



Skills Development for Economic Growth

Unemployed W&R SETA-funded beneficiaries

FINAL REPORT

MAY

2024

**Prepared by Wholesale and Retail Leadership Chair Department of the
Durban University of Technology (DUT)**



RESEARCH PROJECT : Unemployed W&R SETA- funded beneficiaries

Submitted to: The Wholesale and Retail Sector Education and Training Authority
(W&RSETA)

Contact Persons: Mr. Mxolisi Maphakela

Contact: 012 622 9500

Submitted by: The Wholesale and Retail chair Department of the Durban University
of Technology (DUT)

ML Sultan Campus: 6th Floor, B-Block

Wholesale and Retail chair Department

Durban University of Technology

Contact person: Yunus Doba

Contact: 0837867527

Email: YunusD@dut.ac.za

Tracer study of Unemployed W&R SETA-funded beneficiaries Team Members:

Project Leader: Mr. Yunus Doba

Research Coordinator: Dr Tanzala Kikasu

Research Assistant: Ms Nozipho Cele

Project Researchers:

1. Yunus Doba
2. Dr Tanzala Kikasu
3. Dr Andrew Kamwendo
4. Dr Maliga Reddy
5. Dr Nkululeko Praisegod Zungu

Strategic Partner: CUT

Steering Committee Members (W&RSETA): Mr Mxolisi Maphakela (Centurion)

COPYRIGHT

THIS REPORT REMAINS THE PROPERTY OF THE WHOLESALE AND RETAIL
SECTOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING AUTHORITY (W&RSETA)
IN GENERAL, PUBLICATION OF RESULTS IN JOURNALS IS TO BE WELCOME,
BUT ONLY AFTER THE REPORTS HAVE BEEN SUBMITTED TO CABINET, AND
SUBJECT TO
PERMISSION BY THE W&RSETA/CUSTODIAN DEPARTMENT TO ENSURE THAT
CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION IS NOT USED.

HOW TO CITE THIS REPORT: UNEMPLOYED W&R SETA-FUNDED
BENEFICIARIES (UW&R SETAFB): FULL REPORT APRIL 2024.

DISCLAIMER

IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT ANY OPINIONS EXPRESSED IN THIS REPORT
ARE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE SERVICE PROVIDER AND NOT THE
GRADUATE PLACEMENT COMMITTEE (W&R SETA).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The W&R SETA plays a critical role in funding and helping unemployed youth by bridging the education and employment gap, as well as improving the skills and competencies of workers in the retail sector. The skills development interventions aim to create an environment that allows beneficiaries to be employed, upskilled, or empowered to start and build their own enterprises. Ultimately, the W&R SETA's aim is to create a qualified, knowledgeable, competent, and professional workforce that will transform the Wholesale and Retail Sector. The W&R SETA supports the growth and sustainability of the wholesale and retail industries through a variety of training intervention programmes, including as student internships, learnerships, graduate internship and placement programmes, workshops, bursaries, and so on. As a result, the purpose of this research project was to examine and trace the status of W&R SETA-funded beneficiaries who are employed, unemployed, or have become entrepreneurs after completing W&R SETA intervention programmes. One of the study's primary goals was to track and trace participants who had received W&R SETA funding for skill development.

Furthermore, the study investigated and evaluated the effectiveness of the W&R SETA programmes in reducing unemployment through training intervention programmes that comprise supporting and encouraging employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for youths in the country. This study sought realistic solutions for the W&R SETA to maximize benefits and return on investment from various sponsored training interventions through the development of employable and economically active beneficiaries. According to the findings, participation in these programmes resulted in beneficiaries finding work once the programmes were completed. The report also emphasizes the significance of continued assistance and training programmes for beneficiaries to keep their jobs. Recommendations include broadening the scope of learnership initiatives to improve beneficiaries' employability and job retention rates.

Overall, the study emphasizes the effectiveness of focused skill development measures in reducing youths' unemployment.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The study on unemployed beneficiaries funded by W&R SETA is a research project supported by W&R SETA, in collaboration with the Wholesale and Retail Leadership Chair Department at Durban University of Technology (DUT). The W&R SETA provides various skills development programmes aimed at enhancing the skills of employees in the wholesale and retail sector. These programmes encompass training in customer service, merchandising, stock control, and sales strategies. Participants are anticipated to undergo training in current industry practices and techniques, along with gaining hands-on experience in a retail environment. The objective of these programmes is to provide individuals with the necessary skills to thrive in a fast-paced and competitive industry. By participating in these funded programmes, learners and employees can improve their career prospects and seize new opportunities within the wholesale and retail sector. The W&R SETA is dedicated to supporting the industry's growth and development through these valuable training initiatives. The W&R SETA's funding and sustainable economic engagement model, along with the Dashboard Report - Unemployed W&R SETA-funded beneficiaries suggested below, outline the main themes that were investigated, as well as the specific findings and recommendations for the W&R SETA to consider. This report encompasses five significant key features, including following:

- The W & R SETA funding and sustainable economic engagement model
- Dashboard Report - Unemployed W&R SETA-funded beneficiaries
- Introduction, Literature Review, and Research methodology.
- Findings and interpretation of quantitative and qualitative results.
- Recommendations and Conclusion.

THE W & R SETA FUNDING AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC ENGAGEMENT MODEL

As stated earlier, the Wholesale and Retail Sector Education and Training Authority (W & R SETA) funding plays a crucial role in supporting skills development and training within the wholesale and retail sector in South Africa. The funding provided by the E&R SETA helps to address skills shortages, enhance productivity, and improve the overall competitiveness of the sector. Therefore, the W & R SETA funding and sustainable economic engagement model below is suggested to work hand in hand to support skills development and training within the wholesale and retail sector. By investing in skills development, the SETA could help to create a skilled workforce, drive economic growth, and ensure the sector remains competitive in the global marketplace.

W & R SETA FUNDING AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC ENGAGEMENT

W & R SETA

- Selective bursary programmes funded
- Ownership of due diligence of institutions
- Facilitate lecturer capacitation
- Audit quality of interventions
- Revisit learnership and skills programme relevancy
- Fund only programmes linked to sustainable employment

KNOWLEDGE PROVIDERS

- Programme relevance workshops
- Industry engagement
- Focus on soft-skills
- Lecturers/facilitators upskilling and reskilling
- Work Readiness for beneficiaries within programmes
- Placement mentorship
- Industry engagement
- Career development programmes
- Entrench entrepreneurship in all programmes
- WIL placement

W & R SETA

- Own industry mentorship development
- Facilitate work readiness
- Mitigate against free labour syndrome
- Contract placement
- Contract absorption
- Link industry with institutions via engagement forums
- In-source monitoring of interventions in a meaningful way
- Evaluate all interventions

INDUSTRY PARTNERS

- Commitment to placement
- Assess success of Employability
- Commitment to absorption contract
- Training of mentors
- Commitment to logbooks
- Student rotation in position plan
- Engaging with institution in terms of programme relevance
- Motivate post qualification study amongst beneficiaries
- Ongoing student support

ROI

Sustained employment
Vertical movement
Career Development

DASHBOARD REPORT - UNEMPLOYED W&R SETA- FUNDED BENEFICIARIES

The Dashboard Report - unemployed W&R SETA- funded beneficiaries summarises the main themes, findings, observations and recommendations aligned to qualitative and quantitative investigations conducted to assess the employment status of unemployed W&R SETA- funded beneficiaries who went through the E&R SETA intervention programmes. The key findings were divided into themes, which included employment status of beneficiaries, skills and knowledge gained from training programmes, support or resources from the W & R SETA, challenges encountered in accessing and securing employment within the sector after completing the W&R SETA programmes, and beneficiary satisfaction and recommendations of the W&R SETA programmes. However, the Dashboard Report-unemployed W&R SETA-funded beneficiaries presents particular findings and significant recommendations for the W&R SETA to consider.

DASHBOARD REPORT - UNEMPLOYED W&R SETA- FUNDED BENEFICIARIES

Emerging Themes	Key Findings	Potential Reasons	Recommendations
Education levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 39% of the beneficiaries had matric and 28% were beneficiaries of a national diploma. 13% beneficiaries of a bachelor's qualification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There could be a few potential implications for employment opportunities based on the diverse range of educational backgrounds among funded unemployed beneficiaries by the W&R SETA 	<p>The W&R SETA should fund a mix of skills and qualifications to meet the evolving needs of the industry and to enhance employability prospects for job seekers.</p>
Participation in W & R SETA interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 37% of beneficiaries received bursaries. 28% of beneficiaries participated in a learnership programme. 26% of beneficiaries were on other programmes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All beneficiaries were in a formal training intervention. 65% of beneficiaries received bursaries and participated in a learnership programme shows a positive uptake of educational opportunities among the beneficiaries. 	<p>The W&R SETA should provide more information and support beneficiaries on how to access and apply for learnership programmes opportunities. The W&R SETA should monitor and evaluate the impact of these programmes on the beneficiaries' academic and professional growth to guide future interventions.</p>
W & R SETA funding Window most represented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 77% secured funding from the W&R SETA during the period between 2022 and 2023 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This suggests that beneficiaries could still be in a programme, which is supported by the largest number of beneficiaries receiving funding in 2023. However, there may be other barriers or challenges preventing completion of the programmes. 	<p>Ongoing funding for beneficiaries must be further supported.</p>
Completion of W & R SETA Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 58% of beneficiaries confirmed the completion of the W&R SETA programmes with a "YES" response. 42% of beneficiaries disapproved of "NO" and did not complete the W&R SETA programmes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are complex and varied reasons why beneficiaries may have been unable to complete the W&R SETA programmes, including both external factors and personal beliefs about the value of the training. 	<p>Efforts to address these obstacles and providing additional support to beneficiaries may help improve completion rates in the future</p>

Employment Status of Beneficiaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 41% are still unemployed (jobless) and looking for employment. 23% are still students and placed toward their W&R SETA programmes. 14% are working full-time. 10% did not disclose whether they are employed or unemployed following their completion of W&R SETA programmes. 9% are working part-time. 2% are not seeking for jobs and have remain unemployed. 1% are self-employed. 		<p>The W&R SETA programmes are helping a portion of the beneficiary's access to the labour market, but it lacks a retention commitment of learners and graduates by companies</p> <p>Bursary and graduate placement funding should be linked to scarce and critical skills and</p> <p>Funding of programmes should ensure programmes enrolled for possess relevant skills set required by the economy to avert skill set mismatch</p>
The duration of employed beneficiaries who managed to secure employment after completing the W&R SETA programmes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 86% have been employed for up to 3 years after completing their W&R SETA programmes. 9% are in employment within 4 to 6 years. 5% did not indicate their job duration after completing W&R SETA programmes. 1% started their own businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This shows that the W&R SETA programmes may not have had a major impact on promoting entrepreneurship among beneficiaries. The findings suggest that the W&R SETA programmes are successful in helping a significant portion of beneficiaries to secure employment in the industry within a relatively short period of time. 	<p>The W & R SETA should fund more programmes on entrepreneurship to stimulate an entrepreneurial spirit amongst the youth</p> <p>The funding must be further harnessed and supported</p>
Training programme choice and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 49.4% indicated that the academic programme studied offered an advantage in securing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic qualifications have a crucial advantage of becoming employable 	<p>Funding provided must be linked to sustainable job opportunities rather than merely funding programmes for any qualification.</p>

<p>employment opportunities</p>	<p>employment upon graduation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 35.3% felt that training programmes did provide an advantage in securing employment post-graduation. • 66.2% were confident that the training programme contributed to career advancement. • 21.4% disagreed that qualification received had contributed to career progression. • 54.7% believed that training programme studied offered a favorable avenue to increased responsibilities at the workplace. 	<p>in a competitive and congested graduate labour market.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This does not definitely imply whether the results are due to the relevance of the qualification studied, a skills mismatch, or a reflection of the dilemma of unemployment in South Africa • Beneficiaries perceived that a qualification is a springboard to career growth could have influenced a positive response. • Qualification relevance and skills sets mismatch could stymie can progression. 	<p>Institutions of higher learning should make changes in training programmes to cultivate highly skilled graduates.</p> <p>The W & R SETA should conduct due diligence of all its interventions to ensure that there is alignment between the intervention funded, industry needs and organizational growth.</p>
<p>Training programmes and growth in an organization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 21.4% were in disagreement that training programme studied offered a favorable avenue to increased responsibilities at the workplace. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training acquired serves as catalyst to growth in an organization as higher degree of responsibilities and trusted to supervisory and management positions in an organization. • If skills training is not linked to labour market dynamics training initiatives can most likely misfire rendering training beneficiaries irrelevant with inappropriate skills 	
<p>Transitioning into employment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 58.4% were satisfied that the study programme contributed to easily transition to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beneficiaries were underprepared to enter employment which alluded to programme relevancy 	<p>The W & R SETA should fund work readiness programmes to bridge the gap between institutions and industry.</p>

	<p>the employers' organization.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 30.4% were in disagreement that study programmes assisted in easy transition to the workplace 	and soft skills required	<p>Knowledge providers should include work readiness as part of learning programmes to ensure a seamless transition to employment</p> <p>The W & R SETA should increase its Work Integrated Learning spend to provide avenues for work preparedness for all beneficiaries.</p>
Development of Soft Skills	<p><u>1. Working with Teams</u> 75.4% posited that training programmes enhanced the ability of beneficiaries to effectively function in teams at the workplace.</p> <p><u>2. Problem-solving skills</u> 83.1% were of the view that training programmes had a positive effect on the ability to solve technical problems.</p> <p><u>3. Communication Skills</u> 85.2% stated that training programmes contributed to the improvement of the ability to communicate effectively.</p> <p><u>4. Developing good relationships in the workplace</u> 86.1% were confident that training programmes enhanced beneficiaries ability to have a good working relationship with others.</p> <p><u>5. Diveristy training</u> 83.9% stated that the training received was beneficial to them respecting diversity and appreciating cultural difference.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This augurs well for training programmes beneficiaries as soft skills acquired by beneficiaries will aid working collaboratively and valuing team members Results affirm that training programmes were effectively imparting skills, making beneficiaries agile and enterprising in the work environment. Communication skills training should be introduced to students at the commencement of a programme and as well as towards the end of an undergraduate course so as to embrace communication skills at all times. The ability to have good relationship with others in the workplace plays a fundamental role in engendering team spirit and working collaboratively to achieve collective work tasks and goals Diversity, multi-culturalism and celebrating differences harmonises relationships and 	<p>The W & R SETA should add on a broad spectrum of soft skills training as a standard aspect of all learning programmes</p> <p>Training programmes should harness relationship building and affording beneficiaries to be more pliable, work ready and view diveristy in the work environment as an organizational strengh</p>

		people engagements. Embracing differences cements better relationships.	
Training and overall contribution to career development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 67.1% were of the view that overall the training impacted on their career development.. 16.8% disagreed that they had received from training programmes 16% were neutral and reticent on the matter, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A significant number were satisfied that training received had set out career paths for them which is a pronouncement that there is a positive association between training and career aspiration This suggests that that there was a disconnect between training programmes and aspired career pathways This signifies that beneficiaries remained unconvinced whether training programmes contributed to their career paths 	The W & R SETA should continue funding training programmes in the same manner it has been doing so. However, certain areas of programmes should investigate and address limitations of the programme so that more beneficiaries good extract maximum benefit
IMPACT			
Skills and knowledge gained from training is beneficial professionally and career wise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 36.1% conclusively agreed that skills and knowledge imparted by the W & R SETA programmes contributed positively in the professional and career lives of respondents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This alludes to either that the programme lacked relevance or due to skill set mismatch or that beneficiaries could not secure employment. 	The W & R SETA should ensure that programmes funded are directly linked to professional growth
Skills and knowledge gained from training is beneficial professionally and career wise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 63.8% were satisfied that skills and knowledge gained was valuable in shaping career opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This underscores the significance of the W & R SETA interventions, 	The W & R SETA should look at how to translate the significance of intervention into securing permanent employment. The W & R SETA should entrench these programmes due to the positive feedback received.
Quality of training intervention and progress progression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 63% of beneficiaries indicated a positive perception that the quality of the training has contributed to their success or progress in their career or business. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beneficiaries recognised the value of the skills, knowledge, and experiences gained through the training and attribute a significant portion of 	The W & R SETA should conduct evaluation of interventions to address areas of dissatisfaction and improvement

<p>The W & R SETA interventions and corporate employment preparedness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two thirds acknowledged the value and relevance of the training in preparing them for corporate environments. 	<p>their achievements to the insights and competencies acquired.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate business constantly reinvents themselves to remain competitive and focus on human capital investment. 	<p>The W & R SETA interventions should be constantly adapting to business change.</p> <p>The W & R SETA should invest in the upskilling and reskilling of facilitators and lecturers so that they have the competencies to effectively create stimulating learning environments</p> <p>Learnerships, graduates' placements and bursaries should offer mentorships and support structures for successful completion.</p>
<p>Training environments as a platform for development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 18.5% expressed scepticism or dissatisfaction regarding the effectiveness of the interventions. Suggesting the training lacked relevance or failed to address specific corporate requirements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They may feel the training lacked relevance or failed to address specific corporate requirements. 	<p>Structured W & R SETA programmes should enable knowledge conversations, nurture better-quality relationships, build trust and promote teamwork.</p>
<p>Training Programmes and self-development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 84% were satisfied that the training environment positively contributed to their intellectual growth, indicating that it facilitated their ability to think creatively, make effective decisions, and produce high-quality work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning is stimulated by the learning contexts and competency levels of learning facilitators and lecturers. Beneficiaries gain intellectually and are creative in an environment where there is improved quality and enhanced productive interactions between learners and competent lecturers. 	

Application of acquired skills.

- 87.7% were confident that the training environment played a positive role in their self-confidence and abilities.
- 86% were of the view that the training environment promoted attributes like conscientiousness, taking responsibility, time-management, and organizing tasks.
- 68.3% had applied skills they gained from the programme, suggesting that the training had a tangible impact on their professional endeavours.

Enhancing employment opportunities by studying further

- 73.3% felt that they needed to further develop their skills as they were still unemployed.

Expanding skill sets post qualification.

- 46.9% indicated that they have further developed their skills post-programme completion.
- 40.4% have not developed their skills post the programme.

- A supportive environment immersed in collaboration and mentorship promotes self-confidence in execution of tasks.

- Well-constructed environmental interventions could positively impact cognitive processes and attention management, ultimately fostering creativity.

- Maintaining competence and practice would keep beneficiaries agile in achieving tasks and goals.

- The The development of skills post-graduation for employment secure opportunities alludes to the supply of skill set not aligned to the demand of skills required.

- Pull factors to study further could include recognition of study leave, salary scale upgrades, and promotions based on higher qualifications.

- Push factors away from further skills acquisition could be a lack of motivation, absence of funding and minimal monetary incentives post upgrading of qualifications.

To gain real value of application of acquired skills, training institutions should collaborate with industry for insights on relevant skills needed and getting real-time feedback from work mentors. W & R SETA should champion this engagement
The W & R SETA should align its funding model to address the demand of skills required, for e.g. to fund in demand skills only

The W & R SETA should have a strategy for addressing skills development to balance the push and pull factors so that more individuals get skilled aligned to labour market trends and remaining relevant.

SUPPORT AND FUTURE PLANS (SFP):

Support or resources from the W & R SETA that helped enhance Beneficiaries' career or business.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 61.7% agreed that they have received support or resources from the W & R SETA that helped enhance their career or business. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This positive feedback suggests that the resources provided are effective and valuable, and further investment in these initiatives could lead to even greater success for beneficiaries 	<p>The W&R SETA must continue to prioritize and expand these programmes to further enhance the careers and businesses of individuals within the industry.</p> <p>Conducting follow-up surveys or interviews to gather more specific feedback on which programmes were most beneficial and how they can be improved.</p>
Support or resources from college or university that helped enhance beneficiaries' career.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 70.4% agreed that they have received support or resources from their college or university that helped enhance their career. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The majority of beneficiaries acknowledged the support they have received from their college or university in enhancing their career, indicating the effectiveness of current programmes and resources. There may be room for improvement in the types of support and resources offered to ensure all beneficiaries receive equal opportunities for career enhancement. 	<p>Increase the support and resources provided by colleges and universities to ensure all beneficiaries receive assistance in enhancing their career.</p> <p>Implement programmes and initiatives that specifically target career development and support for students</p>
Support or resources from the company where beneficiaries were placed that helped them enhance their career or business.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 46.5% agreed that they have received support or resources from the company they were placed that helped them enhance their career or business. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beneficiaries perceived that the support or resources provided by the company have been beneficial for advancing their career or business endeavours. It reflects positively on the effectiveness of the companies in providing valuable assistance to individuals during their placement 	<p>Increase and improve the support and resources provided to beneficiaries by companies to further enhance their careers or businesses.</p> <p>Implement mentorship programmes, offering additional training or educational opportunities,</p> <p>Providing networking opportunities, and actively seeking feedback from beneficiaries to better understand their needs and preferences.</p>
The growth of beneficiaries in their current career and business pathways.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 86.8% agreed that they see themselves continuing to grow in their current career and business pathways. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This indicates that a significant majority of beneficiaries have a positive outlook on their future growth within their current career or business endeavours. 	<p>Provide further support and resources to help these individuals continue to develop and advance in their chosen fields.</p> <p>By investing in the growth and development of these individuals, the organisation can help ensure</p>

			<p>their continued success and satisfaction in their careers.</p> <p>Offering mentorship programmes, additional training opportunities, networking events, and access to industry experts</p>
Beneficiaries' career aspirations outside their current career in the Wholesale & Retail Sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 66.3% agreed that they have other career aspirations outside their current career in the Wholesale & Retail Sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beneficiaries have displayed ambitions beyond their current career path within the Wholesale & Retail Sector. Results indicate a desire for growth, exploration, and potentially diversification of career opportunities among beneficiaries. 	<p>Beneficiaries may develop new opportunities for skill development and training in other industries that align with their career aspirations: Considering how current skills and experiences can be transferred to new roles or sectors.</p> <p>Beneficiaries should be encouraged to research and explore different career paths that match their interests and goals, and to create a plan for gaining the necessary education or experience to transition into a new field.</p>

CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED IN ACCESSING AND SECURING EMPLOYMENT WITHIN THE SECTOR AFTER COMPLETING THE W&R SETA PROGRAMME:

The wholesale and retail sectors often attract a large pool of entry-level candidates.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 72.8% agreed that the wholesale and retail sectors often attract a large pool of entry-level candidates. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The high percentage of beneficiaries who agreed that the wholesale and retail sectors attract a large pool of entry-level candidates suggests that there is a strong interest in these industries among job seekers looking for entry-level opportunities. It may be worth exploring ways to leverage this interest to attract and retain talent in these sectors. 	<p>It may be beneficial for organisations in the wholesale and retail sectors to focus on targeted recruitment efforts to attract high-quality entry-level candidates.</p>
Employers may prefer candidates with more extensive practical experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 77.8% agreed that employers may prefer candidates with more extensive practical experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beneficiaries believed that practical experience is valued by employers and may be a preference in candidate selection processes. 	<p>Employers should actively promote opportunities for beneficiaries to gain practical experience through internships, co-op programmes, volunteer work, or part-time jobs.</p> <p>Building up a strong portfolio of hands-on experience can help set beneficiaries apart from others in the job market.</p> <p>Networking with professionals in the field and seeking mentorship</p>

			can also provide valuable insights and guidance on how to further beneficiaries can develop practical skills and make oneself a more attractive candidate to potential employers.
Challenges to bridging the gap between academic learning and the specific skills required in the wholesale and retail sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 73.2% agreed that it is challenging to bridge the gap between academic learning and the specific skills required in the wholesale and retail sectors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a recognition of a gap between theoretical knowledge gained through academic learning and the practical skills demanded by the industry. 	<p>Implement more hands-on training programmes or apprenticeships that specifically focus on the practical skills needed in the wholesale and retail sectors.</p> <p>Partnerships between academic institutions and retail businesses and industry experts could provide valuable insights and guidance in developing curriculum that better aligns with industry needs.</p>
There is mismatch between the placed student expectations and the actual job market conditions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 63.4% agreed that there is a mismatch between the placed student expectations and the actual job market conditions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beneficiaries perceived that there is a discrepancy between their expectations when placed in jobs and the reality of job market conditions. They argue that there is a gap between what they expect from their placements and the actual opportunities available in the job market. 	<p>Improving career counselling services by providing beneficiaries with more accurate and up-to-date information about job market conditions and expectations can help them make more informed decisions about their career choices.</p> <p>Strengthening industry partnerships by working closely with employers and industry experts can help educational institutions better understand the demands of the job market and tailor their programmes to meet those needs.</p> <p>Enhance practical training opportunities by offering internships, co-op programmes, and other hands-on learning experiences can help beneficiaries gain valuable skills and insights into the job market.</p> <p>Reducing the likelihood of mismatches between expectations and reality could be beneficial for beneficiaries.</p> <p>Conduct regular surveys and feedback sessions by continuously gathering input from both beneficiaries and employers can help identify potential mismatches and issues early on, allowing for timely adjustments and improvements.</p>

			Provide ongoing career development support by offering resources and guidance to help beneficiaries navigate the job market, develop relevant skills, and make successful transitions into their chosen careers can help address the mismatch between expectations and actual conditions.
The poor economic conditions is reducing job opportunities making it difficult to secure employment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 91% agreed that poor economic conditions are reducing job opportunities, making it difficult to secure employment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beneficiaries perceive that challenging economic conditions are negatively impacting job availability and increasing the difficulty of securing employment. It suggests a widespread recognition of the impact of economic factors on the job market. 	<p>A focus will be on creating job training programmes and partnerships with local businesses to provide more opportunities for employment.</p> <p>Exploring ways to stimulate economic growth in the community, Such as incentivizing small business development or attracting new industries, could help address the issue of limited job opportunities.</p> <p>Provide support and resources for those looking for employment, such as resume writing workshops or career counselling services.</p>

BENEFICIARY SATISFACTION & RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE W&R SETA PROGRAMMES:

Beneficiaries' satisfaction with the W&R SETA funding received.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 61.7% were satisfied with the funding received from the W&R SETA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The fact that over half of beneficiaries agreed with the funding received indicates that the support provided by the W&R SETA is valuable and appreciated (satisfaction). It shows that the funding is making a positive difference in the lives and work of beneficiaries. 	The W&R SETA should continue providing funding to beneficiaries as it is positively impacting a majority of them. They should also consider expanding funding opportunities or increasing funding amounts to further support beneficiaries in their endeavours.
Beneficiaries' satisfaction with the W&R SETA learnership, or skills programmes they received.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 56% stressed their satisfaction with the learnership or skills programmes received from the W&R SETA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The high percentage of beneficiaries who expressed satisfaction with the learnership or skills programmes from the W&R SETA suggests that these programmes are well-received and beneficial to participants. 	<p>The W&R SETA should continue to offer and support learnership or skills programmes provided, as the majority of beneficiaries agreed with their effectiveness.</p> <p>It may be worth exploring ways to further enhance and promote these initiatives to continue to support skill development in the workforce.</p>

<p>Beneficiaries' experience with the W&R SETA programmes enhanced their current employment status or entrepreneurial journey.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 61% agreed that experience with the W&R SETA programmes enhanced their current employment status or entrepreneurial journey. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The fact that over half of beneficiaries agreed that the programmes enhanced their current employment status or entrepreneurial journey is a positive outcome. This suggests that the W&R SETA is successful in its efforts to support individuals in improving their career prospects through its programmes. 	<p>The W&R SETA should continue monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of its programmes to ensure they continue to meet the needs of beneficiaries.</p> <p>The W&R SETA should continue to focus on providing high-quality programmes that effectively enhance beneficiaries' employment status or entrepreneurial journey.</p> <p>The W&R SETA should consider expanding and improving existing programmes to have an even greater impact on beneficiaries' careers.</p>
<p>Beneficiaries' recommendation to improving the content and implementation of the W&R SETA intervention programmes due to technological advancement in the sector.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 86.8% agreed that improvements to the content and implementation of the W&R SETA intervention programmes are necessary due to technological advancements in the sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is evident from the results that beneficiaries recognise the importance of staying up to date with technological advancements in the sector. The W&R SETA should take note of the feedback received and prioritise making necessary improvements to ensure the effectiveness and relevance of their intervention programmes. 	<p>The W&R SETA should consider making improvements to the content and implementation of its intervention programmes to align with technological advancements in the sector. It should be conducting a thorough review of current intervention programmes to identify areas for enhancement and update content accordingly.</p> <p>The W&R SETA should invest efforts and resources in training programmes that focus on teaching beneficiaries about the latest technological advancements in the industry.</p>
<p>The W&R SETA programmes should strengthen learnerships and graduate placement interventions to allow beneficiaries to gain relevant and adequate work experience to secure employment/entrepreneurs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 93% agreed that the W&R SETA programmes should strengthen learnerships and graduate placement interventions to allow beneficiaries to gain relevant and adequate work experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The majority of beneficiaries clearly see the value in gaining work experience through learnerships and graduate placement interventions, indicating a strong desire for practical training opportunities in the industry. This suggests that there is a gap that needs to be addressed in providing sufficient work experience 	<p>Based on the results, it is recommended that the W&R SETA focuses on strengthening learnerships and graduate placement interventions in order to address the need for beneficiaries to gain relevant and adequate work experience.</p>

		opportunities for beneficiaries in the W&R sector.	
The W & R SETA should secure industry commitment to assist beneficiaries/unemployed youth with employment opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 94.7% strongly agreed that W&R SETA should secure industry commitment to assist beneficiaries and unemployed youth with employment opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The high percentage of beneficiaries strongly agreeing with this statement indicates a strong desire and need for employment opportunities within the industry. It is important for the W&R SETA to continue to focus on this area and to actively work towards creating more employment opportunities for beneficiaries and unemployed youth. 	The W&R SETA should prioritise securing industry commitment to assist beneficiaries and unemployed youth with employment opportunities. This could involve actively reaching out to industry partners and working collaboratively to create job opportunities for these individuals.
The W & R SETA intervention programmes should be extended to include a more formal component of Mentorship Training and Practice with the involvement of key industry Partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 93.4% supported the recommendation to extend the W&R SETA intervention programmes to include a more formal component of Mentorship Training and Practice with the involvement of key industry partners. This indicates strong overall support for the proposal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The involvement of key industry partners in the mentorship component is essential for the success of the programme, as it ensures relevance and alignment with industry needs and standards. Collaboration with industry partners should be actively pursued to maximise the benefits of the mentorship training and practice. 	Based on the high level of support for the proposal to include mentorship training and practice in the W&R SETA intervention programmes, it is important for the organisation to prioritise this initiative and allocate resources accordingly

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	iv
BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY.....	v
THE W & R SETA FUNDING AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC ENGAGEMENT MODEL	vi
DASHBOARD REPORT - UNEMPLOYED W&R SETA- FUNDED BENEFICIARIES.....	viii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	1
List of Tables	4
List of Figures	5
1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY	6
2. PROBLEM STATEMENT.....	8
3. AIM OF THE STUDY.....	9
4. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES.....	9
5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	10
6. LITERATURE REVIEW	13
6.1 INTRODUCTION.....	13
6.3 EFFECTIVENESS OF THE W&R SETA TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES IN TERMS OF PROVIDING BENEFICIARIES WITH NECESSARY SKILLS FOR EMPLOYMENT OR ENTREPRENEURSHIP	17
6.3.1 Evaluating the Relevance of training for employment or entrepreneurship	17
6.3.1.1 To what extent do the training programmes offered by the w&r seta align with the needs of the industry and the job market?	17
6.3.2 Quality of training	22
6.3.4 Suitability of training methodologies.....	29
6.3.5 Absorption rates.....	36
6.3.6 Beneficiary satisfaction	38
6.4 SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY BENEFICIARIES IN RELATION TO ACCESSING AND SECURING EMPLOYMENT WITHIN THE SECTOR.....	39
6.4.1 Successes.....	39
6.4.2 Challenges	40
6.5 BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY EMPLOYERS IN RELATION TO THE ABSORPTION AND NON-ABSORPTION OF BENEFICIARIES IN THE LABOUR MARKET.....	40

6.5.1	Benefits of Absorbing Beneficiaries in the Labor Market:	40
6.5.2	Challenges of Absorbing Beneficiaries in the Labor Market:	41
6.5.3.	Challenges of Non-Absorption of Beneficiaries in the Labor Market:.....	42
6.6	MODEL TO ENHANCE TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTIONS AND INCREASE EMPLOYABILITY AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP OPPORTUNITIES FOR BENEFICIARIES WITHIN THE SECTOR.....	43
7.	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	45
7.1	Research design	46
7.2	Flowchart of qualitative and quantitative approaches.....	47
8.	CONCLUSION.....	51
9.	ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS.....	52
9.1	BIOGRAPHICAL DATA	52
9.1.1	Gender.....	53
9.1.2	Age group	54
9.1.3	Ethnicity	55
9.1.4	Level of education.....	56
9.1.5	Qualification completed at the university or college.....	58
9.1.6	The W&R SETA programmes for which beneficiaries received funding.	60
9.1.7	The period when the W&R SETA funding was secured for beneficiaries	62
9.1.8	The W&R SETA programmes completed by beneficiaries	63
9.1.9	Employment status of funded beneficiaries following the completion of SETA programmes	the W&R 64
9.1.10	Duration of employed beneficiaries after completion of the W&R SETA s.	programme 68
9.2.	TRAINING PROGRAMME CHOICE AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES.....	69
9.2.1	The training programme has provided me with an advantage in securing employment after graduation.	70
9.2.2	Qualification acquired and career advancement.....	71
9.2.3	Training programmes and growth in an organization	72
9.2.4	Transitioning into employment	73
9.2.5	Training and working with teams	73
9.2.6	Problem-solving skills and training programmes.....	74
9.2.7	Training programme and communication skills.....	75
9.2.8	Developing good relationships in the workplace.....	76
9.2.9	Diveristy training	76
9.2.10	Training and overall contribution to career development	77

