) there are a number of reasons why workplace learning is not sufficient on its own. For example, it might be too company specific, the

company might exploit the learner and only use him/her for one specific task - the organisation stands to gain financially if the learner becomes proficient in a certain task (Mjelde, 1997b, in Gamble, 2003:48) - and supervisors often show little commitment to the training task (Huddleston, 1999, in Gamble 2003:48). On the other hand, workshop learning cannot always provide learners with sufficient skills to simply transfer to and apply in the workplace because most colleges do not possess the modern equipment used in industry (Resnick, 1987, in Gamble, 2003:47).

As shown in Chapter Four (section 4.3.2) this Learnership consisted of structured college-based learning, that is, classroom-based theory and SE, and work-based learning. The SE resembles Gamble's (2003) description of 'workshop' learning. Hillside College was one of the few colleges that included the SE as part of the theoretical component of this Learnership. In this Learnership learners had to perform various planned tasks relating to a retail entity in the SE. The range of tasks they performed in the SE was much more than what they had to do at work. The theory in this Learnership (that is, the theory learnt at college combined with the SE activities) has prepared learners to be proficient in their current workplaces as well as in other companies in the retail industry. The introduction of the SE proved to be an innovative idea that assisted with integration.

A noteworthy point that emerged during this research is that the DoE has prescribed the inclusion of the SE in every programme at an FET college as from 2007 to ensure a link between theory and practice at FET colleges.

Young (2004) argues that the unit standard-based programme should be syllabus-based and not competency-based. The literature review in Chapter Two (section 2.4) has pointed out syllabus-based programmes afford learners the opportunity to progress to higher education and provide broader knowledge that are increasingly valued by employers (Young, 2004). The W&RSETA recognised that giving unit standards and assessment criteria are not enough. Consequently they provided a fairly detailed syllabus for this Learnership. By supplying the learning material

for each unit standard the W&RSETA ensured that college facilitators had more guidance, regarding the theory, in implementing this Learnership. However, the programme was still unit standard-based and not syllabus-based.

As shown in Chapter Four (section 4.3.4) the learning material in some of the unit standards was inadequate. Some of the facilitators had to supplement the theory with extra material, such as additional calculations and explanations on the income statement as well as other important calculations used in industry (for the unit standard "Performing basic business calculations in retail and wholesale practices"). Additional notes on business etiquette were handed to learners (for the unit standard "Attending to customers"). Questionnaires or worksheets were used during practical excursions to record the behaviour of sales assistants in action (for the unit standard "Attending to customers"). A questionnaire was designed for learners to record the different ways of promoting and displaying merchandise (for the unit standards "Display and marking merchandise" and "Promoting merchandise"). The above indicates that the learning material in some unit standards was insufficient.



## 5.5 Policy objectives

Chisholm (2003) states that South Africa has to implement a new skills strategy that would wipe out the memories of apartheid policy and practice and include all its citizens. In Chapter Two (section 2.1) the literature shows that the objective of the new policies was to develop an education and training system that would benefit all its citizens, especially the previously marginalised majority.

Similarly to the UK, Chapter Two (section 2.2) shows that redress is also one of the objectives of the new education and training system in South Africa (RSA 1995). This study shows that this Learnership was a means to grant youth from a disadvantaged socio-economic background access to a learnership, an opportunity to a qualification and the prospect of employment after completing the

Learnership. Chapter Four (section 4.3.3) shows that in this Learnership all the learners came from a disadvantaged socio-economic background.

The Introduction shows that a learnership would have achieved part of the objective regarding assisting new entrants into the labour market in the NSDS if 50% of learners were employed (that is, have a job or is self-employed), in full-time study, further training or in a social development programme within six months of completion (DoL, 2001:22). The research shows that this Learnership has been successful in the above area because six months after the successful completion thereof, at least fourteen learners were employed in a permanent capacity, that is, 77,7%.

This study shows that this Learnership was successful although not all of the thirty-two learners who initially enrolled completed it. The fourteen learners who did not complete the Learnership dropped out within the first quarter of the year. These learners did not complete the Learnership because the Learnership was not a success but because of their own personal problems referred to in Chapter Three (section 3.4.4). An investigation into the reasons why some learners did not complete the learnership is a topic for future research.



Kraak (2005) states that South Africa could not simply follow the rest of the world in their high skills strategy because many of its citizens are unskilled or possess very low skills. He therefore argues for a 'multi-pronged Human Resource Development' approach (Kraak, 2005:57). Chapter One (section 1.3.1) shows that a 'multi-pronged' approach consists of a 'joint high-skill and intermediate-skills strategy on the supply side, underpinned by a demand-driven strategy that seeks to stimulate large-scale labour-absorbing employment growth and is supported by appropriate input of training for the unemployed' (Kraak, 2005:57). This means that South Africa would not only be able to provide training to the unskilled and/or low skilled unemployed and employed citizens but the country would be also be able to continue to provide training in the high skills sector.

As discussed in Chapter Two, South African policy on skills development since 1994 can be seen as one that promotes a multi-pronged strategy. The South African NQF is a multi-level framework since it embraces all eight educational levels. It includes GET, FET and HET. In addition level 1 consists of sub-levels for ABET. The new South African skills policy therefore promotes education and training for the unskilled, low skilled, intermediate skilled and highly skilled. Learnerships, as a central element of the Skills Development Strategy illustrated that the South African NQF and Skills Development Act do not only include artisans but incorporates education and training of levels below and above artisan level. This means that a learnership can be done at all occupational levels.

This research has shown that learnerships provide a strategy for contributing to improved proficiency in the workplace, equity and redress and broader social goals to improve prospects for youth.

## 5.6 Conclusion and Recommendations



A limitation of this study is that I could not interview all learners who completed this Learnership. As shown in Chapter Three (section 3.4.2) I could only interview seven of the eighteen learners who completed this Learnership. Some of the reasons why the other eleven learners were not interviewed, include: learner's reluctance to participate in an interview, learners worked awkward shifts, no contact details, not fluent in English and an unpleasant incident with a learner right at the end of the Learnership.

Another limitation is that the findings of this study cannot be generalised because the experiences of the learners on the same learnership at other training providers were not the same. In particular it should be noted that not all training providers included the SE in the college-based component. The methods of teaching at the various training providers might also have been different. The attitudes and methods of workplace facilitators might have been different too. However, the study does provide valuable information regarding the experiences of a group of

learners on a W&R Learnership that can be useful to other college facilitators, workplace facilitators, learners and the W&RSETA for future learnerships.

This study highlighted some important lessons for me personally. Firstly, that unit standards and assessment criteria are inadequate. Although the W&RSETA provided fairly detailed syllabi, there were still gaps in the learning material. The college facilitators had to develop extra material to compensate for the gaps. This highlights the important role of the college facilitator.

Secondly, this research suggests that the college facilitator played multiple roles. In addition to being an educator, the intervention by the researcher regarding Princess and Nelson, shows that the college facilitator also acted as a counsellor. The educator as counsellor could be an area for future research.

Thirdly, this research shows that the introduction of the SE by Hillside College as part of the theoretical component in a non-traditional area, proved to be a successful innovator. The value of this strategy has been recognised by the DoE and the inclusion of the SE has now been prescribed in all learning programmes offered at FET colleges as from 2007.



Fourthly, the new skills required because of the globalisation of the South African economy and workplace, such as decision-making, problem solving and creativity, as discussed in Chapter One (section 1.2.1) are not vital for this Learnership. This Learnership only equipped learners to execute simple tasks at work because it was a NQF Level 2, Learnership and most learners were employed in junior positions, namely General Assistants. A more advanced learnership will focus much more on aspects, such as critical thinking, creative thinking and problem solving. I believe that all people should be able to think critically. Critical thinking, creative thinking and problem solving form part of one's broader education for life. Although the college facilitators tried to include CCFOs in the theoretical component, the hierarchical structures in the workplace often work against this. Whether employees do think critically and creatively and

use their knowledge and experience to solve problems could be an interesting area to explore in future research.

Finally, this study shows that a learnership grants unemployed youth, especially those from a disadvantaged background, access to the labour market. These youth have an opportunity to obtain a 'free' qualification and to earn an income. A learnership can indeed be regarded as an instrument to attempt to redress equity and alleviate poverty in South Africa.

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**APPENDIX 1:** **QUESTIONNAIRES**

***LEARNERS***

**The semi-structured interview schedule of learners' experience of the integration of theory and practice in a Wholesale and Retail Generalist (NQF Level 2) Learnership**

**Background questions:**

Why did you apply for the learnership or what were your expectations of the learnership?

**1. Questions relating to the workplace:**

1.1 What were your expectations of the workplace experience?

1.2 If you had known what your job entailed would you still have agreed to do the learnership? Explain.

1.3 What did you do at work everyday?

1.4 Was there any support available?

1.5 Who supported you with any query you had at work? What did this person do and how did he/she do it?



1.6 What did you learn at work?

1.7 Was there a specific time set aside for training at work or was it just on-the-job training?

1.8 What contribution did you make to your company?

**2. Questions relating to the structured college-based learning:**

2.1 What were your expectations regarding the theory you would learn?

2.2 Do you think the theory learnt at college served as a basis or was more than sufficient for the skills needed at work? Explain. (Also refer: length of day; materials used; content; method of instruction; language of instruction)

2.3 How useful was the work done and/or theory learnt in the Simulated Enterprise (SE) in terms of preparing you for the skills needed at your company? Was it

sufficient or more than sufficient for what was expected of you at work? Describe how you feel about this?