9.3 IMPACT OF W&R SETA PROGRAMME.....	79
9.3.1. Skills and knowledge gained from training is beneficial professionally and career wise ...	79
9.3.2 Quality of training intervention and progress progression	80
9.3.3 W & R SETA interventions and corporate employment preparedness	82
9.4 Skills Utilisation and Development (SUD)	83
9.4.1 Training environments as a platform for development.....	84
9.4.2 Training Programmes and self-development	85
9.4.3 Training Programmes promoting a better work ethic	85
9.4.4 Application of acquired skills	87
9.4.5 Enhancing employment opportunities by studying further	88
9.4.6 Expanding skill sets post qualification	89
9.5. SUPPORT AND FUTURE PLANS (SFP).....	90
9.5.1 Support or resources from the W & R SETA that helped enhance career or business.	90
9.5.2 Support or resources from my college or university that helped enhance career ...	91
9.5.3 Support or resources from the company I was placed with that helped enhance my career or business.	92
9.5.4 Self continuing to grow in my current career and business pathways.....	93
.....	93
9.5.5 Other career aspirations outside current career in the Wholesale & Retail Sector.	94
9.5.6 Other professional aspirations outside current business.	95
9.6 CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED IN ACCESSING AND SECURING EMPLOYMENT WITHIN THE SECTOR AFTER COMPLETING THE W&R SETA PROGRAMME (C).	96
9.6.1 The wholesale and retail sectors often attract a large pool of entry-level candidates	97
9.6.2 Employers may prefer candidates with more extensive practical experience.....	98
9.6.3 It is challenging to bridge the gap between academic learning and the specific skills required in the wholesale and retail sector.....	99
9.6.4 There is mismatch between the placed student expectations and the actual job market conditions.....	100
9.6.5 The poor economic conditions is reducing job opportunities making it difficult to secure employment.....	101
9.7 SATISFACTION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	102
9.7.1 I am satisfied with the W&R SETA funding I received:	102
9.7.2 I am satisfied with the W&R SETA learnership, or skills programmes I received....	103
9.7.3 My experience with the W&R SETA program enhanced my current employment status or entrepreneurial journey.	104

9.7.4 I recommend improvements to the content and implementation of the intervention programmes due to technological advancement in the sector.	W&R SETA 105
9.7.5 I suggest that the W&R SETA programmes should strengthen learnerships and graduate placement interventions to allow beneficiaries to gain relevant and adequate work experience to secure employment/ entrepreneurs.	106
9.7.6 I propose that the W & R SETA secure industry commitment to assist unemployed youth with employment opportunities.	beneficiaries/ 107
9.7.7 I recommend that the W & R intervention program be extended to include a more formal component of Mentorship Training and Practice with the involvement of key industry Partners.	108
10 RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION.....	109
10.1 Recommendations	109
10.1.1 Curriculum Alignment	109
10.1.2 Industry and academic institution partnerships	110
10.1.3 Career Guidance and Career pathing.....	111
10.1.4 Mentorship Support.....	112
10.1.5 Work Readiness Programmes	112
10.1.6 Internships and Work-Integrated Learning.....	113
10.1.7 Selective and prudent funding vs Funding any programme	113
10.1.8 SETA Marketing of interventions	114
10.1.9 Qualitative Evaluation of Interventions	114
10.1.10 Contractual commitments	115
10.1.11 Entrepreneurship education	115
10.2. Conclusion	116

List of Tables

Table 1 Key questions that will inform the study	11
Table 2 Guideline to evaluate the W&R SETA training program relevance and up to date to the fast-changing work environment.	12
Table 3 Critical reasons for improving and keeping up to date training program by the W&R SETA. .	20
Table 4 factors that determine the effectiveness of training program in equipping beneficiaries with the necessary skills for employment or entrepreneurship.....	24
Table 5 Factors that can contribute to trainers' experience and competence.	26
Table 6 Benefits of employees' training and development.....	30
Table 7 Ways the training programmes provided to beneficiaries can achieve its objectives.....	35
Table 8 Factors that could contribute to beneficiaries' placement High rates.	37

List of Figures

Figure 1 Study's framework.	16
Figure 2 Potential Model to enhance the W&R SETA training and development interventions and increase employability and entrepreneurship opportunities for beneficiaries within the sector.	43
Figure 3 Mixed methods design implemented for data collection and analysis.	47
Figure 4 Flowchart (1) of Qualitative Research (Inductive approach to research).....	48
Figure 5 Flowchart (2) of Quantitative Research (Deductive approach to research).....	49
Figure 6 Gender	53
Figure 7 Age group.....	54
Figure 8 Ethnicity	55
Figure 9 Level of education.....	56
Figure 10 Qualification completed at the university or college.	59
Figure 11 The W&R SETA programmes for which beneficiaries received funding.	61
Figure 12 The period when the W&R SETA funding was secured for beneficiaries.	62
Figure 13 The W&R SETA programmes completion by beneficiaries.	63
Figure 14 Employment status of funded beneficiaries following the completion of the W&R SETA programmes.....	65
Figure 15 Employment duration of employed beneficiaries after completion of the W&R SETA programmes.....	68
Figure 16 Training programme experience and career development.....	70
Figure 17 Impact of w&r seta programme	79
Figure 18 Skills Utilisation and Development (SUD)	83
Figure 19 Support and future plans (SFP).....	90
Figure 20 Challenges encountered in accessing and securing employment within the sector after completing the w&r seta programme (c).	96
Figure 21 Beneficiary Satisfaction & Recommendations.....	102

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The W&R SETA plays a crucial role in funding and supporting unemployed youth by bridging the gap between education and employment, and in enhancing the skills and competencies of individuals within the retail sector. The skills development interventions seek to promote an enabling environment for beneficiaries to be either employed, upskilled, or empowered to start and grow their own businesses. Ultimately, the W&R SETA contributes to the growth and sustainability of the wholesale and retail industry. Therefore, this research study focuses on examining the status of the W&R SETA beneficiaries who are employed, unemployed or have become entrepreneurs. The study intends to track and trace beneficiaries who had received funding from W&R SETA for skills development.

Moreover, the study further investigates and evaluates the effectiveness of the W&R SETA programmes in reducing unemployment through training programmes that consist of facilitating and promoting employment and entrepreneurial opportunities. This study targets to find plausible solutions for the W&R SETA on receiving maximum benefits and a return on investment on the various funded training interventions through the development of employable and economically active beneficiaries. Essentially, in the context of this study, the concepts of unemployed beneficiaries, employed/absorbed beneficiaries, and beneficiaries who have started their own business or have become entrepreneurs are described in line with the objectives that are discussed in the course of this research study.

- **Unemployed beneficiaries:**

Unemployed beneficiaries are individuals who have been previously unemployed and had received funding for skills development. The funded program was implemented to help beneficiaries gain practical work experience

through internships or learnerships programmes and assist in job placement within the sector by partnering with employers.

However, post the W&R SETA intervention skills and qualifications acquired, they remained unemployed and not absorbed by companies.

- **Employed/Absorbed beneficiaries:**

Employed/Absorbed beneficiaries are individuals who have been previously unemployed and had received funding for skills development. The funded programme was implemented to help beneficiaries gain practical work experience through internships or learnerships programmes and assist in job placement within the sector by partnering with employers. However, post the W&R SETA intervention for skills and qualifications acquired the beneficiaries were employed/absorbed by companies.

- **Beneficiaries who have started their own businesses.**

This group of individuals includes unemployed beneficiaries who have been funded by the W&R SETA for skills development. The funded program was implemented to help beneficiaries gain practical work experience through internships or learnerships programmes and assist in job placement within the sector by partnering with employers. However, post the W&R SETA intervention for skills and qualifications acquired, beneficiaries have become entrepreneurs within the wholesale and retail sector and have started their own businesses.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The W&R SETA has over the past years funded various interventions to enhance skills development in the retail sector. The challenge is to understand and address the employment status and outcomes of beneficiaries who have received funding or completed training programmes facilitated by the W&R SETA. Specifically, the critical question for the W&R SETA is knowing the employment and entrepreneurship status of beneficiaries from the various interventions. The intention of the funding agency is to ensure that beneficiaries gain access to the labour market by securing employment, becoming successful entrepreneurs, addressing skills shortages, and mitigating against South Africa's unemployment dilemma. The interventions were being designed to develop a competent workforce, access to the employment market and inculcating skills in entrepreneurship.

Fundings are made available towards creating an enabling environment for entrants into the economy and concomitantly addressing unemployment challenges experienced by South Africa. Significantly, the W&R SETA is unable to determine the impact and success of its monetary investment in terms of its desired goal and mission to develop a skilled, capable, competent, and professional workforce to transform the Wholesale and Retail Sector. The barometer of success would be the number of beneficiaries who have been absorbed in the industry, beneficiaries who have become entrepreneurs and beneficiaries who are not active in the economy. In light of the above, the key issue to be examined is to identify the extent to which the W&RSETA programmes contribute to reducing unemployment by facilitating employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for previously unemployed individuals.

3. AIM OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to investigate the employment status of funded beneficiaries by the Wholesale and Retail Sector Education and Training Authority (W&R SETA) who were granted skills development and employment opportunities within the wholesale and retail sector.

4. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study intended:

1. To determine the percentage of beneficiaries who completed the W&R SETA programmes and have successfully gained employment in the sector.
2. To identify the percentage of beneficiaries who completed the W&R SETA programmes and remain unemployed.
3. To determine the percentage of beneficiaries who completed the W&R SETA programmes and have started their own businesses.
4. Assessing the effectiveness of W&R SETA training and development programmes in terms of providing beneficiaries with necessary skills for employment or entrepreneurship.
5. To determine the successes and challenges experienced by beneficiaries in relation to accessing and securing employment within the sector.
6. To examine the benefits and challenges experienced by employers in relation to the absorption and non-absorption of beneficiaries in the labour market.
7. To propose a model that will enhance W&R SETA training and development interventions and increase employability and entrepreneurship opportunities for beneficiaries within the sector.

5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were examined:

1. What is the percentage of beneficiaries who completed the W&R SETA programmes and have successfully gained employment in the sector?
2. What is the percentage of beneficiaries who completed the W&R SETA programmes and remain unemployed?
3. What is the percentage of beneficiaries who completed the W&R SETA programmes and have started their own businesses?
4. Are the W&R SETA training and development programmes effective in terms of providing beneficiaries with the necessary skills for employment or entrepreneurship?
5. What are the successes and challenges experienced by beneficiaries in relation to accessing and securing employment within the sector?
6. What are the benefits and challenges experienced by employers in relation to the absorption and non-absorption of beneficiaries in the labour market?
7. What would be a fitting model that will enhance W&R SETA training and development interventions and increase employability and entrepreneurship opportunities for beneficiaries within the sector?

The sub-sections that follow discusses in detail the objectives defined for this study. However, in this phase, some additional questions related to the study objectives will be examined. Table 1 presents some of the key questions that will inform the study. Q1 to Q17 illustrates question 1 to question 17 in the Table below.

Table 1 Key questions that will inform the study

Q1	To what extent do the training programmes offered by the W&R SETA align with the needs of the industry and the job market?
Q2	Is the training program offered by the W&R SETA up-to-date and relevant to the fast-changing work environment?
Q3	How effective is the training in equipping beneficiaries with the necessary skills for employment or entrepreneurship?
Q4	Are the trainers experienced and competent?
Q5	Are the training materials up-to-date, and are they delivered in a way that is easy to understand?
Q6	Is the training methodology used by the W&R SETA appropriate for the level, context and content being covered?
Q7	What are the training methods used by the W&R SETA to develop skills for employment or entrepreneurship?
Q8	Do the training programmes cater to different learning styles and the needs of diverse beneficiaries, including those from disadvantaged communities or special needs individuals?
Q9	What are the percentages of beneficiaries who successfully complete the training programmes and obtain employment or become entrepreneurs in the sector?
Q10	Are the absorption rates high enough to demonstrate the effectiveness of the training?
	What do employers consider as important factors for absorption of learners?
Q11	What do the beneficiaries themselves think about the training programmes offered by W&R SETA?
Q12	Are they satisfied with the quality and relevance of the training? Do they feel adequately prepared for employment or entrepreneurship after completion of the program?
Q13	What could be the successes experienced by beneficiaries in relation to accessing and securing employment within the sector?
Q14	What could be the challenges experienced by beneficiaries in relation to accessing and securing employment within the sector?

Q15	Were there any challenges or barriers encountered by beneficiaries during their participation in the W & R SETA interventions/ training programmes, and how did they overcome them?
Q16	Were there any challenges or barriers encountered by beneficiaries during their participation in the W & R SETA interventions/ training programmes, and how did they overcome them?
Q17	What recommendations or suggestions can be provided for improving the effectiveness of W&R SETA interventions/ training and development interventions?

These questions, which emanate from each objective of the study, are examined in the sub-sections below. Furthermore, answers to these questions (e.g., *is the training program offered by the W&R SETA up-to-date and relevant to the fast-changing work environment?*), will be informed following the guideline provided in Table 2.

Table 2 Guideline to evaluate the W&R SETA training program relevance and up to date to the fast-changing work environment.

Check the Official Website	Visit the official website of W&R SETA or the specific program in question. Look for updates, key legislation and policies, announcements, and any information regarding the relevance of their training programmes.
Contact W&R SETA	Reach out to the W&R SETA directly through their contact channels. This could include phone numbers, email addresses, or any online contact forms. Inquire about the currency and relevance of their training programmes.
Industry Feedback	Seek feedback from individuals/beneficiaries who have undergone the training or professionals in the wholesale and retail industry. They can provide insights into the effectiveness and relevance of the program. Also, verify the feedback mechanism used by W&R SETA? If any; as well as mechanisms for monitoring & evaluation of interventions.
Industry Trends	Research current trends and developments in the wholesale and retail sector. This information can help to assess whether the training program aligns with the latest industry practices and requirements.
Accreditation and Certification	Check if the training program is accredited and recognized by relevant industry bodies. Accreditation often indicates that the

	program meets certain standards and is regularly reviewed for updates.
Continuous Improvement	Inquire about the W&R SETA's commitment to continuous improvement. Organizations that are proactive in updating their training programmes to meet evolving industry needs are likely to provide more relevant content.
Employer Partnerships	Check possible partnership between the W&R SETA and employers or businesses in the sector. Collaborations with industry stakeholders can ensure that training programmes stay current with the demands of the workplace.

6. LITERATURE REVIEW

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This study investigates the employment status of funded beneficiaries by the W&R SETA who were granted skills development and employment opportunities within the wholesale and retail sector. According to (W&RSETA Strategic plan for 2020/21 – 2024/25), the vehicle used by which SETAs in general and the W&R SETA in particular to make a meaningful contribution towards skills development in the country is the National Skills Development Strategy. Therefore, critical skills are developed for sustainable growth, development & equity, promoting and accelerating quality training for all in the workplace, promoting employability and sustainable livelihoods through skills development, assisting designated groups, including new entrants, to participate in accredited work, integrated learning and work-based programmes to acquire critical skills to enter the labour market and self-employment, and improving the quality and relevance of provision. To this extent, the role of the W&RSETA is to ensure the provision of quality learning within the wholesale and retail (W&R) sector in order to enable its stakeholders to advance the national and global positioning of South Africa's W&R industry. Furthermore, the W&RSETA is responsible for overseeing skills development in the W&R sector.

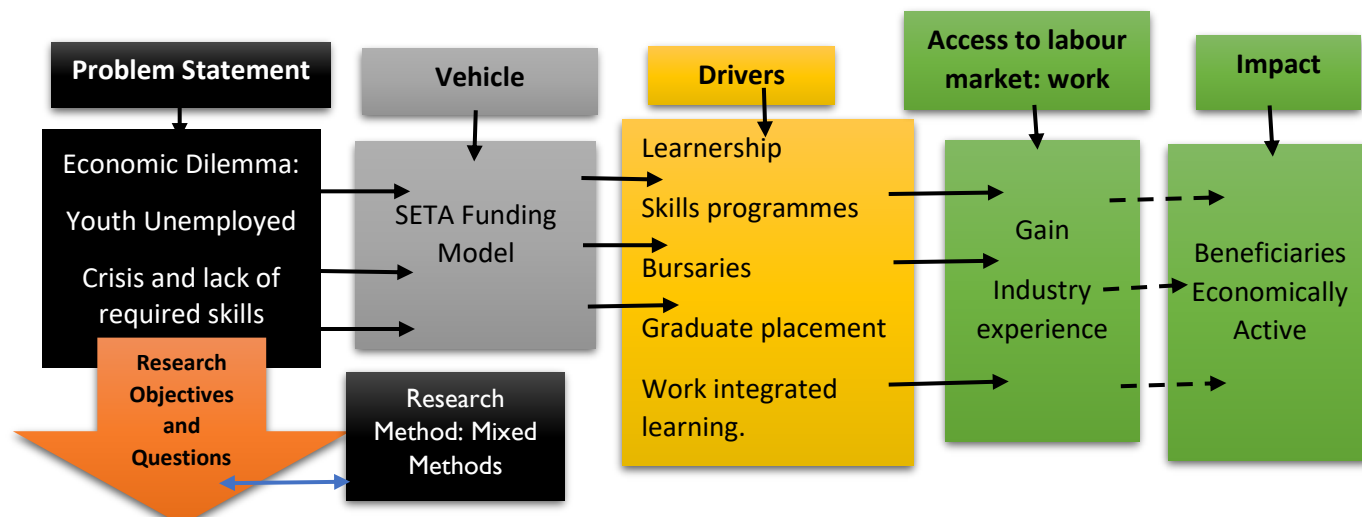
In addition, in line with its mandate, the W&RSETA is an agent of transformation that promotes employment equity, job creation and broad-based Black economic empowerment (BBBEE) through the development of skills, and by assisting in alleviating shortages of skills in the sector. This study relates with the vision of the W&R SETA to embracing the practice of conducting research in order to make evidence-based decisions (informed decisions) and improve its products and services to stakeholders within the sector. Fundamental to this practice is to determine the status of funded beneficiaries by the W&R SETA who were granted skills development and employment opportunities within the wholesale and retail sector. Through this investigation, the W&RSETA will be able to identify the following:

- The percentage of beneficiaries who completed the W&R SETA programmes and have successfully gained employment in the sector.
- The percentage of beneficiaries who completed the W&R SETA programmes and remain unemployed.
- The percentage of beneficiaries who completed the W&R SETA programmes and have become entrepreneurs.

Figure 1 below shows the study's framework.

Study Framework

Research Aim: To investigate the employment status of funded beneficiaries by the Wholesale and Retail Sector Education and Training Authority (W&R SETA) who were granted skills development and employment opportunities within the wholesale and retail sector.



This study intends:

- 1.To determine the percentage of beneficiaries who completed the W&R SETA programmes and have successfully gained employment in the sector.
- 2.To identify the percentage of beneficiaries who completed the W&R SETA programmes and remain unemployed.
- 3.To determine the percentage of beneficiaries who completed the W&R SETA programmes and have started their own businesses.
- 4.Assessing the effectiveness of W&R SETA training and development programmes in terms of providing beneficiaries with necessary skills for employment or entrepreneurship.
- 5.To determine the successes and challenges experienced by beneficiaries in relation to accessing and securing employment within the sector.
- 6.To examine the benefits and challenges experienced by employers in relation to the absorption and non-absorption of beneficiaries in the labour market.
- 7.To propose a model that will enhance W&R SETA training and development interventions and increase employability and entrepreneurship opportunities for beneficiaries within the sector.

Research Questions

- 1.What is the percentage of beneficiaries who completed the W&R SETA programmes and have successfully gained employment in the sector?
- 2.What is the percentage of beneficiaries who completed the W&R SETA programmes and remain unemployed?
- 3.What is the percentage of beneficiaries who completed the W&R SETA programmes and have started their own businesses?
- 4.Are the W&R SETA training and development programmes effective in terms of providing beneficiaries with necessary skills for employment or entrepreneurship?
- 5.What are the successes and challenges experienced by beneficiaries in relation to accessing and securing employment within the sector?
- 6.What are the benefits and challenges experienced by employers in relation to the absorption and non-absorption of beneficiaries in the labour market?
- 7.What would be a fitting model that will enhance W&R SETA training and development interventions and increase employability and entrepreneurship opportunities for beneficiaries within the sector?

Figure 1 Study's framework.

6.2. THE PERCENTAGE OF BENEFICIARIES WHO COMPLETED THE W&R SETA PROGRAMMES AND HAVE SUCCESSFULLY GAINED EMPLOYMENT IN THE SECTOR.

According to Watters and House (2023), in order to calculate the percentage of beneficiaries who completed the W&R SETA programmes and have successfully gained employment in the sector, one need to divide the number of beneficiaries who gained employment by the total number of beneficiaries who completed the program, and then multiply the result by 100. The formula to calculate the percentage is as follows:

- $\text{Percentage} = (\text{Number of beneficiaries who gained employment} / \text{Total number of beneficiaries who completed the program}) \times 100.$

In practice, as an illustration, let's assume or say that there were 100 beneficiaries who completed the W&R SETA programmes, and out of those, 70 beneficiaries successfully gained employment in the sector. The following calculations are to be done:

- $\text{Percentage} = (70 / 100) \times 100$
- $\text{Percentage} = 0.7 \times 100$
- $\text{Percentage} = 70\%$

This illustration means that the percentage of beneficiaries who completed the W&R SETA programmes and have successfully gained employment in the sector is 70%. Thus, following this illustration, the calculations of the percentage of those that remain unemployed and/or became entrepreneurs will be the same. The next section examines the effectiveness of the W&R SETA training and development programmes in terms of providing beneficiaries with necessary skills for employment or entrepreneurship.

6.3 EFFECTIVENESS OF THE W&R SETA TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES IN TERMS OF PROVIDING BENEFICIARIES WITH NECESSARY SKILLS FOR EMPLOYMENT OR ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The effectiveness of the W&R SETA training and development programmes in terms of providing beneficiaries with the necessary skills for employment or entrepreneurship can be assessed by evaluating the relevance of training for employment or entrepreneurship, the quality of training, suitability of training methodologies, placement rates, and beneficiary satisfaction (Simplilean, 2023). The following subsections discuss each of these factors.

6.3.1 Evaluating the Relevance of training for employment or entrepreneurship

The questions that need to be asked when evaluating the relevance of training for employment or entrepreneurship consist of the following:

- To what extent do the training programmes offered by the W&R SETA align with the current needs of the industry and the job market?
- Is the training program offered by the W&R SETA up to date (fit for purpose) and relevant to the fast-changing work environment? (or relevant to examine the degree of flexibility in the content of the interventions & the process of implementation?).

6.3.1.1 To what extent do the training programmes offered by the w&r seta align with the needs of the industry and the job market?

According to Herrity (2023), training for employment or entrepreneurship is important because it represents a good opportunity for beneficiaries to grow their knowledge base and improve their job skills to become more effective in the workplace. The OECD (2014) postulated that training for employment or entrepreneurship often aims at boosting start-ups, innovative ventures, and new jobs. It supports the acquisition and development of skills and make individuals to become more creative and self-confident in any career path that they may pursue. This implies that despite the cost of training, the return on investment could be immense if it is consistent.

In general, the extent to which the training programmes offered by the W&R SETA align with the needs of the industry and the job market can be evaluated by considering the following (Pandey, 2022 and Parton, 2023):

- **Needs Assessment:** The W&R SETA needs to conduct regular needs assessment surveys to ensure that the training programmes offered by the W&R SETA align with the current and emerging needs of the industry and job market. This should involve engagement with employers, industry associations, experts, and education partners.
- **Advisory Committees:** The W&R SETA should have or establish advisory committees comprising of employers, industry experts, and other relevant stakeholders to provide guidance on the design and delivery of the training programmes.
- **Curriculum Revision:** The W&R SETA should regularly review and revise the curriculum of their training programmes to ensure that it is up to date with the latest industry and job market needs. Examine the curriculum of W&R SETA training programmes to see if it covers relevant skills, technologies, and knowledge areas that are currently in demand in the industry.
- **Industry Placement:** The W&R SETA should continually partner with employers to offer placement opportunities to the trainees (beneficiaries) after completing their training programmes. This will enable them to gain practical experiences and relevant skills needed for the job market.
- **Feedback from Employers and Beneficiaries (Participants):** Seek feedback from employers who have hired individuals trained by the W&R SETA and from beneficiaries who have completed the programmes. Their experiences can provide valuable insights into the effectiveness and relevance of the training.
- **Industry Reports and Trends:** Stay informed about industry reports, trends, and forecasts to understand the evolving needs of the sector. This information can help to assess whether the W&R SETA's training programmes are keeping pace with industry developments. Check if the W&R SETA conducts regular consultations with industry stakeholders, such as employers, business associations, and professional organizations. This can provide insights into how well the training programmes align with current industry needs (Industry Consultation). The industry reports and trends are essential to identify crucial gaps and to suggest remedial actions to be taken to consideration for change and improvement.

- **Job Placement and Alumni Success:** Investigate the job placement rates of individuals who have completed the W&R SETA training programmes. High rates of successful job placement and positive outcomes for program graduates may indicate alignment with industry needs.

Considering the above, the alignment of the training programmes offered by the W&R SETA with industry and job market needs depend on their ability to conduct regular needs assessment, engage relevant stakeholders, revise their curriculum regularly, and provide industry placement opportunities.

6.3.1.2. *Is the training program offered by the w&r seta up-to-date and relevant to the fast-changing work environment?*

The empirical study will clarify the outcome of this question. But in this phase, literature indicates that the evolving and fast changing labour markets impose a massive challenge on traditional education and training systems and require new approaches for the training program to be up-to-date and relevant to the fast-changing work environment (ILO and OECD, 2018). Countries and organisations around the world are undergoing major changes. The world of work is undergoing rapid and deep changes brought about by technological development, demographics, globalisation, and climate change. These trends are affecting the composition of employment, the nature of the tasks carried out at work and the skills required in the labour market.

They are also putting enormous pressure on traditional education and training systems, calling for improved quality and new approaches to lifelong learning. Skills development can help turn these challenges into opportunities. Skills contribute to productivity increases and are instrumental in enabling people to benefit from new job opportunities. According to the (ILO and OECD, 2018), The frontloading of skills through initial training for a single lifetime qualification is no longer sufficient or effective and is increasingly being challenged in the context of rapidly changing skill needs. Education and training systems are required to be flexible and prepare individuals to learn continuously over their life.

In South Africa, the training programme offered by the W&R SETA need to be up-to-date and relevant to the fast-changing work environment. Efforts to improve training program offered by the W&R SETA can be observed through various funded research and development activities. As an illustration, the W&R SETA Report (2021) indicates the results of the research study conducted, which was to determine whether or not a programme is achieving its mission and assist in demonstrating the programme's outcomes. The study envisaged to trace employment status of beneficiaries (i.e., employed, self-employed and unemployed), employment rates, match between qualifications attained and occupations, nature of employment, in terms of employment sector or types of employment (e.g., formal, or informal); tenure (part time or full time, contract or permanent); salary level; benefits (UIF, pension, medical aid, allowances); and identifying a need for any further studies (W&R SETA Report (2021).

Therefore, the W&R SETA is required to manage sufficient efforts and resource capability to keep improving the training program offered and maintain it up-to-date and relevant to the fast-changing work environment. According to AI Chatbot, in today's fast-paced and constantly evolving work environment, it is crucial to have a training program that is relevant and up to date. Several reasons may justify the necessity and requirements of improving training program by the W&R SETA. The following Table 3 provides some critical reasons.

Table 3 Critical reasons for improving and keeping up to date training program by the W&R SETA.

Reasons for maintaining training program up-to-date and relevant to the fast-changing work environment	Descriptions
Keeping up with new technologies	With new technologies emerging every day, it is essential for the workforce to stay up to date with the latest tools and systems to remain competitive. A training program that is relevant and up to date can provide employees with the necessary skills and knowledge to use these new technologies effectively.
Changing job roles	As job roles change, employees may need to learn new skills to keep up with their responsibilities. A training program that regularly updates its content can help employees stay current with their job requirements.

Retaining employees	Providing relevant and up-to-date training programmes can help companies retain their employees. Employees appreciate companies that invest in their development and are more likely to stay with a company that offers opportunities for growth and development.
Increasing productivity:	By providing employees with the necessary knowledge and skills, companies can increase productivity and efficiency. Training programmes that are relevant and up to date can help employees perform better and contribute more to the success of the company.
Adapting to change	With the current work environment changing rapidly, companies need to be prepared to adapt quickly. A training program that is relevant and up to date can help employees be more adaptable and flexible when facing change.
Continuous Updates	Training programmes should be regularly updated to reflect changes in technology, industry trends, and best practices. This ensures that employees are learning the most current and relevant information.
Agile Learning Design	Implement agile learning methodologies that allow for quick updates and modifications to training content. This can involve regular feedback loops, rapid prototyping, and continuous improvement processes.
Digital Learning Platforms	Utilize digital learning platforms and tools that facilitate easy updates. Online courses, webinars, and e-learning modules can be quickly modified to incorporate new information.
Industry Collaboration	Foster partnerships with industry experts, associations, and organizations to stay informed about the latest developments. Collaborating with external entities can provide valuable insights into emerging trends.
Microlearning Modules	Break down training content into smaller, bite-sized modules. This allows for more flexibility in updating specific topics without having to overhaul entire training programmes.
Personalized Learning Paths	Implement personalized learning paths based on individual employee needs and career goals. This ensures that each employee receives training that is directly relevant to their role and evolving responsibilities.
Feedback Mechanisms	Establish feedback mechanisms where employees can provide input on the effectiveness and relevance of training programmes. This can help identify areas that need improvement or updating.
Cross-Functional Training	Encourage cross-functional training to prepare employees for a variety of tasks and roles. This flexibility is especially important in rapidly changing environments where job responsibilities may evolve.
Data Analytics	Leverage data analytics to track the effectiveness of training programmes. Analyzing performance metrics and employee feedback can help identify areas that need attention and modification.
Future Skills Focus	Prioritize training on skills that are likely to be in demand in the future. This proactive approach ensures that employees are equipped with the skills needed for upcoming changes in the work environment.
Leadership Development	Include leadership and soft skills training to prepare employees for evolving leadership roles. This is essential for those who may be tasked with leading teams through changes

Table 4 indicates that staying relevant and up to date in a fast-changing work environment requires a proactive and flexible approach to training. The W&R SETA and employers should invest in resources and strategies that allow for continuous adaptation to industry changes and the evolving needs of beneficiaries and workforce. In addition, having a training program that is relevant and up to date is essential for companies to remain competitive, retain employees, increase productivity, and adapt to change. Therefore, companies should invest in creating and maintaining effective training programmes that meet the needs of their workforce. According to the W&R SETA Report (2021), to improving and keeping up to date training program, the following should be considered:

- The development of partnerships between Higher Education Institutions and employers could be seen as a critical factor to improve the relevance of education and facilitating access to education and learning.
- Employers, students, and W&RSETA are viewed as key players in the success of work-based learning.
- Students should use training program as a stepping stone towards attaining skills and qualifications to go and use in other sectors.
- Training program should produce graduates who are proactive, and can use higher level skills including 'analysis, critique, synthesis and multi layered communication to facilitate innovative teamwork in catalysing the transformation of their organization.
- Training program should produce graduates who have technical and discipline competences from their degrees and can adapt to the workplace culture, use their abilities and skills to evolve the organisation and participate in innovative teamwork. Employers also value critical thinking as this is required for innovation and anticipating and leading change, etc.

6.3.2 Quality of training

According to (ILO, 2010), a great effort is required to make sure that skills development systems deliver both the quantity and the quality of training needed. Therefore, in order to evaluating or ensuring the quality of training program provided by the W&R SETA, three important questions will inform the study, including:

- How effective is the training in equipping beneficiaries with the necessary skills for employment or entrepreneurship?
- Are the trainers experienced and competent?
- Are the training materials up-to-date, and are they delivered in a way that is easy to understand?

6.3.2.1. *How effective is the training in equipping beneficiaries with the necessary skills for employment or entrepreneurship?*

According to Simplilearn (2023), many studies show that companies that have dedicated employee training and development programmes see not only a sharp increase in profits but also a high level of staff retention, which is vital for sustained business growth. Employee training is worth the investment because replacing talents is far more expensive than retaining existing ones. As markets continue to evolve, and business environments increasingly become competitive, more and more companies realize that employee training is essential to an organization. Therefore, employee training is no longer a proposition reserved only for C-Suite professionals, but rather, it is an overall growth engine that drives business success. Simplilearn (2023) emphasised that the biggest asset of any business is its employees.

Successful organizations are aware of this, and they know how important it is to invest in talent. However, the effectiveness of training in equipping beneficiaries with the necessary skills for employment or entrepreneurship can vary greatly depending on various factors. According to Genesis Analytics (2017), training effectiveness is the extent to which the training is meeting its objectives and identifies the constraints to achieving these. Once again, this study will determine whether the training program offered by the W&R SETA is effective in equipping beneficiaries with the necessary skills for employment or entrepreneurship. Table 4 Provides factors that determine the effectiveness of training program in equipping beneficiaries with the necessary skills for employment or entrepreneurship.