2.4 Do you think the college facilitators assisted you sufficiently with regards to the theory? Explain.

**3. Additional comments:**

3.1 Were your expectations you had before you started the learnership realised or not? Explain.

a) Have you been employed full-time after the learnership? If yes, what kind of work are you doing now? Also: If yes, do you think that it is because you are applying the skills learnt on the learnership? In other words, has the learnership prepared you sufficiently?

If no, why do you think you have not been appointed full-time at the same company or elsewhere?

b) Did you obtain the qualification?



3.2 How do you think the theory could be improved? What would you add or remove from the learning material?

3.3 How do you think the practical component could be improved?

3.4 How do you feel about the combination of the theory and practical component of this learnership?

3.5 Do you plan to study further? If yes, why have you made this decision? What or who encouraged you to study further? If no, why not?

3.6 What are your plans/goals for the future? What or who influenced this decision?

3.7 Is there anything else you would like to comment on regarding the learnership?

***WORKPLACE FACILITATORS***

1. How long have you been working for this company?
2. What is your position?
3. How did it come about that you were chosen to be this learner's or these learners' workplace facilitator?
4. What were your expectations of the learner(s)?
5. How did you assist the learner(s) with the practical workplace activities as well as the workplace activities they had to complete in their learner guides? What actually happened during these sessions?
6. How did you advise/prepare the leaner(s) for assessments?
7. Do you think your expectations of the learner(s) have been met? Explain.
8. Have you decided to hire the learner(s) as part of your full-time/part-time staff? If yes, why? If no, why?
9. After being exposed to the learning material used for this learnership and bearing in mind the level of the learner(s), do you think it is appropriate and sufficient for your specific industry? Explain. Do you have any suggestions as to how the programme (theory and practical) can be changed or improved?
10. Do you think the theory and practical components complimented each other very well or not? Explain.
11. Are there any other comments you would like to make regarding the learnership?

***SIMULATED ENTERPRISE FACILITATOR***

1. What were your expectations of the learners?

2. What did the learners do in the SE?
3. Did they live up to your expectations or not? Explain.

4. Do you think the SE forms an integral part of this learnership or not? Explain.

5. Are there any improvements regarding the programme used in the SE you would like to bring about specifically for the purpose of this learnership?

6. Could you complete what you envisaged doing with the learners in the allocated time? Explain. Can you make any suggestions regarding the time you think should be spent in the SE?

7. Are there any other comments that you would like to make regarding this learnership or learnerships in general? Perhaps you'd like to say something about how a learnership is structured and what you think about this way/method of learning.



***PROGRAMME MANAGER***

1. What were your expectations regarding bringing the college, learners and workplace facilitators together? In other words, what were your expectations with regards to managing the programme/learnership?

2. Can you relay some of your experiences of dealing with the learners and workplace facilitators in trying to bring the theory and practical components together? Was it difficult or easy? What were some of the problems you encountered? Explain.

3. How did you eventually bring the three parties together effectively?

4. Are there any other comments you would like to make regarding the entire learnership?

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**APPENDIX 2:** **RESULTS OF SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS**

**Learners' experience of the integration of theory and practice in a Wholesale and Retail Generalist (NQF Level 2) Learnership**

**SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS**

**Note:** pseudonyms were used

***LEARNERS' RESPONSES***

**EXPECTATIONS OF LEARNERS**

1. Would be able to gain experience in the world of work [Neliswa; Andrew; Princess]
2. Gain theoretical knowledge at the college [Neliswa; Benjamin; Debbie; Mary]
3. Obtain a certificate or qualification without having to pay for it [Mary]
4. To have a better job [Benjamin; Nelson]
5. To possibly be employed full-time at the end of the learnership [Neliswa; Debbie; Andrew; Mary]
6. To eventually create a better future [Benjamin]
7. Management simply instructed the learner, who was a casual for three years, to go on the learnership [Debbie]
8. Dual purpose – in-service training for an incomplete Marketing Diploma [Andrew]
9. To be employed immediately; improve studies – go further – get a better job [Princess]
10. More education about business and about the industry [Nelson]

**THE WORKPLACE**

**Expectations of workplace experience**

1. Already working - so knew what was expected at work everyday [Debbie; Benjamin; Nelson]
2. Never worked before – so did not really know what to expect; thought I was going to learn about secretarial duties, administrative work, e.g. invoicing [Neliswa]

3. Worked before elsewhere– so had basic idea of what is expected of an employee, but didn't know what is expected at specific workplace – picked up what was expected at work soon after starting learnership [Andrew]
4. Expected to gain experience in something quite different [Mary]
5. Simply wanted a job – irrespective of what the job would entail [Mary]
6. Had no idea what to expect [Princess]

**Would learners still have done learnership if they had known what their job would entail?**

1. Yes – enjoy challenges [Andrew]
2. Yes – learnership changed learner – self-esteem increased; became more confident to speak to other people [Mary]
3. No, it was tough in the beginning – didn't like it – wanted to drop this whole thing [Princess]
4. Yes, wanted to learn more about business industry and also earn some money [Neliswa]

**The other 3 learners [Debbie; Benjamin; Nelson] were already employed, albeit as casuals, before they started this learnership.*



**Daily activities at work – combined with what they learnt at work**

1. Clean workshop and service the tools; learnt how to sell products to customers [Nelson]
2. Shipping, packed parcels according to invoices, postage of parcels, reception work; learnt how to complete an invoice [Princess]
3. Cashier duties; but if necessary she had to pack shelves and help the men on the shop floor; didn't really learn to do much new because she had already been working for the company for three years [Debbie]
4. Remove all perishables, with expired sell-by date, from shelves; pack out new stock, check and change promotion dates, check whether all prices are still correct; learnt how to use the till, complete an invoice and check deliveries – invoices as well as products [Benjamin]
5. Make sausages, pack the sausages onto trays, how to pack the trays of sausages into boxes, how to pack these boxes of sausages into the fridge, how

to pack sausages, red meat and cold meat for other stores, how to differentiate between cold meat and frozen meat; learnt how to use the computer as well as do some filing [Neliswa]

6. Label the stock, pack the stock away, see that the stock is kept clean, check the stock coming in and stock going out of the warehouse, complete a few forms, e.g. order forms and leave forms; learnt how to make labels and barcodes for the products, learnt how to communicate with different kinds of people, how to enjoy what you're doing whilst at work – whether it be speaking to customers, speaking to a colleague or simply dealing with different situations he found himself in at work, e.g. solving a query for a customer telephonically or face-to-face; (really enjoyed all of the above – it built character and confidence) [Andrew]
7. Started on the factory floor making and packing russian sausages and viennas, later helped with the deli line and most of the time helped with the sausage line, pushed herself to meat side, assisted with filing in the office; in between helped drivers with on- and off-loading of stock; learnt how to do the wages and sales analysis on the computer [Mary]



**Workplace facilitators**

1. Supervisors [Neliswa; Mary]
2. Other administrative employee and HR Manageress [Neliswa; Mary]
3. HR Officer [Debbie]
4. Manager [Debbie; Benjamin]
5. Technical Director and Chief Executive Officer [Andrew]
6. Other experienced staff [Neliswa]
7. Receiving Manageress [Benjamin]
8. The boss, his wife and another employee who completed the same Wholesale and Retail Learnership [Nelson]
9. Another employee who was working there for a while already [Princess]

**How workplace facilitators supported the learners**

1. Explained and questioned learners on how an activity is performed [Neliswa]
2. When supervisor was busy he asked another experienced staff member to assist learners [Neliswa]

3. Assisted with workplace activities in the Learner Guide [Debbie; Andrew; Nelson]
4. Asked learner to explain to other staff members what was learnt at college [Debbie]
5. Workplace facilitator who was not physically at the workplace called learner and explained or cleared up queries telephonically [Debbie]
6. Sent information to learner via facsimile [Debbie]
7. Learner also took own initiative and tried new activities on own [Mary]
8. Had many little teaching sessions while doing job [Benjamin; Mary]
9. Administrative staff would ask learner to assist with the overload of work. They showed her how to do what they needed her to do. [Mary]
10. Mentor showed her how to use invoices to pack, how to (actually) pack the parcels – how to fill them [Princess]

**How training occurred/ when was it done**

1. Mostly on-the-job – during normal working hours [Neliswa; Benjamin; Debbie; Andrew; Mary; Princess]
2. Special time set aside, once a week, to complete workplace activities in the Learner Guide [Andrew]
3. Sat down for about one hour before or after work and helped with any questions; also helped during the day [Nelson]
4. Had a meeting every Friday at approximately half past four to check if we had any problems – not really a training session, but just to check on how we are coping generally [Nelson; Princess]



**Contribution made by learners to the workplace**

1. Used own initiative to train casual workers during the learnership [Benjamin]
2. During the learnership explained to other employees what was learnt at college; colleagues gave their input in answering questions in learner guide; together they implemented improvements [Debbie]
3. Approximately 8 months into the learnership was promoted from a normal general factory worker to a permanent position, viz. Warehouse Manager. [Andrew]