Table 4 factors that determine the effectiveness of training program in equipping beneficiaries with the necessary skills for employment or entrepreneurship

Factors that determine the effectiveness of training programmes	Description of the relevance of Factors that determine the effectiveness of training programmes.
Relevance of skills training program	The training should focus on teaching skills that are in demand in the job market or are essential for starting a successful business. If the training is aligned with the needs of the industry or market, it is more likely to equip beneficiaries with the necessary skills. The training should be aligned with the current demands of the job market or the specific needs of the industry. Outdated or irrelevant skills may not contribute effectively to employability or entrepreneurship.
Quality of training	The quality of training provided is crucial for its effectiveness. Well-designed programmes with experienced trainers, practical hands-on learning opportunities, and up-to-date curriculum are more likely to effectively equip beneficiaries with skills. The quality of training materials, instructors, and delivery methods play a crucial role. A well-structured and engaging training program is more likely to be effective.
Duration and intensity of training	The duration and intensity of training can influence its effectiveness. Longer and more intensive training programmes generally provide more time for beneficiaries to acquire and master skills.
Practical application and internships	Training programmes that include practical application opportunities, internships, or on-the-job training can significantly enhance the effectiveness of the training by allowing beneficiaries to practice and apply their learned skills in real-world settings. Programmes that incorporate hands-on experience or practical application of relevant skills and knowledge tend to be more effective. Practical training allows beneficiaries to further enhancing their proficiency within the sector and directly apply what they learn in real-world scenarios.
Follow-up support	The provision of follow-up support, such as mentoring, job placement assistance, or business incubation, can help beneficiaries further develop their skills and successfully enter the job market or launch their ventures. Structured purpose-driven support after the completion of training, such as job placement assistance or guidance for starting a business, can contribute to the long-term success of beneficiaries.
Individual circumstances and aptitude	The effectiveness of training can also depend on individual circumstances and aptitude. Factors such as educational background, prior work experience, personal motivation, and learning ability can influence how effectively beneficiaries acquire and utilize the skills taught during training.
Industry Collaboration	Partnerships with industries or businesses can enhance the effectiveness of training programmes. This collaboration can provide insights into current industry needs and create opportunities for internships or job placements.
Soft Skills Development	In addition to technical skills, the development of soft skills such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and adaptability is essential for success in both employment and entrepreneurship.

Monitoring and Evaluation	Regular monitoring and evaluation of the training programmes' outcomes are necessary to identify strengths and weaknesses. This feedback loop allows for adjustments and improvements.
Support Services	Access to support services such as mentorship, counselling, and job placement assistance can significantly enhance the effectiveness of training programmes.
Customization	Tailoring training programmes to the specific needs and backgrounds of the beneficiaries can increase their relevance and effectiveness.
Economic Conditions	The overall economic conditions and job market trends in the region can impact the effectiveness of training programmes. A program that addresses the current economic landscape is more likely to yield positive outcomes.

By considering factors that determine the effectiveness of training programmes in Table 4, it is significant to understand that in order to assess the overall effectiveness of training programmes, it is imperative to evaluate the employment or business success rates of the beneficiaries after completing the training, as well as their level of satisfaction with the acquired skills. Continuous monitoring and evaluation of training programmes can help identify areas of improvement and ensure that the training is effectively equipping beneficiaries with the necessary skills for employment or entrepreneurship. It's also important to note that the effectiveness of training programmes is often multifaceted, and success may be measured not only by immediate employment but also by the long-term sustainability of the skills acquired. Regular evaluations and adjustments to training programmes based on feedback and outcomes are critical for ensuring ongoing effectiveness.

6.3.2.2. *Are the trainers experienced and competent?*

Earlier it was indicated that a great effort is required to make sure that skills development systems deliver both the quantity and the quality of training needed (ILO, 2010). This entails in the first instance an adequate supply of qualified teachers, trainers, directors of training institutions, and master craftsperson to take on apprentices; the provision of opportunities for them to periodically upgrade their own skills; and conditions of work comparable with those in industry so as to attract the most talented staff. Well-staffed and adequately funded training institutions are essential to skills development strategies and policies.

Periodic reviews may be necessary to assess their effectiveness in meeting their goals and their efficiency in using scarce resources. Existing training infrastructure needs constant innovation to keep up with new technologies and learning methods. In addition, ILO (20110) emphasised that flexibility and agility are vital to ensure that institutions remain able to respond to the evolving challenges posed by dynamic labour markets. Training institutions must have the capacity to periodically adapt curricula and update teachers' and trainers' skills to the changing needs of the world of work. Good-quality training outcomes further depend on maintaining a high quality of training contents, methods, facilities, and materials. Skills standards should be set and tested by involving stakeholders in the process.

Flexible workplace training and learning critically depends on a strong integration between education, training, and work. A skills-based qualification system can accommodate multiple pathways through education, and between education and work. Workplace training allows students not only to learn the technical skills related to a particular job, but also to develop soft skills, such as communication, ICT, teamwork, problem-solving and the ability to learn, that are ever more critical in changing market environments. Thus, the evidence to indicate whether of trainers are experienced and competent will determined the empirical study. But Table 6 presents some factors that can contribute to trainers' experience and competence are the following:

Table 5 Factors that can contribute to trainers' experience and competence.

Factors that can contribute to trainers' experience and competence	Description of factors that can contribute to trainers' experience and competence
Education and certification/qualification	Trainers with a formal education or certification in their specific field have the knowledge and understanding of the subject matter, techniques, and best practices necessary to effectively train others. A solid educational background in the relevant field is essential. Trainers often have degrees or certifications in education, instructional design, or the subject matter they are teaching.
Years of experience	The more experience a trainer has in their field, the more likely they are to have encountered a range of challenges and situations that contribute to their competence. Experience allows trainers to better understand the needs and expectations of their trainees and develop strategies to address them effectively. Practical experience in the field being taught adds credibility to a trainer's expertise. Real-world examples and case studies enhance the learning experience for participants.

Continuous learning	Trainers who actively seek out opportunities for professional development, such as attending workshops, conferences, or additional courses, are more likely to stay updated with the latest trends and advancements in their field. Continuous learning helps trainers adapt their techniques and approaches to better meet the needs of their trainees. Trainers who engage in continuous learning and stay updated on industry trends are better equipped to provide relevant and up-to-date information to participants.
Communication skills	Effective trainers have excellent communication skills, both verbal and nonverbal. They can convey information clearly and concisely, actively listen to their trainees, and adapt their communication style based on individual learning styles. Effective communication is a fundamental skill for trainers. This includes not only clear verbal communication but also the ability to listen actively, facilitate discussions, and adjust communication styles to the needs of different learners.
Empathy and patience	Trainers need to be able to empathize with their trainees and understand their unique challenges and learning difficulties. They should be patient, supportive, and encouraging, creating a safe and comfortable learning environment where trainees feel comfortable asking questions and seeking clarification.
Flexibility and adaptability	Every training session is unique, and trainers must be able to adapt their plans and approaches based on trainee feedback, changing circumstances, or unexpected challenges. Flexibility allows trainers to modify their techniques and exercises to meet the specific needs and learning styles of their trainees. The ability to adapt training methods to different learning styles and diverse audiences is crucial. Trainers should be flexible and capable of modifying their approach based on the needs of participants.
Feedback and evaluation	Competent trainers regularly seek feedback from their trainees and evaluate the effectiveness of their training sessions. They use this feedback to improve their content, delivery methods, and overall approach to training. Competent trainers actively seek feedback from participants and use it to improve their training methods. Continuous self-reflection is an essential aspect of professional development.
Industry knowledge	Trainers with a deep understanding of the industry in which they operate are more likely to be effective. They can provide practical examples and real-life scenarios to enhance trainee understanding, relate the training content to industry-specific challenges, and stay informed about the latest industry standards and practices.
Technology proficiency	In today's digital age, trainers who are proficient in utilizing technology tools and platforms for training and communication are more likely to be competent. They can leverage various online resources, interactive software, and e-learning platforms to deliver engaging and interactive training experiences. In today's digital age, trainers should be familiar with relevant technologies and tools that enhance the learning experience, such as learning management systems, multimedia resources, and virtual collaboration platforms.
Passion and enthusiasm	Passionate trainers who genuinely enjoy what they do are more likely to be effective in their roles. Their enthusiasm can inspire and motivate trainees to actively engage in the learning process and apply the acquired knowledge and skills in their professional lives. A genuine passion for helping others learn and grow is a key factor. Enthusiastic trainers often inspire and motivate participants, creating a positive learning experience.

Instructional Design Skills	Competent trainers understand how to design effective learning materials and activities. They can create structured and engaging training programmes that facilitate understanding and retention.
Subject Matter Expertise	In-depth knowledge of the subject matter being taught is essential for trainers. This expertise allows them to answer questions, provide insights, and guide participants effectively.
Interpersonal Skills	Building a positive and respectful rapport with learners fosters a conducive learning environment. Trainers with strong interpersonal skills can create a safe space for participants to ask questions and share experiences.
Assessment and Evaluation Skills	Competent trainers know how to assess participant understanding and adjust their teaching methods accordingly. They can also design assessments to measure the effectiveness of the training program.
Problem-Solving Skills	Trainers encounter various challenges during sessions. The ability to identify issues and implement solutions on the spot contributes to their overall competence.
Ethical Conduct	Trainers must uphold ethical standards in their profession, respecting diversity, maintaining confidentiality, and ensuring fairness in their interactions with learners.

Considering the factors illustrated in Table 5, it is essential to understand that the combination of these factors could contribute to a trainer's overall experience and competence, which ultimately may impact the effectiveness of the learning experiences they facilitate.

6.3.2.3. *Are the training materials up-to-date, and are they delivered in a way that is easy to understand?*

To this question, the empirical study will provide clarification if the training materials used by the W&R SETA are up to date. But it is essential to admit that training materials should be time to times reviewed and updated in line with the industry's demand, and because of disruptive innovation and technological advancements that are changing the work environment. According to the ILO (2010), training materials should be updated to be able to anticipate skills needs and to align training provision with changing needs in the labour market. This applies to change in the types and levels of skills needed as well as in occupational and technical areas. Currently, in various industries or sectors of the economy, demand is growing for non-routine analytical skills involving creativity, problem-solving, communication, teamwork, and entrepreneurship – all skills that help workers to maintain their employability and

enterprises their resilience in the face of change. Conversely, demand is decreasing for more routine skills in functions subject to automation, digitization, and outsourcing. In this era of innovative technology, a number of methods are used to forecast future skills needs. These include forecasting occupational and skills profiles at various levels of disaggregation; social dialogue; labour market information systems and employment services; and analysis of the performance of training institutions, including tracer studies. In today work environment, “New Skills for New Jobs” initiative is the focus on forecasting future skills needs. Therefore, training materials up-to-date should be related to the work that include forecasting supply and demand for skills levels, forecasting systems, and producing skills needs assessments in sectors (ILO, 2010).

6.3.4 Suitability of training methodologies

This section examines the suitability of training methodologies employed by the W&R SETA in terms of providing training and development programmes to beneficiaries with necessary skills for employment or entrepreneurship. Two important questions need to be asked to indicate whether or not training methodologies employed by the W&R SETA are suitable. These include:

- Is the training methodology used by the W&R SETA appropriate for beneficiaries?
- Do the training programmes cater to different learning styles and the needs of diverse beneficiaries, including those from disadvantaged communities or special needs individuals?

The suitability of training methodologies can be observed when beneficiaries are able to witness the benefits of (employee) training and development. Table 6 presents the benefits of employees training and development (Simplilearn, 2023).

Table 6 Benefits of employees' training and development

Benefits of employees' training and development	Description of benefits of employees' training and development
Higher Capacity for the Adoption of New Methods and Technologies	The advantages of employee training and development for an organization can be tremendous, especially when it comes to adopting new technologies, processes, and models. However, in today's ever-changing business landscape, one-off employee training is not enough. To reap the full benefits of employee training and development, organizations need to upskill the workforce consistently. This enables employees to quickly adopt the latest technological developments, which they can use to speed up innovations in processes and products.
Employee Training and Development Helps Companies Keep Pace with Changes in the Industry	Modern companies need to develop continuously, which is why training is essential for employees. The importance of employee training is paramount, particularly when you are trying to keep up with industry changes, rules, and regulations. Having up-to-date knowledge about the industry will help employee stay ahead of the competition.
Employee Training and Development Increase Job Satisfaction and Morale	There are many advantages of training and development for an organization, but the benefits of employee training and development also impact employee career growth as well. When employees sense that their employer is helping them to improve their skills and knowledge base, they feel motivated, and this increases their job satisfaction and morale.
Lower Employee Turnover	Getting an opportunity to learn new skills and gain knowledge is why training is important for employees. Still, for an organization, employee training is worth the investment because it translates into decreased employee turnover. Continuous employee training and development, experts agree, is the key to retaining skilled employees, which saves thousands of financial resources.
The Ability to Attract High-Calibre Talent Is One of the Prime Advantages of Training and Development for an Organization	An organization that prioritizes employee training and development sets a benchmark, which draws in top-level talent. According to various surveys, job seekers consider employee training and development as a major benefit. From a company's viewpoint, retaining a skilled workforce and attracting quality talent are the two main advantages of employee training and development.
Employee Training and Development Helps Maintain Skill and Knowledge	Every skill requires regular practice. Otherwise, mastery over it is lost. Periodic employee training programmes serve as refresher courses for employees, which not only helps them sharpen the skills they have already learned, but it also enables the organization to maintain a high level of skill and knowledge.
Employee Training Gives Your Company the Much-needed Competitive Edge	In the present-day business environment, innovations, industry trends, and technologies are always changing. In this scenario, to stay ahead of competitors, one must recognize the importance of training employees. When the organisation has robust employee training and development programmes in place, employees will better adapt to the changes, giving the organization the much-needed competitive advantage.
Employee Training and Development Create Scope for Internal Promotions	The advantages of training and development for an organization are varied. One of the major benefits of training to employers is that employee training helps fill internal promotion positions. This is a cost-effective solution, as hiring new talent is an expensive affair. Plus, your existing employees are well acquainted with the organization's operations and work culture, so they can start working instantly.

Source: adapted form Simplilearn (2023).

Table 6 shows the benefits of employees' training and development within an organisation. For example, one of the major benefits of training to employers is that employee training helps fill internal promotion positions. This is a cost-effective solution, as hiring new talent is an expensive affair. In addition, existing employees are well acquainted with the organization's operations and work culture, so they can start working instantly. According to Simplilearn (2023), the importance of employee training may vary according to specific areas and functions. Some factors that may lead an organisation to decide when employees need training or development include the following (Simplilearn, 2023):

- When the organization faces a knowledge or talent gap.
- When there is need for performance improvements in certain areas or functions.
- When there is a requirement to address specific skill gaps.
- When the company needs to train employees in specific programmes.
- When the organization is undergoing technological updates. And
- When there is need to tailor personalized strategies for each employee.

Considering the aforementioned, the question that needs to be asked is to understand if the training methodology used by an organisation such as the W&R SETA is appropriate for all beneficiaries who were enrolled in the training program. The section that follows examines the methodology used by the W&R SETA to train beneficiaries.

6.3.4.1. *Is the training methodology used by w&r seta appropriate for all the beneficiaries?*

The interaction with the industry during data collection will facilitate to determine whether the training methodology used by W&R SETA is appropriate for all the beneficiaries. In other words, it may sound difficult to determine whether the training methodology used by the W&R SETA is appropriate for all beneficiaries without further information on the specific methodology being used and the diverse needs and backgrounds of the beneficiaries. It is important for the training methodology to take into consideration the individual learning styles, capabilities, and objectives of the beneficiaries.

Additionally, the methodology should be adaptable and flexible to meet diverse needs and promote inclusivity. According to Simplilearn (2023), there are several methods and approaches to employee training and development. The choice of method depends on various factors such as the nature of the training content, the learning objectives, the target audience, and the available resources. In addition, to determine whether the training methodology used by W&R SETA is appropriate for all beneficiaries, one would need to consider several factors that include (Simplilearn, 2023):

- **Diversity of Beneficiaries:** Assess the diversity of the beneficiaries, including their educational backgrounds, skill levels, and learning preferences. A training program that caters to a diverse audience is generally more effective.
- **Learning Styles:** People have different learning styles (e.g., visual, auditory, kinesthetic). A good training methodology should take these variations into account to accommodate a broader range of learners and ensure that the training is impactful.
- **Accessibility:** Ensure that the training methodology is accessible to all beneficiaries, including those with disabilities. Consider factors such as the availability of assistive technologies and materials.
- **Relevance to Industry Needs:** Verify that the training content aligns with the current and future needs of the wholesale and retail industry. Relevant and up-to-date content increases the program's effectiveness.
- **Feedback and Evaluation:** Gather feedback from beneficiaries who have undergone (or currently going through) the training. Assess the effectiveness of the methodology through surveys, assessments, and other evaluation methods.
- **Adaptability:** The training methodology should be adaptable to changing circumstances and evolving industry requirements. It should allow for updates and improvements based on feedback and industry trends.
- **Inclusivity:** Ensure that the training methodology promotes inclusivity and does not inadvertently exclude any group of beneficiaries.
- **Continuous Improvement:** A good training program should have mechanisms for continuous improvement. Regularly review the methodology based on outcomes, feedback, and changes in the industry landscape.

In light of the above, the empirical study will assist to get most accurate and current information about W&R SETA's training methodology and its appropriateness for beneficiaries. The study will be reaching out directly to contacting individuals involved in the program, including beneficiaries who have undergone the training will provide valuable insights into their experiences. According to Simplilearn (2023), some common methods used for employee training and development include:

- **Instructor-Led Training (ILT):** This traditional method involves a trainer or subject matter expert delivering training sessions in a classroom or workshop setting. It allows for direct interaction between the trainer and participants, facilitating immediate feedback and clarification of concepts. ILT can be conducted in-person or through virtual classrooms using video conferencing tools.
- **On-the-Job Training (OJT):** OJT involves training employees while they perform their regular job tasks. It can be structured or informal, with experienced employees or supervisors providing guidance and coaching to the trainee. OJT is practical and hands-on, allowing employees to learn by doing and acquire skills directly relevant to their roles.
- **E-Learning:** E-Learning refers to training delivered through digital platforms, such as online courses, modules, or interactive multimedia. It offers flexibility in terms of time and location, allowing employees to learn at their own pace. E-Learning can include a variety of formats like videos, webinars, simulations, and online assessments. It is often cost-effective and scalable, especially for organizations with remote or geographically dispersed employees.
- **Mobile Learning:** With the widespread use of smartphones and tablets, mobile learning has gained popularity. It involves delivering training content through mobile devices, allowing employees to access learning materials anytime, anywhere. Mobile learning can include mobile apps, microlearning modules, podcasts, or even SMS-based training.
- **Blended Learning:** Blended learning combines multiple training methods to create a comprehensive learning experience. It combines elements of ILT, e-learning, and other methods to provide a mix of instructor-led sessions, online modules, virtual simulations, group discussions, and self-paced learning. Blended learning maximizes the benefits of different modalities while accommodating various learning styles and preferences.

- **Mentoring and Coaching:** Mentoring and coaching involve pairing less-experienced employees with experienced professionals who provide guidance, support, and feedback. Mentoring relationships focus on long-term career development and personal growth, while coaching typically targets specific skill enhancement or performance improvement. These methods facilitate knowledge transfer, skill development, and career advancement within the organization.
- **Gamification:** Gamification integrates game elements, such as competition, rewards, and challenges, into the learning process. It makes training more engaging and interactive, motivating employees to participate and progress. Gamification can be applied to various training formats, such as e-learning modules or simulations, to enhance learner engagement and knowledge retention.
- **Workshops and Seminars:** Workshops and seminars involve group training sessions conducted by experts or industry professionals. These sessions focus on specific topics or skills and often include presentations, discussions, case studies, and group activities. Workshops and seminars allow for networking, sharing best practices, and gaining insights from external experts.

6.3.4.2. *Do the training programmes cater to different learning styles and the needs of diverse beneficiaries, including those from disadvantaged communities or special needs individuals?*

In other words, this question can be asked in this way: Do the training programmes provided to beneficiaries achieve its objective, including beneficiaries from disadvantage communities or special needs individuals? One more time, this question will be examined through empirical study and via interaction with industry, institutions, and beneficiaries. But it is essential to understand that the effectiveness of training programmes in catering to different learning styles and the needs of diverse beneficiaries, including those from disadvantaged communities or individuals with special needs, depends on the design and implementation of the programmes. Ideally, inclusive, and accessible training programmes should consider various factors to ensure they meet the diverse needs of participants. Table 7 illustrates potential ways the training programmes provided to beneficiaries can achieve its objective.

Table 7 Ways the training programmes provided to beneficiaries can achieve its objectives.

Ways the training programmes provided to beneficiaries can achieve its objective	Description of the provision of Ways the training programmes provided to beneficiaries can achieve its objective
Multiple learning modalities	Training programmes can incorporate a mix of visual, auditory, and kinesthetics elements to accommodate different learning styles. This could include a combination of presentations, videos, interactive exercises, and hands-on activities. Allow for flexible learning paths so that participants can progress at their own pace and receive additional support as needed.
Individualized learning	Personalized learning pathways can be created to meet the specific needs of participants. This can involve pre-assessments to identify knowledge gaps or strengths and then tailoring the training accordingly.
Clear instructions and accessibility	Training materials should provide clear instructions and be easily accessible to all participants, regardless of their background or abilities. This could include offering materials in multiple languages and ensuring content is compatible with screen readers or other assistive technologies. Physical Accessibility: Ensure that physical spaces and materials are accessible to individuals with disabilities. This includes considerations for wheelchair accessibility,
Digital Accessibility	If the training involves digital content, ensure that it is accessible to individuals with visual or hearing impairments. This may involve providing alternative formats, captions, or screen reader compatibility.
Collaborative and inclusive approaches	Encouraging collaboration and group work within the training can foster a sense of community, provide social support, and allow participants to learn from each other's diverse perspectives and experiences.
Culturally relevant content or Cultural Sensitivity	Training programmes should aim to include culturally relevant examples, case studies, or scenarios that resonate with participants from different backgrounds. This helps ensure the content is relatable and meaningful to all learners. Culturally Relevant Content: Ensure that training materials and examples are culturally sensitive and relevant to the diverse backgrounds of the participants.
Supportive environment	It is important to create a supportive and inclusive learning environment. This includes fostering a non-judgmental atmosphere, providing additional support if needed, and promoting diversity and inclusivity in all aspects of the training program. Individualized Support: Provide individualized support for participants who may need additional assistance due to learning disabilities or other challenges.
Learning Styles	Incorporate a variety of teaching methods to accommodate different learning styles, such as visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, and reading/writing preferences.
Interactive Learning	Include opportunities for hands-on activities, group discussions, and practical applications to engage participants with diverse learning preferences.
Inclusive Language	Use language that is inclusive and respectful of different cultures, avoiding stereotypes or biases.

Community Engagement	Engage with local communities and stakeholders to understand specific needs and challenges and incorporate community feedback into the program design.
Collaboration with Support Organizations	Partner with organizations that specialize in supporting individuals with disabilities or from disadvantaged communities to ensure that the training is inclusive.
Inclusive Assessment	Diverse Assessment Methods: Use a variety of assessment methods that accommodate different abilities and skills, such as project-based assessments, oral presentations, and written assignments.
Feedback Mechanisms	Continuous Improvement: Establish feedback mechanisms to continuously improve the training program based on the experiences and suggestions of participants.

According to Table 7, effective training programmes should be designed with a focus on inclusivity, considering the diverse needs and backgrounds of beneficiaries (participants). This requires a thoughtful and adaptive approach to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to benefit from the training. Overall, by incorporating these strategies, training programmes can better cater to different learning styles and the needs of diverse beneficiaries, including those from disadvantaged communities or special needs individuals.

6.3.5 Absorption rates

6.3.5.1. *Are the absorption rates high enough to demonstrate the effectiveness of the training programmes?*

To this question, the empirical study will provide elements of responses after interaction with employers, institutions, and beneficiaries. Generally, high placement rates indicate that a significant number of graduates are being successfully placed in jobs related to their training. Furthermore, the effectiveness of training programmes and their placement rates can vary widely depending on the institution, the specific program, and the industry in question. High placement rates can be a positive indicator of the effectiveness of a training program, but they should be considered alongside other factors. However, other factors such as the reputation of the training provider, industry demand, individual skill sets, and economic conditions may also influence these rates.

It's important to consider placement rates alongside other measures of training effectiveness, such as alumni satisfaction, employer feedback, and career progression of beneficiaries (graduates). Table 8 illustrates factors that could contribute to beneficiaries' placement rates.

Table 8 Factors that could contribute to beneficiaries' placement High rates.

Factors that could contribute to beneficiaries' placement High rates.	Description of the provision of factors that could contribute to beneficiaries' placement High rates.
Program Accreditation	Accredited programmes often adhere to certain quality standards, which can be an indicator of program effectiveness.
Industry Reputation	The reputation of the training program within the industry can be important. Employers may prefer candidates from programmes with a strong reputation for producing skilled and knowledgeable graduates.
Alumni Success Stories	Success stories of alumni who have gone on to have successful careers in their chosen field can provide insights into the effectiveness of the training.
Curriculum and Hands-On Experience	A well-designed curriculum that includes practical, hands-on experience can contribute to the effectiveness of a training program.
Industry Connections	Programmes that have strong connections with industry professionals, companies, or organizations may offer better opportunities for networking and job placement.
Post-Graduation Support	Programmes that provide support and resources to graduates in their job search, such as career counselling, job fairs, or placement services, may contribute to higher placement rates.

Table 8 shows that it's essential to consider multiple sources of information when evaluating the effectiveness of a training program. Additionally, talking to current beneficiaries under study, industry professionals, institutions and beneficiaries will provide valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of a particular program.

6.3.6 Beneficiary satisfaction

6.3.6.1 *Specific what do the beneficiaries themselves think about the training programmes offered by w&r seta?*

information about the opinions of beneficiaries regarding training programmes offered by the W&R SETA will be examined during the interaction with them. However, public opinions on training programmes can vary widely depending on individual experiences, the specific courses or programmes involved, and the goals of the participants. Thus, reaching out directly to current or former participants and industry stakeholders could provide valuable insights into the effectiveness and impact of the training programmes.

6.3.6.2 *Are they satisfied with the quality and relevance of the training? do they feel adequately prepared for employment or entrepreneurship after completion of the program?*

Beneficiaries will be able to witness and testify about their degree of satisfaction regarding the quality and relevance of the training obtained as well as their feeling about the preparedness for employment and entrepreneurship after completing the program. According to (Gray and DiLoreto, 2016), some factors that may influence satisfaction include the individual's expectations, prior knowledge, or experience, learning style, and the specific program or training provider. In addition, the satisfaction of beneficiaries in a training program depends on various factors, including the quality of instruction, relevance of the curriculum, support services, and the alignment of the program with their career goals. Regarding feeling adequately prepared for employment or entrepreneurship, this can also vary from person to person. Some individuals may feel well-prepared and confident in their skills and knowledge after completing a program, while others may still feel they need further development or support.

To get accurate and up-to-date information on how satisfied individuals are with the training and if they feel adequately prepared for employment or entrepreneurship, it would be best to seek feedback or reviews from beneficiaries who have completed the specific training program. Furthermore, to obtain up-to-date and specific information about the satisfaction and preparedness of individuals who have completed a particular program, the study will refer to recent reviews, testimonials, or surveys from program graduates. Thus, the satisfaction and preparedness of individuals can be subjective and may vary from person to person. By evaluating all these aspects, the effectiveness of the W&R SETA training and development programmes in providing beneficiaries with necessary skills for employment or entrepreneurship can be determined.

6.4 SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY BENEFICIARIES IN RELATION TO ACCESSING AND SECURING EMPLOYMENT WITHIN THE SECTOR.

6.4.1 Successes

According to the European innovation Council (EIC, 2021) and the AI Chatbot successes experienced by beneficiaries in relation to accessing and securing employment within the sector may include the following:

- **Increased skills:** Beneficiaries who completed the W&R SETA programmes have gained valuable skills, experience and knowledge required for the sector. This has improved their chances of gaining employment within the sector.
- **Networking opportunities:** Through the programmes, beneficiaries were able to interact and engage with employers and industry experts, providing them with networking opportunities which could potentially lead to employment.
- **Employment referrals:** Some beneficiaries have secured employment through referrals from the W&R SETA programme instructors and mentors.

6.4.2 Challenges

According to the European innovation Council (EIC, 2021) and the AI Chatbot, challenges experienced by beneficiaries in relation to accessing and securing employment within the sector are as follow:

- **Limited job opportunities:** The retail and wholesale sector may not have adequate job openings for all the beneficiaries.
- **Competition:** The high number of job seekers who have completed the W&R SETA programmes creates stiff competition in the job market.
- **Employer preferences:** Some employers may prefer hiring candidates with more experience, making it difficult for those without previous work experience to secure employment.
- **Geographic limitations:** Beneficiaries who live in rural areas may experience challenges in accessing job opportunities in urban areas, where most retail and wholesale employment is concentrated.
- **Lack of resources:** Some beneficiaries may not have access to adequate resources such as computers, internet, and transport, which can limit their ability to search and apply for job opportunities.

6.5 BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY EMPLOYERS IN RELATION TO THE ABSORPTION AND NON-ABSORPTION OF BENEFICIARIES IN THE LABOUR MARKET.

6.5.1 Benefits of Absorbing Beneficiaries in the Labor Market:

El-Ganainy et al, (2021) and AI Chatbot postulate that the benefits experienced by employers concerning the absorption and non-absorption of beneficiaries in the labour market may consist of the following:

- **Access to skilled labour:** Beneficiaries who have received training and education through government programmes can provide employers with a skilled and productive workforce.
- **Increased diversity:** The inclusion of beneficiaries from diverse backgrounds in the labour market can bring unique perspectives and ideas to the workplace, leading to increased creativity and innovation.

- **Positive impact on corporate social responsibility:** Employers that participate in government programmes aimed at employing beneficiaries can demonstrate their commitment to social responsibility and community involvement.
- **Access to government incentives:** Governments may offer incentives to employers who hire beneficiaries, such as tax credits or subsidies, which can lead to cost savings for the employer.
- **Improved public image:** Employers who actively recruit and retain beneficiaries can benefit from positive publicity, enhanced brand reputation, and increased customer loyalty.

6.5.2 Challenges of Absorbing Beneficiaries in the Labor Market:

Wildschut-February and Rogan (2020) and the AI Chatbot submit that the challenges experienced by employers about the absorption and non-absorption of beneficiaries in the labour market may consist of the following:

- **Training costs:** Employers may need to invest resources into training and development programmes for beneficiaries, which can be expensive and time-consuming.
- **Adaptation to workplace culture:** Some beneficiaries may require additional support and accommodations to adapt to the social and cultural norms of the workplace.
- **Limited work experience** Beneficiaries may have limited work experience, making it challenging to assess their skills and potential as an employee.
- **Perceived negative stereotypes:** Some employers may hold negative stereotypes of beneficiaries and be hesitant to hire them, leading to discrimination in the hiring process and reduced employment opportunities.
- **High turnover rates:** Beneficiaries may experience difficulty in maintaining employment due to personal difficulties or lack of support, resulting in high turnover rates for employers.

6.5.3. Challenges of Non-Absorption of Beneficiaries in the Labor Market:

The ILO (2018) and the AI Chatbot indicate that the challenges experienced by employers in relation to the non-absorption of beneficiaries in the labour market may consist of the following:

- **Reduced talent pool:** Employers may limit their pool of potential employees by not hiring beneficiaries, resulting in a less diverse and potentially less skilled workforce.
- **Missed government incentives:** Employers may miss out on government incentives, such as tax credits or subsidies, available for hiring and retaining beneficiaries.
- **Negative public image:** Not hiring beneficiaries can result in negative publicity and reduced brand reputation, particularly if the employer is perceived to be discriminating against marginalized populations.
- **Reduced social responsibility:** Not participating in government programmes aimed at employing beneficiaries can be perceived as a lack of commitment to social responsibility and community involvement.
- **Negative impact on the economy:** High unemployment rates among beneficiaries can have a negative impact on the economy, as these individuals may rely on government assistance programmes rather than contributing to the labour market and paying taxes.

6.6 MODEL TO ENHANCE TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTIONS AND INCREASE EMPLOYABILITY AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP OPPORTUNITIES FOR BENEFICIARIES WITHIN THE SECTOR.

According to the ILO and the World Bank Report (2016), the model below could enhance W&R SETA training and development interventions and increase employability and entrepreneurship opportunities for beneficiaries within the sector.

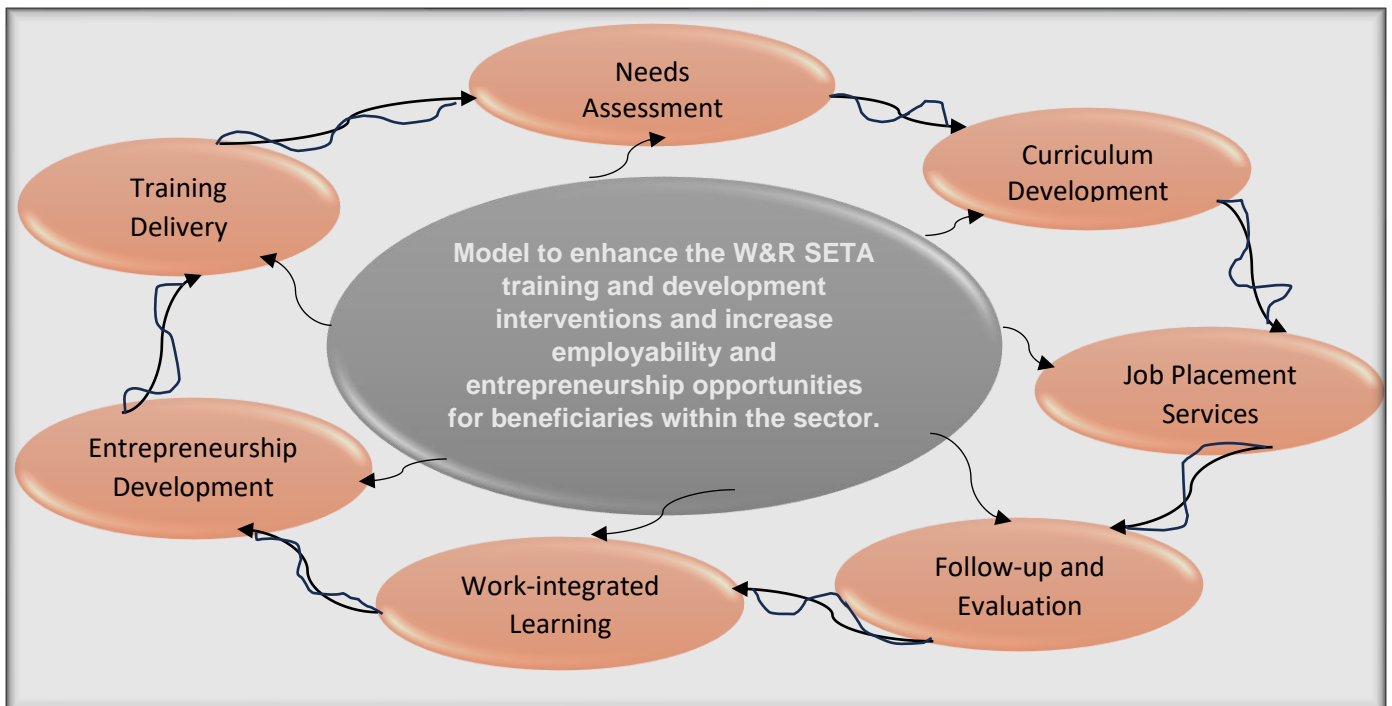


Figure 2 Potential Model to enhance the W&R SETA training and development interventions and increase employability and entrepreneurship opportunities for beneficiaries within the sector.

This model explains the following understanding:

- **Needs Assessment:** Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment to identify the skills gap and training needs within the W&R sector. The assessment should include analysis of industry trends, labour market demands, and the needs of the W&R SETA beneficiaries.

- **Curriculum Development:** Based on the needs assessment, develop tailored training curriculums that address the identified skills gap. The curriculums should be designed to meet specific industry standards and be relevant to the current demands of the labour market.
- **Training Delivery:** Deliver quality training that is accessible to the beneficiaries through blended learning approaches such as face-to-face training, e-learning, and experiential learning. Ensure that training is delivered by competent trainers with relevant industry experience.
- **Work-integrated Learning:** Provide beneficiaries with opportunities for work-integrated learning, such as internships, apprenticeships, and workplace-based training, to strengthen their practical skills and prepare them for the workforce.
- **Entrepreneurship Development:** Offer entrepreneurship development training and support to beneficiaries who aspire to start their own businesses. Provide mentorship, coaching, and access to finance and market linkages to help them establish and grow sustainable businesses.
- **Job Placement Services:** Facilitate job placement opportunities for beneficiaries upon completion of their training and work-integrated learning. Ensure that beneficiaries are placed in jobs that match their skills and interests.
- **Follow-up and Evaluation:** Conduct follow-up and evaluation activities to assess the impact of the training and development interventions on the beneficiaries. Use feedback from beneficiaries, employers, and industry stakeholders to continuously improve the model.

Considering the aforementioned, by attempting to implement this potential model, the W&R SETA could enhance the quality and relevance of its training and development interventions, thus increasing the employability and entrepreneurship opportunities for beneficiaries within the sector.

7. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Saunders et al (2019) postulated that the term research methodology refers to a philosophy, which denotes a system of beliefs and assumptions about the development of knowledge. It refers precisely to what researchers are doing when embarking on research: developing knowledge in a particular field. The knowledge development this study is embarking upon the W&R SETA strategies for navigating digital disruption, fostering innovation, and meeting future skills requirements in the South African Retail Sector. The study is addressing the employment status of funded beneficiaries by the Wholesale and Retail Sector Education and Training Authority (W&R SETA) who were granted skills development and employment opportunities within the wholesale and retail sector.

This research study intends to determine the percentage of beneficiaries who completed the W&R SETA programmes and have successfully gained employment in the sector, identify the percentage of beneficiaries who completed the W&R SETA programmes and remain unemployed, determine the percentage of beneficiaries who completed the W&R SETA programmes and have started their own businesses, assess the effectiveness of W&R SETA training and development programmes in terms of providing beneficiaries with necessary skills for employment or entrepreneurship, determine the successes and challenges experienced by beneficiaries in relation to accessing and securing employment within the sector, examine the benefits and challenges experienced by employers in relation to the absorption and non-absorption of beneficiaries in the labour market, and propose a model that will enhance W&R SETA training and development interventions and increase employability and entrepreneurship opportunities for beneficiaries within the sector.

7.1 Research design

The research philosophy and approaches for this study refer to assumptions about the strategic framework to find plausible solutions for the W&R SETA on receiving maximum benefits and a return on investment on the various funded training interventions through the development of employable and economically active beneficiaries. Therefore, the research Onion framework, focussing on mixed methods was applied in this study in order for data collection and analysis. A Mixed methods approaches consist of the combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches (Noble, 2019).

Mixing approaches was essential for this study as it envisioned to get more viewpoints from employers and beneficiaries upon the variables being studied. Accordingly, mixed methods involve procedures that enable the validation of data from both quantitative and qualitative studies. It assists in confirming assumptions where findings from the qualitative study confirm those from quantitative study (Creswell, 2018). In this study, data are collected by employing mixed instruments, namely a survey questionnaire, Focused groups, and Teams interviews questions. The survey approach provides a numerical description of trends, while the qualitative approach uses thematic analysis. Figure 3 illustrates the Onion mixed methods designs implemented for data collection and analysis. The research onion guided the researchers through all the steps that need to be taken when developing a research methodology.

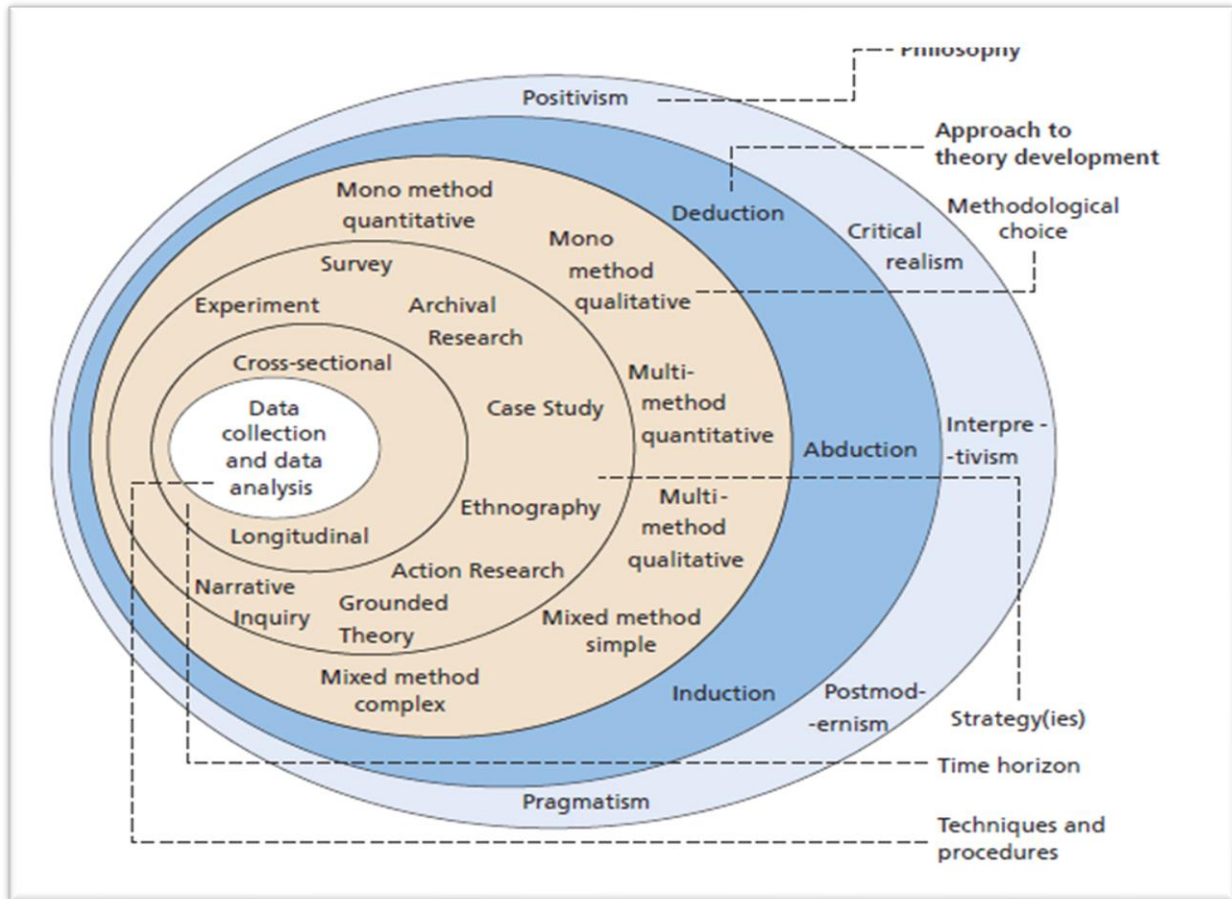


Figure 3 Mixed methods design implemented for data collection and analysis.

Source: Saunders et al. (2019).

According to Saunders, 2019, the research onion is divided into three levels of decisions:

1. Research philosophy and Research approach;
2. Research design which constitutes (a) methodological choices, (b) research strategy and (c) time horizon; and
3. Tactics, i.e., the inner core of the research onion, which includes data collection and analysis aspects.

7.2 Flowchart of qualitative and quantitative approaches.

In agreement with Figure 3, the process of data collection and analysis were applied following the flowchart that reflect both Inductive and deductive approaches for qualitative and quantitative studies. Figures 4 and 5 present the flowchart of qualitative and quantitative approaches.

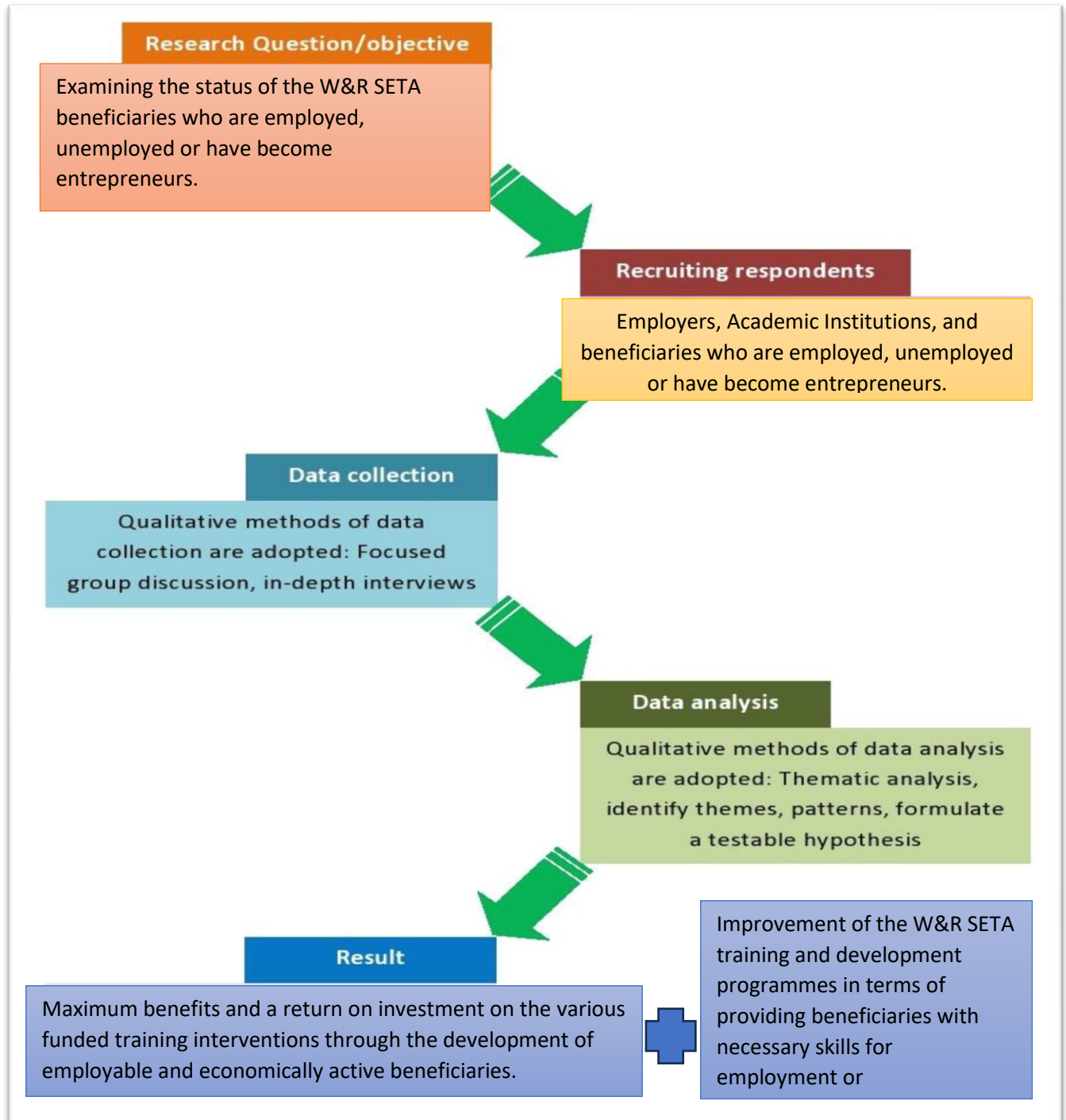


Figure 4 Flowchart (1) of Qualitative Research (Inductive approach to research).

Source: Adapted from Mahesh (2020).

The above flowchart (1) shows the hypothetical process for qualitative data collection and analysis, and the way the results from the study are presented.

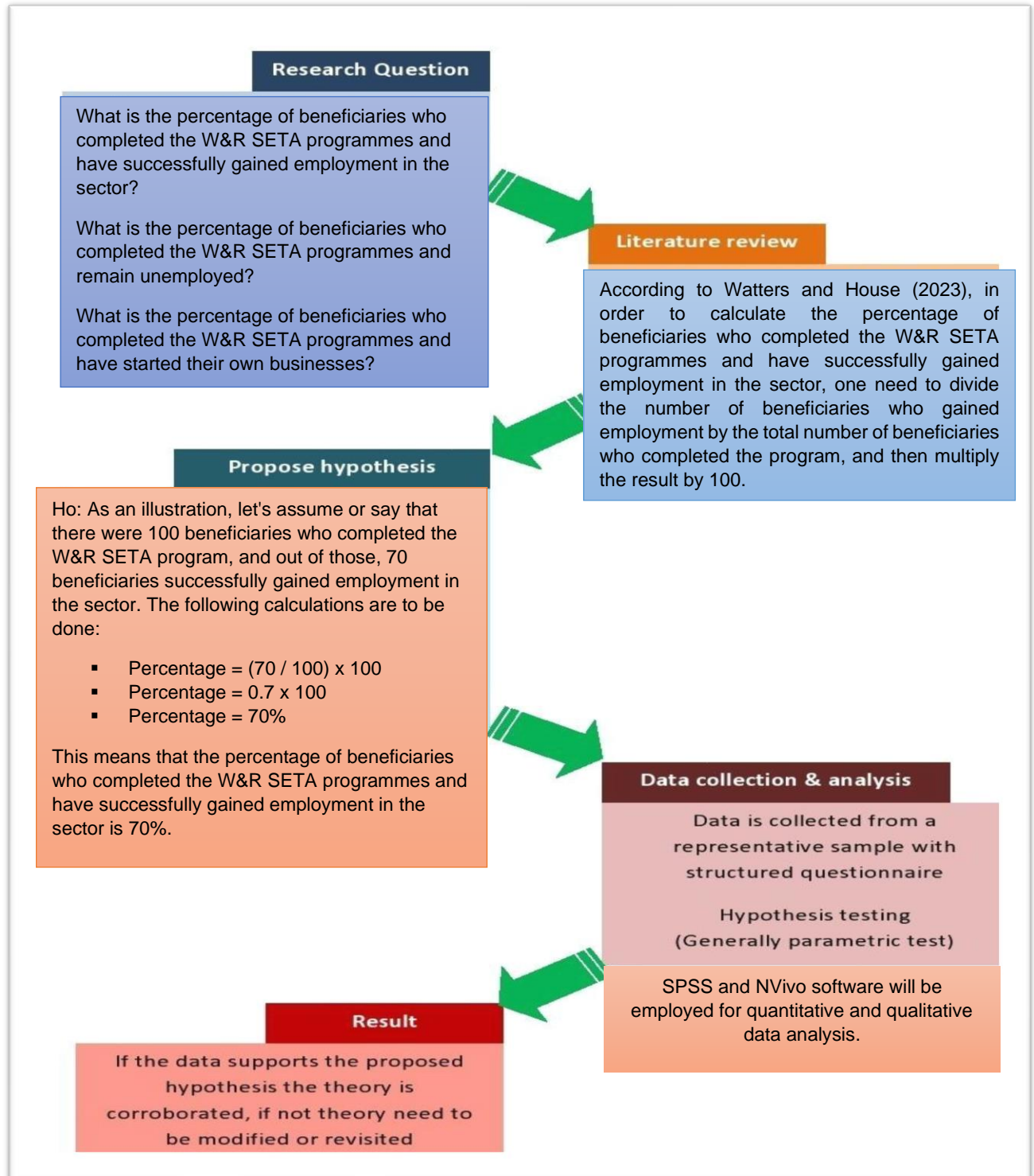


Figure 5 Flowchart (2) of Quantitative Research (Deductive approach to research)

Source: Adapted from Mahesh (2020).

The above 2 flowchart shows the process for quantitative data collection and analysis, and the way the results from the study will be presented, if whether the data supports the proposed hypothesis or not. Discussions and suggestions or recommendations are provided after combining results from both instruments (qualitative and quantitative research questions). The core assumption of mixed methods is that when researchers combine statistical trends (quantitative data) with stories and personal experiences (qualitative data), this collective strength provides a better understanding of the research problem than either form of data alone (Creswell, 2018). The choice of using mixed methods in this study appears to be relevant for the level of interaction between the quantitative and qualitative strands, the relative priority of the strands, the timing of the strands, and the procedures for mixing the strands. A strand is a component of a study that encompasses the basic process of conducting quantitative or qualitative research: posing questions, collecting data, analyzing data, and interpreting results based on that data (Creswell, 2018). Thus, the level of interaction is the extent to which the two strands (quantitative and qualitative) are kept independent or interact with each other.

8. CONCLUSION

The primary goal of this study was to evaluate the employment, unemployment, and entrepreneurial status of W&R SETA beneficiaries and critically track and trace beneficiaries who had received funding from W&R SETA for skills development. Currently, researchers involved in this study are in the process of collecting data, using focus groups and Teams discussions and interviews. The study investigated and assessed how well the W&R SETA programmes work to lower unemployment by offering training programmes that focus on creating and supporting job and business possibilities. In addition, this study intended to generate explanations aligned to employable and economically active beneficiaries in order to establish feasible solutions for the W&R SETA on obtaining maximum benefits and a return on investment on the various financed training interventions. The section that follows provides more details in terms of data analysis, as well as the interpretation of results and recommendations.

9. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

The analysis and interpretation of data discuss aspects related to biographical data, training programme choice and employment opportunities, impact of W&R SETA programme, skills utilisation and development, support and future plans, challenges encountered in accessing and securing employment within the sector after completing the W&R SETA programme, and satisfaction and recommendations.

9.1 BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Biographical data is vital in any study related to W&R SETA-funded beneficiaries programmes, because it provides crucial information about the individuals participating in these programmes. According to Xu (2023) and Wang and Song (2022), in a study, demographic characteristics may include gender, age, years of education, personal health; personal early experiences (childhood, work, study experience), family relations, and previous positions; personal characteristics such as personal interests, attitudes, beliefs and values related to past experiences. For this study, data typically includes demographic information of the W&R SETA-funded unemployed beneficiaries, as well as their employment status.

Researchers were able to assess the efficacy of the W&R SETA programmes through examining the biographical information of the beneficiaries. This allowed them to determine whether the programmes were meeting the employability needs of a particular age group or if any issues needed to be addressed after graduates had completed their training programmes. This suggests that the biographical information helped researchers determine the work status of the beneficiaries after graduates had completed their training. The W&R SETA can increase the efficacy and reach of these initiatives by making well-informed decisions based on the findings related to the employment status of beneficiaries.

9.1.1 Gender

Gender can represent a variety of factors in a study, including social, cultural, biological, and psychological differences between male and female individuals (Huit *et al.*, 2024). It can also indicate the roles and expectations that society assigns to people based on their perceived gender identity. In research, studying gender can help identify disparities, inequalities, and unique experiences that may exist between males, females, and individuals who do not conform to traditional gender norms. Gender representation in studies can provide valuable insights into how gender influences various aspects of life, such as health, education, work, relationships, and social interactions (Smith, 2024). Figure 6 discusses the gender of the W&R SETA-funded unemployed beneficiaries.



Figure 6 Gender

Gender in a study refers to the classification of individuals based on their biological sex, typically male or female. Gender is an important variable in many research studies as it can influence various outcomes and responses. As seen in Figure 6, the findings indicate that there are slightly more female participants (51%) than male participants (49%) in this study. This suggests that the gender distribution is relatively balanced, with a slight overrepresentation of women. These gender findings can have significant implications and play a role in the types of opportunities available to beneficiaries in terms of their employment status, after completing the W&R SETA programme for which they received funding. The sections below will provide information about the gender status of beneficiaries following the completion of the W&R programme.

9.1.2 Age group

According to Bottema-Beutel (2023), in a study, age groups are often categorised into different ranges in order to analyse and compare data. Age groupings are used to help researchers understand how age impacts various outcomes, behaviours, and characteristics being studied. Figure 7 illustrates the age group of funded unemployed beneficiaries who participated in the W&R SETA training programmes.

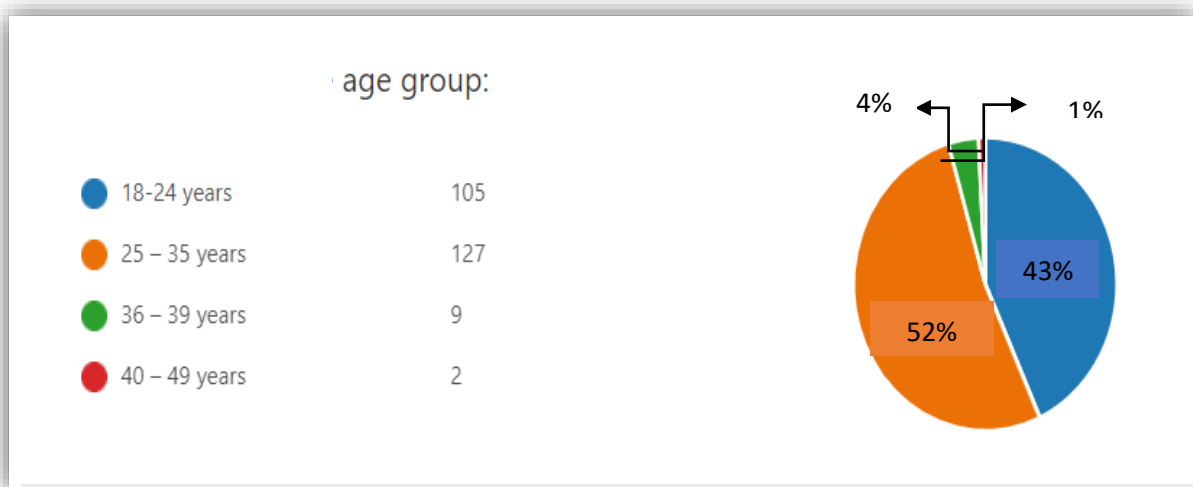


Figure 7 Age group

Respondents' ages were measured on a scale of 18-24, 25-35, 36-39, and 40-49 years. As shown in Figure 7, the age group statistics display that 52% of respondents were between the ages of 25 and 35; 43% were between the ages of 18 and 24; 4% were between the ages of 36 and 39; and only 1% were between 40 and 49. Based on the findings, it can be interpreted that the majority of the respondents (52%) fell within the age group of 25-35 years old. This indicates that this age group was the most represented among the respondents. Additionally, the age group of 18-24 years old also had a significant representation with 43% of the respondents falling within this category. On the other hand, the age groups of 36-39 and 40-49 years old had lower representation, with only 4% and 1% of respondents falling within these categories, respectively. This suggests that respondents in these age groups were less represented in the survey compared to the younger age groups.

In other words, the findings indicate that the majority of the respondents were younger adults in the 18-35 age range, with a smaller percentage of respondents being older adults in the 36-49 age range.

9.1.3 Ethnicity

Ethnicity refers to a person's cultural background, ancestry, or nationality (Baker, 2024). Researchers often consider ethnicity as a variable in studies to understand how it may influence certain outcomes or behaviours. It is important to accurately and respectfully identify and acknowledge the diverse ethnicities of study participants to ensure the validity and reliability of research findings. In this study, as seen in Figure 8, ethnicity of the W&R SETA-funded unemployed beneficiaries included African, Coloured, Indian, White and other.

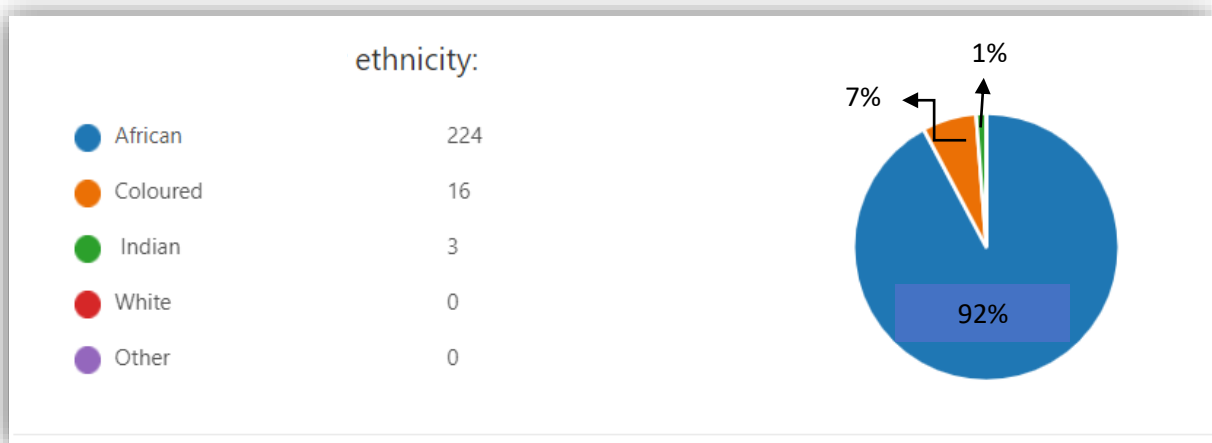


Figure 8 Ethnicity

Figure 8 illustrates the ethnicity of respondents, including African, Coloured, Indian, and White. According to ethnicity statistics, African beneficiaries (92%) are more likely to participate than coloured (7%) and Indians (1%). No White beneficiaries participated in this study. This statistic means that the study on funded unemployed beneficiaries by the W&R SETA had predominantly African participants, with 92% of beneficiaries being African. Coloured participants made up 7% of the beneficiaries, Indians made up 1%, and there were no White beneficiaries in the study.

This suggests that there may be disparities in access to and participation in funded unemployed beneficiaries' programmes within the W&R SETA, with African beneficiaries being more likely to participate compared to other racial groups. Furthermore, the fact that no white beneficiaries participated indicates a lack of representation from this group in the study. This may reflect underlying disparities in access to resources or opportunities for participation among different ethnic groups.

9.1.4 Level of education

In a study, the level of education refers to the highest degree or level of schooling completed by the participants. This can range from no formal education to advanced degrees such as a doctorate or professional degree. Understanding the level of education of study participants is important for interpreting the results and ensuring that the findings apply to the target population (Hong, *et al.*, 2023). Figure 9 displays the level of education of the W&R SETA-funded unemployed beneficiaries who were respondents of this study.

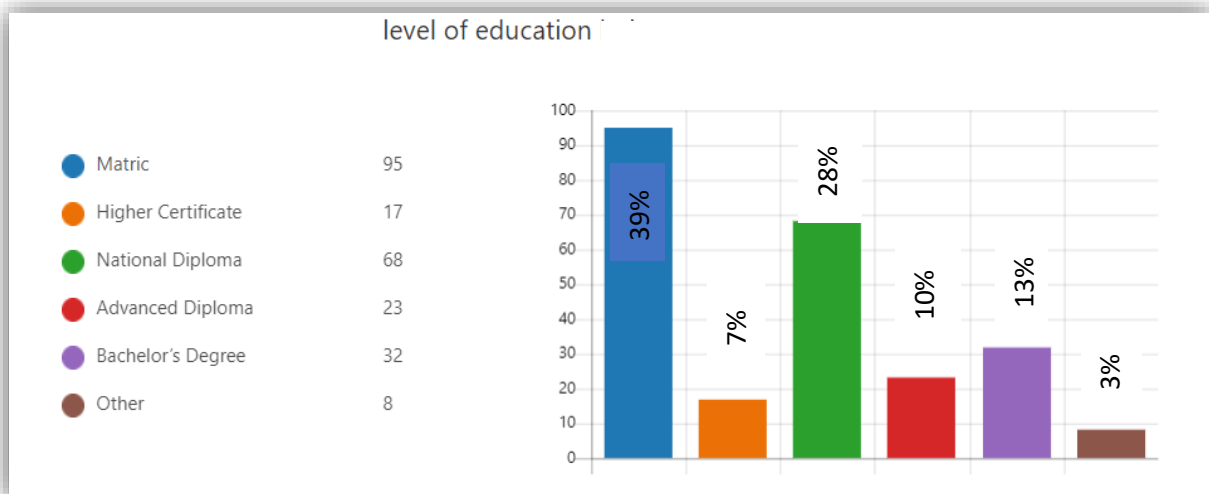


Figure 9 Level of education

This graph depicts the statistical level of education of respondents to this survey. According to the statistical data, 39% of respondents have matriculated, 7% have higher certificates, 28% have national diplomas, 10% have advanced diplomas, 13% have bachelor's degrees, and 3% have other qualifications. These statistics provide

information on the educational background of funded unemployed beneficiaries by the W&R SETA. Therefore, Figure 9 indicates the following:

- 39% of respondents have matriculated: This indicates that a large portion of the funded unemployed beneficiaries by the W7R SETA have completed high school.
- 28% have national diplomas: This shows that a significant number of funded unemployed beneficiaries by the W7R SETA have completed a diploma programme.
- 13% have bachelor's degrees: This suggests that a considerable portion of funded unemployed beneficiaries by the W7R SETA have completed an undergraduate degree programme.
- 10% have advanced diplomas: This indicates that a smaller percentage of funded unemployed beneficiaries by the W7R SETA have completed a higher-level diploma programme.
- 7% have higher certificates: This suggests that a small percentage of funded unemployed beneficiaries have completed a higher education programme that is higher than matric but lower than a diploma.
- 3% have other qualifications: This category includes funded unemployed beneficiaries by the W7R SETA who have qualifications that are not specified in the other categories.

Therefore, these statistics show a diverse range of educational backgrounds among funded unemployed beneficiaries by the W&R SETA, with a noticeable portion having completed diploma and degree programmes. There could be a few potential implications for employment opportunities based on the diverse range of educational backgrounds among funded unemployed beneficiaries by the W&R SETA. For example (Hong, et al., 2023; Yi and Park, 2024):

- **Increased likelihood of specialized skills:** The fact that a noticeable portion of unemployed beneficiaries has completed diploma and degree programmes suggests that there may be a pool of individuals with specialized skills and knowledge that could be valuable for employers in the retail and wholesale sector. This could potentially lead to increased employment opportunities for these individuals in roles that require higher levels of education and training.

- **Demand for higher-skilled roles:** The presence of individuals with diploma and degree qualifications among unemployed beneficiaries may indicate a growing demand for higher-skilled roles in the wholesale and retail sector. Employers may be looking for candidates who have completed higher education programmes to fill positions that require more advanced knowledge and expertise.
- **Potential for career advancement:** Individuals who have completed diploma and degree programmes may have a higher likelihood of being able to access career advancement opportunities within the retail and wholesale sectors. Employers may be more inclined to promote or hire individuals with higher levels of education for roles that require leadership or managerial skills.
- **Challenge in finding suitable employment:** On the flip side, the presence of individuals with diploma and degree qualifications among unemployed beneficiaries may also indicate a potential challenge in finding suitable employment opportunities for these individuals. Employers may have specific criteria for hiring individuals with higher levels of education, which could make it harder for unemployed beneficiaries to secure jobs in their field of study.

However, the diverse range of educational backgrounds among funded unemployed beneficiaries by the W&R SETA suggests both opportunities and challenges for individuals seeking employment in the retail and wholesale sectors. It highlights the importance of having a mix of skills and qualifications to meet the evolving needs of the industry and to enhance employability prospects for job seekers.

9.1.5 Qualification completed at the university or college

Figure 10 below discloses the qualification completed at university or college by funded unemployed beneficiaries before attending the W&R SETA graduates' placement programmes. According to Salendab and Sanchez (2023), Graduates' placement programmes can have a significant impact on their search for employment. These programmes typically provide students with work experience in their chosen field, allowing them to gain valuable skills and knowledge that can make them more attractive to potential employers. One of the key benefits of placement programmes is that they provide graduates with real-world experience that can help them stand out in a competitive job market. Employers are often looking for candidates who have practical experience in addition to their academic qualifications, and placement programmes can provide graduates with the opportunity to develop the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in their chosen field.