4. Approximately 6 months into the learnership were promoted from a normal general factory workers to a permanent position, viz. an Invoicer-packer [Neliswa; Mary]
5. In addition to normal duties also assisted with sales [Nelson]
6. I don't know [Princess]

**STRUCTURED COLLEGE-BASED LEARNING**

**Expectations regarding the theory**

1. Didn't really know in the beginning but picked up as time went by [Andrew]
2. Thought it would be how this specific factory operated – how paints were mixed and other art materials were manufactured and so on [Andrew]
3. Thought it would be about the meat trade [Mary]
4. Thought was going to spend more time at college – from Monday to Friday- just though was going to learn about business skills - didn't think there would be practical work involved [Nelson]
5. Had no idea [Debbie; Princess]
6. Thought she was going to learn about computers, communication and generally theory relating to working in business environment [Princess]
7. Did not know what to expect – simply thought would learn more about wholesale and retail industry [Benjamin]



**Usefulness of theory done at college**

1. More than sufficient – learnt more than what was needed at the workplace [Neliswa; Benjamin; Mary; Nelson; Princess]
2. Did not learn much more – knew most of what was learnt at college already - because had been working for company for 3 years prior to the learnership [Debbie]
3. Aspects not implemented at work can be used in another retail outlet [Debbie; Andrew]
4. Too little - what was learnt at college didn't go with the practical – but it was applicable – but not too much – just served as a basis [Andrew]
5. First learnt theory at college then applied it at work. [Benjamin]

6. Some things were not explained at work but were explained at college [Nelson]
7. Extra aspects learnt at college will definitely help when I go to another wholesale and retail concern [Princess]
8. Had the opportunity to learn the calculation issues, computers, improve telephone skills, reception skills, customer service [Princess]

***Length of day at college***

1. Too long – got bored – drains one mentally [Neliswa; Andrew; Mary]
2. Sometimes too long, sometimes it was worth it – esp. computers and SE [Debbie]
3. Can shorten the periods [Neliswa; Debbie; Andrew; Mary]
4. Just right – there was so much to learn [Benjamin]
5. Spent too much time on theory - did lots of revision [Andrew]
6. Too long – could have college three times a week [Nelson]
7. Too long – tiring – struggled a bit at the end if we survived – but got used to it; too much theory – can have shorter two days in the week at the college [Princess]



***Materials used***

1. Good. [Neliswa]
2. User-friendly [Benjamin; Debbie; Andrew]
3. Easy to follow. [Andrew]
4. Set put professionally [Nelson; Princess; Mary]
5. Liked combination of theory activities and workplace activities [Nelson]
6. Easy to understand. [Neliswa; Debbie; Nelson; Mary]
7. Simple English. [Neliswa; Nelson; Mary]
8. When difficult words were used - looked up there meaning and discovered they were the same (simple words) used at work. Therefore learnt the professional word. [Benjamin]
9. Simple, easy to read, language fine [Princess]

***Content***

1. Theory learnt at college was implemented at work [Benjamin]

2. Easy and simple [Andrew]
3. Concentrated on retail a lot more than on wholesale [Mary]
4. On the right level [Princess]
5. Enough knowledge in a session [Neliswa]
6. It was okay [Nelson]

***Method of instruction***

1. A balance between theory and practical activities given by college facilitators – did not talk too much – did not get bored easily [Debbie]
2. Practical activities in groups was helpful [Benjamin; Nelson; Princess]
3. Gave a lecture – spoke too much sometimes [Andrew]
4. Lots of inter-action, group-work [Andrew]
5. Too few practical activities [Andrew]
6. Lots of practical activities [Nelson; Mary]
7. Asked a lot of questions [Andrew]
8. Good, enjoyable [Andrew]
9. A balance between theory and practical - they made us understand everything [Neliswa]



***Language of instruction***

1. Easy to understand; simple English [Neliswa]
2. Sometimes a bit difficult to understand – had to look up some words - professional term was used compared to the simple everyday word used at work [Benjamin]
3. Although English not first language – could still understand language [Benjamin]
4. Simple and easy to understand [Andrew]

**Usefulness of work done in the Simulated Enterprise**

1. Learnt much more regarding the activities in a wholesale and retail concern – how they fit into one another [Benjamin; Debbie]
2. Learnt how to operate a computer till [Debbie]
3. Work done in SE was much more than what was needed at specific workplace [Neliswa; Debbie; Andrew; Mary; Nelson; Princess]

4. Can use extra knowledge gained and skills learnt at another type of wholesale and retail outlet – always better to know more and be able to do more than what is currently needed in your job – therefore activities done in SE were very useful [Debbie; Andrew]
5. Can exclude some of the positions for level 2 learners [Andrew]
6. Dragged out too long – can shorten the SE to about 8 months [Andrew]

**Assistance of college facilitators**

1. Whenever you needed help they were willing to assist [Benjamin; Debbie; Andrew; Mary]
2. They assisted us 'big-time'; concerned about our problems even if had nothing to do with the learnership. [Neliswa]
3. Were very helpful [Andrew]
4. They were a great help – we were a family [Princess]

**ADDITIONAL COMMENTS**

**Were expectations realised or not**

1. Yes – employed full-time after learnership; obtained a qualification without having to pay for it; was promoted during learnership [Mary]
2. Was a casual for 3 years – but after the learnership became a permanent staff member [Debbie]
3. Gained practical experience at work and theoretical knowledge from college; achieved more than what was expected (promotion: based on what was learnt at college, how learner performed at work and the type of person learner is) [Neliswa]
4. Was employed full-time; felt he had to be promoted after the learnership – but stayed in same position [Benjamin]
5. Yes, employed full-time – learnership helped a lot [Nelson; Princess]
6. Yes, employed full-time – was even promoted (unexpectedly) during learnership [Andrew]

**Improvement of theory**

1. No need to improve – fine as it is [Nelson; Princess; Neliswa; Debbie]

2. SETA needs to look at the fact that they concentrate on retail much more than wholesale [Mary]
3. Can include more practical activities or demonstrations [Andrew]
4. What to do when refrigerator suddenly switches off out of its own; what the temperature of the refrigerators should be [Benjamin]

**Improvement of workplace experience/practical component**

1. Will not change anything [Nelson]
2. Not really, but mentors need to see that learners gain experience in many more areas and not only concentrate on one type of activity [Mary]
3. Workplace facilitators should teach learners to operate more machines [Neliswa]
4. Still wanted to learn much more regarding the activities at work [Benjamin]
5. It was OK [Princess]
6. Although workplace facilitators did a good job, they could have communicated more specifically as to what he was supposed to do and how they wanted him to do it [Andrew]
7. Won't change anything; what was learnt at college was implemented at work [Debbie]



**Integration of theory and practice of programme**

1. Fit in very well with each other – learnt something at college and then implemented it at work [Benjamin; Mary]
2. Integration was spot-on – whoever set up learnership knew what they were doing; theory interlinked with the practical; have recommended that people do a learnership because it's the way to go now – it's an easier way to learn – you gain practical experience and it's hands-on and it's simple and easy [Andrew]
3. Good balance between what was learnt at college and on-the-job training at the workplace [Debbie]
4. They meet together – theory fits with practical – good way of learning [Nelson]
5. Combination of theory and practical …a better way of learning [Neliswa; Princess]

6. Can implement theory almost immediately after learning it at college [Debbie; Neliswa]
7. Can't forget what you learnt [Debbie; Neliswa]

**Future plans**

1. Study further – correspondence course; inspired by family, college facilitators, workplace facilitators and other colleagues as well as the learnership itself [Neliswa]
2. Stay with company because likes what he's doing and colleagues are nice; would like to study further – next level learnership in W&R industry [Nelson]
3. Want to do learnership in another field (Accounting - in which interest really lies) [Mary]
4. If not working: seek employment in wholesale and retail industry (more confident about getting a job); even thinking about starting own business in the wholesale and retail trade [Benjamin]
5. If working: stay with company for another few years and then seek employment elsewhere [Benjamin]
6. Stay with company because like working there and like the people working there, but also want to finish Management Assistant course [Princess]
7. Study further … maybe even become a Personal Assistant; motivated by brother [Debbie]
8. Study further – most probably a management course [Andrew]

**Last general comments**

1. Thank all those who made it possible to receive a 'free' qualification and also to be employed as a permanent staff member [Mary]
2. This learning experience gave learner direction in life [Benjamin]
3. Had fun while learning – a good experience [Debbie]
4. Inspired learner to dream bigger dreams – can even be a PA one day [Debbie]
5. Make sure learners who are selected for a learnership are really learners who 'need it the most' – those who cannot afford to pay for a qualification [Mary]
6. Activities in wholesale and retail process are clear now [Nelson]
7. Wanted to drop out – not because work was difficult but because fellow students were dropping out [Nelson]

8. Thank Programme Manager for introducing to learnership and thank lecturers for doing a great job – lecturers helped me specifically with customer service, calculations and communication [Princess]
9. Recommend that the way the programme is designed continues [Mary]

***WORKPLACE FACILITATORS' RESPONSES***

**BACKGROUND**

1. Working for company for 5 years [Angel]
2. Started the company 15 years ago [William]
3. Working for company for four and a half years [Lynne]
4. Position at company – Head: Leatherman Shipping (South Africa) [Angel]
5. Position – owner [William]
6. Position – HR Manageress [Lynne]
7. Chosen as a workplace facilitator because went on same course the year before [Angel]
8. Mentored a student who was to service tools. Most qualified tool servicer in the country [William]
9. Chosen as workplace facilitator because of her experience [Lynne]