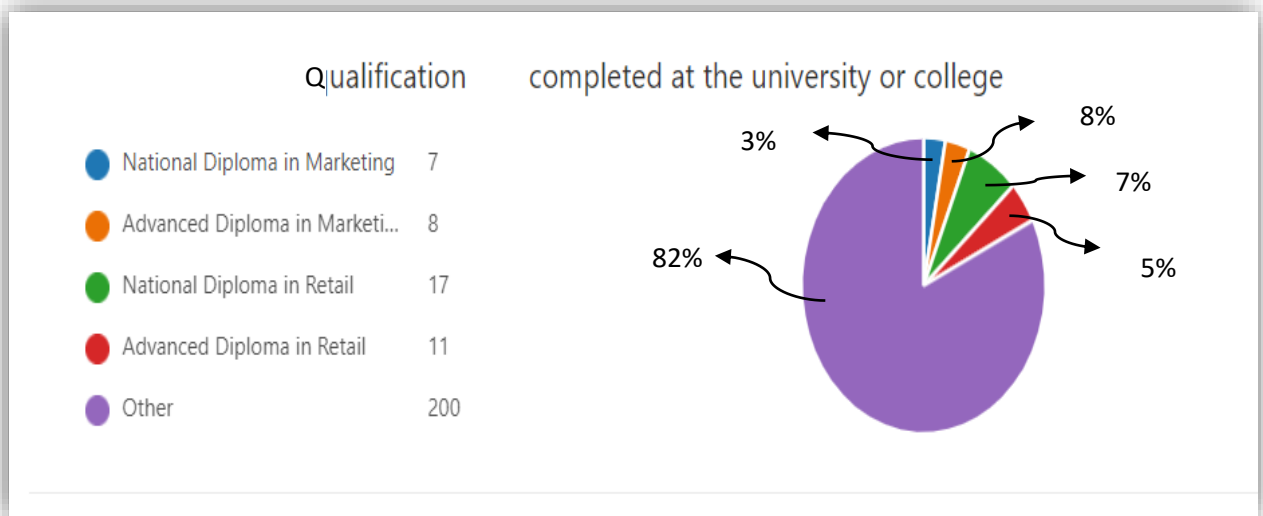


Figure 10 Qualification completed at the university or college.

Figure 10 depicts the statistical outcomes of qualifications completed at university or college by W&R SETA-funded jobless beneficiaries. To interpret the statistical results of the qualifications completed by the W&R SETA-funded unemployed beneficiaries, the distribution of qualifications completed by the beneficiaries is as follows:

- 82% have completed other qualifications than those indicated in Figure 10: This indicates that the majority of beneficiaries have completed qualifications that are not specifically mentioned in the data provided. This could mean that there is a diverse range of qualifications completed by the beneficiaries, which could potentially be beneficial for their future employment prospects.
- 8% have completed an advanced diploma in marketing: This shows that a small percentage of beneficiaries have completed an advanced diploma in marketing. This qualification may indicate a higher level of specialization or expertise in the field of marketing, which could be valuable for certain job opportunities in the retail sector.
- 7% have completed a national diploma in retail: A significant percentage of beneficiaries have completed a national diploma in retail. This qualification may provide them with a solid foundation of knowledge and skills specific to the retail industry, which could enhance their employability within this sector.
- 5% have completed an advanced diploma in retail: A smaller percentage of beneficiaries have completed an advanced diploma in retail. This qualification may indicate a higher level of proficiency in retail-related subjects, potentially opening up more advanced job opportunities within the retail industry.

- 3% have completed a national diploma in marketing: A small percentage of beneficiaries have completed a national diploma in marketing. This qualification may provide them with a strong foundation in marketing principles and practices, which could be beneficial for pursuing marketing-related roles within the retail sector.

In light of the above, the distribution of qualifications completed by the W&R SETA-funded unemployed beneficiaries suggests a diverse range of educational backgrounds and specializations within the retail and marketing fields. This could potentially enhance their employability and competitiveness in the job market within these industries.

9.1.6 The W&R SETA programmes for which beneficiaries received funding.

According to Salendab and Sanchez (2023), placement programmes give graduates the chance to network with professionals in their industry, which can be invaluable when it comes to finding job opportunities. By working alongside experienced professionals and building relationships with them, graduates can increase their chances of securing job offers or referrals to other potential employers. Additionally, placement programmes can help graduates gain a better understanding of the industry they are interested in and the types of roles that are available. This can make it easier for graduates to identify the right job opportunities for them and tailor their job search efforts accordingly. Figure 11 shows the W&R SETA programmes for which beneficiaries received funding.

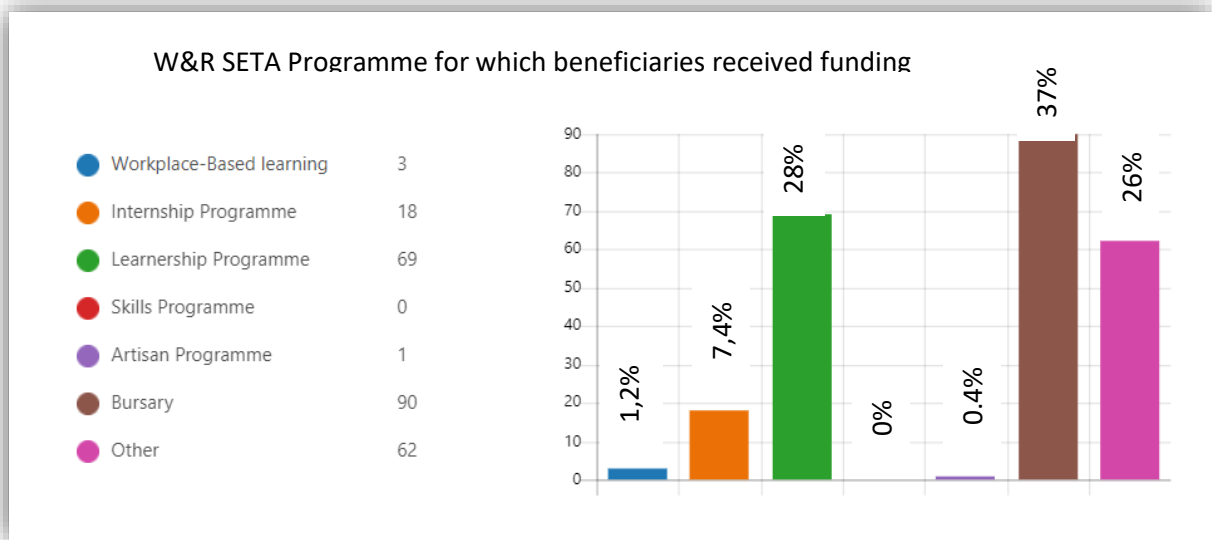


Figure 11 The W&R SETA programmes for which beneficiaries received funding.

As illustrated in Figure 11, the statistical data related to the W&R SETA programmes for which beneficiaries received funding are as follows:

- 37% of beneficiaries received bursaries.
- 28% of beneficiaries participated in a learnership programme.
- 26% of beneficiaries were on other programmes.
- 7.4% of beneficiaries participated in internship programmes.
- 1.2% of beneficiaries received workplace-based learning.
- 0.4% of beneficiaries participated in the artisan scheme.
- No recipients participated in skill-building programmes.

From the statistical data provided in line with the W&R SETA programmes for which beneficiaries received funding, the following understanding can be considered accordingly:

- The majority of beneficiaries (37%) received bursaries, indicating a focus on providing financial support for education and training.
- A significant percentage of beneficiaries (28%) participated in learnership programmes, highlighting an emphasis on developing learnership skills among the beneficiaries.
- A considerable portion of beneficiaries (26%) were on other programmes, which suggests a variety of different programmes were offered to cater to the diverse needs of the beneficiaries.

- A smaller percentage of beneficiaries (7.4%) participated in internship programmes, indicating a focus on providing hands-on work experience.
- A very small percentage of beneficiaries (1.2%) received workplace-based learning, emphasizing practical training in a real work environment.
- An even smaller percentage of beneficiaries (0.4%) participated in the artisan scheme, suggesting a specific focus on developing technical skills in a particular trade.

These above data indicate a diverse range of programmes offered to beneficiaries by the W&R SETA with a strong focus on education, leadership development, and practical work experience. However, there seems to be a lack of participation in skill-building programmes, which may be an area of intervention (for improvement) in the future.

9.1.7 The period when the W&R SETA funding was secured for beneficiaries

The following Figure 12 the period when the W&R SETA funding was secured for beneficiaries based on the graduates' placement programmes.

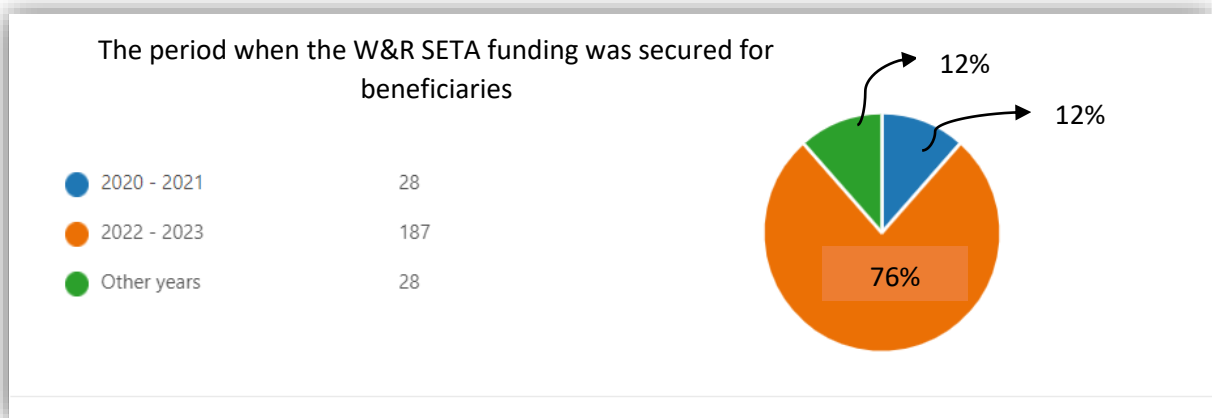


Figure 12 The period when the W&R SETA funding was secured for beneficiaries.

Figure 12 depicts the statistical results from the period when W&R SETA funding was secured for beneficiaries. Thus, the findings show the following:

- 76% of beneficiaries received funds from the W&R SETA between 2022–2023.
- 12% beneficiaries received funds from the W&R SETA between 2020 and 2021.
- 12% of beneficiaries received support from the W&R SETA in previous years.

These findings suggest that a large majority of beneficiaries (77%) secured funding from the W&R SETA during the period between 2022 and 2023. However, a smaller number of beneficiaries (12%) secured funding from the W&R SETA during the period between 2020 and 2021. Additionally, a small percentage (12%) of beneficiaries secured funding from the W&R SETA during other years. Overall, it appears that the majority of beneficiaries have received funding from the W&R SETA in recent years, with only a small proportion securing funding in previous years.

9.1.8 The W&R SETA programmes completed by beneficiaries

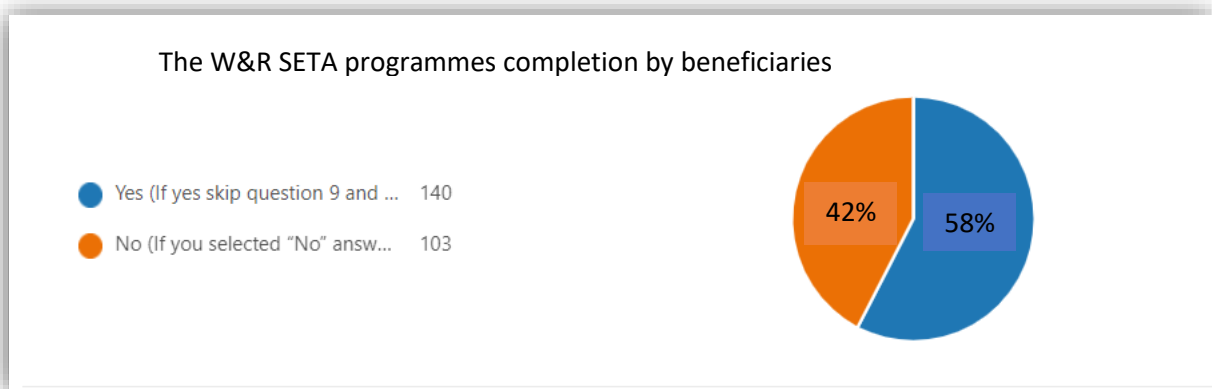


Figure 13 The W&R SETA programmes completion by beneficiaries.

Beneficiaries of the W&R SETA-funded programmes were expected to declare whether or not they have completed their programmes. The findings revealed the following:

- 58% of beneficiaries confirmed the completion of the W&R SETA programmes with a "YES" response.
- 42% of beneficiaries disapproved of "NO" and did not complete the W&R SETA programmes.

Based on the aforementioned statistical findings, it can be interpreted that a majority of beneficiaries (58%) confirmed that they completed the W&R SETA programmes successfully. However, 42% of beneficiaries did not complete the programmes and disapproved with a "NO" response.

This suggests that beneficiaries could still be in a programme, which is supported by the largest number of beneficiaries receiving funding in 2023. Further investigation may be needed to understand the reasons behind respondents who could be experiencing challenges in the process of completion of the programmes. These findings highlight the complex and varied reasons why beneficiaries may have been unable to complete the W&R SETA programmes, including both external factors and personal beliefs about the value of the training. Efforts to address these obstacles and provide additional support to beneficiaries may help improve completion rates in the future.

9.1.9 Employment status of funded beneficiaries following the completion of the W&R SETA programmes

The reasons for tracing the employment status of beneficiaries following the completion of the W&R SETA programmes could be many. According to (Khando, et al., 2021 and Sibanda, 2021), the reasons may include the following:

- **Program Evaluation:** Examining the employment status of funded beneficiaries allows for the evaluation of the effectiveness of the W&R SETA programmes in preparing individuals for employment. By determining how many beneficiaries secured employment after completing the programmes, the W&R SETA can assess the impact and success of their training initiatives.
- **Accountability:** Tracking the employment status of funded beneficiaries holds the W&R SETA accountable for the outcomes of their programmes. It ensures that the funding provided is being used effectively to support individuals in gaining employment and advancing their careers in the wholesale and retail sector.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Understanding the employment outcomes of beneficiaries can help the W&R SETA identify areas for improvement in their training programmes. By analyzing the reasons why some beneficiaries may not have secured employment, the SETA can make adjustments to better meet the needs of participants and increase their chances of success in the job market.

- **Stakeholder Reporting:** Reporting on the employment status of funded beneficiaries is often required by stakeholders, such as government agencies, funders, and employers. This information can demonstrate the impact of the W&R SETA programmes on workforce development and support future funding and partnership opportunities.
- **Support for Beneficiaries:** Knowing the employment status of funded beneficiaries allows the W&R SETA to provide ongoing support to individuals who may be struggling to secure employment. This support can include job search assistance, skills development opportunities, and networking connections to help beneficiaries find meaningful and sustainable employment opportunities.

Figure 14 below demonstrates the Employment status of funded beneficiaries following the completion of the W&R SETA programmes.

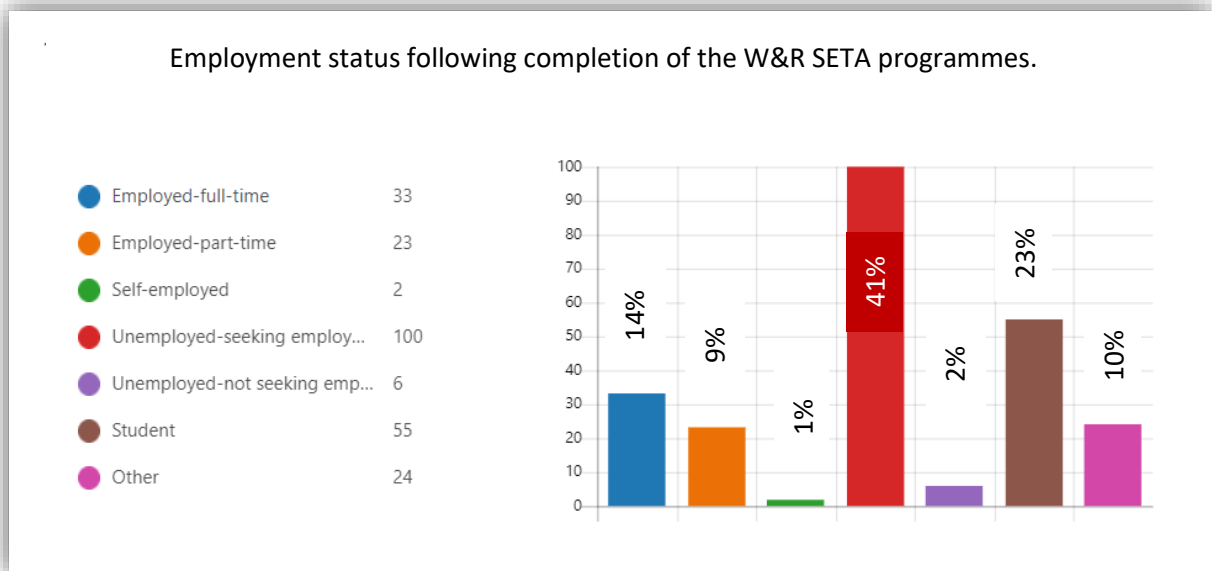


Figure 14 Employment status of funded beneficiaries following the completion of the W&R SETA programmes.

After completing the W&R SETA programmes, respondents were required to disclose information about their employment status. Figure 14 displays the subsequent outcomes:

- 41% of the beneficiaries who completed the W&R SETA programmes are still unemployed (jobless) and looking for employment.
- Of the beneficiaries, 23% are still students and placed toward their W&R SETA programmes.
- Of the beneficiaries, 14% are working full-time.

- 10% of the beneficiaries did not disclose whether they are employed or unemployed following their completion of W&R SETA programmes.
- 9% of the beneficiaries work part-time.
- 2% of beneficiaries do not seek for jobs and have remain unemployed.
- 1% of beneficiaries work for themselves (self-employed).

These findings indicate that a significant portion (41%) of the beneficiaries who completed the W&R SETA programmes are still unemployed and actively looking for employment. 23% of the beneficiaries are still students and are working towards completing their W&R SETA programmes. Additionally, 14% of the beneficiaries are now working full-time, and 9% are working part-time. 1% of the beneficiaries are self-employed. There is a small portion (10%) of beneficiaries who did not disclose their employment status following their completion of the programmes.

It is possible that some of these individuals may also be unemployed or students. Accordingly, the findings suggest that the W&R SETA programmes are helping a portion of the beneficiaries access to the labour market, but it lacks a retention commitment of learners and graduates by companies. There are still a significant number of beneficiaries who are unemployed and seeking for employment opportunities. This shows that the W&R SETA programmes may not have had a major impact on promoting entrepreneurship among beneficiaries. According to (Adewale et al., 2023), many issues could be the reasons hindering beneficiaries to start a business or become entrepreneurs. According to (Alhamad, 2023 and Adewale et al., 2023), barriers to entrepreneurship initiative could include the following:

- **Lack of access to funding:** One of the major challenges faced by beneficiaries of W&R SETA programmes is the difficulty in accessing funding to start or grow their businesses. Many entrepreneurs find it difficult to secure loans or grants to finance their ventures, which can restrict their ability to expand and reach their full potential.
- **Lack of mentorship and support:** Many beneficiaries of W&R SETA programmes may lack access to mentorship or support networks that can provide guidance and advice as they navigate the challenges of entrepreneurship. Without a strong support system, entrepreneurs may feel isolated and overwhelmed, making it difficult for them to overcome obstacles and achieve their goals.

- **Limited market knowledge:** Another common challenge for beneficiaries is a lack of knowledge about the market they are entering. Without a thorough understanding of their target market, competitors, and industry trends, entrepreneurs may struggle to effectively position their products or services and attract customers.
- **Limited access to markets:** Finally, beneficiaries may face challenges in accessing markets for their products or services, particularly if they are operating in remote or underserved areas. Without access to a diverse customer base, entrepreneurs may struggle to generate sufficient revenue to sustain and grow their businesses.
- **Limited access to resources:** Beneficiaries often face challenges in accessing essential resources such as raw materials, equipment, or skilled labor. Without access to these resources, entrepreneurs may struggle to produce their goods or deliver their services efficiently, leading to delays or quality issues that can harm their reputation.
- **Regulatory barriers:** Entrepreneurs may also face challenges related to regulatory compliance, such as obtaining necessary licenses or permits to operate their business legally. Navigating complex regulatory requirements can be time-consuming and costly, particularly for small businesses with limited resources.
- **Inadequate infrastructure:** Infrastructure challenges, such as unreliable electricity supply or inadequate transportation networks, can also hinder the success of beneficiaries' businesses. Without access to essential infrastructure, entrepreneurs may struggle to operate their businesses efficiently and meet customer demands.
- **Fear of failure:** Fear of failure is a common barrier to entrepreneurship, as many people are hesitant to take the risks associated with starting a business. The fear of financial loss, the stigma of failure, or the uncertainty of success can all hold entrepreneurs back from pursuing their business ideas.
- **Lack of entrepreneurial skills and experience:** Many aspiring entrepreneurs lack the necessary skills and experience to start and run a successful business. This can include skills in marketing, finance, operations, and other areas that are crucial for business success.
- **Socio-economic barriers:** Certain demographic groups, such as women, minorities, and individuals from low-income backgrounds, may face additional barriers to entrepreneurship due to systemic inequalities and discrimination. These barriers can include limited access to funding, resources, and opportunities for mentorship and support.

Further investigation may be required to determine the causes behind the low percentage of beneficiaries starting enterprises after completing the W&R SETA training.

9.1.10 Duration of employed beneficiaries after completion of the W&R SETA programmes.

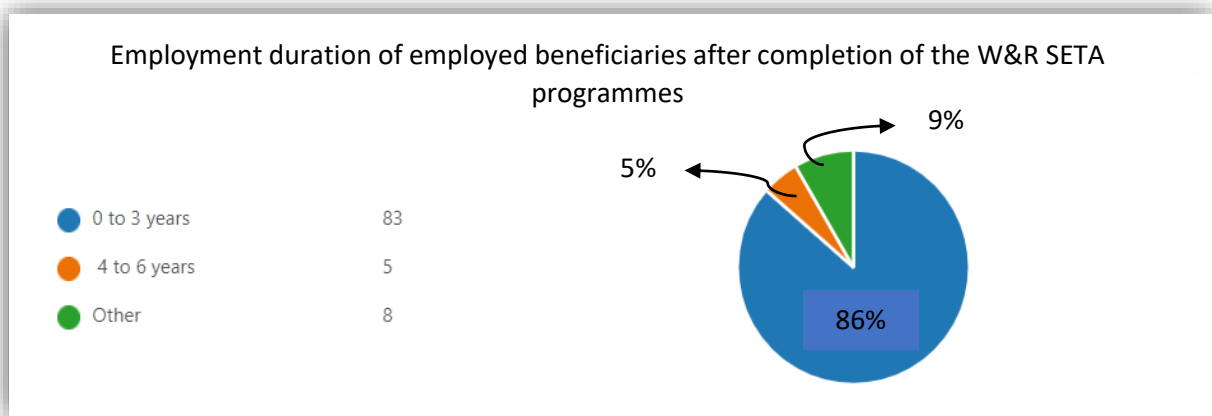


Figure 15 Employment duration of employed beneficiaries after completion of the W&R SETA programmes.

Figure 15 depicts the duration of employed beneficiaries who managed to secure employment after completing the W&R SETA programmes. This reveals the following:

- 86% of beneficiaries have been employed for up to 3 years after completing their W&R SETA programmes.
- 9% of W&R SETA programmes graduates are in employment within 4 to 6 years.
- 5% of employed beneficiaries did not indicate their job duration after completing W&R SETA programmes.

Based on the findings, it can be interpreted that the majority of beneficiaries who completed the W&R SETA programmes are able to secure employment within 3 years after completing the programmes, with 86% of them falling into this category.

A smaller percentage of 9% are able to secure employment within 4 to 6 years after completing the programmes, suggesting that there may be a longer time lag for some individuals in securing employment. The fact that 5% of employed beneficiaries did not indicate their job duration after completing the programmes may indicate an unstable employment condition or they're not sure of securing a stable employment after completing their W&R SETA programmes. Overall, the findings suggest that the W&R SETA programmes are successful in helping a significant portion of beneficiaries to secure employment in the industry within a relatively short period of time.

9.2. TRAINING PROGRAMME CHOICE AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

In this section, beneficiaries were asked to express their level of agreement with the statements in Figure 16, concerning their training programmes experience and career development. Each statement in this figure is discussed based on respondents views. Respondents were asked to describe their observations by selecting either strongly agree, disagree, neutral, agree, or strongly agree. To make the results easier to understand, the percentages representing respondents' views, such as "Agree" and "Strongly Agree" responses, as well as "strongly disagree" and "disagree" responses, are combined into one percentage each. For example, respondents strongly agreed (42%) and agreed (7.4%) that the academic programme studied provided an edge in finding work after graduation. The two percentages were summed to get 49.4%, indicating the level of respondents' agreement (see subsection 9.2.1: The training programme has provided me an advantage in finding work after graduation).

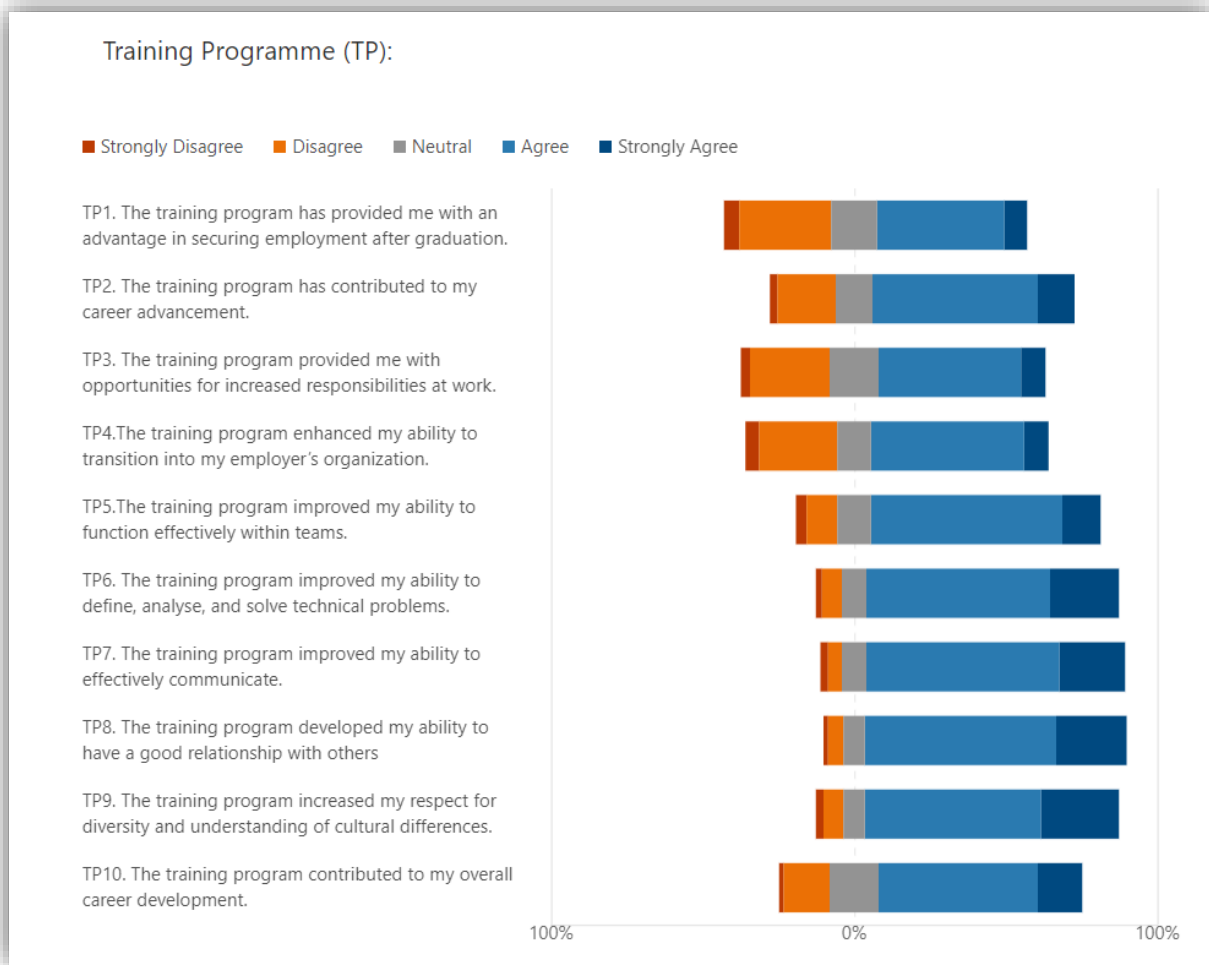
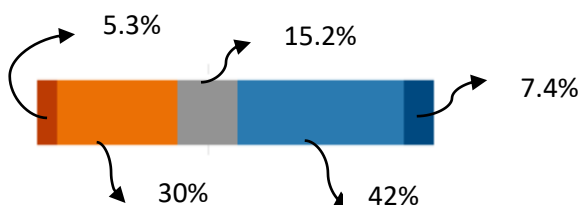


Figure 16 Training programme experience and career development

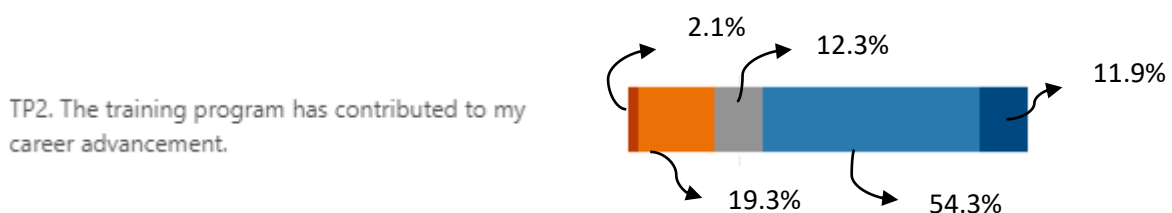
9.2.1 The training programme has provided me with an advantage in securing employment after graduation.



Less than half (49.4%) of the respondents indicated that the academic programme studied offered an advantage in securing employment upon graduation. This aligns with Gurung, Chapagain, and Thapa (2023) assertion that students with academic qualifications have a crucial advantage of becoming employable in a competitive and congested graduate labour market.

Academic credentials aid beneficiaries in positioning themselves as being employable. Haltia, Isopahkala-Bouret, and Mutanen (2023) further posit that higher education balance out social disparities in graduate employment as disadvantaged students may exploit institutional resources, interact with peers, and gain work experience counteracting dispositional barriers. 35.3% disagreed that training programmes provided an advantage in securing employment post-graduation and 15.2% remained neutral. The issues are complex as it does not definitely imply whether the results are due to the relevance of the qualification studied, a skills mismatch, or a reflection of the dilemma of unemployment in South Africa.

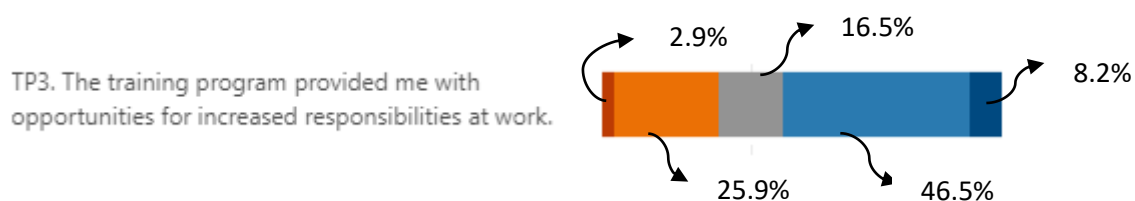
9.2.2 Qualification acquired and career advancement



More than two-thirds (66.2%) of the respondents were confident that the training programme contributed to career advancement, whilst 21.4% disagreed that qualification received had contributed to career progression. 12.3% were unsure and remained neutral. The significant majority believe that the qualification received was the reason for career advancement; however, the result must be cautiously assessed against the employment rate of respondents. However, respondents' perception that a qualification is a springboard to career growth could have influenced a positive response; but in reality skills set mismatch, and limited employment opportunities remains a challenge. Majid and Banu (2024) enunciate that there was a need for extensive structural changes on both the supply and demand sides to increase employability and employment rates of graduates. Government should take a lead reform to stimulate more job opportunities for graduates. Concurrently institutions of higher learning should make changes in training programmes to cultivate highly skilled graduates. Kavitha (2024) states that there is a positive connection between training programmes and career development, with beneficiaries of training displaying increased skills, knowledge, and confidence.

This is demonstrated via improved productivity, work satisfaction, and organizational loyalty. Constant learning and development contribute to employee engagement and retention. Ogunode, Ukozor, and Chijioke (2024) in their exploration of the nexus between training programmes and employee performance established that there was an association between training and improved job performance, consequently emphasizing the positive impact of training. This is further underscored by the importance of training programmes in influencing employee career paths and nurturing professional growth.

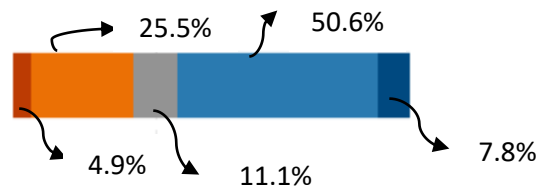
9.2.3 Training programmes and growth in an organization



54.7% of the funding beneficiaries believed that training programme studied offered a favorable avenue to increased responsibilities at the work place. Whilst 21.4% were in disagreement and 12.3% were undecided. More than half of the beneficiaries have indicated that the programme studied is linked to the nature of the work entrusted with responsibilities suggests that training acquired serves as catalyst to growth in an organization as higher degree of responsibilities are entrusted to supervisory and management positions in an organization. Stalin and Maheswari (2024) enunciate a perspective that effective training programmes can have a positive impact on employee engagement which can kindle a sense of growth and competence. This can empower beneficiaries to take on greater responsibilities influenced by enhanced skills, knowledge, and abilities. Carswell and De Neve (2024) present a caveat that if skills training is not linked to labour market dynamics training initiatives can most likely misfire rendering training beneficiaries with inappropriate skills. Consequently, they would be unable to assume higher order responsibilities in a company. Those who disagreed that training provided increase responsibilities at work were perhaps still at an entry-level position and assigned to routine tasks.

9.2.4 Transitioning into employment

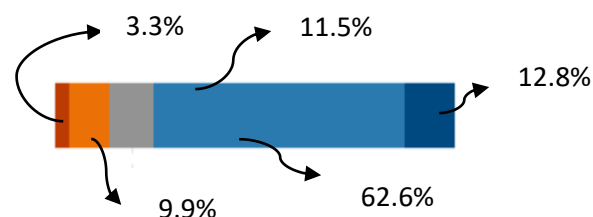
TP4. The training program enhanced my ability to transition into my employer's organization.



58.4% of the respondents were satisfied that the study programme contributed to easily transition to the employers' organization, a moderately significant 30.4% were in disagreement and 11.1% remained neutral. Transitioning into a work environment has to do with competency level acquired linked to tasks allocated together with work preparedness of beneficiaries of training programmes. Although less than a third suggested that training programmes did not enhance the ability to transition to the employer's organization it foregrounds the importance of the programme relevance and work readiness in programmes to ensure a seamless transition to employment. Perez-Encinas and Berbegal-Mirabent (2023) posit that educational programmes fail to provide the necessary competencies to ensure a smooth transition from the university to the job market and that study programme initiatives related to active learning and internships makes a difference in this transition. Jackson and Dean (2023) state that work integrated learning provides a good opportunity for developing adaptive skills and is effective in augmenting graduates' insights of overall preparedness for employment. There is value of embedding and scaffolding various forms of WIL throughout study programmes to support employability and faster labour market insertion.

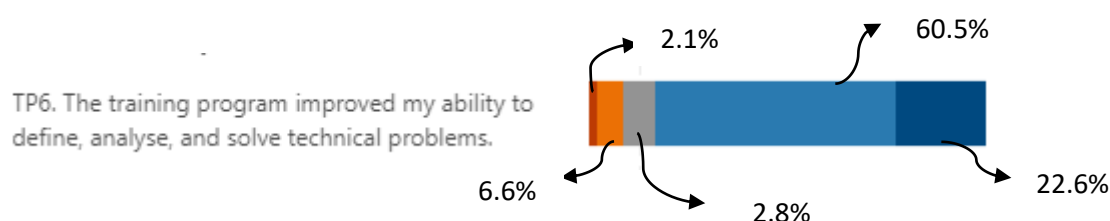
9.2.5 Training and working with teams

TP5. The training program improved my ability to function effectively within teams.



A significant majority of three-quarters (75.4%) of the respondents posited that training programmes enhanced the ability of beneficiaries to effectively function in teams at the workplace. This augurs well for training programmes as soft-skills acquired by beneficiaries will aid working collaboratively and valuing team members. Only 13.2% felt that training programmes did not improve beneficiaries' ability to work in teams and 11.1% remained neutral. The ability to work on teams is critical as entrants in the labour market extract great benefit from learning from work colleagues and mentors in the workplace as employees acquire skills from completing tasks in practice. Learning in work practice can be meaningful for younger workers' performances (De Grip, 2024). Having the ability to effectively function in teams can be a significant contributor to learning and growing beyond the formal training gained in training programmes. Moreover, the ability to work in a team spurs collaborative achievement of goals and consolidates organizational alignment. Creativity in teams is prompted by members' having access to diverse knowledge through interactions with team members. Venkataramani and Tang (2024) contend that working with teams complemented knowledge integration and enables equal participation of team members in the creative problem-solving process.

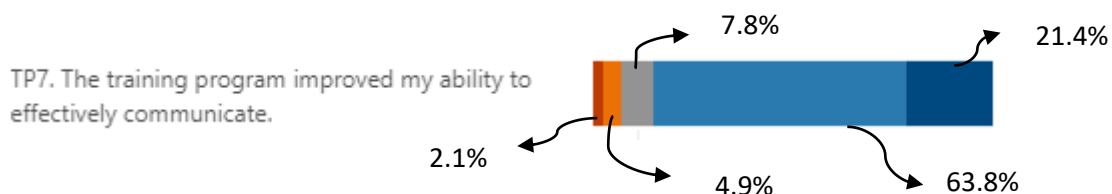
9.2.6 Problem-solving skills and training programmes



In response to the question whether training programmes improved the ability to define, analyze and solve technical problems, a large majority (83.1%) were of the view that training programmes had a positive effect on the ability to solve technical problems. The response is momentous in the sense that beneficiaries had received critical skills in navigating and solving technical problems which is empowering at the work place. Moreover, the results affirms that training programmes are effectively imparting skills making beneficiaries agile and enterprising in the work environment.

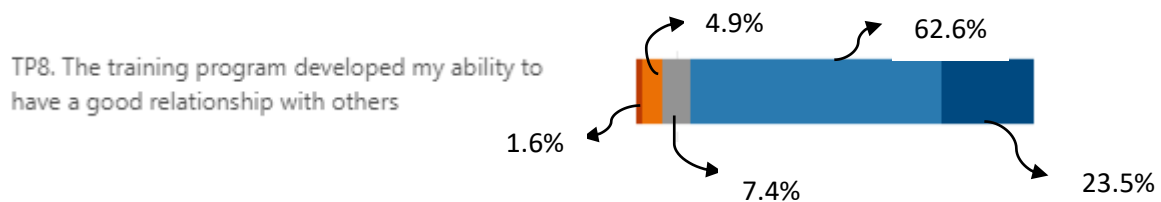
Karaca-Atik, Meeuwisse, Gorgievski and Smeets (2023) have concluded that communication and problem-solving skills were central for employers and can ensure graduates have sustainable careers. Additionally, critical thinking, initiative and self-direction, and social and cross-cultural skills were also considered as vital skills. Training programmes play a pivotal role in the professional readiness for graduates by providing essential competencies with knowledge shaping skills in analysis, comparing and synthesising information. Learning experiences enhances logical thinking, creativity and problem-solving skills which are key to success in professional aspirations (Rakhmankulovna, 2023).

9.2.7 Training programme and communication skills



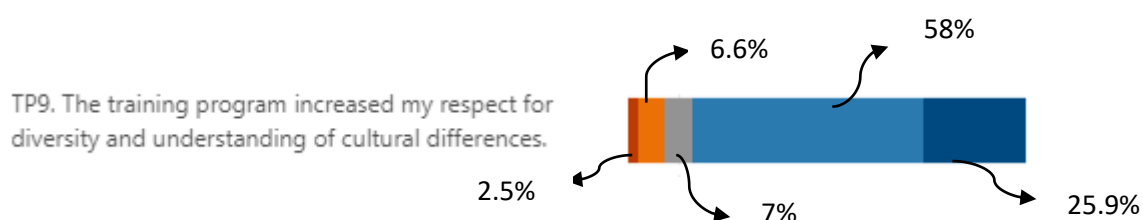
85.2% of the respondents in the study had made an emphatic statement that training programmes contributed to the improvement of the ability to communicate effectively. Verbal, non-verbal and written communication skills are essential in daily transactions in a work environment and beneficiaries are content that training programmes had developed communication skills. A significant minority of 7% indicated that communication skills were lacking in training programmes and provided no benefit. 7.8% were neutral to the question posed. Sudi, Arisanti, Hanim, Sya'rani and Rahwana (2024) alluded to importance of embedding communication skills in training so that it serves as an effective enabler in a career journey. This perspective is further supported by Dalpatadu, Amaratunga, Mudiyanse and Dalpatadu (2024) where it is recommended that communication skills training sessions should be introduced to students at the commencement of a programme and as well as towards the end of an undergraduate course so that beneficiaries embrace communication skills at all times, hence reflecting the significance of communication skills in work engagements, and optimized organizational efficiencies.

9.2.8 Developing good relationships in the workplace



An overwhelming majority (86.1%) of the respondents were confident that training programmes enhanced beneficiaries ability to have a good working relationship with others. The ability to have good relationship with others in the workplace plays a fundamental role in engendering team spirit and working collaboratively to achieve collective work tasks and goals. Only 6.5% of the respondents indicated that training programmes lacked the development and harnessing good relationship building skills., 7.4% were neutral to this question. Training programmes which infuse the development of good relationship with others instil the value of acknowledging diverse viewpoints, promotes multiple voices to be heard and facilitates better work teams. Furthermore, it contributes to enhanced collaboration partnerships, and generating trusting relationships with work colleagues (Lavoie-Tremblay, Boies, Clausen, Frechette, Manning, Gelsomini, Cyr, Lavigne, Gottlieb and Gottlieb, 2024). Nayoyos-Refugia (2024) have identified that healthy working relationships stimulates a positive work environment and also offers prospects for career growth. It is therefore, necessary to better prepare graduates for careers with a deeper appreciation of having good relationships. Overall, it aids in building a more positive work environment by constructively exploiting individual strengths for the common good.

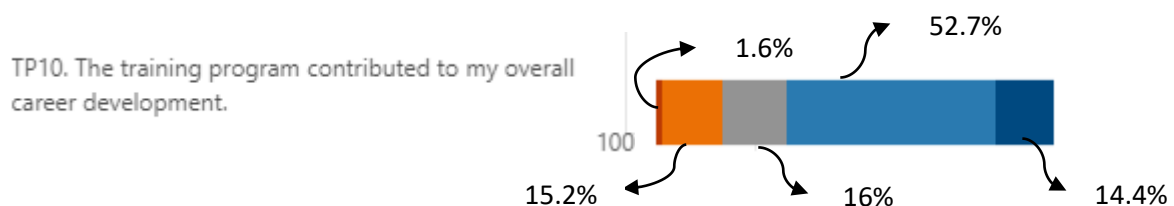
9.2.9 Diveristy training



In response to whether training programmes increased beneficiaries respect for diversity and understanding of cultural differences, a substantial majority of 83.9% opined that the training received was beneficial to them respecting diversity and appreciating cultural difference. This is a noteworthy finding as diversity, multi-culturalism and celebrating differences harmonises relationships and people engagements. A work place is a melting pot of different ideologies and belief systems and embracing differences cements better relationships. Training programmes should be geared to harnessing relationship building and equipping beneficiaries to be more pliable, work ready and view diversity in the work environment as an organizational strength. 9.1% felt that training programmes did not offer training in diversity and understanding cultural differences. 7% remained neutral in response to the question.

According to Anggoro and Anjarini (2024) a developed level of employee cultural awareness and sensitivity encourages diversity and inclusivity, it concurrently promotes positive interaction and collaboration between team members from diverse backgrounds. The capacity to interact with colleagues from various cultures produces an inclusive work climate, where all team members feel accepted, valued and respected. By establishing cultural diversity, cultivating empathy, and refining effective communication skills, training beneficiaries can navigate the intricacies of intercultural interactions with compassion (Normatova, 2024). Additionally, employee cultural sensitivity can be honed through and education (Anggoro and Anjarini, 2024), which underscores the importance of beneficiaries receiving such exposure at institutional level.

9.2.10 Training and overall contribution to career development



Just over two-thirds (67.1%) of the respondents were of the view that overall the training impacted on their career development.

A sizeable number of the beneficiaries were satisfied that training received had set out career paths for them which is a pronouncement that there is a positive association between training and career aspiration. 16.8% had disagreed that benefit was received from training programmes suggesting that there was a disconnect between training programmes and aspired career pathways. 16% were neutral and reticent on the matter, further signifying that respondents remained unconvinced. Collectively one in three respondents were unable to conclusively support that training programmes defined career paths. However, skills acquired through funded training programmes build capacity amongst beneficiaries to be adaptable in career progression.

Career adaptability can positively impact on a beneficiary's accomplishments in the labour market. Being agile in career aspirations can motivate young graduates and new employees to endeavour, develop and prosper professionally in the employment landscape (Stauff and Blondin, 2024). Agility to the rigours of the employment landscape could empower young graduates to retain employment opportunities for a longer period by embracing career growth and professional ambitions (Omar, Romli, Azeem, and Zakaria, 2024). Training empowers graduates with the tools of agility and career development and training experiences should be seen holistically shaping careers. The following section discusses the impact of the W&R SETA programmes on the beneficiaries.

9.3 IMPACT OF W&R SETA PROGRAMME

As part of the effort to obtain a better understanding of the impact of the W&RSETA programme of the beneficiaries of the programme the research instrument also contained questions related to the impact of the programme.

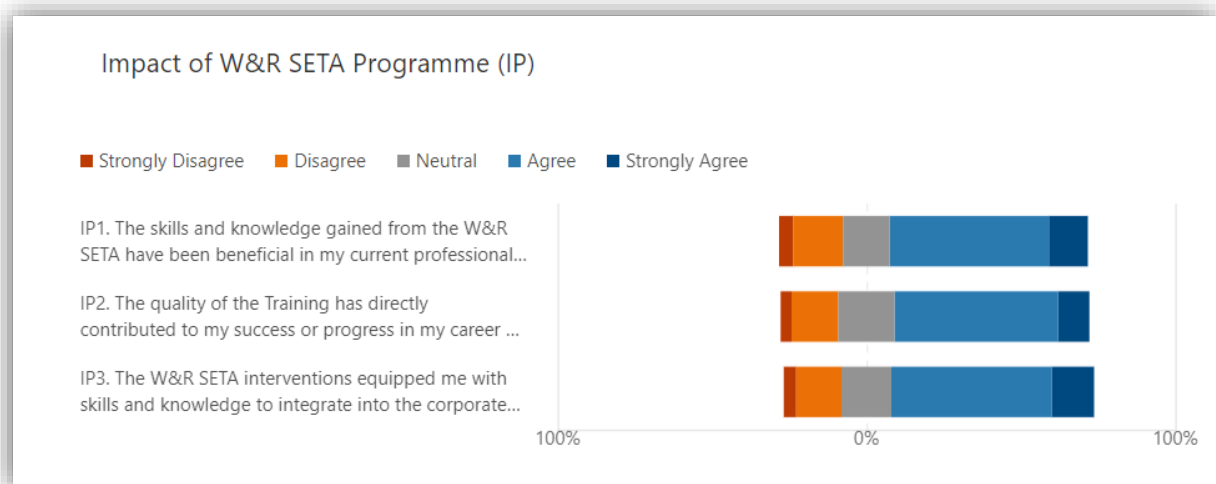
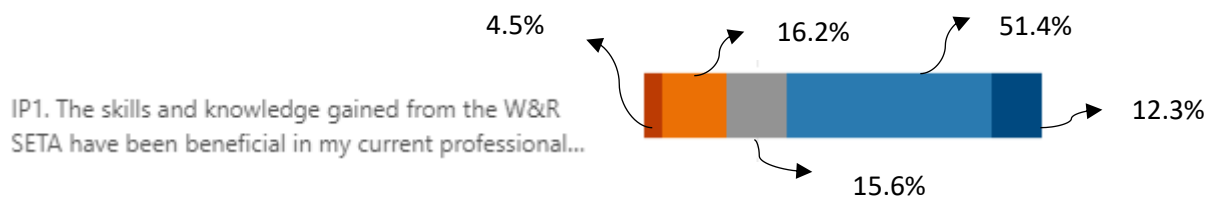


Figure 17 Impact of w&r seta programme

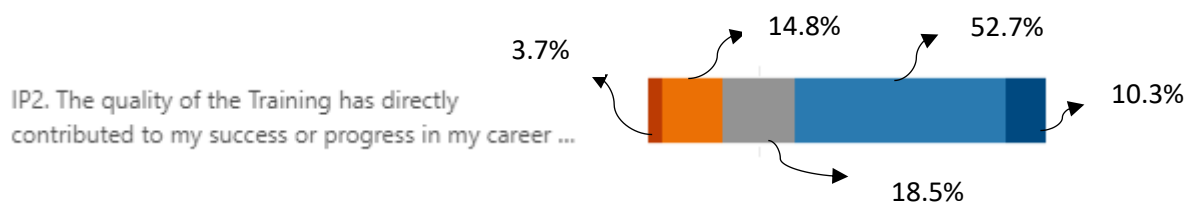
9.3.1. Skills and knowledge gained from training is beneficial professionally and career wise



A fifth of the respondents had stated that the skills and knowledge from the W & R SETA initiatives was not beneficial professionally and had not contributed to career opportunities. This alludes to either that the programme lacked relevance or due to a skill set mismatch or that beneficiaries could not secure employment. If 15.6% of those that were neutral is added to this category of individuals who disagreed it does signal more than a third of the respondents could not conclusively agree that skills and knowledge imparted by the W & R SETA programmes contributed positively in the

professional and career lives of respondents. On the other hand, 63.8% were satisfied that skills and knowledge gained was valuable in shaping career opportunities. Jacobs and Karpova (2023) state that addressing gaps in skills and knowledge allows companies to remain globally competitive. Additionally, competent professionals should have a well-balanced skill and knowledge set to succeed in industry. From a macro perspective, as training is considered as a key variable in influencing professional competence, policymakers should focus on promoting training to increase competency levels of individuals as they enter the labour market. (Nair, Jahagirdar, Angadi and Meena, 2023) . This underscores the significance of the W & R SETA interventions, however interventions has to impactfully translate into securing permanent employment.

9.3.2 Quality of training intervention and progress progression

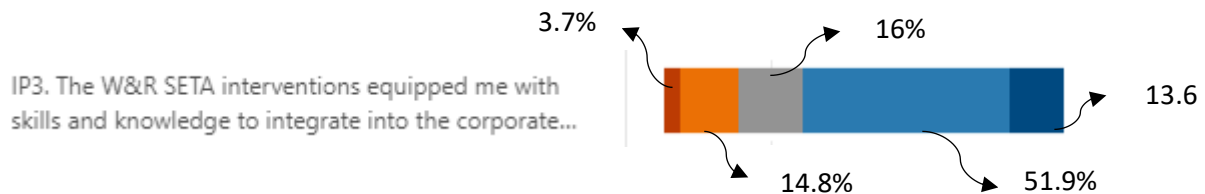


The responses to the statement "The quality of the training has directly contributed to my success or progress in my career or business" provide valuable insights into the respondents' perceptions of the effectiveness of the training provided by the W&R SETA. Figure 17 shows that 3.7% strongly disagreed with the statement, this category represents respondents who indicated that the quality of the training did not contribute to their success or progress in their career or business. They may feel that the training lacked relevance, depth, or applicability to their professional endeavors. Possible reasons for this sentiment could include dissatisfaction with the content, delivery, or overall experience of the training program. Figure17 shows that 14.8% disagreed with the statement and respondents in this category expressed a similar sentiment to those who strongly disagreed but with slightly less intensity. They acknowledge some level of contribution from the training but still feel that it falls short of significantly impacting their career or business progress.

They may have encountered limitations or shortcomings in the training that hindered its effectiveness in translating into tangible benefits for their professional growth. 18.5% remained neutral to the statement and neither strongly affirmed nor negated the statement, indicating a need for further reflection or clarification on the perceived impact of the training. However, 52.7% and 10.3% strongly agreed with the statement (see figure 17). These results indicate that the majority of respondents indicated a positive perception that the quality of the training has contributed to their success or progress in their career or business. They recognise the value of the skills, knowledge, and experiences gained through the training and attribute a significant portion of their achievements to the insights and competencies acquired. This group likely views the training as instrumental in enhancing their professional capabilities and advancing their career or business goals. Shetty, Baliga and Thomas Gil (2024) contend that training programmes has a positive influence on trainees' mindset, motivation, and follow-up abilities.

Therefore, these factors contribute to an increased prospect of attaining success in business endeavors. Receiving quality training which enhances skills and expertise offer candidates an opportunity to be promoted according to respective skills. This could change the candidates status within an organization, consequently giving individuals even more responsibilities at work and contributing to career progression (Susanto, Soehaditama and Benned, 2023). Overall, while the majority of respondents express positive views regarding the contribution of the training to their career or business success, it is essential to consider the perspectives of those who disagree or remain neutral. Addressing any concerns or areas for improvement highlighted by these responses can help enhance the effectiveness and relevance of future training initiatives offered by the W&R SETA.

9.3.3 W & R SETA interventions and corporate employment preparedness



Based on the Likert scale responses to the statement "The W&R SETA interventions equipped me with skills and knowledge to integrate into the corporate world," we can observe the following findings: 18.5% had disagreed and expressed skepticism or dissatisfaction regarding the effectiveness of the interventions in preparing them for the corporate world. They may feel the training lacked relevance or failed to address specific corporate requirements. 16% were neutral and were uncertain about the extent to which the interventions facilitated their integration into the corporate world, indicating a need for further reflection or clarification on the training's impact. A significant majority of almost two thirds (65.%) acknowledged the value and relevance of the training in preparing them for corporate environments, and feeling adequately equipped to navigate and succeed in such settings. Corporate business are constantly reinventing themselves to remain competitive and consistently focus on human capital investment.

Ogut, Adol, Bujdosó, Andrea, Fekete-Farkas and Dávid (2023) expansively posit theoretical dimensions to the value of knowledge resources which trained individuals could bring to an organization. The knowledge-based theory purports that a company's competitive edge stems from its unique knowledge assets together with its ability to efficiently apply and leverage such assets. The resource-based theory, equally, highlights the role of physical and intangible resources in defining a company's competitiveness. The (dynamic) capabilities theory emphasizes the significance of an organisations capacity to incessantly learn, adapt, as well as innovate to be resilient in a competitiveness landscape.

Jaiswal, Arun and Varma, (2022) present a supporting perspective stating that, the need for cognitive skills is growing specifically for skills which are multifaceted information processing, critical thinking, decision making and constant learning in multi-national corporations. The escalation in demand for complex cognitive and information processing skills is due to evolving market drifts, consumer preferences and overall market outlook. Changes in the macro-level industry environment impact internal organizational functioning and it's people assets. Being well equipped with relevant skills and knowledge allows for seamless transition for graduates to a corporate environment. This augurs well for beneficiaries of W & R SETA interventions. Employees are the vanguard of an organization and success is reinforced by the quality and competence of its people (Susanto, Soehaditama and Benned, 2023).

9.4 Skills Utilisation and Development (SUD)

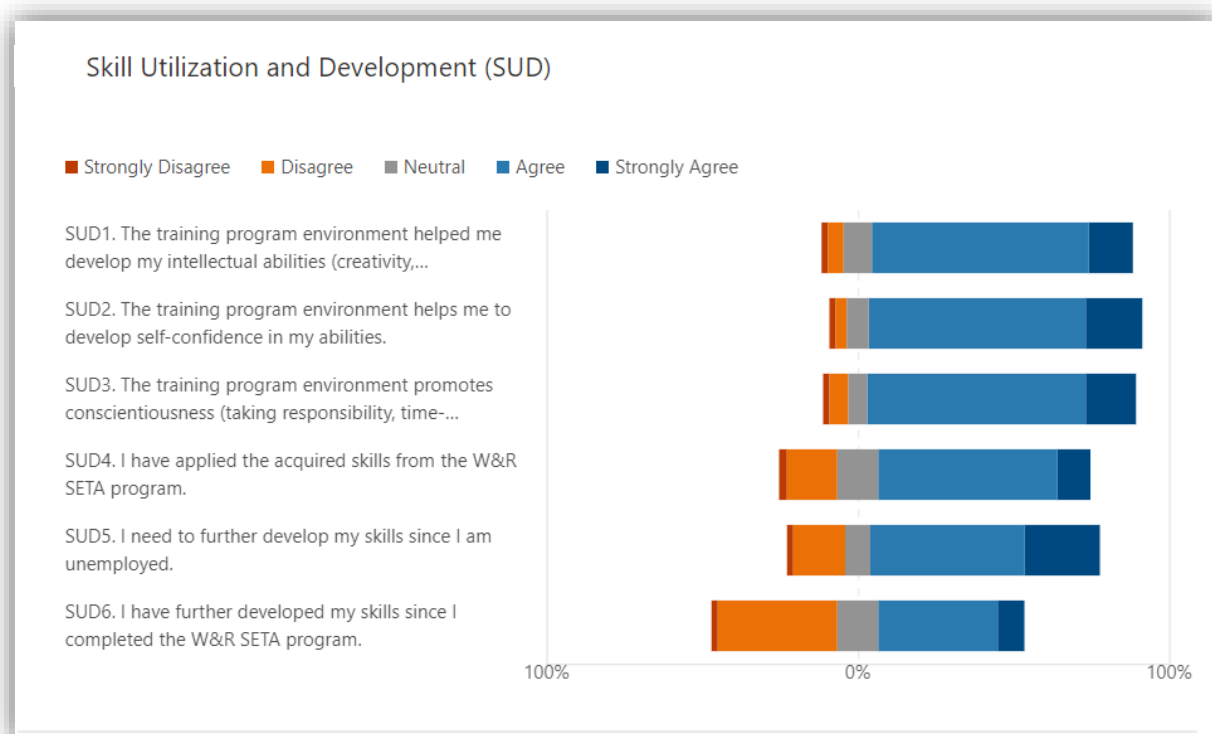
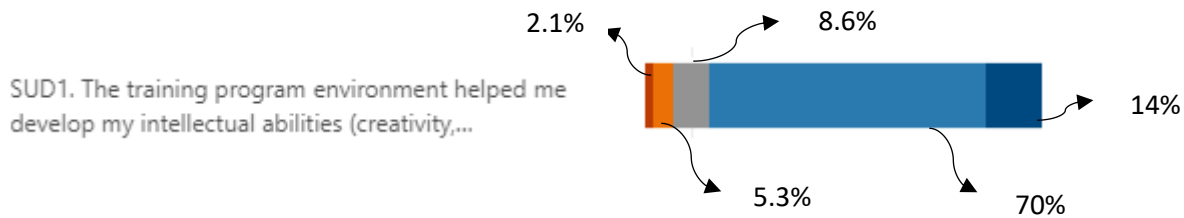


Figure 18 Skills Utilisation and Development (SUD)

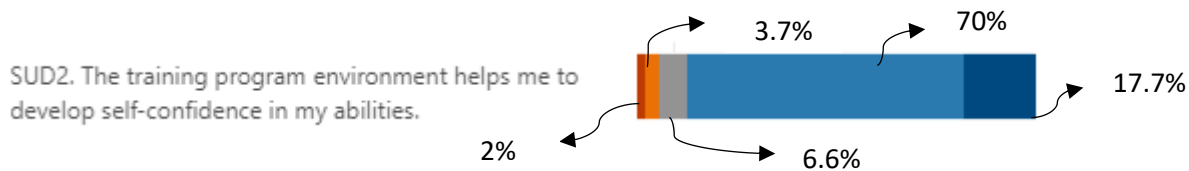
9.4.1 Training environments as a platform for development



In response to the statement about the training programmes environment's impact on the development of intellectual abilities such as creativity, decisiveness, and high-quality work, the majority of respondents (84%) agreed (agree 70% and strongly agree 14%) (see figure 18). It can be said that the training environment positively contributed to their intellectual growth, indicating that it facilitated their ability to think creatively, make effective decisions, and produce high-quality work. Learning is stimulated by the learning contexts and central to shaping such a milieu is the competency levels of learning facilitators and lecturers. Beneficiaries of training gain intellectually and are creative in an environment where there is improved teaching quality and enhanced productive interactions between learners and competent lecturers (Riza, Syarif, Mardatillah, Salam, Khafidah and Yusuf, 2024). This view is further aligned to Zhang's (2024) assertion that an environment that is full of innovation, celebrates diversity, accepts failure and encourages feedback will experience better productivity and will achieve ongoing development and progress. Such environments help develop successful individuals who will achieve in a dynamic business landscape.

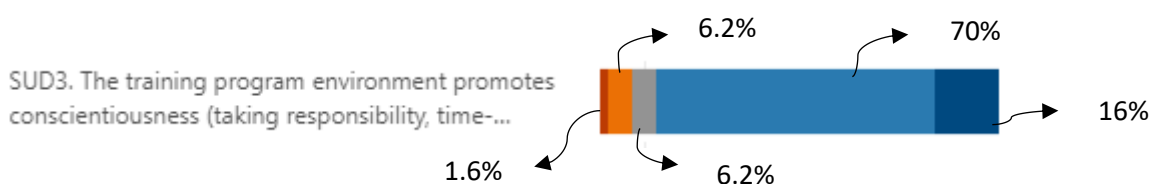
Products from such an ethos are bound to be more creative, possess advanced level of intellectual ability and deliver high quality work. However, a notable portion (7.4%) disagreed, suggesting that they did not perceive significant benefits in terms of intellectual development from the training environment (strongly disagree 2.1% and disagree 5.3%), this factor is of concern and training providers need to link curricula practices to developing better decision-makers, higher order thinking and creativity to compete in a global job market. Only 8.6% were remained neutral to the question and being non-committal to whether they had gained the benefit of the training.

9.4.2 Training Programmes and self-development



Regarding self-confidence in their abilities, a significant majority (87.7%) of respondents agreed that the training environment played a positive role. They felt that the environment helped them build confidence in their skills and capabilities. Zha, Qiao, Hu, Li, Gong and Xu (2024) advocate a stimulating supportive environment immersed in collaboration and mentorship which promotes self-confidence in output of tasks. The establishment of clear protocols in a collaborative learning environment with delineated roles in line with team objectives and project requirement can contribute to mutual respect and self-confidence. Facilitators of learning in such an environment play a mentorship role assisting trainees and guiding them to interpret, apply and respond to work instilling self confidence amongst beneficiaries in the effective execution of tasks. Critically, it is the learning context which strengthens confidence in delivery and beneficiaries of the W & R SETA interventions gained from their supportive role in respective learning experiences. However, there were still some respondents (5.8%) who disagreed, indicating that they did not feel adequately supported or empowered to develop self-confidence during the training programme. 6.5% were unsure if the learning environment aided self-confidence in their abilities.

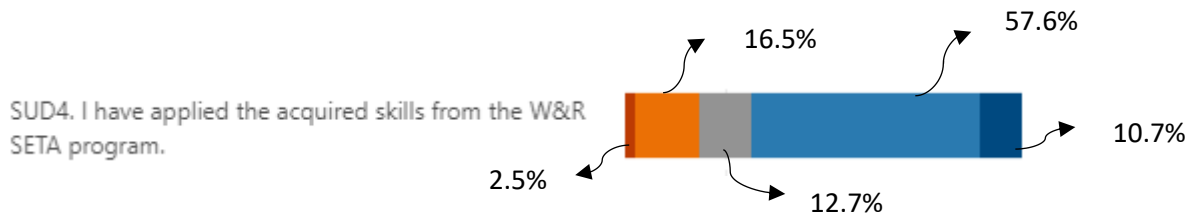
9.4.3 Training Programmes promoting a better work ethic



When considering conscientiousness, which includes aspects like taking responsibility, time-management, and organizing tasks, the majority of respondents (86%) agreed that the training environment promoted these attributes (see figure 18). They felt that the environment encouraged them to be responsible, manage their time effectively, and organize tasks efficiently. Hernandez Sibó, Gómez Celis and Liou (2024) suggest that well constructed environmental interventions could positively impact cognitive processes and attention management, ultimately fostering creativity. Cognitive processes would entail creative thinking, problem identification, problem solving, and ideation. Moreover, learning experiences inculcate discernible benefits related to decision-making competences, productivity improvement and incentive for excellence in performance.

Structured training enables knowledge conversations, nurtures better-quality relationships, builds trust and promotes teamwork (Alkhalaf and Al-Tabbaa, 2024). Training beneficiaries could also benefit from learning about effective time management from a practical point of view on aspects of planning and prioritizing, flexibility and adaptability, focusing on techniques which could enhance concentration and further develop emotion management skills to cope with workload (Podlesny, 2024). Alhasani and Orji (2024) additionally, recommend designing persuasive stress and time management interventions with dynamic rewards to infuse an element of fun and boost engagement where beneficiaries can categorize and track task completion and dedicating adequate time to concentrate on tasks completion. However, a small percentage (7.8%) disagreed, suggesting that they did not perceive the training environment as effectively fostering conscientious behaviors, whilst 6.2% were neutral.

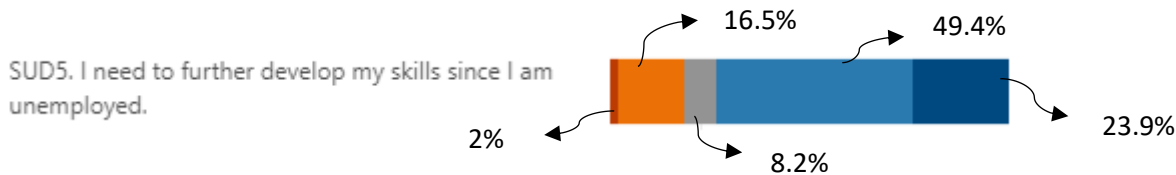
9.4.4 Application of acquired skills



In response to the statement "I have applied the acquired skills from the W&R SETA program," a majority of respondents (68.3%) expressed agreement. They indicated that they have applied the skills they gained from the programme, suggesting that the training has had a tangible impact on their professional endeavors. Khasawneh, Khasawneh, and Khasawneh (2024) uphold that the skills retention and successful skill transfer cannot be overstated and it is vital to sustain proficiency to positively implement attained skills in real-world scenarios, extending beyond the classroom. It is therefore, essential to design appealing and exciting educational encounters, as learner interest and devotion develop as key factors in sustaining long-term skill acquisition. Maintaining competence and practice would keep beneficiaries agile in achieving tasks and goals. To experience real value of application of acquired skills it is necessary for training institutions to collaborate with industry stakeholders for insights on relevant and specific skills needed.

So that learning can focus on real-world scenarios during training, getting real-time feedback from trainees and work mentors (Uwayezu and Nkurikiyimfura, 2024). However, a notable portion (19%) disagreed, indicating that they may not have found ample opportunities or relevance to utilize the skills acquired from the programme, which is a point of concern as relevance of training must be aligned to workplace requirements and non-alignment will increase the skills mismatch divide. 12.7% remained neutral to the question.