**EXPECTATIONS OF LEARNER(S)**

1. Teach the learner picking (taking products off the shelf according to the invoice), packing (pack the goods into a container or package) and posting (post the package). [Angel]
2. That they try to help the company [William]
3. To complete the course and excel in their theoretical and practical studies [Lynne]

**ASSISTANCE WITH PRACTICAL WORKPLACE ACTIVITIES AS WELL AS COMPLETING WORKPLACE ACTIVITIES IN LEARNER GUIDE**

1. Helped with workplace activities in learner guide. If did not have time would ask someone else to assist the learner [Angel]
2. Did not assist with workplace activities in learner guide [William]

3. Not only workplace facilitator but also other capable staff made time during the normal working day to assist the learner, and we had special meetings with the learner [Angel]
4. Went through every step of servicing tools with learner; went through tools with him; showed him how it is serviced; gave him parts of the operation – like buffing and cleaning, selecting parts for replacement and then finally putting them all together- gradually; checked up on his work on consistent basis; improved on shortages found;

   spent dedicated time going through new tools; worked through the process of fixing new tools; sometimes he (as workplace facilitator) doesn't know to fix new tools, so they figure it out together – he , as workplace facilitator, would like AT to develop the ability to solve problems;

   training occurred on- the- job [William]
5. Communicating on-the-job functions; gave learners practice sessions to file and apply basic computer skills [Lynne]

**PREPARATON FOR ASSESSMENTS**

1. Prepared learner for assessments, esp. basic calculations, viz. calculating VAT [Angel]
2. Would prepare learner for the assessments by revising some of the theory throughout the year – ongoing revision [Angel]
3. Started to revise theory with learner approximately two weeks before she had to write a test [Angel]
4. Was not involved in preparing learner for assessments [William]
5. Motivated learners on an on-going basis [Lynne]

**HAS/HAVE EXPECTATIONS OF LEARNER(S) BEEN MET?**

1. Yes, very happy with her work. She is almost my boss. The bosses are very impressed with her; good attitude towards her work; very humorous person; great personality; never rude; never late; always there; fun person; she's good to work with; would love to work with her for eternity [Angel]
2. Yes [William]
3. Yes, out of original 23 learners 13 completed the learnership. Expected fewer to complete [Lynne]

**EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF LEARNER(S) AFTER LEARNERSHIP**

1. Permanent [Angel]
2. Permanent [William]
3. Out of the 13 who completed the learnership, 4 were employed permanently because of their outstanding results [Lynne]

**APPROPRIATENESS OF LEARNING MATERIAL FOR SPECIFIC INDUSTRY**

1. Appropriate for industry; very applicable because I have also been on the same course [Angel]
2. Learnt a bit more than was necessary; could even teach the other staff [Angel]
3. Appropriate for specific industry because learners were exposed to the daily functions of the industry; when learners complete a certain level they should be put on to the next level [Lynne]



**COMMENTS ON INTEGRATION OF THEORETICAL & PRACTICAL COMPONENTS**

1. Yes, it's a great thing; it's a good thing; it's awesome; it's like a plait; the two meet each other [Angel]
2. It's probably the best way [William]
3. Yes, the learners could relate to the theory because they actually did the work themselves [Lynne]

**GENERAL COMMENTS**

1. Keep up with the good work; there's a lot of good that's going [Angel]
2. College has an opportunity to teach some attitudinal skills or perceptions or ways of thinking, which … I believe is where the best improvement, the biggest improvement in working staff can be developed from [William]
3. The concept of delivering more, not expecting quite as much, is the most under-rated, under-trained concept … over-delivery is a requirement [William]
4. Maybe they should concentrate on employed persons – the success rate will be higher; people who have been unemployed for a long period of time can become unemployable [Lynne]

***SIMULATED ENTERPRISE FACILITATOR'S RESPONSE*** [Ilse]

**Expectations of learners**

Expected that learners would not have any experience in the workplace; so did not expect them to be able to work in the SE right from the start

**What learners did in the SE**

They occupied the following positions:

- Receptionist
- Cashier
- Marketing
- Floor manager
- Finance
- Storeman
- Stock controller
- Order clerk



**Were expectations met or not?**

In general yes. They did more than what I expected

**Role played by SE in this learnership**

Most definitely plays an integral part – had positive feedback learners and employers. Practical work and experience in SE can be implemented in workplace immediately.

**Possible improvements to SE programme**

No. Been doing this programme since around 1998- everything is in place and working effectively.

**Time to complete programme**

Yes. Two hours once a week was enough.

**General comments**

Learnership is simply wonderful. What they've learned today at College can be implemented tomorrow. This has always been a dream in my teaching profession and the learnership plus the SE made this dream of mine come true.

***PROGRAMME MANAGER'S RESPONSES*** [Pauline]

**EXPECTATIONS W.R.T. BRINGING TOGETHER THE COLLEGE, THE LEARNERS & THE WORKPLACE FACILITATORS/MANAGING THE LEARNERSHIP**

1. It was a challenge to work closely with the SMME companies – many of which don't have training departments unlike the bigger wholesale and retail companies
2. The challenge was to train the learners using the material provided by the SETA that concentrated more on activities in bigger companies, esp. retail companies, but also to specifically look at the training needs of the individual SMME.



**EXPERIENCES IN DEALING WITH THE LEARNERS AND WORKPLACE FACILITATORS**

1. Biggest problem was working with unemployed learners coming onto the learnership
2. Money and productivity are still the main objectives and not so much the education part
3. One had to take every situation and turn it into a learning opportunity
4. Workplace mentors or coaches did not always have time to train the learners – this title or job was sometimes just added to their normal daily tasks. They are willing to develop the learners but because many SMMEs are understaffed in the first place they can't always pay as much attention to the training of the learners as they would like to.

**ACTIVITIES INVOLVED IN BRINGING TOGETHER THE THREE PARTIES EFFECTIVELY**

1. Communication was of vital importance
2. Communication channels:
   meetings once a month (preferably once every three weeks)
   weekly faxing of attendance registers
   regular e-mails especially the day after the learners had attended college informing the workplace facilitators what the learners had done in every unit standard.

**GENERAL COMMENTS**

1. A learnership is a wonderful tool, but workplace mentors and coaches need proper training (the SETA is starting to train workplace mentors since 2006)
2. Companies should not just shove their training responsibilities into the minimum time. Companies need to listen to the educators
3. The old-fashioned school system that concentrates on knowledge needs to be phased out. A person needs to be holistically prepared and therefore has to come out with learned skills as well
4. Would not like to see us go back to a knowledge-based and fully exam-based system
5. Including the SE into the learnership is a clever way of delivering in the college sector
6. The learnership has taught the traditional that one doesn't have to be in a physical classroom all the time, e.g. took learners to shipping centre with a checklist
7. Exciting methods win the hearts and minds of learners

**APPENDIX 3:** **CONSENT FORM**

**Research topic:** Learners' experience of the integration of theory and practice in a Wholesale and Retail Generalist (NQF Level 2) Learnership

**Researcher:** Karen J. de Mink

I hereby agree to participate in this interview with Miss De Mink. I give her permission to use the information for this study on condition that my identity and the name of the company are not revealed.

Signed: …….

Date: …….



Place: ……..…….

Time: ……

**CONSENT FORM**

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Signed: …… .

Date: …….. …… ….



Place: ……..…….

Time: …….…...

**APPENDIX 4:** **LIST OF PSEUDONYMS**

| No. | Pseudonym | Company or college Pseudonym |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | George | The Liquor Store |
| 2. | Sandra | The Liquor Store |
| 3. | Debbie | The Liquor Store |
| 4. | Charlotte | The Tool Man |
| 5. | William | The Tool Man |
| 6. | Angel | The Tool Man |
| 7. | Nelson | The Tool Man |
| 8. | Princess | The Tool Man |
| 9. | Lynne | The Meat Co. |
| 10. | Neliswa | The Meat Co. |
| 11. | Mary | The Meat Co. |
| 12. | James | The Meat Co. |
| 13. | Lulu | The Meat Co. |
| 14. | Gilbert | The Art Shop |
| 15. | Larry | The Art Shop |
| 16. | Andrew | The Art Shop |
| 17. | Benjamin | The Mini-market |
| 18. | Jacques | The Mini-market |
| 19. | Olive | The Mini-market |
| 20. | Elsabe | Hillside College |
| 21. | Byron | Hillside College |
| 22. | Pauline | Hillside College |
| 23. | Ilse | Hillside College |

**APPENDIX 4:** **LIST OF PSEUDONYMS**

| No. | Real Name | Initials | Pseudonym of interviewee |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Kevin O'Sullivan | KO | Gilbert |
| 2. | Arthur Josephus | AJ | George |
| 3. | Barbara Trethewey | BBT | Charlotte |
| 4. | Nosiphiwo Penxa | NP | Neliswa |
| 5. | David Bethlehem | DB | Benjamin |
| 6. | Sonja Engelbrecht | SE | Debbie |
| 7. | John Oliphant | JO | Andrew |
| 8. | Elizabeth Skinner | ES | Mary |
| 9. | Bruce Trethewey | BT | William |
| 10. | Arthur Tshabe | AT | Nelson |
| 11. | Thandiswa Ndabaninzi | TN | Princess |
| 12. | Margaret Jones | MJ | Pauline |
| 13. | Penny Fisher | PF | Angel |
| 14. | Elbe Henn | EH | Ilse |
| 15. | Merle Timm | MT | Lynne |
| 16. | Sandra Schmidt | SS | Elsabe |
| 17. | Neil Maggott | NM | Byron |
| 18. | Werner | W | Jacques |
| 19. | Penny Kobie | PK | Lulu |
| 20. | Gladstone Mja | GM | James |
| 21. | Barry O'Sullivan | BO | Larry |
| 22. | Hendriena du Randt | HD | Olive |

| No. | Name of Company or College | Pseudonym |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Aroma Drop Inn Liquors | The Liquor Store |
| 2. | Awesome Tools | The Tool Man |
| 3. | Fercon Foods | The Meat Co. |
| 4. | KV Art (Pty) Ltd | The Art Shop |
| 5. | Vredekloof Kwikspar | The Mini-market |
| 6. | Northlink College | Hillside College |
| 7. | Bellville Technical College | East College |
| 8. | Protea College | North College |
| 9. | Belhar College | North-East College |
| 10. | Tygerberg College<br>Panorama Campus<br>Parow Campus | North-West College<br>North-West 1<br>North-West 2 |
| 11. | Wingfield College | South College |

**APPENDIX 5**

**IMPLEMENTATION OF LEARNERSHIP REPORT**

**APPENDIX 6**

**TIME TABLE OF LEARNERSHIP**

**APPENDIX 7**

**DEMOGRAPHICS OF ALL LEARNERS WHO ENROLLED ON LEARNERSHIP**

**APPENDIX 8**

**GENERAL OVERVIEW REPORT OF PROGRAMME MANAGER**

**APPENDIX 9:** **TRANSCRIPT**

**INTERVIEW WITH A LEARNER**

**MARY**

Fri 16 Dec 2005

This interview took place at a pub in Rugby at 15:55.

INTERVIEWER: Ok. The first question is: Why did you apply for this learnership?

INTERVIEWEE: Well, I actually got the learnership through somebody that I know…

INTERVIEWER: Is it?

INTERVIEWEE: … that went through the learnership. I was actually applying for another job at the same time and with that I got the learnership via the job I was applying for.

INTERVIEWER: What did you expect to do on the learnership? Or what did you expect the learnership to do for you?

INTERVIEWEE: What I was told I would get computer training and yes, that caught my eye – very much so. I'm in a family where I never had the privilege of going to college, for number 1 because there is no money to send the person to college. So that automatically grabbed my eye that, yes I should go for that.

INTERVIEWER: So you wanted a qualification that you didn't have to pay for.

INTERVIEWEE: Ja, in a sense, ja.

INTERVIEWER: … and then also the job

INTERVIEWEE: plus, I would have a job at the end of the day.

INTERVIEWER: Alright, and now we get to the workplace experience. What were your expectations of the workplace experience?

INTERVIEWEE: Well, there was a lot to learn. I did not know anything of …

INTERVIEWER: First your expectations. Not what you did – just your expectations. This is before you even started to work. What did you think or hope you were going to do?

INTERVIEWEE: That's a hard question because I basically went for the truck – the truck section although I did not have my license. I basically looked at the truck section.

INTERVIEWER: Is it?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes. I can get some experience here and with it being in-house I could also pick up long distance besides for short…

INTERVIEWER: ... locals

INTERVIEWEE: locals.

INTERVIEWER: You didn't have a lot of expectations – you just wanted to work. That's basically it, hey.

INTERVIEWEE: Ja.

INTERVIEWER: Ok. If you had known what your job entailed would you still have agreed to do the learnership?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes. Yebo!

INTERVIEWER: Why?

INTERIVEWEE: The learnership changed me – in it's own way.

INTERVIEWER: Is it? How? Explain! Tell us! That's interesting!

INTERVIEWEE: It changed me in a sense of being more open. Communicating more with people. Although I used to do it, but I was very reserved. I would communicate with somebody if you would communicate with me. I would not just come out and communicate.

INTERVIEWER: Oh?

INTERVIEWEE: It's the same as going to a pub and sitting there – having a drink. I would actually sit there until somebody spoke to me. I wouldn't bother to try and speak to somebody. So, the learnership gave me a difference in communication.

INTERVIEWER: Uh!

INTERVIEWEE: Very much so.

INTERVIEWER: Did it make you more confident to speak out – to say your say, give your own opinion about …

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, and if they didn't like it – well then lump it – at the end of the day.

INTERVIEWER: Ok. That's good.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: It did one good thing for you!

INTERVIEWEE: Very much so.

INTERVIEWER: Ok. Tell me what did you do at work every day?

INTERVIEWEE: When I started at the company I was working on the floor. I helped with the Russians. I helped with the viennas. I helped with the deli line and most of the time the sausage line. And then eventually I pushed myself to the meat side.

INTERVIEWER: You pushed yourself?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ask them? What happened? You just went?

INTERVIEWEE: I pushed myself. That supervisor, by the name of James, does not give you a gap – nowhere.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that's why the other students – because they were not forward enough – they just stayed on one place?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes. That is why they actually hated the job at the end of the day. The simple fact is you didn't want to pack that sausage but you just had to pack that sausage. Because that supervisor has given you that position and there's it - nothing you could do - whether you like it or not. They did not really rotate a person in the factory. They could have rotated quite a few people. There were so much positions that you could go and do. You didn't have to just work in one section. But they did not do that.

INTERVIEWER: And so you just moved…

INTERVIEWEE: Most of them all blame it on that supervisor.

INTERVIEWER: So you just - one day you just - went and you did – work at another station?

INTERVIEWEE: I just took myself away from that station and I went to go work at another station.

INTERVIEWER: And he didn't say a thing?

INTERVIEWEE: What could he say?

INTERVIEWER: Oh?

INTERVIEWEE: What could he say? I did not sit back like all the others.

INTERVIEWER: Is it. Ok.

INTERVIEWEE: Sit back and just accepted while he said you go there and they just most politely walked there. I stated my case and I said I'm on a learnership. I'm here to learn. I'm not here to be shoved around like you want to shove me around. And I would like to learn this section so I will work in this section.

INTERVIEWER: Ok, so that is how you got to do so many – or work at so many stations. Oh! Ok. Uhm … and your mentor? Can you tell me about your mentor? How did the person help you and who was it? What kind of support did you get? What did this person do? When did this person do it?

INTERVIEWEE: My main mentor was Lynne and Lulu.

INTERVIEWER: And what did they do? How did they help you?

INTERVIEWEE: They were always… they always assisted me…ah I used to actually go and help Lynne in the office with her work – just filing…

INTERVIEWER: Just out of your own?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, out of my own. Once again I was the owner learnership…

INTERVIEWER: … the only learner.

INTERVIEWEE: … that did that. The simple fact is the others were too scared to open their mouths and go and do something different.

INTERVIEWER: Oh! Is it.

INTERVIEWEE: You were there to learn. So obviously – I want to cut up that meat on that vancil. I went to the vancil and I purposely took the chicken leg quarter and thigh and I cut it in half.

INTERVIEWER: Ok.

INTERVIEWEE: And I did it. Where the others …

INTERVIEWER: … waited for orders or …

INTERVIEWEE: … work at the Russian section so that's where you're gonna work – finish and kla.

INTERVIEWER: Forever. So tell me. How did - what did Lynne do exactly? And I'm also interested in when did she do it? Was it during the work…was it just part of the whole on-the-job training. I want to know was there a certain time that she set aside – in the

morning maybe – and said Mary this is now this that, that, that or …

INTERVIEWEE: No. Most of the time I would go on the road. I pushed myself once again to a loader's position – where I became a loader on a truck – with the driver - and of course with that – with me becoming that loader on a truck – we used to get back to the factory at about say 4 o'clock for the latest in the afternoon. Instead of me going inside the factory and working inside the factory, I would go upstairs to Lynne and find out what can I help her with maybe. And then she would either tell me ok, she needs me to do this and she needs me to do that and I would go and do it.

INTERVIEWER: And is it at that point that she told you this is how you do this and this is how you do that.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, that's right. She would explain it to me - and the same with Lulu. Lulu actually showed me how to do the sales analysis on her computer. So I worked with Lynne's side with filing and wages and everything else and I worked with Lulu's side, which is sales analysis again. And then eventually I developed that I am now in my position of a Invoicer … a Invoicer-packer. So ja.



INTERVIEWER: So you have a wide range of…uhm…

INTERVIEWEE: I moved myself around basically.

INTERVIEWER: Ok. And then in the end – can you tell me what contribution did you make towards this company? I think here you must tell me what happened and how you eventually were …received a little bit of a promotion…can you call it a promotion?

INTERVIEWEE: I did receive a promotion.

INTERVIEWER: Can you tell us that story?

INTERVIEWEE: Ok. The boss came to me the one morning and he asked me if I'm prepared to come on to the night shift – as a permanent night shift worker – but obviously in the office as a Invoicer-packer. So, I said to him yes I don't mind. I know for number 1 I've got a permanent position because he's now offered it to

me. I haven't even finished the learnership yet and this position's being offered to me.

INTERVIEWER: How far into the learnership was that?

INTERVIEWEE: Uhm, I'll call it 6 months.