9.4.5 Enhancing employment opportunities by studying further

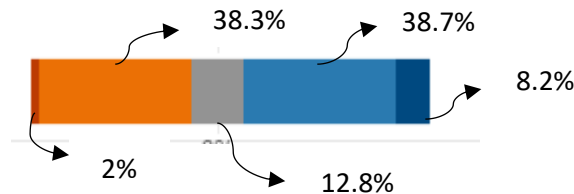


Regarding the statement "I need to further develop my skills since I am unemployed," a substantial majority (73.3%) agreed or strongly agreed. This suggests that a significant portion of respondents recognize the importance of continuous skill development, particularly in the context of unemployment, as a means to enhance their employability and competitiveness in the job market. However, the emphatic statement made by respondents that they have to further develop their skills post-graduation is symptomatic of a global phenomenon of a skill set mismatch. Dixit, Welsh, Agarwal, Ramadani and Agrawal (2024) assert that companies globally are reporting a lack of skills among young educated degree holders not qualifying for job opportunities, consequently exacerbating unemployment. There appears to be a misfit in the implementation and execution of academic programmes by educational institutions.

Msweli (2023) posits that, ironically youth have acquired skills which are not in demand presenting a conflict between skills required by employers and supply of graduates by the institutions aggravating unemployment. This can be ascribed to curricular system deficiencies in which the school system steer graduates toward employment requiring high levels of unmarketable skills (Mathew, Benjamin and Agnes, 2024). It is against this backdrop respondents see the need to further study as an avenue to escape the unemployment quagmire. However, a smaller percentage (18.5%) strongly disagreed, indicating that they may feel adequately skilled or do not perceive a need for further development despite their unemployment status. Only 8.2% chose to remain neutral to the question.

9.4.6 Expanding skill sets post qualification

SUD6. I have further developed my skills since I completed the W&R SETA program.



In response to the statement "I have further developed my skills since I completed the W&R SETA program," the responses were more varied. While a considerable percentage (46.9%) agreed or strongly agreed that they have further developed their skills post-programme completion, a significant portion (40.4%) disagreed. 12.7% remained neutral to the question. This discrepancy suggests that while some participants have actively pursued skill development opportunities beyond the programme, others may not have actively engaged in such endeavors or may not have found suitable avenues for further development. Responses given to studying further could be linked to a lack of relevancy or limitations of acquired qualification or studying further was inspired by aspirational intent. The marginal split between respondents that agreed and those that disagreed is attributed to, according to Sichamba, Matafwali and Kawimbe (2024), "push" and "pull" factors with regard to career advancement and progression.

Pushing away from further skills acquisition could be a lack of motivation, absence of funding and minimal monetary incentives post upgrading of qualifications. Pull factors would include recognition of study leave, salary scale upgrades, and promotions based on higher qualifications. There has to be continuous learning to meet evolving markets and institutions need to consider and respond to perceived push factors while constantly upholding pull factors and re-orienting employees on evolving work environment. Overall the pull factor should be nurtured amongst graduates within the realm of life-long learning and having skills which are current and marketable.

9.5. SUPPORT AND FUTURE PLANS (SFP)

The analysis presented below is based on the responses of individuals who are beneficiaries of the W&R SETA program. These results offer insights into the support received by the respondents and their plans. Through a comprehensive examination of these findings, we aim to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of the program on their trajectories and ambitions.

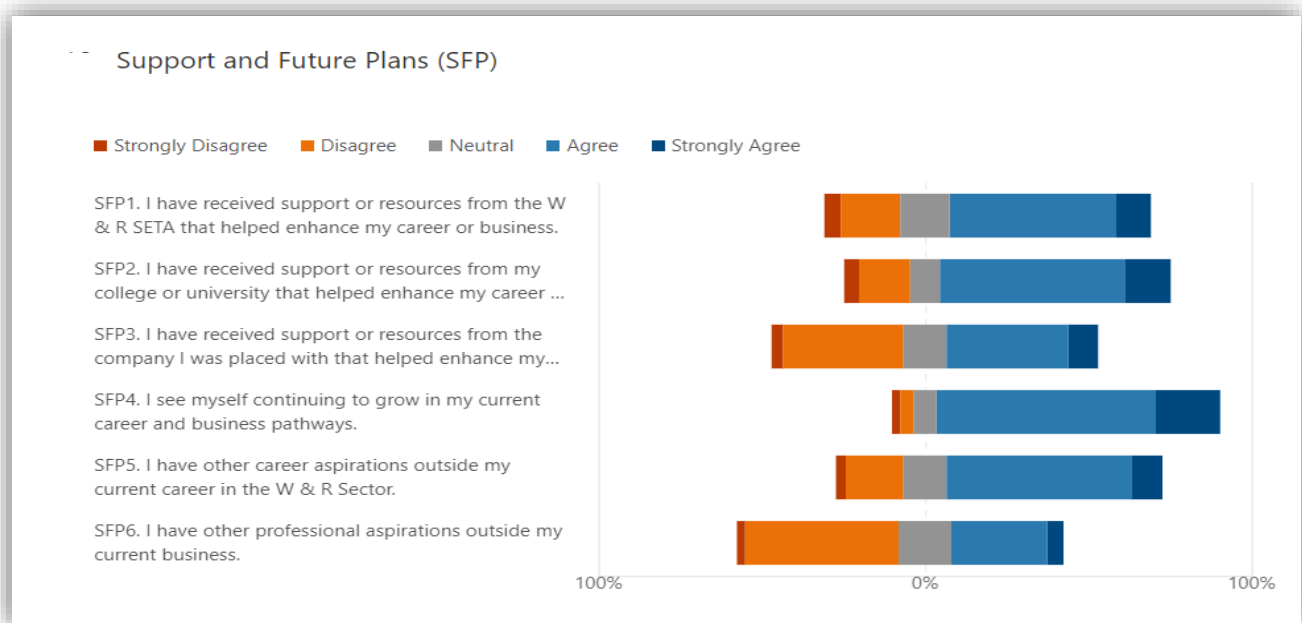
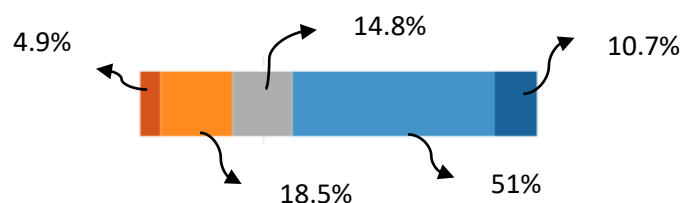


Figure 19 Support and future plans (SFP).

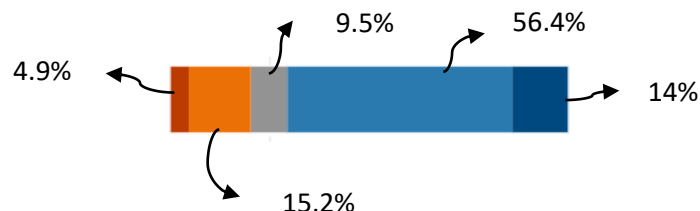
9.5.1 Support or resources from the W & R SETA that helped enhance career or business.



- **Agree:** According to the data, 61.7% of respondents agree that they have received support or resources from the W & R SETA that helped enhance their career or business. This indicates that a majority of respondents perceive that the support or resources provided by the W & R SETA have been beneficial for advancing their career or business endeavors. It suggests that the majority of participants find value in the assistance provided by the organization.
- **Neutral:** 14.8% of respondents are neutral, indicating that they neither strongly agree nor disagree with the statement. This group may have mixed feelings or uncertainties about the extent to which the support or resources received from the W & R SETA have contributed to enhancing their career or business. Their neutral stance suggests they may have experienced some benefits but remain undecided overall.
- **Disagree:** 24.4% of respondents disagree that they have received support or resources from the W & R SETA that helped enhance their career or business. This represents a significant portion of respondents who do not perceive any tangible benefits from the support or resources provided by the organization. It's important to understand the reasons behind their disagreement and address any potential gaps or challenges in the support or resources offered by the W & R SETA.

Overall, while a majority of respondents agree that they have received support or resources that helped enhance their career or business, there is also a notable portion who either hold neutral views or disagree with this statement. It's crucial to further investigate the experiences and perceptions of all respondents to identify areas for improvement and ensure that the support provided by the W & R SETA aligns with the needs and expectations of its stakeholders.

9.5.2 Support or resources from my college or university that helped enhance career

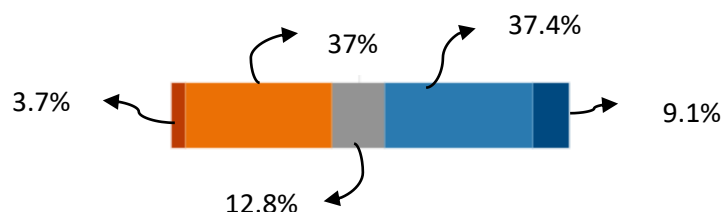


- **Agree:** According to the data, 70.4% of respondents agree that they have received support or resources from their college or university that helped enhance their career. This suggests that a significant majority of respondents perceive that the support or resources provided by their educational institution have been beneficial for advancing their career endeavors. It reflects positively on the effectiveness of the college or university in providing valuable assistance to students in their career development.

- **Neutral:** 9.5% of respondents are neutral, indicating that they neither strongly agree nor disagree with the statement. This group may have mixed feelings or uncertainties about the extent to which the support or resources received from their college or university have contributed to enhancing their career. Their neutral stance suggests they may have experienced some benefits but remain undecided overall.
- **Disagree:** 20.1% of respondents disagree that they have received support or resources from their college or university that helped enhance their career. This represents a notable portion of respondents who do not perceive any tangible benefits from the support or resources provided by their educational institution. It's important to understand the reasons behind their disagreement and address any potential gaps or challenges in the support or resources offered by colleges or universities.

Overall, while a majority of respondents agree that they have received support or resources that helped enhance their career from their college or university, there is also a significant portion who either hold neutral views or disagree with this statement. It's essential for educational institutions to assess and improve their career support services to better meet the needs of all students and ensure positive outcomes in career development.

9.5.3 Support or resources from the company I was placed with that helped enhance my career or business.



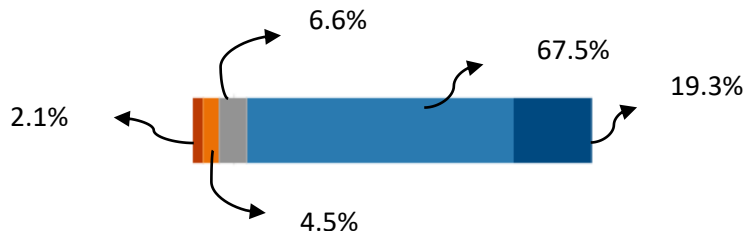
- **Agree:** According to the data, 46.5% of respondents agree that they have received support or resources from the company they were placed with that helped enhance their career or business. This indicates that a significant portion of respondents perceive that the support or resources provided by the company have been beneficial for advancing their career or business endeavors. It reflects positively on the effectiveness of the companies in providing valuable assistance to individuals during their placement.
- **Neutral:** 12.8% of respondents are neutral, indicating that they neither strongly agree nor disagree with the statement. This group may have mixed feelings or uncertainties about the extent to which the support or resources received from the company they were placed with have contributed to enhancing their career

or business. Their neutral stance suggests they may have experienced some benefits but remain undecided overall.

- **Disagree:** 40.7% of respondents disagree that they have received support or resources from the company they were placed with that helped enhance their career or business. This represents a significant portion of respondents who do not perceive any tangible benefits from the support or resources provided by the company. It's important to understand the reasons behind their disagreement and address any potential gaps or challenges in the support or resources offered by companies during placement.

Overall, while a notable portion of respondents agree that they have received support or resources that helped enhance their career or business from the company they were placed with, there is also a significant portion who either hold neutral views or disagree with this statement. It's essential for companies to assess and improve their support and resources offered during placements to better meet the needs of individuals and ensure positive outcomes in career or business development.

9.5.4 Self continuing to grow in my current career and business pathways.

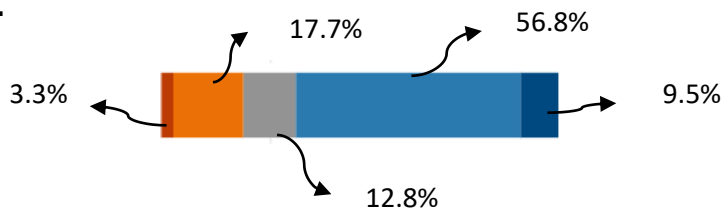


- **Agree:** According to the data, 86.8% of respondents agree that they see themselves continuing to grow in their current career and business pathways. This indicates that a significant majority of respondents have a positive outlook on their future growth within their current career or business endeavors. It suggests confidence and optimism about their ability to progress and succeed in their chosen paths.
- **Neutral:** 6.6% of respondents are neutral, indicating that they neither strongly agree nor disagree with the statement. This group may have mixed feelings or uncertainties about their future growth prospects in their current career or business pathways. Their neutral stance suggests they may have some reservations or hesitations but remain undecided overall.

- **Disagree:** 6.6% of respondents disagree that they see themselves continuing to grow in their current career and business pathways. This represents a relatively small portion of respondents who do not have a positive outlook on their future growth within their current career or business endeavors. It's important to understand the reasons behind their disagreement and address any potential barriers or challenges they may be facing in their career or business development.

Overall, the majority of respondents agree that they see themselves continuing to grow in their current career and business pathways, indicating a positive outlook on their future prospects. However, it's essential to acknowledge the perspectives of those who are neutral or disagree to better understand the factors influencing individuals' perceptions of their career or business growth potential.

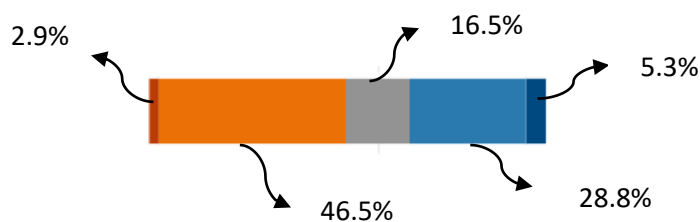
9.5.5 Other career aspirations outside current career in the Wholesale & Retail Sector.



- **Agree:** According to the data, 66.3% of respondents agree that they have other career aspirations outside their current career in the Wholesale & Retail Sector. This suggests that a significant majority of respondents have ambitions beyond their current career path within the Wholesale & Retail Sector. It indicates a desire for growth, exploration, and potentially diversification of career opportunities among participants.
- **Neutral:** 12.8% of respondents are neutral, indicating that they neither strongly agree nor disagree with the statement. This group may have mixed feelings or uncertainties about their career aspirations outside their current career in the Wholesale & Retail Sector. Their neutral stance suggests they may have some contemplation or indecision regarding their future career directions.
- **Disagree:** 21% of respondents disagree that they have other career aspirations outside their current career in the Wholesale & Retail Sector. This represents a notable portion of respondents who do not envision pursuing other career paths beyond their current occupation in the Wholesale & Retail Sector. It's essential to understand the reasons behind their disagreement, such as contentment with their current career or a lack of interest in exploring alternative career options.

Overall, while a majority of respondents agree that they have other career aspirations outside their current career in the Wholesale & Retail Sector, there is also a significant portion who either hold neutral views or disagree with this statement. It's important to acknowledge the diversity of perspectives and aspirations among participants and consider how to support individuals in exploring and pursuing their career goals, whether within or outside the Wholesale & Retail Sector.

9.5.6 Other professional aspirations outside current business.



- **Agree:** According to the data, 34.1% of respondents agree that they have other professional aspirations outside their current business. This suggests that a minority of respondents have ambitions beyond their current business ventures. It indicates that some individuals may be considering or exploring alternative professional paths outside their current business endeavors.
- **Neutral:** 16.5% of respondents are neutral, indicating that they neither strongly agree nor disagree with the statement. This group may have mixed feelings or uncertainties about their professional aspirations outside their current business. Their neutral stance suggests they may be open to considering other professional paths but remain undecided or ambivalent about their future career directions.
- **Disagree:** 49.4% of respondents disagree that they have other professional aspirations outside their current business. This represents a significant portion of respondents who do not envision pursuing other professional paths beyond their current business ventures. It suggests that a majority of individuals are focused on their current business endeavors and do not have immediate plans to explore alternative career paths.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that a substantial portion of respondents do not have other professional aspirations outside their current business, with the majority disagreeing with the statement. However, there is still a notable minority who either agree or are neutral, suggesting that some individuals may be considering or open to exploring alternative professional paths.

It's important to consider the motivations and circumstances of individuals in each group to better understand their career aspirations and support their professional development accordingly. The section below examines the challenges encountered in accessing and securing employment within the sector after completing the W&R SETA programmes.

9.6 CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED IN ACCESSING AND SECURING EMPLOYMENT WITHIN THE SECTOR AFTER COMPLETING THE W&R SETA PROGRAMME (C).

This section provides a comprehensive analysis of the challenges faced in accessing and securing employment within the sector following the completion of the W&R SETA program. By examining these challenges, we gain valuable insights into the effectiveness of the program and the factors influencing employment outcomes in the sector. Here are the results:

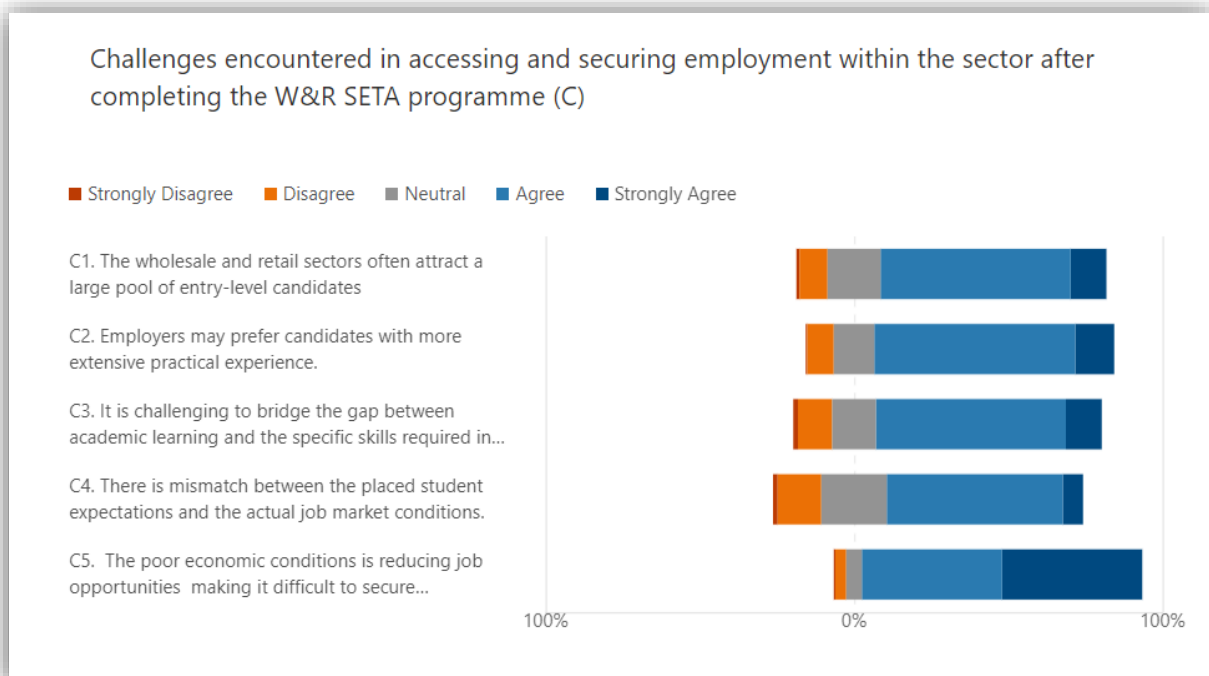
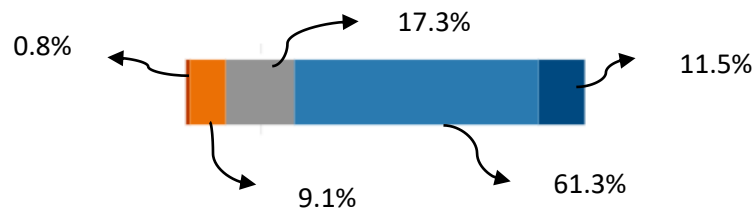


Figure 20 Challenges encountered in accessing and securing employment within the sector after completing the w&r seta programme (c).

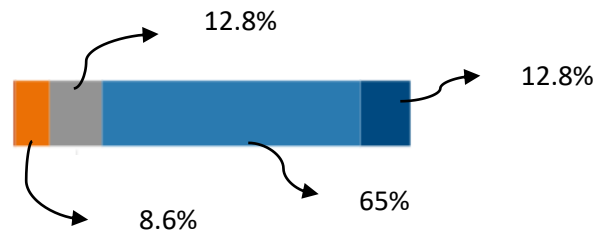
9.6.1 The wholesale and retail sectors often attract a large pool of entry-level candidates



- Agree:** According to the research results, 72.8% of respondents agree that the wholesale and retail sectors often attract a large pool of entry-level candidates. This indicates that a significant majority of respondents believe that these sectors are commonly sought after by individuals seeking entry-level positions. It suggests that there is a widespread perception of the wholesale and retail sectors as accessible and accommodating for individuals entering the workforce.
- Neutral:** 17.3% of respondents are neutral, indicating that they neither strongly agree nor disagree with the statement. This group may have mixed feelings or uncertainties about whether the wholesale and retail sectors attract a large pool of entry-level candidates. Their neutral stance suggests they may not have a strong opinion or may require further information to form a definitive viewpoint on this matter.
- Disagree:** 9.1% of respondents disagree that the wholesale and retail sectors often attract a large pool of entry-level candidates. This represents a relatively small portion of respondents who do not believe that these sectors are commonly sought after by entry-level job seekers. It's important to understand the reasons behind their disagreement, such as perceptions of other sectors being more attractive or accessible for entry-level positions.

Overall, the results of this study suggest that a significant majority of respondents agree that the wholesale and retail sectors often attract a large pool of entry-level candidates. However, some respondents hold neutral or disagreeing views, indicating some diversity in perceptions.

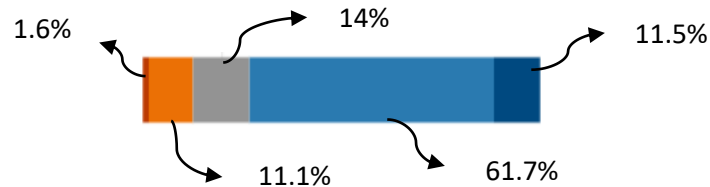
9.6.2 Employers may prefer candidates with more extensive practical experience.



- Agree:** According to the data, 77.8% of respondents agree that employers may prefer candidates with more extensive practical experience. This indicates that a significant majority of respondents believe that practical experience is valued by employers and may be a preference in candidate selection processes. It suggests that there is a widespread perception among respondents that practical experience holds significant importance in the eyes of employers.
- Neutral:** 12.8% of respondents are neutral, indicating that they neither strongly agree nor disagree with the statement. This group may have mixed feelings or uncertainties about whether employers prefer candidates with more extensive practical experience. Their neutral stance suggests they may not have a strong opinion or may require further information to form a definitive viewpoint on this matter.
- Disagree:** 9.4% of respondents disagree that employers may prefer candidates with more extensive practical experience. This represents a relatively small portion of respondents who do not believe that practical experience holds significant weight in the eyes of employers. It's important to understand the reasons behind their disagreement, such as perceptions of other factors being more important in candidate selection processes.

The study findings indicate that most respondents believe employers prefer candidates with extensive practical experience. However, some respondents are neutral or disagree, suggesting varying perceptions. Understanding these perceptions can offer insights into employer hiring practices and the importance placed on practical experience.

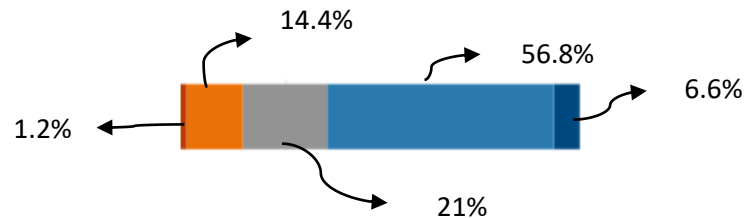
9.6.3 It is challenging to bridge the gap between academic learning and the specific skills required in the wholesale and retail sector.



- **Agree:** According to the data, 73.2% of respondents agree that it is challenging to bridge the gap between academic learning and the specific skills required in the wholesale and retail sectors. This indicates that a significant majority of respondents perceive there to be a challenge in aligning academic learning with the specific skills needed in the wholesale and retail sectors. It suggests that there is a recognition of a gap between theoretical knowledge gained through academic learning and the practical skills demanded by the industry.
- **Neutral:** 14% of respondents are neutral, indicating that they neither strongly agree nor disagree with the statement. This group may have mixed feelings or uncertainties about the extent of the challenge in bridging the gap between academic learning and the specific skills required in the wholesale and retail sectors. Their neutral stance suggests they may require further information or experience to form a definitive viewpoint on this matter.
- **Disagree:** 12.7% of respondents disagree that it is challenging to bridge the gap between academic learning and the specific skills required in the wholesale and retail sectors. This represents a relatively small portion of respondents who do not perceive significant challenges in aligning academic learning with industry-specific skills. It's important to understand the reasons behind their disagreement, such as perceptions of effective educational programmes or experiences that have successfully bridged this gap.

Overall, the results of this study suggest that a significant majority of respondents agree that there is a challenge in bridging the gap between academic learning and the specific skills required in the wholesale and retail sectors. However, some respondents hold neutral or disagreeing views, indicating some diversity in perceptions. Understanding these perceptions can provide insights into educational and training needs within the wholesale and retail sectors.

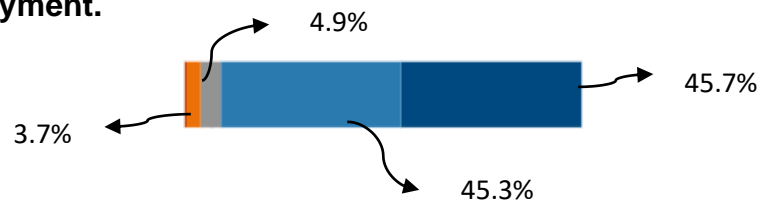
9.6.4 There is mismatch between the placed student expectations and the actual job market conditions.



- **Agree:** According to the data, 63.4% of respondents agree that there is a mismatch between the placed student expectations and the actual job market conditions. This indicates that a significant majority of respondents perceive that there is a discrepancy between the expectations of students placed in jobs and the reality of job market conditions. It suggests that there may be a gap between what students expect from their placements and the actual opportunities available in the job market.
- **Neutral:** 21% of respondents are neutral, indicating that they neither strongly agree nor disagree with the statement. This group may have mixed feelings or uncertainties about whether there is a mismatch between placed student expectations and job market conditions. Their neutral stance suggests they may not have a strong opinion or may require further information to form a definitive viewpoint on this matter.
- **Disagree:** 1.2% of respondents disagree that there is a mismatch between placed student expectations and job market conditions. This represents a relatively small portion of respondents who do not believe that there is a significant discrepancy between student expectations and job market realities. It's important to understand the reasons behind their disagreement, such as perceptions of alignment between student expectations and actual job opportunities.

Overall, the results of this study suggest that a significant majority of respondents agree that there is a mismatch between placed student expectations and the actual job market conditions. However, some respondents hold neutral or disagreeing views, indicating some diversity in perceptions. Understanding these perceptions can provide insights into the effectiveness of career guidance and placement programmes in preparing students for the realities of the job market.

9.6.5 The poor economic conditions is reducing job opportunities making it difficult to secure employment.



- Agree:** According to the data, 91% of respondents agree that poor economic conditions are reducing job opportunities, making it difficult to secure employment. This indicates that the vast majority of respondents perceive that challenging economic conditions are negatively impacting job availability and increasing the difficulty of securing employment. It suggests a widespread recognition of the impact of economic factors on the job market.
- Neutral:** 4.9% of respondents are neutral, indicating that they neither strongly agree nor disagree with the statement. This group may have mixed feelings or uncertainties about the extent to which poor economic conditions affect job opportunities and employment prospects. Their neutral stance suggests they may require further information or experience to form a definitive viewpoint on this matter.
- Disagree:** 4.1% of respondents disagree that poor economic conditions are reducing job opportunities and making it difficult to secure employment. This represents a relatively small portion of respondents who do not believe that economic conditions have a significant impact on job availability and the ease of finding employment. It's important to understand the reasons behind their disagreement, such as perceptions of resilience in the job market or personal experiences that contradict the statement.

Overall, the results of this study suggest that the vast majority of respondents agree that poor economic conditions are reducing job opportunities and making it difficult to secure employment. However, some respondents hold neutral or disagreeing views, indicating some diversity in perceptions. Understanding these perceptions can provide insights into the challenges individuals face in navigating the job market during times of economic hardship. The section that follows explains the level of satisfaction of beneficiaries based on the programmes offered by the W&R SETA, as well as the potential recommendations to improve the W&R SETA training programmes.

9.7 SATISFACTION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

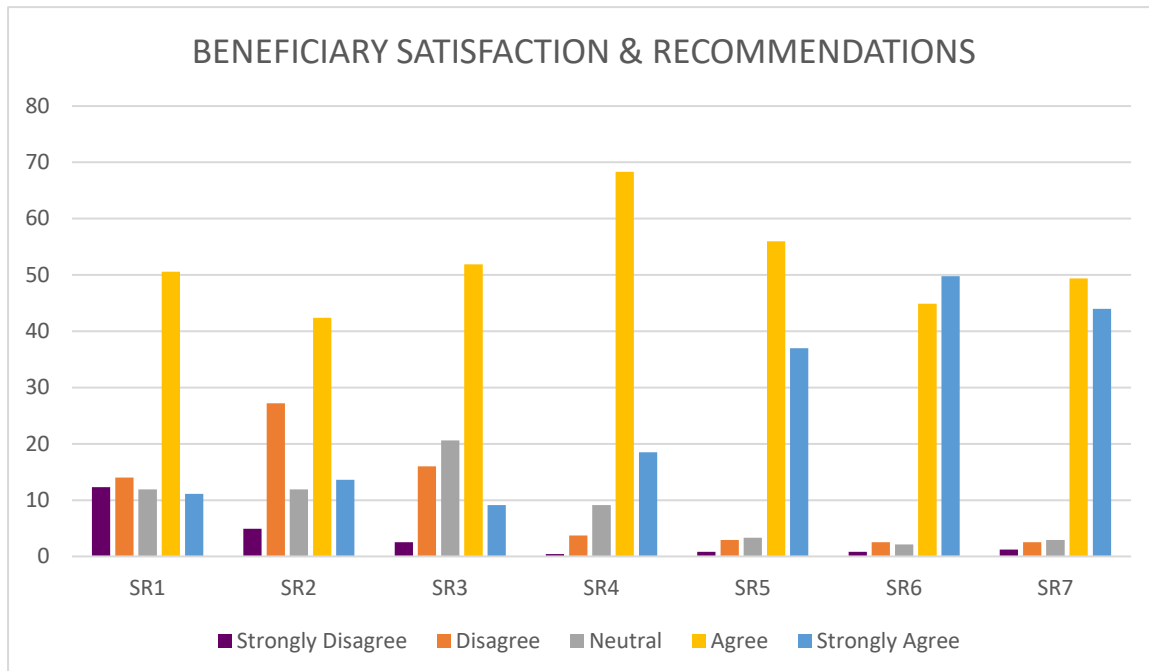


Figure 21 Beneficiary Satisfaction & Recommendations

Beneficiaries were requested to provide input on their level of satisfaction with the W & R SETA interventions/ training and development programmes and offer recommendations for further improvement of the effectiveness of the current programmes. The responses are reflected in Figure 21, as follows:

9.7.1 I am satisfied with the W&R SETA funding I received:

- 12.3% of beneficiaries displayed strong dissatisfaction with the W & R SETA funding received.
- 14% of beneficiaries disagreed with the funding they received.
- 11.9% of beneficiaries maintained a neutral stance to the funding received.
- 50.6% of beneficiaries noted their agreement with the funding received.
- 11.1% of beneficiaries shared a strong sense of satisfaction for the funding received.

Stemming from the above data, the following deductions can be drawn:

- The largest proportion of beneficiaries (50.6%) indicated that they are satisfied with the W&R SETA funding by selecting "Agree."
- A significant portion (14%) expressed disagreement with the statement, indicating that they are not satisfied with the funding.
- The percentages of beneficiaries who strongly disagree (12.3%) and strongly agree (11.1%) are relatively close, indicating a split in opinions with a slightly higher proportion leaning towards strong disagreement.
- A notable proportion (11.9%) selected the neutral option, indicating they neither agree nor disagree with the statement.

Overall, the data suggests a mixed sentiment among beneficiaries regarding their satisfaction with the W&R SETA funding, with a notable portion expressing dissatisfaction or neutrality. Therefore, further investigation may be necessary to determine the reasons behind these sentiments and to explore appropriate and innovative ways in addressing key concerns of beneficiaries.

9.7.2 I am satisfied with the W&R SETA learnership, or skills programmes I received.

- 4.9%- strongly disagreed with the W&R SETA learnership or skills programme received.
- 27.2%- noted their disagreement with the W&R SETA learnership or skills programme received.
- 11.9%- chose to be neutral in their response.
- 42.4%- stressed their agreement with the learnership or skills programme received.
- 13.6%- highlighted their strong agreement with the learnership or skills programme received.

Based on the data presented above, the following conclusions can be made:

- The largest proportion of beneficiaries (42.4%) indicated that they are satisfied with the W&R SETA learnerships or skills programmes by selecting "Agree."
- A significant portion (27.2%) expressed disagreement with the statement, indicating that they are not satisfied with the learnerships or skills programmes.