INTERVIEWER: Ok.

INTERVIEWEE: I'll call it 6 months that I was in the learnership and the position was offered to me. And uhm, basically with that I took it from there. I had a lot of learning work to do. They tried to punish me in their own way of showing me this is the way to do it but in the meantime that's actually the way that it should have been done. So, I had a lot of ups and downs that I had to play with. I was not told straight out what is – actually what - unless I had Lulu that came in some mornings early to show me – because she was also part of the learnership so she knew exactly where to go and what to actually do. The whole thing that I've summed up out of the night shift staff – they don't like to teach somebody something different.

INTERVIEWER: Are they scared that you might get better … (interviewer and interviewee speaking simultaneously…therefore recording a bit unclear)

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, you might get their position – for argument sake. That's what I've summed up. They don't like to teach you too much.

INTERVIEWER: I think that happens all over.

INTERVIEWEE: And I was just that person that I'm not interested in what you want to do – I want to do this – I'm going to do this.

INTERVIEWER: Because you have to learn.

INTERVIEWEE: I am a learner.

INTERVIEWER: Yes. Ok.

INTERVIEWEE: And I always stand in front that I am a learner.

INTERVIEWER: And that's how you got ahead and did things – more that the others.

INTERVIEWEE: I'm a learner.

INTERVIEWER: We're now going to go on to the structured learning. Alright. What were your expectations regarding the theory? Before you

even started going to the college, what did you think or what did you hope you were going to learn?

INTERVIEWEE: I actually…(smile) I hoped I was going to learn about the meat itself – the physical meat trade section. And yes, it did not really turn out to be that. (little laugh) It turned out to be …

INTERVIEWER: I would say retail.

INTERVIEWEE: More a off-sales or a supermarket.

INTERVIEWER: Not the retailer?

INTERVIEWEE: Not the butcher concern as what the company is. The company is more a butcher concern.

INTERVIEWER: And so when you eventually learnt what you learnt – did you think that it was …it was sufficient or it just served as a basis or it was even more that sufficient for what you had to do at work?

INTERVIEWEE: It was an eye-opener. There's a lot…there's a lot that I would have to actually use at the work – the computer for number 1, the telephone communication, number 2, uhm…

INTERVIEWER: Dealing with the customers?

INTERVIEWEE: Dealing with the customers, the calculations. Most of it that I did learn I do have to deal with at the company itself.

INTERVIEWER: Ok. Uhm, can you now tell me a little bit about the length of the day. You don't have to explain in great detail. The length of the day at the college - do you think it was too long, too short, just right for the amount of work you had to learn?

INTERVIEWEE: I'll put it -a bit too long. When it comes to about 3 o'clock that's when everybody now gets bored.

INTERVIEWER: Ok. Do you think that the work that the facilitators did in 2 hours could have been maybe done in 1 hour or 1 and a half – and that would then shorten the day at the college.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, make the sessions a bit shorter. The sessions were a bit too long. So, automatically say for argument sake you're a fast learner, I can actually just listen to what you're saying and then I got everything. There's other people that need that longer time to …you're got to also fluctuate there. But at the end of

the day, yes, the period is a bit too long. I would have like an hour now and then go to the next class and have an hour there and then maybe come back to that class again for another hour. And then go to the next class and come back to the class for another hour.

INTERVIEWER: But at the end, at the end … ?

INTERVIEWEE: In that space…thinking about…what was I actually learning now? 2 hours is a bit too long to still…

INTERVIEWER: Ok.

INTERVIEWEE: Because now you're gonna go and spend at the other class and you're learning something different so you haven't actually had time to think about what you were told here now.

INTERVIEWER: Is it. Ok. I'll take that up…

INTERVIEWEE: So you haven't had time to register what actually was said.

INTERVIEWER: … with the college. Ok. The materials that you used? And I'm talking about the books that you received from the SETA?

INTERVIEWEE: Very much so.

INTERVIEWER: Very much how?

INTERVIEWEE: A big insight.



INTERVIEWER: Was it easy to understand? Was it simple language?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, it was - very much so.

INTERVIEWER: Was it. Do you think it was professionally set out?

INTERVIEWEE: All the way. All the way. Some of the questions??? As I say depending on what company you're working for. Some of the questions I couldn't really answer for the simple fact is our company didn't deal with that.

INTERVIEWER: … the sales side, hey.

INTERVIEWEE: Ja, so that's where you would have a bit of a problem, but other than that, no. Definitely.

INTERVIEWER: Ok. The method of instruction that the facilitators used? Uhm, was it just all theory? Were there some practical activities?

INTERVIEWEE: There was a lot of practicals.

INTERVIEWER: And do you think that they combined their theory and their own practical activities very well or not? What do you think about that?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, some of them actually made it enjoyable to actually do it – to do that task. Some of them were just talking – as in talking and I must just listen. INTERVIEWER: Ok, and you enjoyed the practical side more.

INTERVIEWEE: Once again, it comes down to what is that person that is actually in your class learning? Can they learn by…by listening or can they learn by just writing? What way do they actually learn? For me personally, I prefer to write. Not to listen.

INTERVIEWER: So, did you want notes?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, I'd go with the notes again.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, ok.

INTERVIEWEE: So, it depends basically on the learner, but it was done…definitely – all the way.

INTERVIEWER: And then we get to the Simulated Enterprise. Uhm, do you think that the skills that you learnt there was enough or more that enough for what you needed at work? Uhm, how do you feel about this?

INTERVIEWEE: Simulated Enterprise I would actually go with more. More training on the Simulated Enterprise side for the simple fact is you can…you can do a lot with that. I mean I basically using the … the calculation side of that, I use the telephone communication, customer, sometimes I speak to customers and I must take their order. So, the Simulated Enterprise brought a lot…

INTERVIEWER: And especially you because you moved around – you moved yourself around – all those different positions, and so…

INTERVIEWEE: Ja.

INTERVIEWER: … the Simulated Enterprise served you very well.

INTERVIEWEE: Very much.

INTERVIEWER: Ok. And the lecturers? The facilitators in the Simulated Enterprise and also the other lecturers that just taught you the normal unit standards…did they assist you when you needed assistance?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, they would always assist you. Uhm, depending on what you thought that you needed more training with. I won't say they would sit down with each person individually, because they don't really have the time to sit down with each person individually, but surely if you had to ask you would get assistance.

INTERVIEWER: Alright. Thank you. And we now move on to the last few questions. Uhm, Right now you are employed full-time, hey…

INTERVIEWEE: Yes…

INTERVIEWER: … you said that.

INTERVIEWEE: … very much so.

INTERVIEWER: And do you think it is because of what you learnt on the learnership or do you think it is also because of just the type of person you are?



INTERVIEWEE: I would say what I've learnt on the learnership for number 2. For number 2, uhm basically because the person who I took the position from actually left the company. If that person did not leave the company I don't think I would be sitting in that position – at the moment. I would most probably still be on the floor or in the truck – where I was. So, it's got a lot to do with…

INTERVIEWER: ... circumstances

INTERVIEWEE: … what is actually happening.

INTERVIEWER: Ok. Uhm, just another general question about the theory. If you think the theory can be improved. How would you improve the theory? I'm talking about that which you did at college? Do you think that it can be improved?

INTERVIEWEE: I would not really improve it. It's fine as it is. As I say – just cut down on the…on the time period. The period is a bit too long.

INTERVIEWER: Ok. And then the practical component? This is now the help that you got at work, or the experience that you got at work? Do you think that it was sufficient?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, that is – all the way. But as I say, once again, it's depending on all…

INTERVIEWER: … your mentor…what company?

INTERVIEWEE: … what company are you working for. You were teaching us more retail that wholesale.

INTERVIEWER: Ja, I know. They do concentrate a lot on retail.

INTERVIEWEE: That was a bit of a problem to us that worked for The Meat Co. For the rest of them I mean I know of other people as well that work for a liquor company and that training is perfect…

INTERVIEWER: … for them, yes.

INTERVIEWEE: … for them… 100 %

INTERVIEWER: Although they are wholesale they actually do deal with retail…

INTERVIEWEE: They deal with most of what they have learnt.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, ok. So maybe we could take that up as a recommendation with the SETA that…that the theory is concentrating too much…I mean that they concentrate too much on the retail part. How do you feel about the combination of they theory and the workplace experience – that integration of the two? Do you think it is a good way of learning?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, it is because you're coming to college for that one day of which you're being taught on paper what to do and when you get to your company you're actually being physically taught what to do. So, you can eventually combine the two for yourself – I'm doing this and no I'm not doing that. I'm doing more of this and I'm not doing more of that.

INTERVIEWER: Ok, so you think that that combination is good. You enjoyed that. Ok. And the time…the time between what you learnt and how you implemented that…how you applied that learning is not too long or too far apart because it's just the day after.

INTERVIEWEE: That's right, ja.

INTERVIEWER: Ok, ES, your future plans?

INTERVIEWEE: My future plans? Uhm, well, as I say I'm prepared to stay with the company. I would like to go into the trucking side of the company. But…my position…I'm quite happy with my position. I can't really complain about my position. Uhm, I'm still doing a bit of the driving side…so I'm getting my driving section as well. So, yes, I'm quite happy where I am.

INTERVIEWER: Do you plan to study further? If you can, will you?