- The percentages of beneficiaries who strongly disagree (4.9%) and strongly agree (13.6%) are smaller compared to the other categories but still represent notable portions of the data.
- A moderate proportion (11.9%) selected the neutral option, indicating they neither agree nor disagree with the statement.

In summary, the data suggests a mixed reaction among beneficiaries regarding their satisfaction with the W&R SETA learnerships or skills programmes, with a notable portion expressing dissatisfaction. It may be advisable to conduct further exploration into the reasons behind the views expressed by the beneficiaries, to improve the quality and effectiveness of the SETA programmes.

9.7.3 My experience with the W&R SETA program enhanced my current employment status or entrepreneurial journey.

- 2.5%- of beneficiaries strongly disagreed
- 16%- of beneficiaries disagreed
- 20.6%- of beneficiaries remained neutral
- 51.9%- of beneficiaries agreed
- 9.1%- of beneficiaries strongly agreed

A careful review of the above data, reveals the following:

- The largest proportion of beneficiaries (51.9%) indicated that their experience with the W&R SETA program has enhanced their current employment status or entrepreneurial journey by selecting "Agree."
- A significant portion (20.6%) expressed a neutral stance, neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the statement.
- The percentages of beneficiaries who strongly disagree (2.5%) and strongly agree (9.1%) are relatively small compared to the other categories but still represent significant portions of the data.
- A notable proportion (16%) expressed disagreement with the statement, indicating that they do not believe their experience with the W&R SETA program has enhanced their current status or journey.

In effect, the data implies a positive attitude among a majority of beneficiaries regarding the enhancement of their current employment status or entrepreneurial

journey due to their experience with the W&R SETA program. However, there is also a notable proportion of beneficiaries who either disagree or hold a neutral stance, indicating need for improvement or more research into the effectiveness of the program in achieving its primary goals.

9.7.4 I recommend improvements to the content and implementation of the W&R SETA intervention programmes due to technological advancement in the sector.

- Strongly Disagree: 0.4%
- Disagree: 3.7%
- Neutral: 9.1%
- Agree: 68.3%
- Strongly Agree: 18.5%

A close analysis of the above results indicates the following:

- The majority of beneficiaries (68.3%) agree that improvements to the content and implementation of the W&R SETA intervention programmes are necessary due to technological advancements in the sector.
- A significant portion (18.5%) strongly agrees with the statement, indicating a high level of consensus among this group.
- A smaller proportion (9.1%) expressed a neutral stance, neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the recommendation for improvements.
- Only a small percentage of beneficiaries disagreed (3.7%), and an even smaller percentage strongly disagreed (0.4%) with the recommendation.

Interestingly, the data suggests that there is widespread recognition among beneficiaries of the need for improvements to the content and implementation of W&R SETA intervention programmes to align with technological advancements in the sector. Both the high and strong agreement percentages indicate strong support for these improvements. Therefore, this data can be utilised to inform and guide stakeholders in the sector about the importance of updating and adapting intervention programmes to meet the evolving technological landscape and the contemporary needs of beneficiaries.

9.7.5 I suggest that the W&R SETA programmes should strengthen learnerships and graduate placement interventions to allow beneficiaries to gain relevant and adequate work experience to secure employment/entrepreneurs.

- 0.8%- of beneficiaries Strongly Disagree
- 2.9%- of beneficiaries Disagree
- 3.3%- of beneficiaries remain Neutral
- 56%- of beneficiaries Agree
- 37%- of beneficiaries Strongly Agree

In view of the above results, the following conclusions may be highlighted:

- The majority of beneficiaries (56%) agree that the W&R SETA programmes should strengthen learnerships and graduate placement interventions to allow beneficiaries to gain relevant and adequate work experience.
- A significant portion (37%) strongly agrees with the suggestion, indicating a high level of consensus among this group.
- A smaller proportion (3.3%) expressed a neutral stance, neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the suggestion.
- Only a small percentage of beneficiaries disagreed (2.9%), and an even smaller percentage strongly disagreed (0.8%) with the suggestion.

In effect, the data suggests strong support among beneficiaries for strengthening learnerships and graduate placement interventions within W&R SETA programmes. Also, the combination of high and strong agreement percentages indicate a clear desire for these programmes to provide opportunities for gaining relevant work experience, which is seen as crucial for securing employment or pursuing entrepreneurial ventures. This data highlights the importance of prioritizing such interventions within the W&R SETA programmes to better serve the needs of beneficiaries and improve their chances of success in the workplace.

9.7.6 I propose that the W & R SETA secure industry commitment to assist beneficiaries/ unemployed youth with employment opportunities.

- Strongly Disagree: 0.8%
- Disagree: 2.5%
- Neutral: 2.1%
- Agree: 44.9%
- Strongly Agree: 49.8%

An interpretation of the above percentages, reveals the following:

- The majority of beneficiaries (49.8%) strongly agree that W&R SETA should secure industry commitment to assist beneficiaries and unemployed youth with employment opportunities.
- A significant portion (44.9%) agrees with the proposal, indicating a high level of support.
- Only a small percentage of beneficiaries disagree (2.5%) or strongly disagree (0.8%) with the proposal.
- A minority (2.1%) expressed a neutral view, neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the proposal.

Convincingly, the data suggests overwhelming support among beneficiaries for the proposal to secure industry commitment for assisting beneficiaries and unemployed youth with employment opportunities. Both the high agreement and strong agreement percentages emphasises a clear consensus among beneficiaries that such actions would be beneficial in addressing unemployment and supporting individuals in accessing employment opportunities within the industry. This data underscores the importance of collaboration between W&R SETA and industry stakeholders to create extended learning and career pathways to employment for beneficiaries and unemployed youth.

9.7.7 I recommend that the W & R intervention program be extended to include a more formal component of Mentorship Training and Practice with the involvement of key industry Partners.

- 1.2%- of beneficiaries Strongly Disagreed
- 2.5%- of beneficiaries recorded their Disagreement
- 2.9%- of beneficiaries maintained a Neutral view
- 49.4%- of beneficiaries stressed their Agreement
- 44%- of beneficiaries noted their Strong Agreement

Based on the above data, the following pertinent inferences may be underscored:

- A significant majority of beneficiaries (44% strongly agree and 49.4% agree) support the recommendation to extend the W&R intervention program to include a more formal component of Mentorship Training and Practice with the involvement of key industry partners. This indicates strong overall support for the proposal.
- Only a small proportion of beneficiaries disagree (2.5%) or strongly disagree (1.2%) with the recommendation.
- A minority (2.9%) expressed a neutral stance, neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the proposal.

In essence, the data draw attention to overwhelming support among beneficiaries for the recommendation to include a more formal component of Mentorship Training and Practice within the W&R intervention program, with involvement from key industry partners. Also, the high and strong agreement percentages denotes a clear consensus among beneficiaries that such an addition would be beneficial in enhancing their learning and skill development, as well as facilitating connections with industry professionals. This data underscores the potential value of mentorship and industry collaboration in strengthening intervention programmes and supporting beneficiaries in their career development within the W&R sector.

10 RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

10.1 Recommendations

This study examined and traced the employment status of the W&R SETA-funded beneficiaries who were granted learnership opportunity. It aimed to investigate whether they are employed, unemployed or became entrepreneurs after completing the W&R SETA training intervention programmes. In general this study found that the majority of Unemployed W&R SETA-funded beneficiaries faced challenges in finding sustainable employment in the retail and wholesale sector. These challenges included limited job opportunities, lack of appropriate skills required by employers, a competitive job market, etc. The study also highlighted the need for targeted interventions to address the specific needs of this group of beneficiaries and improve their employment prospects. To these challenges the following recommendations are to essential to be considered by the W&R SETA:

10.1.1 Curriculum Alignment

The W & R SETA should:

- Consider making improvements to the content and implementation of its intervention programmes to align with technological advancements in the sector. It should be conducting a thorough review of current intervention programmes to identify areas for enhancement and update content accordingly.
- Continue to focus on providing high-quality programmes that effectively enhance beneficiaries' employment status or entrepreneurial journey.
- Prevent mismatches between expectations and reality and focus on what could be beneficial for beneficiaries.
- Encourage institutions of higher learning to make changes in training programmes to cultivate highly skilled graduates in meet industry demands.
- To constantly adapt curriculum changes in the sector.

- Invest in the upskilling and reskilling of facilitators and lecturers so that they have the competencies to effectively create stimulating learning environments.
- Stimulate knowledge conversations, nurture better-quality relationships, build trust and promote teamwork.
- Entrench broad spectrum of soft skills training as a standard aspect of all learning programmes.
- Ensure training programmes harness relationship building and affording beneficiaries to be more pliable, work ready and view diversity in the work environment as an organizational strength.
- Align funding to curricula output and needs of the retail sector in terms of relevance and sustainable employment opportunities.

10.1.2 Industry and academic institution partnerships

The W & R SETA should:

- Foster partnerships between academic institutions, retail businesses and industry experts to provide valuable insights and guidance in developing curriculum that better aligns with industry needs.
- Help educational institutions better understand the demands of the job market and tailor their programmes to meet those needs.
- Focus on creating job training programmes and partnerships with local businesses to provide more opportunities for employment.
- Facilitate collaboration between knowledge providers and industry for insights on relevant skills needed and getting real-time feedback from work mentors so as to gain real value of application of required skills.
- Champion industry and academic institutional engagement (as the custodian of skills development in the retail sector)

10.1.3 Career Guidance and Career pathing

The W & R SETA should:

- Provide ongoing career development support by offering resources and guidance to help beneficiaries navigate the job market, develop relevant skills, and make successful transitions into their chosen careers. This can help address the mismatch between expectations and actual conditions.
- Provide support and resources for those looking for employment, such as resume writing workshops or career counselling services.
- Improve career counselling services by providing beneficiaries with more accurate and up-to-date information about job market conditions and expectations. This can help them make more informed decisions about their career choices.
- Encourage research and explore different career paths that match beneficiaries' interests and goals, and to create a plan for gaining the necessary education or experience to transition into a new field.
- Develop new opportunities for skill development and training in other industries that align with their career aspirations: Considering how current skills and experiences can be transferred to new roles or sectors.
- Implement programmes and initiatives that specifically target career development and support for students.
- Increase the support and resources provided by colleges and universities to ensure all beneficiaries receive assistance in enhancing their career.
- Expand and improve existing programmes to have an even greater impact on beneficiaries' careers.

10.1.4 Mentorship Support

The W & R SETA should:

- Include high level support and mentorship for beneficiaries.
- Launch mentorship training for industry-based mentors to assist and guide beneficiaries for W&R SETA intervention programmes.
- Promote networking opportunities for beneficiaries with professionals in the field who could provide valuable insights and guidance on how to develop practical skills and make oneself a more attractive candidate to potential employers.
- Encourage mentorships and support structures for the successful completion of learnerships, graduates' placements and bursaries. Making funding available has to come with complimentary support.

10.1.5 Work Readiness Programmes

The W & R SETA should:

- Encourage knowledge providers to include work readiness as part of learning programmes to ensure a seamless transition to employment.
- Fund work readiness programmes to bridge the gap between institutions and industry.
- Implement funding more hands-on training programmes or apprenticeships that specifically focus on the practical skills needed in the wholesale and retail sectors.

10.1.6 Internships and Work-Integrated Learning

The W & R SETA should:

- Enhance practical training opportunities by offering internships, co-op programmes, WIL, and other hands-on learning experiences. This can help beneficiaries gain valuable skills and insights into the job market.
- Increase its Work Integrated Learning spend to provide avenues for work preparedness and route to employment market.
- Fund general work exposure induction and work readiness prior to placement so that beneficiaries are able to transition to industry and make themselves more marketable.

10.1.7 Selective and prudent funding vs Funding any programme

The W & R SETA should:

- Ensure prudent funding that is linked to sustainable job opportunities rather than merely funding programmes for any qualification.
- Invest efforts and resources in training programmes that focus on teaching beneficiaries about the latest technological advancements in the industry.
- Align its funding model to address the demand of skills required, for e.g. to fund in demand skills only.
- Make sure bursary and graduate placement funding is linked to scarce and critical skills.
- Fund a mix of skills and qualifications to meet the evolving needs of the industry and to enhance employability prospects for job seekers.
- Fund programmes that possess relevant skills set required by the economy to avert skill set mismatch.
- Strengthen learnerships and graduate placement interventions in order to address the need for beneficiaries to gain relevant and adequate work experience.

- Ensure that programmes funded are directly linked to professional growth.

10.1.8 SETA Marketing of interventions

The W & R SETA should:

- Provide more information and support beneficiaries on how to access and apply for learnership programmes opportunities.
- Continue to prioritise and expand intervention programmes to further enhance the careers and businesses of individuals within the industry. This should be marketed with intent.
- Develop a strategy to encourage more individuals to get skilled aligned to labour market trends and remaining relevant.

10.1.9 Qualitative Evaluation of Interventions

The W & R SETA should:

- Monitor and evaluate the impact of these programmes on the beneficiaries' academic and professional growth to guide future interventions.
- Engage with knowledge providers on the results of the impact towards improvement and alignment.
- Conduct regular qualitative surveys and feedback sessions by continuously gathering input from both beneficiaries and employers. This can help identify potential mismatches and issues early on, allowing for timely adjustments and improvements.
- Conduct evaluation of interventions to address areas of dissatisfaction and improvement.
- Examine project spend in terms of a cost-benefit analysis to address limitations of the programme so that more beneficiaries good extract maximum benefit.

10.1.10 Contractual Commitments

The W & R SETA should:

- Conduct due diligence of all its interventions to ensure that there is alignment between the interventions funded, industry needs and organizational growth. Knowledge providers should be contractually bound to provide relevant programmes.
- Regularly conduct due diligence of industries participating in interventions to assess commitment in offering beneficiaries value in work placement. Companies guilty of viewing graduate placement and WIL as 'sponsored labour' must be sanctioned from participation in all interventions.
- Look towards translating the significance of intervention into securing permanent employment by enshrining retention clauses in the contract.
- Regularly monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of its programmes against contract requirement to ensure they continue to meet the needs of beneficiaries.
- Sanction non-compliance be it institutions or industry.
- Prioritise industry commitment to assist beneficiaries and unemployed youth with employment opportunities. This could involve actively reaching out to industry partners and working collaboratively to create job opportunities for these individuals.

10.1.11 Entrepreneurship education

The W & R SETA should:

- Fund more programmes on entrepreneurship to stimulate an entrepreneurial spirit amongst the youth.
- Engage knowledge providers to ensure that entrepreneurship education should be included in all its programmes.

10.2. Conclusion

In retrospect what can be elucidated is that the W & R SETA funding interventions play a pivotal role in skills developments in the retail sector. The range of interventions are all geared as a to route the employment market and the development of entrepreneurs. The vision and intent of the interventions are noble however, at the level of execution it requires recalibration with greater involvement from the SETA. Exorbitant amounts of monies that are invested and expecting desired returns in an aloof manner would not deliver desired returns on investment. The critical void between funding resources made available and retention at the work place has to be revisited, refined and constantly re-evaluated. The content of learnerships and skills programmes must evolve as the sector evolves so as to meaningfully address the skill set mismatch, otherwise programmes will be consistently misfiring. There has to be ongoing conversations with industry at every level as opposed to a national chain store level only to ensure programme alignment.

Efforts are being made to consult industry in terms of skills required; however this has to translate into practice at a workshop level delving at specifics, elements and nature of skills required and are in demand. The W & R SETA can play the initiating and facilitating role of such engagements. Reflecting on learning environments and delivery modes, these has to be re-imagined and facilitators of programmes have to consistently reskilled and upskilled to keep pace with industry changes. Addressing these aspects will keep beneficiaries abreast of respective industries and being more employable. What has emerged from the study is that there is a lack of an entrepreneurial spirit amongst beneficiaries or that training programmes lack that critical component and only train beneficiaries for the work place. The W & R SETA should conduct due diligence on all programmes funded to ensure that programmes include entrepreneurship as part of its core programme and that entrepreneurship is not a step-child in learning. For the economy and unemployment to self-correct entrepreneurship will play a fundamental role.

Transitioning from being a learner and student to economic activity can be daunting for young trainees. There has to be some sort of bridging sub-structures from institutions, industry and the SETA. In terms of graduate placement and work integrated learning, the W & R SETA should play an instrumental role in the development of industry-based mentors who could provide support, guidance and pastoral care to learners and students on work related learning and transitioning into the world of work. Mentorship training should be funded so that there is value experienced at the work place which could facilitate greater absorption of beneficiaries. Additionally, university lecturers, TVET College lecturers and independent service provider facilitators must be placed at industry sites for practical experience and they must be accredited with work site certification, an area the W & R SETA can explore. The ivory tower approach to teaching and learning has to be reconfigured towards commitment to economic development by enhancing curriculum relevancy. As a custodian of skills development in the sector the W & R SETA has a deep vested interest in achieving its goals and it therefore has to transact beyond making funding available.

A significant factor emerging is the training of soft skills for all beneficiaries so that when beneficiaries interface with prospective employers they display soft skills and behaviour patterns which are aligned to industry-based values and professional ethics. The W & R SETA has to play an influential role to ensure that funding is received and there are enabling factors (which the SETA can propel) through the value-chain facilitating retention. This would obviate issues around 'sponsored labour' used by industry whereby students and learners are recycled annually. Participating companies must be contractually bound to a percentage unemployed student intake. By reflecting and acting on the recommendations and concluding remarks the W & R SETA will be making an indelible statement with regard to avenues for enhanced employability and entrepreneurship in the retail sector.

REFERENCES

- Adewale, A.J., OYEKU, B.V. and OYEKU, O.M., 2023. Entrepreneurial Training and Business Sustainability of Beneficiaries of FIRO Technologies: *Lead City Journal of the Social Sciences*, 8(2), pp.115-136.
- Alhasani, M. and Orji, R., 2024. Promoting Stress Management among Students in Higher Education: Evaluating the Effectiveness of a Persuasive Time Management Mobile App. *International Journal of Human–Computer Interaction*, pp.1-23.
- Alkhalaf, T. and Al-Tabbaa, O., 2024. The effect of ability, motivation and opportunity (AMO) on SMEs' innovation performance. *Creativity and Innovation Management*, 33(1), pp.21-38.
- Almhamad, G. 2023. The factors affecting women entrepreneurship in developing countries. How far are we from supporting women entrepreneurship? *Acta Academiae Beregsasiensis. Economics*, (4), pp.591-604.
- Anggoro, A. and Anjarini, A.D., 2024. Building an Organizational Culture that Supports Diversity and Inclusion. *Management Studies and Business Journal (PRODUCTIVITY)*, 1(1), pp.190-197.
- Baker, D.G., 2024. *Race, ethnicity and power: A comparative study*. Taylor & Francis.
- Bottema-Beutel, K., LaPoint, S.C., Kim, S.Y., Mohiuddin, S., Yu, Q. and McKinnon, R., 2023. An evaluation of intervention research for transition-age autistic youth. *Autism*, 27(4), pp.890-904.
- Carswell, G. and De Neve, G., 2024. Training for employment or skilling up from employment? Jobs and skills acquisition in the Tiruppur textile region, India. *Third World Quarterly*, 45(4), pp.715-733.
- Creswell, J.W., Clark, V.L.P. 2018. *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. 3rd ed. London: Sage.
- Creswell, J.W. 2015. *A concise introduction to mixed methods research*. California: Sage.
- Creswell, J.W. 2011 and Clark V.L. 2011. *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. 3rd ed. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Creswell, J.W. 2009. *Research design: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods approach*. 3rd ed. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Dalpatadu, S.A.C., Amaratunga, L.T.D.S., Mudiyanse, R.M. and Dalpatadu, K.C.S., 2024. Exploring Attitudes toward Communication Skills Training and Their

- De Grip, A., 2024. The importance of informal learning at work. IZA World of Labor.
- Dixit, J.K., Welsh, D.H., Agarwal, S., Ramadani, V. and Agrawal, V., 2024. The role of educational institutions in combating educational unemployment and developing future entrepreneurs: insights from Indian experts. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, 51(2), pp.137-160.
- Edmonds, W.A & Kennedy, T.D. 2019. An Applied Guide to Research Designs: Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Methods. Available at COMPLETED PHD SUMMARY OF THE STUDY at <https://methods.sagepub.com/book/an-applied-guide-to-research-designs-2e>.
- El-Ganainy, A., Ernst, E., Merola, R., Rogerson, R and Schindler, M. 2021. Inclusivity in the Labor Market, WP/21/141. Available at <https://www.imf.org/-/media/Files/Publications/WP/2021/English/wpia2021141-print-pdf.ashx>.
- European innovation Council (EIC), 2021. Analysis of EIC beneficiaries' needs and challenges regarding geographic expansion. Available at <https://eic.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-02/Analysis%20of%20EIC%20beneficiaries%20needs%20and%20challenges%20-%20Final%20Study%20-%20Final.pdf>.
- Genesis Analytics, 2017. Evaluation of JOBS Programme—Jobs preparedness training. Available at <https://www.nyda.gov.za/Portals/0/downloads/Genesis%20Analytics%2C%20NYDA%2C%20Evaluation%20of%20Job%20preparedness%20JOBS%20Programme%2C26%20February%202017.pdf>.
- Gray, J.A., DiLoreto, M. 2016. The Effects of Student Engagement, Student Satisfaction, and Perceived Learning in Online Learning Environments. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*, 11 (1), 1-20.
- Gurung, S.K., Chapagain, R. and Thapa, B.G., 2023. Perceptions of employability of undergraduate business program graduates: A qualitative analysis. *Journal of Business and Management*, 7(01), pp.138-157.
- Haltia, N., Isopahkala-Bouret, U. and Mutanen, H., 2023. Getting a head start: capital inheritance and the labour market entry of Finnish business graduates. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 44(4), pp.669-686.
- Hernandez Sibó, I.P., Gómez Celis, D.A. and Liou, S., 2024. Exploring the Landscape of Cognitive Load in Creative Thinking: a Systematic Literature Review. *Educational Psychology Review*, 36(1), pp.1-47.
- Herrity, J. 2023. The Importance of Training Employees: Benefits. Available at <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/importance-of-training>.

- Hong, W.C.H., Chi, C., Liu, J., Zhang, Y., Lei, V.N.L. and Xu, X., 2023. The influence of social education level on cybersecurity awareness and behaviour: A comparative study of university students and working graduates. *Education and Information Technologies*, 28(1), pp.439-470.
- Huit, T.Z., Coyne, C. and Chen, D., 2024. *State of the Science: Gender-Affirming Care for Transgender and Gender Diverse Youth*. Behavior Therapy.
- ILO, 2018. Finding proactive features in labour market policies: A reflection based on the evidence. Available at https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---cabinet/documents/publication/wcms_650075.pdf.
- ILO and the World Bank Report, 2016. Enhancing employability. Available at <https://www.oecd.org/employment/emp/Enhancing-Employability-G20-Report-2016.pdf>.
- ILO, 2010. A Skilled Workforce for Strong, Sustainable and Balanced Growth: A G20 Training Strategy. Available at <https://www.oecd.org/g20/summits/toronto/G20-Skills-Strategy.pdf>.
- Jackson, D. and Dean, B.A., 2023. The contribution of different types of work-integrated learning to graduate employability. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 42(1), pp.93-110
- Jacobs, B. and Karpova, E., 2023. "Must-have" skills and knowledge for apparel merchandising professionals in South Africa. *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*, 14(2), pp.206-225.
- Jaiswal, A., Arun, C.J. and Varma, A., 2022. Rebooting employees: Upskilling for artificial intelligence in multinational corporations. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 33(6), pp.1179-1208.
- Karaca-Atik, A., Meeuwisse, M., Gorgievski, M. and Smeets, G., 2023. Uncovering important 21st-century skills for sustainable career development of social sciences graduates: A systematic review. *Educational Research Review*, 39, p.100528.
- Kavitha, M. 2024. Unleashing potential: a study on the impact of training programmes on career trajectories and job performance., Juni Khyat ISSN: 2278-4632 (UGC Care Group I Listed Journal) Vol-14, Issue-1, No.02, January: 2024
- Khando, K., Gao, S., Islam, S.M. and Salman, A., 2021. Enhancing employees' information security awareness in private and public organisations: A systematic literature review. *Computers & security*, 106, p.102267.
- Khasawneh, Y., Khasawneh, N. and Khasawneh, M., 2024. Exploring the long-term effects: Retention and transfer of skills in gamified learning environment. *International Journal of Data and Network Science*, 8(1), pp.195-200
- Koyana, S. and Mason, R., 2018. Transformation in the wholesale and retail sector in South Africa: the role of internships. *Journal of Business and Retail Management Research (JBRMR)*.

- Lavoie-Tremblay, M., Boies, K., Clausen, C., Frechette, J., Manning, K., Gelsomini, C., Cyr, G., Lavigne, G., Gottlieb, B. and Gottlieb, L.N., 2024. Nursing leaders' perceptions of the impact of the Strengths-Based Nursing and Healthcare Leadership program three months post training. *International Journal of Nursing Studies Advances*, 6, p.100190.
- Mahesh, B.T. 2020. Research onion: a systematic approach to designing research methodology. Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/357284560_RESEARCH_ONION_A_SYSTEMATIC_APPROACH_TO_DESIGNING_RESEARCH_METHODODOLOGY/citation/download.
- Majid, M.H.M. and Banu, M.I.I., 2024. Challenges Faced by Arts Graduates in the Current Job Market: A Sri Lankan Perspective. *ORGANIZE: Journal of Economics, Management and Finance*, 3(1), pp.18-30.
- Mathew, T.H., Benjamin, R.M. and Agnes, R.S., 2024. Human capital development and capacity building in africa: the unemployment dilemma of graduates in South Africa. *Transylvanian Review*, 32(1).
- Msweli, S.V., A critical and in-depth analysis of entrepreneurship as the instrumental tool for addressing youth unemployment: A case of KwaZulu-Natal. In *Mbali Conference 2023 Proceedings* (p. 447).
- Nair, N.B., Jahagirdar, K.A., Angadi, J.G. and Meena, M.S., 2023. Professional competence of extension personnel in Karnataka state of India. *Indian Journal of Extension Education*, 59(2), pp.79-83.'
- Nayoyos-Refugia, J.M., 2024. Exploring Employability, Program Relevance and Job Satisfaction among BS Criminology Graduates. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary: Applied Business and Education Research*, 5(1), pp.130-139.
- Noble, H. and Heale, R. 2019. *Triangulation in research, with example*. Available: <https://ebn.bmj.com/content/22/3/67>.
- Normatova, A., 2024. Navigating the tapestry of intercultural communication: building bridges in a diverse world. *Educational Research in Universal Sciences*, 3(4 SPECIAL), pp.515-519.
- OECD and ILO, 2018. Global Skills Trends, Training Needs and Lifelong Learning Strategies for the Future of Work. Available at https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---inst/documents/publication/wcms_646038.pdf.
- Ogunode, N.J., Ukozor, C.U. and Chijioke, R.A., 2024. Staff Training and Academics Job Performance in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria. *International Journal of Academic Integrity and Curriculum Development*, 1(1), pp.69-75.
- Ogut, H., Adol, G.F.C., Bujdosó, Z., Andrea, B., Fekete-Farkas, M. and Dávid, L.D., 2023. Theoretical nexus of knowledge management and tourism business enterprise competitiveness: An integrated overview. *Sustainability*, 15(3), p.1948.

Omar, M.K., Romli, A.H., Azeem, N. and Zakaria. 2024. A., Relationship Between Career Adaptability And Employability Skills: Towards Engineering Graduates Career Development.

Pandey, A. 2022. How To Evaluate the Effectiveness of Training Programmes.
Available at <https://elearningindustry.com/how-to-evaluate-the-effectiveness-of-training-programmes>.

Parton, N. 2023. Bridging Higher Education Outcomes and Labour Market Needs: A Study of Jouv University Graduates in the Context of Vision 2030. Social Science Journal, 12(6), 360; <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci12060360>.

Perez-Encinas, A. and Berbegal-Mirabent, J., 2023. Who gets a job sooner? Results from a national survey of master's graduates. *Studies in Higher Education*, 48(1), pp.174-188.

Podlesny, S.V., 2024. Donbass State Engineering Academy, Kramatorsk, Academichna 72, 84313 Abstract. The article is an overview of key methods and strategies that help university professors organize their work more effectively. The article discusses the following aspects: Planning and prioritizing: Instructors will learn how to develop detailed plans, prioritize, and allocate time between tasks. This method helps you focus on your key responsibilities. Delegation. Socially responsible activities to ensure quality education in the context of sustainable development, p.100.

Punch, K.F and Oancea, A. 2014. Introduction to research methods in education.
Available: <https://books.google.co.za/books?isbn=1473909201>.

Rakhmankulovna, A.S., 2023. The role of education and training in professional training and the importance of foreign languages in the formation of professional competencies of students. *International Journal of Advance Scientific Research*, 3(09), pp.58-62.

Ravikiran, A.S. 2023. Population vs Sample: Definitions, Differences and Examples.
Available at <https://www.simplilearn.com/tutorials/machine-learning-tutorial/population-vs-sample>.

Riza, S., Syarif, M., Mardatillah, F., Salam, A.J., Khafidah, W. and Yusuf, M., 2024. Improving Lecturer Competence to Encourage Innovation and Creativity in Learning. *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun*, 12(1), pp.249-272.

Salendab, F. and Sanchez, R., 2023. Graduates Tracer Study: The Employability Status of Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED) of Sultan Kudarat State University–Kalamansig Campus.

Saunders, M.N.K., Lewis, P., Thornhill, A. 2019. *Research methods research methods for business students* (8th ed.). New York: Pearson Education.

Shetty G, S., Baliga, V. and Thomas Gil, M., 2024. Impact of entrepreneurial mindset and motivation on business performance: deciphering the effects of

entrepreneurship development program (EDPs) on trainees. Cogent Business & Management, 11(1), p.2314733

- Sibanda, N., 2021. An Evaluation of the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP): South Africa's Employment Creation Tool (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria (South Africa)).
- Sichamba, S., Matafwali, M. and Kawimbe, S., 2024. Professional Trajectories: A Qualitative Exploration of Push and Pull Factors on Career Advancement Progression for Accountants in Government Institutions in Lusaka District. *Journal of Business and Economics in 4IR*, 1(1), pp.12-22.
- Simplilearn, 2023. Benefits and Methods of Employee Training and Development in 2023. Available at <https://www.simplilearn.com/benefits-of-employee-training-and-development-article>.
- Smith, B., 2024. *The Truth That Never Hurts 25th anniversary edition: Writings on Race, Gender, and Freedom*. Rutgers University Press.
- Stalin, M.V. and Maheswari, M.U., 2024. The Influence of Human Resource Management Practices on Employee Work Engagement In Selected Manufacturing Companies in South India. *Journal of Research Administration*, 6(1).
- Stauff, J. and Blondin, J.E. eds., 2024. Promoting Intercultural Agility and Leadership Development at Home and Abroad for First-year Students. IGI Global.
- Sudi, M., Arisanti, I., Hanim, S.A., Sya'rani, R. and Rahwana, K.A., 2024. The Effect of Organizational Culture and Communication Skills on Administrative Performance in Higher Education Institutions in East Java. *West Science Interdisciplinary Studies*, 2(02), pp.440-447.
- Susanto, P.C., Soehaditama, J.P. and Benned, M., 2023, April. Determination of Motivation and Career Development: Analysis of Training, Competence. In *Proceeding International Conference on Religion, Science and Education* (Vol. 2, pp. 273-279).
- Thomas, R. 2023. Unravelling Research Population and Sample: Understanding their role in statistical inference. Available at <https://www.enago.com/academy/population-vs-sample/#:~:text=The%20research%20population%2C%20also%20known,which%20a%20sample%20is%20drawn>.
- Uwayezu, J.C. and Nkurikiyimfura, J.B., 2024. Evaluating Rwanda Polytechnic Graduates' Self-assessment on the Application of Soft Skills in the Workplace. *Journal of Indonesian Scholars for Social Research*, 4(1), pp.33-42
- Venkataramani, V. and Tang, C., 2024. When does external knowledge benefit team creativity? The role of internal team network structure and task complexity. *Organization Science*, 35(1), pp.92-115.
- Wang, Y.; Song, G. 2022. Application of Biographical Data in Student's Major Selection. *Sustainability*, 14 (23), 1-13.

Watters, A and House, A. 2023. How to Calculate Percentages to Solve Math Problems. Available at <https://www.dummies.com/article/academics-the-arts/math/basic-math/how-to-calculate-percentages-240018/>.

Wildschut-February, A., Rogan, M. 2020. Transformation, stratification and higher education: exploring the absorption into employment of public financial aid beneficiaries across the South African higher education system. Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/336623765_Transformation_stratification_and_higher_education_exploring_the_absorption_into_employment_of_public_financial_aid_beneficiaries_across_the_South_African_higher_education_system.

W&RSETA Strategic Plan for 2020/21 – 2024/25. Available at https://static.pmg.org.za/WRSETA_SP_and_APP_Including_Annexures_FY2021-2022_12_March_2021.pdf.

Xu, X. 2023. Biographical Data: A Bibliometrics Study and Visualization Analysis via CiteSpace.

Yi, E. and Park, D.H., 2024. *The effect of core competencies of university students on employment and first year salary level based on school activity log*. Heliyon.

Zha, S., Qiao, Y., Hu, Q., Li, Z., Gong, J. and Xu, Y., 2024. Designing Child-Centric AI Learning Environments: Insights from LLM-Enhanced Creative Project-Based Learning. arXiv preprint arXiv:2403.16159.

Zhang, Y., 2024. Cultivating a Culture of Innovation: The Impact of Leadership Style on Employee Well-being and Organizational Creativity. *International Journal of Global Economics and Management*, 2(1), pp.202-210.