INTERVIEWEE: I would, but I'm going into the Accountancy field.

INTERVIEWER: You know there's a learnership for that too.

INTERVIEWEE: The Accountancy, Bookkeeping…?

INTERVIEWER: There is a learnership for that. Maybe you must phone the college and ask them about that. Don't just leave it.

INTERVIEWEE: That is my field, ja.

INTERVIEWER: Ok, what made you decide this?

INTERVIEWEE: It's always been my field – since school days.

INTERVIEWER: Is it?

INTERVIEWEE: I've been top notch since school.

INTERVIEWER: Is it. Ok.



INTERVIEWEE: It's just that – the money as I say – not everybody's got the cash to actually go and pay to study and get their degrees like other people can just fork it out.

INTERVIEWER: Ok. Don't give up on that dream.

INTERVIEWEE: Ja.

INTERVIEWER: Ok. Alright, and then the last question. Is there anything else you would like to comment on … regarding this learnership? (pause)… even if it's got nothing to do with the learnership…the work itself – I mean. (pause) nothing?

INTERVIEWEE: As I would say, the supervisors that is actually on duty – they should give more time to the learners by moving them around – not sticking to one spot.

INTERVIEWER: Alright.

INTERVIEWEE: Because that's the only way they're going to be able to learn – by moving them around. I mean at the end of the day, say for argument sake, I'm packing sausage – I'm too slow on the

sausage line but maybe I'm faster on packing the meat but they don't move me around. So, you will never know what you're actually good at.

INTERVIEWER: Ok. Alright.

INTERVIEWEE: What's the point of doing this learnership if they are not letting you learn! That is the whole issue.

INTERVIEWER: So, that's actually part of your practical component *improvement.* Yes. Ok. Well, thank you very much.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes. That is.

INTERVIEWER: We've got one last comment still to make.

INTERVIEWEE: Ok, so what I would comment on as well prior to the whole conversation is the fact that – try and help people that do not have the money to actually send their child to college - to actually get that education because I have seen out of this learnership myself that there is quite a few people that was on this learnership that actually had the money – that could pay to go on this learnership instead of getting it for nothing like they did get it – just by … working for that company.



INTERVIEWER: So, we should look at who we are actually recruiting.

INTERVIEWEE: Very much so.

INTERVIEWER: Ok.

INTERVIEWEE: Give it to the people that…that's more necessary that needs it the most…

INTERVIEWER: Ok.

INTERVIEWEE: … compared to others.

INTERVIEWER: Well, thank you very much. Thank you for that very valid point.

INTERVIEWEE: A pleasure.

[End of Interview]

**APPENDIX 10:** **EXTRACT OF CHAPTER 4 OF THE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT ACT 97 OF 1998**

**Chapter 4, of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998, sets out the following criteria for a learnership:**

"16. Learnerships

A SETA may establish a learnership if –

(a) the learnership consists of a structured learning component;

(b) the learnership includes practical work experience of a specified nature and duration;

(c) the learnership would lead to a qualification registered by the South African Qualifications Authority and related to an occupation; and

(d) the intended learnership is registered with the Director-General in the prescribed manner"

**Chapter 4, of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 also outlines the requirements of the learnership agreement.**



"17. Learnership agreements

(1) For the purposes of this Chapter, a 'learnership agreement' means an agreement entered into for a specified period between

(a) a learner;

(b) an employer or a group of employers (in this section referred to as 'the employer'); and

(c) a training provider accredited by a body contemplated in section 5(1)(a)(ii)(bb) of the South African Qualifications Authority act or group of such training providers.

(2) The terms of a learnership agreement must oblige –

(a) the employer to –

(i) employ the learner for the period specified in the agreement;

(ii) provide the learner with the specified practical work experience; and

(iii) release the learner to attend the education and training specified in the agreement;

(b) the learner to –

(i) work for the employer; and

(ii) attend the specified education and training; and

(c) the training provider to provide –

(i) the education and training specified in the agreement; and

(ii) the learner support specified in the agreement

(3) A learnership agreement must be n the prescribed form and registered with a SETA in the prescribed manner.

(4) A learnership agreement may not be terminated before the expiry of the period of duration specified in the agreement unless –

(a) the learner meets the requirements for the successful completion of the learnership

(b) the SETA which registered the agreement approves of such termination; or

(c) the learner is fairly dismissed for a reason related to the learner's conduct or capacity as an employee.

(5) The employer or training provider that is party to a learnership agreement may be substituted with –

(a) the consent of the learner; and

(b) the approval of the SETA which registered the agreement.

(6) A SETA must, in the prescribed manner, provide the Director-General with a record of learnership agreements registered by the SETA."

**APPENDIX 11:** **PROCEDURE FOLLOWED BY HILLSIDE COLLEGE TO GET LEARNERSHIPS AND SKILLS PROGRAMMES IN PLACE:**

- Holding informative sessions on new legislation and its impact on the college. This was done with every department to get staff to change their way of thinking.
- Forming a Curriculum Development Committee that consisted of Top Management, Middle Management (Heads of Departments) and the Marketing Department of the college. The Heads of Departments were expected to relay the information to the rest of the staff in their department.
- Training of staff on how to develop new learning material.
- Sending staff on various courses, viz. Assessor Training, Curriculum Development
- Training - Learner Guide Training and Assessor Guide Training. This was done per subject group.
- Establishing a management structure by which learnerships and skills programmes could be implemented, viz.

  *Head of Department: Learnerships and Skills Programmes

  *Project Manager for every SETA – manages learnerships (a Project Co-ordinator for every SETA – manages skills programmes - would be appointed once the need arose – in other words – once the Project Manager has too many learnerships to manage)



Since the merger, the management structure has changed. It now appears as follows: (Elsabe, 2004)

- Senior Manager for Extended Learning and Strategic Business
  (Strategic Business being skills development; Extended Learning refers to Part-time studies)
- Head of Dept: Learnerships and Skills - Business Studies and Utilities
- Head of Dept: Learnerships - Engineering
- Head of Dept: Skills Programmes - Business Studies and Utilities

- Head of Dept: Skills Programmes – Engineering
- Project Manager: Learnerships (for every SETA); if there are too many learnerships to manage, a Project Co-ordinator: Skills Programmes will be appointed

(Interview: HoD: Elsabe, 5 August 2004)

**APPENIDX 12:** **OBJECTIVES AND REQUIREMENTS OF THIS LEARNERSHIP**

The unit standards covered in this learnership include:

*Fundamental unit standards* (compulsory unit standards)

- Using computer technology in retail and wholesale practices;
- Compiling verbal and written communications in retail and wholesale practices; and
- Performing basic business calculations in retail and wholesale practices.

*Core unit standards* (compulsory unit standards)

- Handling stock;
- Attending to customers;
- Displaying and marking merchandise;
- Applying safety, security and housekeeping;
- Understanding industry, structures, terms and concepts;
- Promoting merchandise;
- Processing retail documents; and
- Handling cash.



*Elective unit standards* (the learner can choose which unit standard applies to his/her type of work)

- Applying food handling in retail and wholesale practices; or
- Applying speciality merchandise in retail and wholesale practices

W&RSETA – Skills Development for Economic Growth, Learnerships – Wholesale & Retail Generalist NQF Level 2 FACILITATOR GUIDE outlines the intention of this programme:

1. Skill standards will help retail and wholesale organisations to:

- Improve employee performance and productivity;
- Reduce hiring, selection and training costs;
- Build and retain a long term committed workforce;
- Access “best practice” training information and materials;
- Communicate performance expectations to employees;
- Attract career employees to the retail and commercial field; and
- Motivate employees to continue to develop skills.

2. Skill standards will help workers to:

- Understand potential for success in retail career in a commercial organisation;
- Evaluate knowledge and skills;
- Document performance on the job;
- Develop portable skills;
- Identify efficient and effective education and training;
- Commit to lifelong learning and skill development; and
- Become a productive member of a team and company.



3. Skill standards will help facilitators to:

- Understand what skills are needed to succeed on the job;
- Incorporate industry requirements in curriculum and programme designs;
- Provide appropriate advice on career preparation and choices;
- Identify a foundation of “employability” skills;
- Increase business/education communication and collaboration; and
- Draw learners and workers to industry responsive and endorsed programmes.

(Source: W&RSETA, c2004a)

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**APPENIDX 13:** **PROGRAMMES OFFERED AT NORTH COLLEGE AND NORTH-WEST COLLEGE (i.e. NORTH-WEST 1) OF HILLSIDE COLLEGE BEFORE AND AFTER AMALGAMATION**

The learner demographics at the North College just before the amalgamation used to be mostly Coloureds and Blacks and only about 5 % Whites. This campus used to offer the following business courses, viz. Business Studies (NIC, NSC), Management Assistant (N4, N5, N6), Marketing Management (N4, N5, N6) and Human Resources Management (N4, N5, N6). After amalgamation the courses offered are Business Studies (NIC/NSC – Accounting Administration/Secretarial), Financial Management (N4, N5, N6) and Marketing Management (N4, N5, N6). This campus does not offer any W&RSETA learnerships or skills programmes.

The learner demographics, at North-West 1 of the old North-West College just before the amalgamation, used to be approximately 80 – 85 % whites with some coloureds and very few blacks making up the rest. This campus used to offer Human Resources Management (N4, N5, N6), Marketing Management (N4, N5, N6), Financial Management (N4, N5, N6), Accounting (N4, N5, N6), Administration and Commerce (N4, N5, N6), Management Assistant (N4, N5, N6). After amalgamation the courses offered are Financial Management (N4, N5, N6), Cost and Management Accounting (3 year course accredited by UNISA), Marketing Management (Introduction – optional, N4, N5, N6), Marketing Management (3 year course accredited by UNISA), Import/Export Management (1 – 3 years accredited by IMM), Project Management (1 – 3 years NQF levels 4 – 6: Services Seta qualification), Medical Secretary/Office Professional (N4, N5, N6) and Legal Secretary/Office Professional (N4, N5, N6). This campus does not offer W&RSETA learnerships but they do offer the (Small Medium and Micro Enterprises) SMME Project - Providing customer service (level 4), Using computer technology in retail and wholesale practices (level 2), Selling goods and services (level 4), Merchandising retail and wholesale (level 2), Managing the starting of a new operation (level 5), Managing all financial aspects of a retail/wholesale outlet (level 5) and Project RAVE: Business Start-up programme (level 2). Other business-related learnerships and skills programmes are also offered

at this campus, however since they are not W&RSETA programmes I have not elaborated on them.

**APPENDIX 14:** **UNIT STANDARDS RESEARCHER WAS INVOLVED IN ON THIS LEARNERSHIP**

Facilitation of the following unit standards:

- Compiling verbal and written communications in retail and wholesale practices,
- Attending to customers (I did about one third of this unit standard);
- Displaying and marking merchandise,
- Promoting merchandise and
- Applying speciality merchandise in retail and wholesale practices.

I also stood in for some of the other facilitators during college holidays or when they were needed elsewhere. These unit standards include:

- Performing basic business calculations in wholesale and retail practices
- Processing retail documents and Understanding industry, terms and structures and concepts
- Handling stock
- Handling cash
- Safety, security and housekeeping.



Summative assessments of the following unit standards:

a) Knowledge Tests -

- Communication;
- Attending to customers;
- Displaying and marking merchandise;
- Promoting merchandise; and
- Applying speciality merchandise in retail and wholesale practices.

b) Behavioural Observations –

- Attending to customers;
- Display and marking merchandise
- Promoting merchandise
- Applying speciality merchandise in retail and wholesale practices.
- Processing retail documents;
- Handling stock;
- Safety, security and housekeeping; and
- Handling cash.

**APPENDIX 14:** **UNIT STANDARDS RESEARCHER WAS INVOLVED IN ON THIS LEARNERSHIP**

Facilitation of the following unit standards:

- Compiling verbal and written communications in retail and wholesale practices,
- Attending to customers (I did about one third of this unit standard);
- Displaying and marking merchandise,
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I also stood in for some of the other facilitators during college holidays or when they were needed elsewhere. These unit standards include:

- Performing basic business calculations in wholesale and retail practices
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- Handling stock
- Handling cash
- Safety, security and housekeeping.



Summative assessments of the following unit standards:

a) Knowledge Tests -

- Communication;
- Attending to customers;
- Displaying and marking merchandise;
- Promoting merchandise; and
- Applying speciality merchandise in retail and wholesale practices.

b) Behavioural Observations –

- Attending to customers;
- Display and marking merchandise
- Promoting merchandise
- Applying speciality merchandise in retail and wholesale practices.
- Processing retail documents;
- Handling stock;
- Safety, security and housekeeping; and
- Handling cash.

**FIGURE 1:** **LEVY/GRANT SYSTEM**

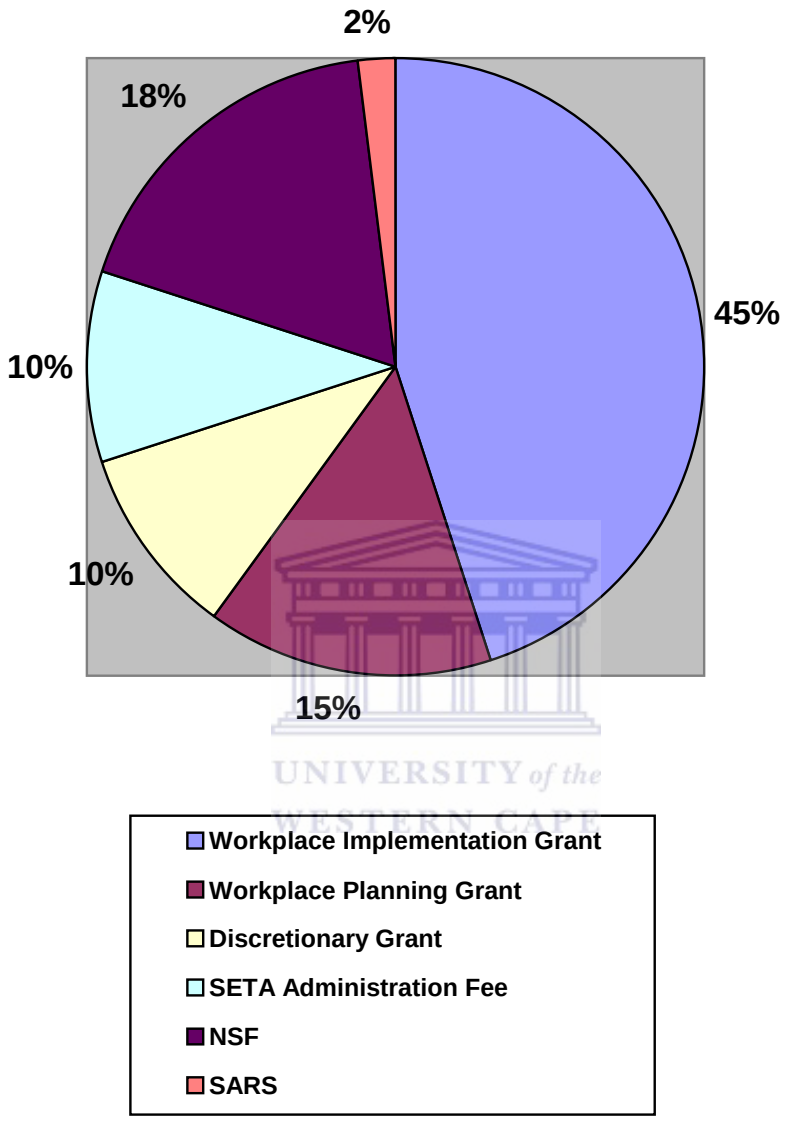

**TABLE 1:** **TYPOLOGY OF WORK EXPERIENCE: GUILE AND GRIFFITHS**

| MODEL OF WORK EXPERIENCE | **TRADITIONAL MODEL** | **EXPERIMENTAL MODEL** | **GENERIC MODEL** | **WORK PROCESS MODEL** | **CONNECTIVE MODEL** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Purpose of work experience | Launch the work | 'Co-development' between education and work | Key skill/competence assessment | 'Attunement' to work environment | 'Reflexivity' |
| Assumption about learning and development | ADAPTION | ADAPTION AND SELF-AWARENESS | SELF-MANAGEMENT | ADJUST AND TRANSFER | VERICAL AND HORIZONTAL DEVELOPMENT |
| Practice of work experience | Managing tasks and instructions | Managing contributions<br><br>PLUS:<br>- recording experiences | Managing action plan and learning outcomes<br><br>PLUS:<br>- managing situations | Managing work processes, relationships and customers<br><br>PLUS:<br>- adding value for employer<br>- supporting employability | Working collaboratively to apply and develop knowledge and skill<br>PLUS:<br>- 'boundary crossing'<br>- 'entrepreneurialability' |
| Management of work experience | SUPERVISION | ARMS-LENGTH | FACILITATION | COACHING | DEVELOPING AND RESITUATING LEARNING |
| Outcome of work experience | Skill acquisition knowledge of 'work readiness' | Economic and industrial awareness | Assessed learning outcomes | System thinking | Poly-contextual and connective skills |
| Role of education and training provider | Provide: formal preparation programme | Provide: briefing for and de-briefing of work experience | Facilitate: portfolio of achievement | Support: reflection-in and on-action | Develop partnerships with workplaces to create: 'environments for learning' |

**TABLE 3: STEPS IN THE SKILLS REVOLUTION**

(How the company can claim back 70% of the 1% skills levy paid to the SETA.)

**Step 1:** The employer registers at any SARS office. The employer should indicate on the SARS SDL 101 form that he/she is interested in registering with the W&RSETA.

**Step 2:** The employer then nominates an employee with the necessary skills to act as a Skills Development Facilitator (SDF). The SDF submits a Workplace Skills Plan (WSP) to the W&RSETA before a set date. The employer will then be eligible for a ***Workplace Planning Grant*** (15% of the levies paid).

**Step 3:** The SDF has to ensure that the WSP is indeed implemented. After successful implementation of the WSP, the employer will be eligible for a ***Workplace Implementation Grant*** (45% of the levies paid).

*Additional notes:*



An employer can also claim an additional approximately 10% for a ***Discretionary grant.*** Before this grant is paid it has to be approved by the SETA.

An employer can therefore claim back up to **70% of the total levies paid**.

The remaining **30% is allocated as follows**:

- SETA Administration 10%
- National Skills Fund 18%
- SARS (as a collecting agent) 2%

Some of this information has changed since 2006.

(Source: W&RSETA, c2004b)